

JOHN

INTRODUCTION

The author of this gospel called Jesus “God” in the first verse; and, throughout the whole marvelous work, he deployed his material to prove it skillfully and powerfully.

He affirms that he knew this Jesus, was His constant companion, disciple, and intimate friend, and that he was one of the first to become His follower.

He saw Jesus arrested, attended the trials, witnessed the crucifixion, saw the soldier thrust the spear into His side, was present at the burial, and was the person singled out by Jesus to care for the blessed Mary, being thus commissioned while Jesus was still upon the cross.

He entered the tomb after the resurrection and saw the grave cloths lying in such a manner as to convince him that Jesus had risen from the dead; he was present in the upper room when Jesus appeared to the disciples with Thomas absent, and again a week later with Thomas present. He saw the confrontation when Jesus challenged Thomas to see the print of the nails in His hands and to thrust his hand into Jesus’ side, and recorded the astounding confession of the erstwhile unbeliever, “My Lord, and my God!”

Now, if anyone believes that there is any such being upon this earth as Satan, the deduction is mandatory that the evil one would be compelled to challenge such a book as John.

The traditional date of the writing of the book of John is (80-90 A.D.), or maybe even a little earlier. John wrote this book in Ephesus. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 30, noted, “Tradition is well-nigh unanimous in maintaining that the place where the apostle wrote his gospel; was Ephesus. Repeated attempts in recent literature to discredit this strong tradition have not been successful.”

Is the purpose of John that of supplementing the synoptics? In the light of what he wrote, the answer is affirmative.

That it was intended to be supplementary is also evident from the omission of any things emphasized in the synoptic accounts, such as the parables, the whole Galilean ministry, many of the miracles, the nativity, and the institution of the Lord's Supper.

CHAPTER 1

This chapter falls easily into five divisions.

1. The prologue, Verses 1-18.
2. The deputation from Jerusalem to John the Baptist, Verses 19-28.
3. Events of the next day after that deputation, Verses 29-34.
4. The events of the second day after the deputation, Verses 35-42.
5. The events of the third day following the historic interview with John the Baptist, Verses 43-51.

Thus, aside from the prologue, this chapter records the events of only four days of Jesus' ministry. Appropriately, it begins with the words, "In the beginning," for a number of important beginnings appear in it such as.

1. The beginning of all things, Verse 3.
2. The beginning of recognition of Jesus as Son of God, Verse 34.
3. The beginning of Jesus' disciples, Verse 41.
4. The beginning of the apostleship, Verse 41f.
5. The beginning of the use of title Son of Man, Verse 51.
6. The beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

Verse 1

The eternal existence of the Lord Jesus Christ and His absolute identification with God and as God are unequivocally stated in the first line of this gospel.

From this opening word to the end of the gospel, there is not the lightest deviation from the sacred author's intention of presenting Jesus Christ, as God

come in the flesh for the purpose of human redemption, and to whom every man owes the uttermost worship and devotion.

“In the beginning . . .” is like the opening words of Genesis; and, by such a choice of words, the apostle John evaluates the new creation through Jesus Christ in the same category of importance as the physical creation itself, and, in fact, being another creative act of the same Word which was active in the first.

“Was the Word . . .” The Greek word *Logos* from which Word is translated was widely known in the world of John’s day. The Word, as applied to Jesus Christ, is found only four times in the New Testament, twice in this prologue, verses 1 and 14, in 1 John 1:1, and in Revelation 19:13.

A word, in the primary meaning of the term, is a vessel for the conveyance of an idea; and Christ was the vessel which conveyed the true idea of God to humanity.

“And the Word was with God . . .” means that our Lord was intimately associated with the Father upon a parity and equality with Him. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 70, wrote of the bold translation of this place saying, “He Himself was in the beginning face to face with God. The fully Divine Word, existing from all eternity as a distinct was enjoying loving fellowship with the Father. Thus the full deity of Christ, His eternity, and His distinct personal existence are confessed once more, in order that heretics may be refuted and the church may be established in the faith and love of God.”

“And the Word was God . . .” This truth might have been deduced from either of the two preceding clauses, but the apostle left nothing to chance, categorically affirming in this third clause that the Word was indeed God, a truth reaffirmed at the end of the prologue.

The apostle’s doctrine of the *Logos* is thus seen to differ from the *Logos* of Greek philosophy in these particulars:

- (1) The New Testament *Logos* is God,
- (2) is personal,
- (3) created all things, including all matter, and

(4) became flesh and dwelt among men.

“Word was God . . .” J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 774 declared that this means, “Christ was Divine, and is therefore to be worshiped with the same worship as is due the Father.”

Verse 2

“He was in the beginning with the Father. . .” Three propositions from verse 1 are here reduced to a single declaration and re-affirmed.

Verse 3

Other New Testament passages which attribute the creation of the universe to Jesus Christ are: Colossians 1:16, 17, 1 Corinthians 8:6, and Hebrews 1:2, 10.

Also, the synoptics are filled with Jesus’ promises of eternal life, which again, is just as wonderful as creation, or even more wonderful, since the creation itself is not eternal!

NOTES REGARDING CREATION

Throughout the Bible, creation is declared to be an act of God and Christ, or God through Christ. Is it scientific to view the universe as having been created by God?

The point to remember is that no atheistic scientist holds any higher degree, has any more intelligence, or possesses any more information pertinent to the question, than do the men cited here.

Frank Allen, Ph.D., Cornell University, commented on the ponderous protein molecule, the basic building block of all life, and noted that it has about 40,000 atoms arranged in an exceedingly complicated pattern.

John Clover Monsma, Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe, p. 23, said, “The amount of matter to be shaken together to produce a single molecule of protein would be millions of times greater than that in the whole universe. For it to occur on earth alone would require almost endless billions of years (10^{243}). But proteins as chemicals are without life. It is only when the mysterious life comes into them that they live. Only Infinite Mind, that is, God, could have

foreseen that such a molecule could be the abode of life, could have constructed, and made it live.”

Merritt Stanley Congdon, natural scientist and philosopher, *Ibid.* p. 35, stated that, “There are no facts yet wrested from the intriguing mysteries of this strange on rushing cosmos which can in any degree disprove the existence and intelligent activities of an unconditioned, personal God.”

Irving William Knobloch, Ph.D., Iowa State College, *Ibid.*, p. 89, wrote, “I believe in God because mere chance could not account for the emergence of the first electrons or protons, or for the atoms, or for the first amino acids, or for the first protoplasm, or for the first seed or for the first brain. I believe in God because His Divine existence is the only logical explanation for things as they are.”

Verse 4

“In Him was life . . .” Life was a favorite term with the author of John. William C. Tenney, *John, the Gospel of Belief*, p. 66, said, “This noun occurs thirty-six times, and eleven are in conjunction with the adjective eternal.”

The use of the past tense shows the true spiritual life was in Christ before the incarnation, emphasizing the truth that all of the hopes of worshipers under Israel’s law were actually in the Lord Jesus Christ, just as it is with all who ever lived.

“The light of men . . .” God’s revelation of Himself to sinful and fallen humanity appears in this. Only they are enlightened who know the life in Christ; all others are in darkness.

Verse 5

“And the darkness did not comprehend it . . .” Some translations favor “the darkness overcame it not.” It is also true that “the darkness overcame it not,” nor will it ever do so. The basic hostility between light and darkness, good and evil, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil, appears in this verse.

The unregenerated world hates God and the knowledge of His truth; but the hatred and opposition of evil men cannot prevent the light from shining.

Verse 6

The apostle John nowhere referred to the great herald as John the Baptist, but simply as John.

"Sent from God . . ." John the Baptist was a true prophet with a valid message from God.

Verses 7-8

These two verses along with verse 6, presents the following facts with reference to John the Baptist.

1. He came from God and was therefore a true prophet.
2. He was not the light.
3. His mission was to bear witness to the light.
4. To bear witness to the light was to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

"That all might believe through him . . ." The purpose of God in sending John the Baptist was that all men might believe in Christ. John the Baptist effectively fulfilled that responsibility. The fact that many would not believe was due to the hardening and prejudice on their part.

Verse 9

"There was the true light . . . coming into the world . . ." This speaks of the sudden appearance of Christ the world's Redeemer, His "coming into the world" indicating His pre-existence and making His appearance among men an act of our Lord's own volition.

"Enlightens every man . . ." Alvah Hovey, *op. cit.*, p. 63, thought that, "It may signify that some knowledge of God is given to every man by the Word. We understand it, however, as a description of the normal relation of the Word to mankind, as an affirmation that, if one fails of true and saving knowledge, it is because he closes the eye of his soul to it, and not because the Word has failed to offer it to him."

The view maintained is that light from Jesus Christ has truly reached and benefited, in some degree, every person who ever was born after Jesus came.

Verse 10

“The world did not know Him . . .” These words bluntly state a near incredibility. That the very creator of the world should cast aside the glory of His eternal existence and choose to enter earth life as a man subject to all the inconveniences and limitations of the flesh—that is a fact of awesome wonder; but added to that is the obstinate and rebellious refusal of the Lord’s creation to acknowledge Him when He came!

Verse 11

The better part of a century had passed since Jesus came, when John wrote these words; and yet, in these words, the apostle seems still to be struck with the marvel that the Lord’s own people, the chosen people, who should have been the first to know and hail His coming, that even those people received Him not.

Verse 12

“As many as received Him . . . to those that believe in His name . . .” refers to the same persons, namely, to those who accepted the claims of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and believed the message that He delivered to mankind.

Since the days of Martin Luther, many religious persons have believed that faith alone makes people children of God; but, in this verse, it is clear that believers are not sons of God merely because they are believers, but that believers have the right to become sons of God.

B. W. Johnson, *New Testament Commentary*, p. 30 explained it, “It is not declared that they were made children by believing, but to the believer, He gives the power to become a child. When one believes in Christ, his faith becomes a power to lead him to yield himself to God and to receive the Word into his heart. He then can repent of sin, surrender to the will of the Father, and being baptized into Christ he puts on Christ, becomes the Lord’s brother and a child of God by adoption.”

The efforts to get rid of the plain teaching of this verse have resulted in some fantastic assertions, as for example, William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 82, writes, “The right to become children of God is reserved for the future, when freed from

every impurity, the life of God, His holiness and love, shall have become completely manifest to us.”

John was speaking here of the right, or power, that men enjoy now, the privilege of being children of God now.

“Gave the right . . .” The privilege of being a child of God is the greatest privilege afforded by life on earth; but even when men have complied with the conditions antecedent to the gift, no one can yet be considered as deserving or meriting so marvelous a gift.

Verse 13

New birth is a condition of salvation, and it was assumed by John that believers who received the right to become God’s children would exercise it by obedience of the gospel, and the burden of the thought of this verse is that the new birth is of God, spiritual and from above, and that it does not derive from Abrahamic descent, that is, “of blood,” nor “of the flesh” nor “of the will of man.”

Verse 14

They greatly err who suppose that John differed from the synoptics regarding the virgin birth of our Lord, for it is in this verse recorded that the Word who was God, did in fact become flesh and that He was “the only begotten” of the Father!

John’s terminology here is fantastic. He does not use any of the terminology employed by the synoptics, and yet he stated here the doctrine of the virgin birth in terms that were suggested by his presentation of Christ as the Divine Word.

“The Word became flesh . . .” means that God became a man. This is John’s statement of the doctrine of the incarnation, the central mystery of our holy religion.

Hendriksen, *Ibid.*, p. 84, wrote, “The verb became has a very special meaning here. Not become in the sense of ceasing to be what He was before. When the wife of Lot becomes a pillar of salt, she ceases to be the wife of Lot; but when Lot

becomes the father of Moab and Ammon, he remains Lot. So also here, the Word becomes flesh but remains the Word, even God.

Thus our Lord was perfect in godhead and perfect in manhood, and yet one Person.

“Flesh . . .” as used here simply means human nature in possession of a body and does not imply any taint of sin. “Flesh,” as used by John in this verse, carries with it none of the implications of Paul’s frequent usage of the term, a distinction that Paul himself carefully preserved. It means the genuine, perfect, holy, human nature of our Lord.

“And dwelt among us . . .” may imply a great deal more than the English words denote. W. F. Howard, *Interpreter’s Bible*, p. 473, wrote, “The Greek word (translated dwelt) derived from the noun for tent, is often used without any reference to its etymology; but so allusive a writer as John may well have been thinking of the tabernacle in the wilderness where the Lord dwelt with Israel (Exodus 25:8-9; 40:34), and more particularly of that pillar of cloud above the tent of meetings, typifying the visible dwelling of the Lord among His people.”

On account of this, some translators, following the Greek more exactly, render it “tabernacled among us.” The idea is that Christ’s earthly sojourn was not a fleeting, or illusory, appearance, but a sustained and continued existence as a man among men. Giving His contemporaries every opportunity to observe and evaluate His life and mission.

“And we beheld His glory . . .” The verb beheld does not refer to some casual or incomplete observance, but as Merrill C. Tenney, *op. cit.*, p. 71, noted, “The verb beheld contains the root of the word theater and connotes more than a causal glance. It involves careful scrutiny of what is before one in order to understand its significance.”

“As of the only begotten from the Father . . .” There can be little doubt that John here referred to the transfiguration; but the glory of Christ included far more than that. J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 775, said, “Not merely the visible glory of the Transfiguration and the Ascension, but the moral and spiritual

splendor of His unique life, which revealed the nature of the invisible Father. (It was) not a reflected glory, as would have been the case had He been a mere human saint or prophet, but it was the glory of God's only begotten Son, and therefore God's own glory, for Christ and the Father are one."

"Only begotten . . ." is peculiar to this apostle. Such a title could never have been used except by one who understood and accepted the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ.

"Full of grace and truth . . ." Commenting on the words "grace and truth" B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 13, wrote, "The combination recalls the description of Jehovah, Exodus 34:6, and is not infrequent in the Old Testament. As applied to the Lord, the phrase marks Him as the author of perfect Redemption and perfect Revelation. Grace corresponds with the idea of revelation of God as love (1 John 4:8, 16) by Him who is Life; and truth with that of the revelation of God as light (1 John 1:5) by Him who is Himself Light."

Verse 15

John spoke with authority as to the matters pertaining to the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. This verse shows exactly what the relationship truly was. Between the two, there was the difference between God and man, time and eternity, the finite and infinite, between the sun and the reflected light of the moon, between the Lord and the servant unworthy to unloose His sandals.

The statement of John that Christ was "before" him shows that the apostle's understanding of the pre-existence of Christ and eternity of the Word had begun with his own acceptance of the teaching of John on these very subjects. John was six months older than Jesus, and, only in respect to Jesus' eternal existence before the incarnation, could he have affirmed that Christ was before him.

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 775, thought the meaning valid, paraphrasing it thus, "He existed before my birth, and even before His own birth, as the eternal Son of God."

Verse 16

All blessings come from God. The wealth men receive is invariably through the employment of God-given talents and opportunities; the vigor, strength, health, and intelligence of every person is given to him from above.

In his remarkable “Essay on Experience,” Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Nothing is of us or our works—all is of God. Nature will not spare us the smallest leaf of laurel. All writing comes by the grace of God, and all doing and having.”

Verse 17

Christ was not only greater than the mighty John the Baptist, but was also transcendentally above the great lawgiver Moses. This verse does not mean that grace and truth were not evidenced by the law of Moses, but that grace and truth through the Lord Jesus Christ far exceeded anything in the old dispensation.

Verse 18

This verse reveals Christ as the true basis of all genuine human enlightenment concerning God, but it begins by pointing out the inherent human limitation of being unable actually to see God (in the highest sense) while still in the flesh. Thus, due to his limitation, man can enjoy true knowledge of God only through the revelation of the one who, as both God and man, is in a position truly to reveal Him.

“No man has seen God at any time . . .” God is a Spirit, eternal, invisible Spirit; but God has manifested Himself in Jesus our Lord; and he that has truly “seen” Jesus has seen God.

“The only begotten Son . . .” The oldest and most reliable manuscripts of this gospel read “only begotten God” in this passage, and it should be so translated. (B. F. Westcott, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*)

Merrill C. Tenney, *op. cit.*, p. 72, declared that, “The evidence for only begotten God is so strong as to be practically conclusive . . . only begotten God makes an unequivocal affirmation of the deity of Christ.”

In this magnificent verse, the apostle shows how men may know God, despite the fact that God may not be known through human sensory perception. God is revealed to mankind by Jesus Christ the Holy One. The nature and attributes of God are revealed through Christ whose identity with the Father is complete and whose identity with man is all so perfect.

John carefully assembled and deployed his amazing material in this gospel to prove that Christ is God come in the flesh and to induce faith on the part of men in the world's only Redeemer.

“Who is in the bosom of the Father . . . suggests the most intimate union and identity with God on the part of Christ. The bosom of the Father is best understood, not as a literal place of location, but as a state of existence.

“He has explained Him . . .” means far more than merely talking about God. Jesus said, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father” (14:9). The revelation in Jesus Christ was not something whispered in a cave. His revelation of God to man was like the star that announced His birth, blazing forth the truth to all generations of men, His very life being the Light of men.

The holy scriptures themselves have been called the Word of God in all generations; and since Jesus is here designated the Word, a comparison of Christ and the Bible is suggested.

CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

1. Christ was both human and Divine, and so is the Bible. The Lord identified Himself as one with the Father, and yet He was also the Son of the virgin Mary. The Bible is in fact the Word of God; yet at the same time, it is the writing of men.
2. Christ and the Bible are both “of the Jews.” Jesus was born of Jewish ancestry, His forbearers being the great worthies of the Old Testament; and also the Bible is Jewish, most of its writers being Jews. There were a few Gentiles conspicuously among the Lord's fleshly ancestors, such as Ruth and Tamar, there are also some Gentile writers of the Bible, notably Job and the evangelist Luke.

3. Both Christ and the Bible have been disbelieved, mocked, tried with false trials and crucified. During the French Revolution the Bible was publicly tried and condemned, tied to the tail of a donkey ridden by a harlot, and dragged through the streets of Paris to the city dump. As John Macmillan, *The Crucified and Risen Bible*, p. 64, wrote, “The Bible is like the Lord in its crucifixion, being crucified by many who are enemies of the cross of Christ.”
4. Both the Lord and the Bible have triumphed over death, the Lord by rising from the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and the Bible rising from every grave to which it was ever consigned.

DEPUTATION FROM JERUSALEM TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

This paragraph (verses 19-28) takes note of the impact of John’s mission upon the religious hierarchy in Jerusalem who were impressed with the thousands of people being baptized and with the bold and dynamic preaching of John. A delegation was sent to investigate.

Verses 19-20

The apostle John had already referred to John the Baptist (1:6-8); and, as it was he who had first turned the eyes of the apostle to Jesus.

“The priests and Levites from Jerusalem . . .” The word Jews, by the end of the first century and the time John wrote this gospel, had acquired a sinister meaning in the entire Christian society, resulting from official Israel’s rejection of the Savior. John’s use of this word throughout the gospel was to designate the avowed enemies of Christ; and it should never be understood as including the whole race of Israel, despite the fact that the vast majority of Israel had followed their evil leaders in rejecting Christ.

The Sanhedrin, the official religious hierarchy which condemned Jesus to death, was doubtless the body that initiated this inquiry; and why? The popular report of John’s success had reached Jerusalem; and, unthinkably, from their viewpoint, he was even teaching that Jews needed repentance and baptism! Were they not the chosen people?

“Priests and Levites . . .” Most of the high priestly class were Sadducees, and it is remarkable that some of the delegation were Pharisees (1:24). The mutual hatred of those sects raises a question of how the Pharisees came to have a part in the inquiry; but one obvious explanation is found in the invariable tendency of bitterest enemies to unite in a common opposition to Christ. These two sects made a common cause against Jesus.

“Confessed, and did not deny . . . confessed I am not the Christ. . .” The double use of “confessed” derives from the statement in the first clause that there was a confession and the identification in the second clause of what the confession was.

Verse 21

John the Baptist was called Elijah by Christ Himself (Matthew 17:12), and this raises the question of why John here denied it. Literally, John the Baptist was not Elijah, and John’s literal answer was literally true. Typically and spiritually, John the Baptist was that Elijah foretold in Malachi 4:5; but there is no evidence that the Baptist knew his own identity as Elijah; and if he did know it, his answer was still the truth.

The popular notion was that the original Elijah would rise from the dead; and if John the Baptist had given an affirmative answer to their question, it would have been, in the context, a falsehood.

“Are you the prophet? . . .” is a reference to the prophet like unto Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18) who must be identified with the Messiah.

Verse 22

“Those who sent us . . . “are identified as Jews and Pharisees. (1:19, 24) The Sadducees did not believe in any resurrection.

Having answered their threefold question regarding Christ, Elijah, and that Prophet, John next responded with an affirmative statement regarding their question, “What do you say about?”

Verse 23

John laid claim to the office of the harbinger (a herald, one who goes before) of the Messiah.

Verses 24-25

“From the Pharisees . . .” This mention of that sect was to explain why the investigation continued with such persistence.

Had only the Sadducees been involved, it is inconceivable that those hypocrites would have proceeded any further than John’s admission that he was not the Messiah. Certainly, they would never have concerned themselves about any possibility of John’s being Elijah raised from the dead.

It was the baptizing and not the preaching which caused the greatest perplexity in John’s questioners. The extensive mass cleansing of the whole nation through repentance and baptism clearly suggested the great cleansing that had been prophesied by Ezekiel of the times of the Messiah (Ezekiel 36:25 ; 37:23); why then was John doing it if indeed he was not Christ nor the kind of forerunner they expected to precede the Christ?

This query shows that they had missed completely the implication of John’s quoting Isaiah 40:3, in which he made it clear that he was actually the forerunner of the Messiah, but not the literal Elijah they had expected.

Verses 26-27

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 97 commented on this verse saying, “Why does he baptize? He answers that while he administers the sign (water), he does not claim to be able to bestow the thing signified (the Holy Spirit). That is Messiah’s high prerogative, and that Glorious One has even now arrived upon the scene of Israel’s history, though they have not recognized Him.”

John was answering the question of why He was baptizing; but, if Hendriksen’s comment is what John meant, he did not answer the question at all.

“I baptize in water . . .” Note that it was in, not with, water that John baptized, indicating immersion as the action which constituted baptism.

The Messiah had already arrived but had not yet been publicly revealed, hence it was appropriate that the herald should be about the business of cleansing the nation through repentance and baptism, that being God's way of making ready a people prepared to receive the Messiah.

Verse 28

The place names mentioned in John are so numerous, yet always incidental to the main narrative, that their very profusion compels the conclusion that the author was writing truth which belonged to his immediate knowledge and recollection.

Since there were two cities named Bethany, the other being only a couple miles from Jerusalem, he distinguished this one as being "beyond Jordan." The exact location of this Bethany is not certain.

This verse concludes the apostle's record of the first one of those four great days which lived in his memory.

EVENTS OF THE SECOND DAY

Verse 29

"The next day . . ." following the events related, John saw Jesus coming towards him, exactly at the most favorable moment. The great Immerser was in exactly the right frame of mind to identify the Savior, and His most able disciples had been fully prepared, emotionally and intellectually, to transfer their love and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world . . ." Thus John the Baptist hailed Jesus of Nazareth as the long expected Messiah of Israel and the Savior of all mankind.

From the gates of Paradise until that dramatic instant, the sacrificial lamb had been the paramount and dominating feature of the worship of God throughout both the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations; and John's thundering announcement which identified Jesus Christ as the antitype of the Passover Lamb, and even of the lambs slain previously from the foundation of the world, was as crucial and important as any utterance ever made on earth.

In this first announcement of the great office of the Son of God, it was His relation to man's sin that was emphasized. He "takes away the sin of the world." Christ came to redeem men from sin.

CHRIST AND MAN'S SIN

Sin is man's worst enemy, his greatest problem, all human wretchedness issuing from a single fountain of bitter waters, that of sin. The glory of Jesus our Lord lies in what He does to sin.

(1) Jesus reveals sin.

Men would never have known their sin adequately had it not been for Christ. Every person who brings his heart to Christ will find it bleeding from a consciousness of sin; and this effective work of revealing man's sin constitutes a step in their redemption.

(2) Christ ransoms from sin. Wonderful is the word that Christ ransoms men from sin. In this world's terrible night of darkness and despair, how grandly do the words go marching in the gloom: ransomed, redeemed, propitiated, bought with a price, saved by the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:18-19)

(3) Christ removes sin far away. He takes away the guilt, the penalty and the practice of sin. He is the sin-bearer for all humanity. (Isaiah 53:6) He bore our sins in His own body on the cross, thus accomplishing what no typical lamb ever achieved. Only in Jesus Christ is there an effective decontaminator for human transgression. It is the blood of Christ alone which is able to do what all the oceans and the perfumes of Arabia cannot do: make the guilty innocent!

(4) Christ overrules sin for the good of them who love Him. (Romans 5:20) People who have been scarred and burned in the ugly pits of sin are often more conscious of God's grace than some who have led more conventional lives. Perhaps in this is explained why the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees.

(5) Christ remits sin. He forgives it! This is the great difference between the new covenant and the old. (Jeremiah 31:31-35) God indeed forgives sin, removing it as far as the east is from the west, as far as the bottom of the sea,

forgiving sin so completely that God will not even remember it no more! How wonderful is the thought that God will remember sin no more, even when men themselves are unable to forget it.

It is particularly significant that Christ was thus presented as the Savior of all men, and not merely as the Savior of a class or nation.

“The sin of the world . . .” identifies the grand theater of our Lord’s redemptive service, making it encompass all mankind , but only in the sense of salvation’s being available to all, and not in the sense of the universal procurement of salvation.

Verse 30

Every line of the fourth gospel is directed to establishing the identity of Christ as God incarnated, or God come in the flesh; and this verse can be true only in that context. John the Baptist was older than Christ, having been conceived six months earlier.

Verse 31

These words of John the Baptist are remarkable for a number of reasons. He was a cousin of Jesus and was well acquainted with Him as it was possible to be, from the purely human standpoint; and the meaning here has to be that John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah.

This and the following verses reveal the means by which John himself was enabled certainly to identify Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Verses 32-33

In order for John to be able to see the Holy Spirit, it was necessary for the Spirit to assume a bodily form; and, appropriately, it was that of a dove, long the symbol of peace and goodness.

This was not a mere case of a bird lighting on Jesus for a moment, a phenomenon which, while rare, is occasionally experienced by men. The heavens were opened, and the dove visibly descended from on high, an action totally disassociated from the invariable flight pattern of a dove, which is always horizontal.

Also, there was a voice out of heaven, the testimony of God Himself saying, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

In addition to all this, the Spirit–dove remained visibly upon the Lord. Thus Jesus was absolutely identified as the One who would baptize in the Holy Spirit. Without the witness of this gospel, men might never have known how John the Baptist arrived at the conviction that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

Verse 34

These words are the climax of the witness of John the Baptist and form here a direct quotation from him; but they also stand as the witness of the apostle John as well, being a part of the testimony which had convinced him that Jesus is the Son of God.

EVENTS OF THE THIRD DAY

Verse 35

From the impact of these words, it is clear that John was recalling, through the power of memory, exactly where he and that other disciple had been standing, with their beloved teacher John the Baptist.

“Again the next day . . .” he and that other disciple were standing there with John the Baptist; and Jesus walked in that vicinity, not toward them, as on the previous day, but near them; and once more, John the Baptist perhaps a little sad due to the impending departure of some of his most discerning disciples, thundered the identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God, doing so emphatically and bluntly as possible.

Verse 36

It was as if John the Baptist had said, “There! I have identified Him. There is no more for me to say. It is now up to you.” John, the apostle-to-be, and that other disciple took the decisive step. They followed Jesus!

Verses 37-38

Alvah Hovey, *op. cit.*, p. 78, said, “But who was the unnamed companion of Andrew? It was probably the Evangelist himself. For

- (1) the narrative in this place is very particular and graphic, making it probable that the writer was an eyewitness.
- (2) The writer of such a narrative would have been sure to mention the name of the other disciple, unless there had been some reason for withholding it.
- (3) The writer of this gospel never refers to himself by name, and the same feeling which led him to withhold his name elsewhere accounts for his withholding it here.”

“What do you seek? . . .” was an appropriate response by Jesus to the fact of their following Him; but their response was more timid and hesitant than we might have expected.

John’s explanation of the term “Rabbi” indicates that the greater part of the Christian world to whom this was written was Gentile.

“Rabbi . . .” By the use of this title and by their inquiry as to where the Master lived, the two disciples clearly indicated a desire to know more of the Person to whom their beloved teacher had made such amazing statements.

Verse 39

Jesus thus rewarded the two disciples by inviting them home with Him. It has been supposed that John was here using the Roman method of counting time, thus making it about 10:00 A.M. when this occurred.

The significant thing to note in this place, however, is the fact that the author recalled so exactly the very hour of the day when these events took place.

The reason for this was the fact that it was the very day and hour that brought him into the presence of the Holy One of God, a presence that changed John’s life and changed the world.

Verse 40

Here in this chapter is recorded where it all began. The apostle John and Simon Pete’s brother Andrew were the first disciples of the Lord Jesus. John’s detailed account of the events and circumstances for these four days which

began with the deputation to John the Baptist from Jerusalem is of the greatest interest and significance. This first hesitant and timid approach to Jesus reveals the intimate and personal beginning of the ranks of His disciples in all ages.

Verse 41

“He found first . . .” The exact meaning of the word “first” here is thought to be difficult; but the exact shade of various meanings is really of no great consequence. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 104, said, “The meaning is that two men (Andrew and John), having a day with Jesus, became so impressed with what they found in Him that they became missionaries. Each started out to find his own brother. Andrew, as the first, found his brother Peter. It is implied that John as the second missionary found his brother James. However in keeping with his delicate reserve, John did not say that directly.”

“We have found the Messiah . . .” implies that Andrew, Peter, James and John had been earnestly expecting and waiting for the Messiah and that they had been searching to find Him, their attitude of expectancy having resulted from John the Baptist’s preaching, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)

Thus the prior attitude of those first disciples accounts for their rapid progress. They first addressed the Lord as “Rabbi”; and, after only a day with Him, they affirmed that He was the Messiah. Note that John again interpreted the Jewish term “Messiah” for his Gentile readers.

CONCERNING ANDREW

Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible*, p. 49, mentioned the old tradition that this apostle was crucified “because of his rebuke of Aegeas for obstinate adherence to idolatry. He as nailed to a cross in the form of an “X” hence the name “Saint Andrew’s Cross.”

The greatest contribution of this apostle would appear to have been the exercise of his ability to enlist others, He enlisted his own brother Peter; he discovered the lad with the barley loaves and fishes; he, along with Philip, brought the Greeks to Jesus; and, upon at least one occasion, he was associated

with the “inner three” in a private meeting with Jesus. (Mark 13:3) There is no evidence that he ever resented the greater prominence of his brother Peter; and he never tried to parlay that relationship into any special privilege for himself, as did James and John. As one of the twelve apostles, his name is inscribed upon the foundations of the Eternal City coming down from God out of heaven. (Revelation 21:14)

Verse 42

“You are Simon the son of John . . .” These are the exact words Jesus used in His confession of Peter. (Matthew 16:13f) The Lord’s use of them here appears to have been prompted by His Divine foreknowledge of the great confession that Peter would make.

“You shall be called Cephas . . .” This new name assigned to Andrew’s brother (Peter) means “stone” or “pebble.” J. C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, John, p. 76, wrote, “Cephas” is a Syriac word, and is equivalent to the Greek word Petrous, which we render Peter. Both mean a stone, a portion of a rock. “Petra” means a rock, “Petros” a piece of rock. Peter was the latter, not the former.”

Our Lord here displayed His perfect knowledge of all persons, names and things. Such knowledge was supposed by the Jews to be a peculiar attribute of the Messiah. He was to be one of “quick understanding.” (Isaiah 11:3) It is a peculiar attribute of God, who alone knows the hearts of men. Our Lord’s perfect knowledge of all hearts was one among many proofs of His Divinity. His same knowledge appears again in His address to Nathaniel, and in His conversation with the Samaritan woman.” (1:47, 4:18)

EVENTS OF THE FOURTH DAY

Verse 43

“The next day . . .” This indicates the fourth successive day of the epic events here narrated by John. This verse brings us to the moment when Jesus was ready to leave Bethany beyond the Jordan and go to Cana in Galilee where He would perform the beginning of His miracles; but, before His departure two

more disciples would be added to the little company. It was necessary to inquire how the Lord found Philip, who, in all probability, was one of that small select group of John's followers who were expecting the Messiah.

CONCERNING PHILIP

Whereas Andrew and John found the Lord, the case of Philip was different in that the Lord found him; but the genuine nature of his discipleship was evidenced at once by his mission which resulted in the enrollment of Nathaniel in the sacred fellowship. Only Philip and Andrew of the Twelve had Greek names, which might explain the approach of the Greeks through these disciples. (12:21)

Herbert Lockyear, op. cit., p. 277, noted that Philip was apparently slow to apprehend spiritual truth saying, "Philip experienced familiar friendship with Jesus, for he did not call him by name. Slow to apprehend, he missed much; Jesus had nothing but kind words for him. (14:8) Tradition tells us that Philip died a martyr at Heirapolis."

There is no Scriptural reference to Philip after Pentecost, which leads to doubt that any great success attended his preaching. It would seem that he was more concerned with the practical objections to spiritual projects than the others. It was Philip who counted up the cost of the bread that would have been needed to feed the five thousand. Like many in all ages, he failed to take into account the power of the Lord.

The tradition that Philip was the man who wanted first to go and bury his father is not authentic, but it seems to fit his type of thinking. (Matthew 8:21)

It is known, however, that he was one of the Twelve, in fact the fifth in that sacred list, that he was a citizen of Bethsaida, the hometown of Peter and Andrew and James and John, and that he was faithful to the Lord.

Verse 44

The first five of the Twelve came from Bethsaida, which means "place of fish," the same being one of the ten cities, "Decapolis," situated on Lake Galilee, and not far from Capernaum.

Verse 45

All that Philip here said of Jesus is true:

- (1) that Moses and the prophets wrote of Him,
- (2) that He was of Nazareth, and
- (3) that He was the son of Joseph, although the latter was true legally, not actually.

CONCERNING NATHANIEL

Nathaniel, meaning the gift of God is thought to be another name for Bartholomew, one of the Twelve. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 20, wrote, "John never mentions Bartholomew; the synoptics never mention Nathaniel; and thus it is altogether probable that the Nathaniel of John is the Bartholomew of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Nathaniel being his chief name and Bartholomew indicating his filial relationship, meaning son of Tolmai."

All Jewish names beginning with "Bar" are a name derived from the father or an ancestor, indicating parentage, such names including: Bartimaeous, Barabbas, Barjesus, Barnabas, and Bar-Jonah, the latter being the surname given Peter by Christ Himself. (Matthew 16:16)

J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 88, observed, "The objection that Nathaniel's name is never mentioned in Matthew, Mark, or Luke, is of no weight. Not one of the three tells us that Peter was called Cephas; and only Matthew gives Jude (the brother of James) the name of Lebbaeus.

If Nathaniel was not indeed an apostle, the same man as Bartholomew, how can it be explained that Christ appeared after His resurrection to a group of seven, and, of the five named all were apostles except Nathaniel? That such a list of named apostles included one who was not an apostle is extremely unlikely. (John 21:2)

Nathaniel was "of Cana in Galilee" (2:12); but this does not mean that he was the bridegroom at Cana when Jesus changed the water into wine, as tradition says, nor that he was one of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Edgar J.

Goodspeed, *op. cit.*, p. 42, said of the sixth apostle, “Doubtless there was much to be said of him and his labors, but it had not struck the imagination or engaged the interest (of the gospel writers). Yet it was precisely the quiet, patient work of such obscure figures that mainly won the gospel battle in the world of the first century.”

Jesus called Nathaniel an “Israelite indeed,” meaning that he was of the “seed of Abraham,” that is, the spiritual seed, and not merely of fleshly descent.

Verse 46

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 777, said that, “Nazareth was an obscure place and not even mentioned in the Old Testament,” but it does not follow that Nazareth was extraordinarily wicked. Nathaniel’s question does not mean that Nazareth was any more sinful than other similar places; but it indicates that Nazareth simply did not fit the preconceived notions that men had about where to look for the Messiah. The popular proverb regarding Nazareth, as many popular proverbs are, was quite inaccurate and unfair.

Many of the most distinguished places mentioned in the New Testament were unknown in the Old Testament that apparently Christ avoided places like Hebron, Bethel, Shiloh, and even Jerusalem in the sense that He never spent a night there, except as a prisoner, retiring each night to Bethany.

Horatius Bonar, *Family Sermons*, p. 49, said, “In choosing these unknown places for His Son, God showed that it was not former privilege, nor ancient sanctity, nor a venerable name that could avail anything with Him, or attract His favor. Christ was sent to new places, where so far as we know, the foot of patriarch, judge, prophet, or king had never been; showing that no city was so favored as to exclude others, and that all cities, as well as all souls, had a share in His Divine regards.”

“Come and see . . .” Nothing dispels prejudice and clears away misunderstanding like personal investigation; and, of all the challenges ever addressed to

prejudiced or skeptical men, none was ever any more effective than this, “Come and see!”

It is true now, as always, that the only unbelievers are those who have not made a fair and personal search of the evidence.

Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. V, p. 520, commented on this verse saying, “He who candidly examines the evidence of the religion of Christ will infallibly become a believer. No history ever published among men has so many external and internal proofs of authenticity as this has. A man should judge of nothing by first appearances, or human prejudices. Who are they who cry out, 'The Bible is a fable.' Those who have never read it, or read it only with the fixed purpose to gainsay it.”

Verse 47

“An Israelite indeed . . .” William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 110, wrote, “In the light of the context . . . Jesus is here thinking of Jacob . . . The employment of trickery for selfish advantage characterized not only Jacob , but also his descendants. (Genesis 40:37-43) A really honest, sincere Israelite had become such an exception that at the approach of Nathaniel Jesus exclaimed, “Look, truly an Israelite in whom deceit does not exist.”

Verse 48

Many a person would merely have accepted the compliment and kept his thoughts to himself, but Nathaniel expressed his amazement and asked the source of Jesus’ knowledge. Christ’s answer convinced him that the Savior’s knowledge was not casual or superficial, but that it was absolute and perfect. There are no secrets from God. (Hebrews 4:13)

Verse 49

This confession hailed Jesus as the Divine Son of God, which being true, also entitled Him as the King of Israel. Satan immediately launched a counterattack; the Pharisees propounded plausible arguments why Jesus could not be the

Messiah; and Jesus Himself proved not to be the political figure most were expecting; in consequence of all this, the road to true belief grew very difficult as the years of the Master's ministry unfolded.

Verse 50

The confession, true as it was, reflected the shallowness of the popular opinion regarding Jesus.

What are those greater things Jesus promised that Nathaniel would see?

1. He had seen an example of Jesus' penetrating supernatural knowledge; but, in the future, he would see the knowledge employed in the achievement of human redemption, a far greater thing.
2. He had seen the truth that Jesus is the Son of God; but in the future, he would see Christ also as the Son of man and the achiever of reconciliation between God and all humanity.
3. He had seen Jesus as King of Israel; but in the future, he would come to know that Christ is not merely King of Israel, but King of all creation, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. (1 Timothy 6:15)

Verse 51

J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 91, noted that the expression "Verily, verily" is peculiar to this gospel, having been used in it 25 times, always by Jesus, and having the equivalent meaning of "Amen, amen." It always implied a solemn and emphatic statement of some great truth. No other New Testament writer ever used this solemn double "Amen."

But what is the great truth enunciated here? The words certainly point to the vision of Jacob who saw the Ladder from earth to heaven with angelic traffic in both directions; and, if a spiritual meaning is sought, which seems mandatory, Jesus here identified Himself as the Ladder bridging the gulf between God and man.

In Nathaniel's confession, the prominence of "King of Israel" pointed to the secular and political views usually held regarding the promised Messiah, and in this verse Jesus emphasized the great spiritual objectives of His earthly visitation.

The emphasis upon "Son of Man" was probably due to Jesus' purpose of reserving emphasis on the latter until the time of Peter's confession. (Matthew 16:13f)

The meaning of both titles carries the implication of Christ's deity; but "Son of God," in their popular mind, was too closely associated with "King of Israel," in the exact manner of Nathaniel's confession; and it was not time for Jesus to challenge the Pharisees by using "Son of God."

A little further attention to the title Son of man is in order.

SON OF MAN

The title "Son of man" was used at least forty times by Jesus, twelve times in this gospel; and, it is found only in our Lord's reference to Himself. There are two questions of the deepest significance that arise from Jesus' use of this title:

1. did He use it in such a manner as to diminish His claim of absolute Divinity?
2. Why did He favor this title as distinguished from "Son of God,," which was more popularly associated generally with the coming Messiah?

The answer to the first question is an emphatic negative. Jesus meant by the title "Son of man" to affirm His deity and godhead just as dogmatically as the title "Son of God" could have done it, but with additional advantage of stressing His unique relationship to the human race as well.

Why did Jesus prefer this title? Son of God was a title that carried with it, in the popular mind, the meaning King of Israel, a fact proved by Nathaniel's usage of the two together just a moment before; and it would have been disastrous for

the Lord to have allowed the multitudes to crown Him king, a thing many of them were eager to do.

That Jesus did positively intend that “Son of man” should be understood in a unique and supernatural sense is proved by His use of the title as follows. He used the title:

1. In connection with His power to forgive sins. (Matthew 9:6)
2. Of His lordship over the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:8)
3. Of His second advent in glory. (Matthew 19:28)
4. Of His resurrection. (Matthew 17:23)
5. Of His seeking and saving that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)
6. And of His coming in the final judgment. (Matthew 26:64)

The frustrated hatred and enmity of the Pharisees at His trial before Caiaphas reached a point of frenzy over this very title. The Pharisees knew perfectly that “Son of man” was fully as adequate a title of the Messiah as was “Son of God.” They were trying to trick Jesus into using the latter title, because of its popular but mistaken identification with an earthly kingship of Israel. From these and many other considerations, therefore, it must be concluded that the answer to the second question raised at the first of that title’s being free of any possible misrepresenting. The very learned, such as the Pharisees, well knew it as a valid and proper designation of the Divine Messiah; but it is clear the multitudes did not so recognize it. (12:34)

Before leaving this chapter, J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 89, quoted the observation of Aretius saying, “This chapter is singularly rich in names or epithets applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. He listed the following twenty-one names: The Word, God, Life, Light, The True light, The Only Begotten of the Father, Full of grace and truth, Jesus Christ, The only Begotten Son, The Lord, the Lamb of God,

Jesus, A Man, The Son of God, Rabbi, Teacher, Messiah, Christ, The Son of Joseph, The King of Israel, and The Son of Man.”

CHAPTER 2

Beginning here and continuing through chapter 12, seven great signs pointing to the deity of Christ are presented. The word, "sign" used seventeen times in this gospel, is the term John used for "miracles." The seven signs are:

1. Changing water into wine. (Chapter 2)
2. Healing the officer's son. (Chapter 4)
3. Healing the cripple. (Chapter 5)
4. Feeding the 5,000. (Chapter 6)
5. Walking on the sea. (Chapter 6)
6. Healing the man born blind, (Chapter 9) and
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead. (Chapter 11)

These signs are not mere dramatic illustrations, but are facts.

FIRST OF THE SEVEN SIGNS

Verse 1

Cana is distinguished from another village of the same name in the tribe of Ephraim. (Joshua 16:9) In this city, Cana of Galilee, located eight or ten miles northeast of Nazareth, Mary the mother of Jesus, was one of the guests at the wedding.

“The third day . . .” is the third day after Nathaniel became a follower of Jesus, and, in this implied connection with Nathaniel, there is the probable

explanation of how Jesus and His disciples came to be invited. Nathaniel was a native of Cana. (21:2)

The small size of the village makes it quite easy to suppose that he was certainly acquainted with the bridegroom, or even a relative.

Verse 2

The possible source of the invitation cannot be known. It is enough to know that Jesus and His disciples were invited and that they attended.

Christ came not as an ascetic, fasting and withdrawing from public contact, but as a person of loving social grace who adorned and blessed any company by His presence.

Verse 3

All Jewish weddings were celebrated with wine for the guests, and such a failure as is recorded here would have been an occasion of sharp embarrassment to the host. Jesus' mother knew that He had the power to alleviate the shortage and evidently hoped by this remark to enlist His aid in overcoming it.

Verse 4

“Woman . . .” This word addressed to His mother seems a little harsh in English. Alan Richardson, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 60, said, “It was not in the original. ‘Madam’ comes nearest, but is too cold and distant.”

Nevertheless, a mild and respectful reproof of His mother cannot be separated from this. The Savior's work of world-wide redemption was beginning; and the magnificent dimensions of such a work were not to be prescribed and directed by His earthly mother. Jesus' words here leave no doubt that Mary's suggestion was premature and unnecessary; and yet Jesus' rejection of her words did not violate any of the veneration and respect the beloved Mary was entitled to receive.

Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Gospel of John*, p. 47, noted, “She was not without error and sin, and was not meant to be prayed to and adored. If our Lord would not allow His mother even to suggest to Him the working of a miracle, we may well suppose that all prayers to the Virgin Mary, and especially prayers entreating her to “command her Son” are most offensive and blasphemous in His eyes.”

“My hour has not yet come . . .” has been variously understood as meaning, “They are not yet completely out of wine,” or, “It is not time for me to step in yet,” or, “It is not yet time for Me go show My glory.” Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, Vol. Luke and John, p. 192, said, In my opinion it means, the proper time for His imposing there had not yet arrived, and it was an improper time for him to work a miracle.”

Of course, “My hour” was also used to mean the hour of the Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection.

Verse 5

This verse also shows several things:

1. Mary did not understand Jesus’ words either as a rebuke or as a refusal to meet the need pointed out by her.
2. She evidently anticipated that Jesus’ command might appear unreasonable to the servants.
3. Under normal circumstances, servants might hesitate to carry out the orders of a guest.

Thus her remarks to the servants were needed and timely. That she was in a position to instruct servants suggests a close personal connection with the family of the bridegroom, and indicating also that Mary, not Nathaniel, might have been the source of the invitation to Jesus and His disciples.

“Whatever He says to you, do it.” Mary thus assumed her proper place, no longer making suggestions to the Lord, but leaving everything in His hands.

Whatever Christ commands should be obediently accepted and done. The evidence of the blessed Mary to the servants of Cana is appropriate for every generation; and even churches should spare themselves the burden of deciding whether the Lord’s commandments are essential or not—and do them all.

Verse 6

Here is the vivid description of an eyewitness who, after so many years, could still see the six stone water pots sitting there, precisely in a certain place, nor is the indefinite capacity of the water pots (twenty or thirty gallons—two or three firkins) a contradiction of this. (Each *‘firkin’* was about seven or eight gallons.)

These water pots were hand made of stone; and there is hardly any possibility that they were of a precise capacity in each case.

“Jewish custom of purification . . .” “Purification” is a reference to the extensive washings of hands, cups, pots, and brazen vessels.

Verse 7

The servants obeyed the Lord, and without hesitation filled the stone water pots up to the brim. The fact that the servants filled the water pots to the brim left no room for adding anything else to the water.

Verse 8

Regarding the question of what kind of wine this was, all kinds of irresponsible speculations abound. Even Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 193, gave elaborate arguments to prove that the wine here created by the Lord was nothing more than the pure juice of grapes with no alcohol content whatever, but he admits, “The wine referred to here was doubtless such as was commonly drunk by those in Palestine.”

To say that the wine Jesus made was supercharged with alcohol like some of the burning liquors that are marketed today under the wine label, we emphatically deny, but to go further than this and read wine as grape juice seems to be a perversion of the word of God.

Verse 9

"The headwaiter (the ruler) tasted the water . . ." The headwaiter was the person in charge of the festivities, presumably a close friend of the bridegroom honored with the responsibility of organizing and conducting the marriage celebration. Among his duties was that of tasting the wine before it was served to the guests. This accounts for the fact that the ruler of the feast was the first to taste the wine created by the Lord.

Verse 10

Good wine first . . . then the poorer." In these words, the ruler of the feast unconsciously recorded the sordid economy of this world which first entices with that which is beautiful and desirable, and then punishes and frustrates with that which is worse.

G. H. Morrison, *The Wings of the Morning*, p. 1, said, "Why, think you, did this saying so impress John that it lingered ineffaceably in his memory? Was it merely because of the pleasure it evoked to hear his Master's handiwork so praised? I think there was a deeper reason. John was by nature an idealist, loving to find the abstract in the concrete; and, in the particular instance of that moment, he was quick to see the universal law."

AFTERWARD THAT WHICH IS WORSE

1. In the history of Adam's race, first came Paradise and the Garden of Eden; then came the temptation and fall, the cure, the expulsion, and the flaming sword that pointed in every direction.
2. In the progression of physical life on earth, first there are the joys of childhood, the excitement and pleasure of youth; and afterwards there

are the labor and strife, weakness, senility, and death. This physical progression to that which is worse, is among the saddest and most pitiful qualities of mortal life.

3. In the enticement to sin, the death's head is always hidden behind the smiling mask of beauty and delight. The smile of the adulteress ends in blood upon the threshold, and the sparkling cup conceals the poisonous asp at the bottom of it.
4. In life's arrangements without consideration of God, the progression is ever downward and toward that which is worse. Marriages where God is not a partner move unerringly in the direction of futility and sorrow.

Prodigals move invariably in their thoughtless and licentious freedom, not to honor but to the swine pen. Many an arrangement of business employment or pleasure is began with high hopes and expectations; but if God is not in the arrangement, it moves inexorably to lower and lower levels to become finally a state of shame.

5. In the longer progression of unconsecrated life, as it regards time and eternity, the same wretched deterioration occurs. However glorious or desirable the state of the wicked in this present life may appear to be, it is only for a little while, followed by the terrors of a hopeless grave and the punishments of hell. Some people refuse to believe in any such thing as hell; but intelligent reasoning, as well as Divine revelation, supports the conviction that awful retribution is stored up for the wicked after death.

G. H. Morrison, *op. cit.*, wrote, "I believe in law; I believe in immortality; I believe in the momentum of life. And if momentum of a life be downward, and be unchecked by the strong arm of God, how can we hope that it will be rested by the frail and yielding barrier of the grave? If sin conceals the worse that is behind tomorrow, may it not also seal the worse that lies behind the grave?"

6. In the progression of the material universe, all material things being inferior to the great spiritual realities, there is the same downward course. The sun itself will finally become a burnt-out star and our earth but a dead speck of dust in space.

As Moody Lee Coffman, *The Origin of the Inanimate*, p. 75, stated, “The universe must be reckoned as becoming more disordered with time. All other known physical laws may be extrapolated backward in time as well as forward, but the second law of thermodynamics insists that entropy monotonically increases. Time cannot be reversed in direction to change this fact. No violation has ever been observed.

All the experience of mankind leads us to believe the universe must work its way to a uniform heat sink with no potential for doing useful work. It is the second law of thermodynamics.”

This profound observation is but the scientific way of saying, “afterwards, that which is worse.” (2 Peter 3:10-12)

7. In the corruption and defilement of man’s moral nature, through the ravages of sin, it is always “afterward that which is worse.” Sin always begins with so-called minor departures from the Word of God; but the descent of the soul towards rejection of God and debauchery is constant and accelerated in its moving away from God. The miserable history of Sodom and Gomorrah has been endlessly repeated by all of the nations that have turned away from God. (2 Timothy 3:13)

“Worse and worse” is the law of all sin and turning away from God.

From the above considerations, it is clear enough that the ancient master of ceremonies at Cana uttered a truth far more comprehensive than the primary application of it.

“You have kept the good wine until now . . .” The contrast between the way God does things and the performance of men apart from God is dramatically

stated. With sinful men, "It is ever, afterwards that which is worse;" but with God in Christ it is ever "the best wine last!"

THE BEST WINE LAST

1. In God's great act of creation, the best wine came last. First, the earth was without form and void, and darkness moved upon the face of the deep. Afterwards came light, vegetation, lower forms of animal life, and finally man created in the image of God!
2. In the dispensations of God's grace, the same progressive betterment is observed. The Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian dispensations of God's mercy appeared in ascending order of benefit and glory.
3. In Scriptural revelation, the same progression of that which is better appears. (Hebrews 1:2)
4. In the earthly life of our Lord, the wonder of Bethlehem and the angelic announcement of a Savior born culminated in the far more wonderful event of Jesus' death and resurrection of the salvation of mankind. The best wine came last.
5. The progression of the Christian life follows the same pattern. The enthusiasm and joy of the novice convert to Christ resolves into a far more wonderful experience of the mature Christian. G. H. Morrison, *op. cit.*, p. 11, wrote, "The difference in Christ and the devil is just this, that the devil's tomorrow is worse than his today; but the tomorrow of Christ, for every man who trusts Him, is always brighter and better than his yesterday. Every act of obedience on our part gives us a new vision of His love."

The hymn "Brighter the Way Grows Every Day;" and all who have ever followed the Lord have found it so.

6. In time and eternity, we may be certain that God has kept the best till last. Joyful and fulfilling as the Christ life assuredly is, the full glory of it

will not be realized till “that day” when the Lord shall provide the crown of life to all those that have loved His appearing.

No description of heaven is possible. Language itself, as a means of communication (thought), breaks down under the weight of superlative metaphors employed by the inspired writers who received from God, visions of the Eternal City.

The throne of God is there, the river of life, the tree of life, the gates of pearl, the streets of gold, the protective wall, and the Savior’s own face as the light. Who can fully understand such things as these? But one thing we may be certain; when the trials, sorrows, tribulations, heartaches, and sufferings of our earthly pilgrimage have ended, and when we awaken to behold the Savior’s face in the eternal world, we shall cry adoringly, “Lord, thou has reserved the best till now.”

Verse 11

Jesus’ action in changing the water into wine is here dominated the first of His mighty miracles, a positive manifestation of the Lord’s glory, and the event which issued in the faith of His disciples.

Compared with the first great miracle wrought by Moses, in which water was changed into blood, this sign resembles that one, as should have been expected of type and antitype; but it also contrasts dramatically.

Moses’ sign impoverished; this one enriched. This was a source of joy; that one a source of revulsion and disgust. That changed water into something worse; this changed water into something better.

The superiority of Christ over Moses, so starkly visible here, was to appear in all the miracles that followed. Moses’ miracle was a curse; this a blessing.

CHRIST AND MARRIAGE

Any full appreciation of this wonder must take account of the occasion upon which it was enacted, namely, at a wedding feast. By such a choice of platform from which to launch His world-saving ministry, Christ conferred upon marriage His approval, encouragement, and blessing.

Far from having been a capricious or accidental beginning of His ministry, this sign at Cana was part of the Master Plan of the Savior's earthly sojourn.

How appropriate it is that He who was to become the great Bridegroom of the Church in heaven and upon earth should have begun His ministry with such a wonder as this and upon such an occasion as the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

"And manifested His glory . . ." Brooks Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 39, said, "The manifestation of His glory in this "sign" must not be sought simply in what we call its miraculous element, but in this connection with the circumstances, as a revelation of the insight, sympathy, and sovereignty of the Son of Man, who was the Word Incarnate."

The enrichment that came of Christ's presence at that ancient wedding was a literal endowment of the new family unit with an exceedingly valuable and ample supply of the choicest wine, removing the new couple at one stroke from a status of poverty and embarrassment to a position of abundance and plenty. The literal enrichment of that bride and groom symbolizes the enrichment that always follows the welcoming of Christ into the homes and hearts of men.

Verse 12

"Capernaum . . ." was a principal city on Lake Galilee and a scene of many of our Lord's most notable deeds. Notice what Jesus said of this city in Matthew 11:23.

This curse upon Capernaum has been literally fulfilled, the very site of the place hardly being known today. The fact that the mighty deeds and preaching

of Christ Himself were ineffective there leads to some reflections on the subject of evangelism.

EVANGELISM

Many evangelists, especially young ones, seem to believe that given the proper methods, reinforced with zealous and attractive personnel, just about any city or province may be taken for the Lord.

Such determination and zeal are commendable so long as it is remembered that, in the last analysis, each community, and every man, has the final word on whether or not it or he will serve the Lord, and that no method, personality, system, or anything else can win the whole world for Jesus Christ, bind it in golden chains, and lay it at the Redeemer's feet, the insurmountable obstacle being what it has ever been, that is, the stubborn will of sinful and unregenerate men.

Jesus was an effective and powerful evangelist, being Himself none other than the glorious head of our holy religion. Moreover, His helpers had the rank of apostles, being capable, industrious, diligent, and intelligent persons; and they knew the territory, five of them having been brought up in the suburbs of Capernaum.

Yes, and Jesus got the community's attention. He raised Jarius' daughter from the dead, and Jarius was the ruler of the synagogue. (Mark 5:22) He healed the centurion's servant, and the centurion commanded the Roman military presence in the city and was doubtless the richest man in the whole area, having built the Jews a synagogue. (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-5) Also the Lord cured the son of the king's personal representative in that town, called "a certain nobleman." (4:46ff) If such deeds did not get the attention of Capernaum, nothing could have done it.

Add to all this the impassioned preaching of the Son of God, and one is forced to the conclusion that there is no way that Capernaum could have been won for the Lord. The intangible factor in evangelism is the people themselves, every

individual one of them, each having the power to oppose the heavenly will if he so decides.

ILLUSTRATION: A large dog food company had a convention in a great city for hundreds of their salesmen; and, with the great auditorium overflowing with salesmen, the president of the company made his presentation.

“Look at this,” he said. “This beautiful golden can with the red label holds thirteen ounces of pure protein; it will make your dog’s coat silky, his teeth white, and his disposition adorable. It has all the vitamins and minerals needed and costs only 39 cents a can; why can’t you go out and sell a billion cans of it?” Pausing dramatically to let the import of his tremendous message sink in, he was dumbfounded and the convention propelled into a near riot, when, from way up in the balcony, somebody shouted, “The dogs don’t like it!”

That is the way it is with the gospel of Christ. As long as men prefer to commit fornication and drink liquor rather than serve the Lord, many a loving message of faith and salvation shall fail its intended fruit.

“His mother and His brothers . . .” This is the first mention of Jesus brothers in John; and it is clear from 7:5 that they did not yet believe in Him. Regarding the question of whether or not these were sons borne of the mother of Jesus. (See Matthew 12:46) There is no good reason for understanding “brothers” in this passage in any unusual manner.

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Verse 13

“The Passover of the Jews . . .” Writing near the end of the first century, John no longer referred to the Passover as a feast of God, but of the Jews. Whatever ordinances or observances, even though originally commanded by God, become in a peculiar sense ordinances of men. Jesus’ saying of the temple, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38), is in the same vein of thought.

The cleansing of the temple about to be related should not be confused with the second cleansing during the final week of our Lord’s life on earth. In this cleansing, Jesus made use of a scourge, but none was mentioned in the synoptic accounts of the second cleansing.

John's relation of this dramatic cleansing gives the explanation of the implacable hatred of the Pharisees and other keepers of the temple concessions, the hatred being evident enough in the synoptics, but this practical reason for it at so early a date appearing only in John.

Verse 14

These animals and birds were required offerings in the Jewish sacrifices, but the worshipers were required to purchase them from the temple functionaries and were not allowed to bring their own; and even in circumstances where the worshiper might have been permitted to bring his own offering, the element of convenience naturally turned all to the supply provided by the temple. The only money that could be used in such purchases was the coinage or currency controlled by the temple. The denarius and other coins were prohibited, for example, as bearing Caesar's image.

Thus with the temple concessionaires having the only supply of animals and the only supply of money by which they could have been purchased, the suffering people were gouged unmercifully.

No wonder Jesus denounced that crowd of cheaters as "thieves and robbers." It was particularly an act of aggravation that the money changers had actually moved into the sacred area of the temple itself.

Modern Christians have little reason to be critical of the commercialization of the ancient temple. Arno Gaebelin, *op. cit.*, p. 51, said, "So called churches have become houses of merchandise, places of amusement, theatricals, moving pictures, dancing for young people, etc. Evangelistic campaigns led by evangelists who are incorporated, aiming at big collections to which saints and sinners, Jews and Gentiles are urged to give . . . schemes to raise big sums of money—all these are greater evils than selling sheep and oxen in the temple court of Israel."

Christian houses of worship correspond in no way to the ancient temple of the Jews, being in no sense "the Lord's house," except in the most accommodative sense; and yet it is still true that in places set apart for prayer and the ministry of the word of God, reverence and spirituality should prevail within them.

Verse 15

It is said that Jesus never used force, but this verse proves otherwise.

It is a moot question whether or not Jesus actually used a whip on any of the money changers, the usual interpretation being that He did not, but the very existence of such a weapon in the strong hand of the vigorous young carpenter from Nazareth was a threat of force sufficient to deter any of the money changers from contesting it.

The whip was necessary in driving out the animals; but, with regard to money changers, the moral indignation of the Holy One crying out against the callous commercialization of the very house of God was far more effective than any physical threat could have been. Needless to say, such action by Jesus was required by the undying hatred of the godless Sadducees who were the principal operators of the temple concessions. Their financial interests had been jeopardized; and one may be sure that from this day forward murderous schemes were devised for getting rid of Jesus.

William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, p. 123, further comments on the meaning of "all" in this verse. "The AV and RSV favor the idea that Jesus actually drove out all the wicked traffickers together with the sheep and oxen. In the second cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21:12), it is definitely stated that the cattle dealers were themselves driven out. If that happened then, we may take for granted that it took place now."

Verse 16

The doves, in cages, could not be driven out, hence the Lord's command that they be carried out.

"House of merchandise . . ." Among the differences in this cleansing and the second, is this order of the Lord for them to cease and desist from such practices. At the second cleansing, it was too late to command them to cease, and they were at that time denounced as "thieves and robbers." Their day of grace had passed.

"My Father' house . . ." "My" indicates the unique son-ship of Jesus, and focuses on the Messianic import of this event of cleansing. As A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 38, noted, "The cleansing is far more than a Jewish reformer's act; it is a sign of the advent of the Messiah."

In Malachi 3:1f, it is written: “The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple . . . but who can endure the day of His coming? . . . and He shall purify the sons of Levi.” Also, in Zechariah 14:1, we have, “And there will no longer be a Canaanite (or merchant) in the house of the Lord of hosts in that day.”

Thus, very early in His ministry, Jesus laid claim by these bold deeds to His rightful position as the long-awaited Messiah of Israel and head of the Theocracy.

Verse 17

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 34, wrote, “The disciples witnessing this manifestation of the zeal of their Lord for the house of His Father, are filled with fear that Jesus may suffer what David had to endure in his day, namely, that his zeal in some way would result in His being consumed.”

It was precisely this manifestation of the Savior’s zeal that set in motion against Him the murderous animosity of the religious apparatus in Jerusalem, which never relented till a cross arose upon Golgotha.

Jesus never lost sight of the Messianic implications of the temple cleanings; and in the second instance of it, He reminded the selfish concessionaires that the house of God’s holy religion had never been intended as their private privilege and personal domain, but that “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations,” indicating that “all nations” including the Gentiles, were intended to be benefited through the coming Messiah. Thus the sin of the money changers was not merely against Israel, but against all mankind also.

The strong Messianic implication of this bold deed was not altogether lost on the priests, for they demanded a sign that would confirm Jesus’ implied claim of Messiahship. The cleansing itself was an excellent sign, but one they rejected

Verses 18-19

What Jesus meant by these two verses is plainly given in verse 21, “He was speaking of the temple of His body,” but such a simple answer is rejected by some.

A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 34, declared, “Destroy is a prophetic command meaning, “Go on as you are doing and you will bring this temple down in ruins (at the hands of Rome); but in a brief time (three days) I will raise up another

center of worship.” Jesus is predicting that through His work there will arise a new spiritual building in which the New Israel, the Church, will worship God!” In Jesus’ true words, the same temple envisaged as destroyed is exactly the same one Jesus promised to raise up in three days; and added to that the obvious fact is the emphatic statement of the inspired evangelist himself that Jesus “spoke of the temple of His body!”

This verse shows that Jesus fully knew the consequences of casting out the money changers; and by this prophecy, He clearly foretold that they would indeed put Him to death and that He would rise from the dead on the third day.

The only sign the Pharisees were promised was the Lord’s own death, burial, and resurrection; but here He used the analogy of the destroyed temple raised again in three days, while there the “sign of the prophet Jonah” had exactly the same meaning.

Verses 20-21

At this point, it is possible to check the historicity of John’s gospel; and it is no surprise to find it exactly accurate. Herod the Great began building the temple in 20-19 B.C. Adding 46 years to that date brings the time of this first cleansing to 27-28 A. D. and adds strong evidence for the early date of this cleansing. The Jews construed Jesus’ words in the most literal fashion possible, they considered His claim ridiculous.

Verse 22

“And they believed the Scripture . . .” The Scripture in view here is verse 19, where Jesus had spoken of raising up the destroyed temple.

Verse 23

John means by this that a great many other signs had been given by Jesus at this first Passover, giving the key to the selectivity of his narrative. From the vast number of Jesus’ signs, only seven were selected for this gospel by its inspired author.

A multitude would have gathered quickly around such a defender of righteousness as Jesus showed Himself in that episode. The view here is that the mention of signs (plural) has reference to many of Jesus' mighty deeds that were omitted from this gospel and all the gospels.

The cleansing of the temple, though not miraculous, and thus not reckoned among John's seven signs, nevertheless was a dramatic and startling announcement of Jesus as the Messiah who had suddenly come to His temple.

Verse 24

The sudden wave of popularity had not deceived Jesus who well knew the fickle and unreliable nature of public opinion.

Verse 25

Our Lord looked right through those people in Jerusalem who, in the presence of His astounding miracles, readily conceded that He was the Messiah, but who discerned none of the moral implications of such a fact.

The first thought was: "Well, good! Let us see if He can throw the Romans out!"

Some of Jesus' disciples were a little disappointed that Jesus did not at once place Himself at the head of that great throng of "believers" who had been so easily convinced by His miracles.

Only in the true retrospective reflection of the apostle so long afterwards would the true reason for the Lord's refusal become clear. Something more than belief has always been a prerequisite for becoming a true follower of the Lord; and that throng of "believers only" had nothing of that "something more" always required.

That fatal lack was the thing Jesus discerned. These were doubtless some of the same people who shouted, "Crucify Him!" when the Lord stood before Pilate.

One additional thing, over and beyond faith only, required of all who would enter the kingdom of God is the new birth; and appropriately, John next recorded Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus.

CHAPTER 3

The proper understanding of this chapter begins with the final verses of chapter 2, where it was revealed that a great number of people "believed on" the Lord Jesus Christ, but whose discipleship was rejected by the Lord because they had "faith only."

Commentators who have vainly tried to find something wrong with the faith of those people are frustrated by the fact that "believed on" in chapter 2:23 means exactly what it means everywhere else in the New Testament.

The failure of those "believers on His name" to be accepted by Jesus was due to the fact that in all the history of redemption nobody was ever accepted upon the basis of faith alone. One of the things, in this dispensation of mercy, that one must have in addition to faith is the experience of the new birth.

That was precisely the lack of those believers at the end of chapter 2; and, appropriately, John next recorded the Savior's instruction regarding the new birth. This interview with Nicodemus with its teaching on the new birth (3:1-21) and the final witness of John the Baptist (3:22-36) form the subject matter of this whole chapter.

Verses 1-2

"Nicodemus . . ." means innocent blood, or victor over the people, depending upon whether the name is Greek or Hebrew. He was a wealthy Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin, teacher of theology, and known as a "ruler of the Jews," a title reserved in Rabbinic literature "for a great man, or a prince." (Brooks Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, p. 248)

The connection here with events of the preceding chapter is dramatic, Nicodemus clearly being one of those “believers” who did not obey the Lord. The omniscience of Jesus is evident in His answering the question of Nicodemus without His utterance of the question. Nicodemus is mentioned three times in this gospel:

- (1) he came to Christ (3:2);
- (2) he spoke for Christ (7:45-52); and
- (3) he honored Christ (19:39-40); and in each instance the circumstance of his coming to Jesus by night is mentioned.

“This man came to Him by night . . .” Some have supposed that the night interview resulted from Nicodemus’ fear of his peers in the Sanhedrin, but the idea of secrecy must be imported from the text. It is just as reasonable to suppose that the night afforded the best opportunity.

Although Nicodemus spoke up on behalf of Jesus before the Sanhedrin (7:45-52), it is not recorded that he did so when the body condemned Jesus to death, hence the inference that he was not present at that trial.

After Jesus’ death, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, prepared the body for burial. (19:39-40)

“Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher . . .” These words admit that the whole Sanhedrin knew of the heavenly origin of Jesus and of the validity of His astounding miracles.

“For no one can do these signs . . .” How amazing it is that with such evidence before them, so few, probably only this man and Joseph of Arimathea, were touched in their hearts sufficiently to lead them to Jesus.

Verse 3

“Born again . . .” The new birth is another, a second birth; and, although in a sense a second birth is from above, also in another sense is the first birth, or natural birth. (See verse 5, where Jesus more fully describes “born again.”)

Here the emphasis is upon the absolute necessity of the new birth. It is not merely true that one cannot enter God’s kingdom without the new birth; he cannot even see it!

The requirement here stated by Jesus was actually a demand that Nicodemus forsake all reliance upon the Law of Moses, and upon the elaborate ritual and traditionalism of the Pharisees, and enter upon a totally new way of life. It was a shocking requirement. Nicodemus, at that point in time, was not able to accept it.

Concerning the abrupt manner of Jesus’ speaking to Nicodemus, Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 95, said, “The answer seems abrupt, but it is unnecessary to suppose the omission of any connecting thought. For Jesus, being recognized as a teacher from God, and reading for Himself at a glance the character of Nicodemus, as well as the question in his heart, that is: “What must a man do in order to enter Messiah’s kingdom?” (Meyer) . . . declares at once that a new birth— new life—is indispensable to any real knowledge of the kingdom of God. “No one,” he says, “whether Jew or Gentile, can grow up and glide over from the nature to grace; everyone must begin his life altogether anew, in order to share in My kingdom.”

“The kingdom of God . . .” It is a mistake to minimize the teaching of this gospel regarding the kingdom of God. True, John was more concerned with the credentials of the King, the burden of the gospel being to prove the deity and godhead of Jesus Christ; but the kingdom was never far from His thoughts.

In this great passage, the terms of entering the kingdom is emphatically stated; and before Pontius Pilate Jesus made pointed reference to “My kingdom.”

(18:36-37) Jesus' great purpose of establishing His kingdom is there stated to have been His total reason for coming into the world.

Verse 4

Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel, appeared here in a very obtuse and unspiritual frame of mind, in that he ridiculed the Lord's requirement of a new birth. It was not so much the impossibility of a new birth that Nicodemus rejected, as it was the idea that such a thing was necessary.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, one of a class that had rejected out of hand the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins preached by John the Baptist. (Luke 7:30)

It should be remembered that John's baptism was from God, and that all who rejected it rejected God. This fact underlies the truth that the publicans and harlots entered God's kingdom before the Pharisees. They accepted John's baptism; the Pharisees did not.

Christ and His apostles accepted the baptism of John and submitted to it; and that baptism was intended as preparatory for the kingdom of heaven; and, therefore, it is impossible to suppose that Nicodemus should have been excused for not knowing what Jesus meant by being "born of water."

Alvah Hovey, *Ibid.*, p. 96, said, "The metaphor of the new birth appears to have been used by the Rabbins to describe the religious change in a Gentile who became a proselyte to Judaism; and the import of baptism as administered by John implied the same view of repentance, namely, that it was a burial of the old life, and entrance upon a new life."

Verse 5

Paraphrasing this verse it says, "Unless one obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ by believing in Him, repenting of sin, confessing His name, and being baptized into Jesus Christ, (no genuine baptism is possible without the three antecedents

mentioned here), and as a consequence of such obedience, receives the Holy Spirit, he can never enter God's kingdom, that is, he cannot be saved."

At the time Jesus revealed this teaching to Nicodemus, the great commission had not been given; and the immediate application of the teaching to Nicodemus regarded John's Baptism which was mandatory; but the glowing words of this passage anticipated the great commission and the baptism therein commanded, thus making the passage applicable to all subsequent ages who would enter God's kingdom.

"Born of water" refers to baptism; and there is absolutely nothing else connected with Christianity to which it could refer. For centuries after this gospel was received, "born of water" was never otherwise construed than as a reference to baptism.

Note: In the study of this passage, it should be remembered that it is only quite recently in Christian times that interpretations of this verse have been devised to exclude its obvious reference to Christian baptism.

The warping and distortion of the views of expositors since the Lutheran reformation, who have sought to confirm this text to Luther's erroneous theory of justification, were denounced by no less a giant of biblical exegesis than Alford, Handbook on Baptism, p. 320, who wrote, "There can be no doubt, on any honest interpretation of the words, that "born of water" refers to the token or outward sign of baptism; "born of the Spirit," to the thing signified, or the inward grace of the Holy Spirit. All attempts to get rid of these two plain facts have sprung from doctrinal prejudices, by which the views of expositors have been warped."

It is regrettable that Alford injected the jargon of "outward sign" and "inward grace" into his comment; because the relative meaning of these two things, "born of water" and "born of the spirit" is not under discussion in this passage.

Both are absolutely necessary to salvation, that being the unqualified affirmation of this text. Thus in order to be saved, one must be baptized (born of water) and receive the Holy Spirit (born of the Spirit).

In view of the facts that John baptized, that Christ Himself was baptized, that His disciples baptized in His name (4:2), it seems impossible to disconnect water in John 3:5, from baptism.

Most of the bitterest denunciations against what Jesus taught here are actually directed against a straw man called baptismal regeneration, in which it is continually affirmed that water cannot save anyone but, of course, no one supposes that it can. No efficacy was ever attributed to the water, even by the staunchest defenders of what Jesus here clearly made a precondition of salvation.

Christ promised in Mark 16:16 that, “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved,” and that promise is as good a commentary on John 3:5 as any other that might be brought forward to explain this disputed passage.

The importance of the questions raised round the sacred words of Jesus in this place requires that further attention be directed to their study.

REGARDING THE NEW BIRTH

The new birth “of water and of the Spirit” is one birth, not two, despite there being two elements in it. One of these elements “born of water,” is water baptism, that being the element of the new birth for which man himself is responsible for the doing of it. (Acts 22:16)

The other element of the new birth, “born of the Spirit,” is the reception of the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Contrasting with what is done by man, this endowing of the Holy Spirit is what is done by God. The great heresy regarding this one birth is the doctrine that men may omit their part, not being baptized, but that God will go ahead,

despite that, and endow the believer with the Holy Spirit anyway! John 3:5 teaches that both elements are absolutely necessary in the new birth.

“Born of water” is a reference to the ceremony of baptism; but there is no magic in water, nor does the ceremony itself contribute anything to sanctification, as often alleged. Millions of faithful Christians can testify that submission to the commandment of baptism did not automatically give them a new nature, the new nature coming through a growth process in consequence of the endowment of the Spirit.

Care should be taken to distinguish between “baptism” as a reference to the immersion ceremony, and “baptism” meaning a new birth of which the ceremony is an element.

But if the actual ceremony does not change the nature of the convert, what does?

1. It is the last of the preconditions of salvation to be fulfilled by the sinner, the others being: believing, repenting, and confessing Christ; and upon compliance with all of them by the sinner, God forgives all previous sin of the sinner and confers upon him a state of absolute innocence.

The fulfilling of the preconditions by the sinner does not merit or earn God’s forgiveness, nor provide any class of works that could place God under any obligation other than His own gracious and merciful promise.

Every true believer who repented and was baptized was then and there forgiven of all past sin and endowed with a status of absolute innocence in God’s sight. This is accomplished not by the ceremony but by God when the ceremony is obeyed, and not otherwise. (Acts 22:16)

2. In the second instance, there is achieved in the penitent a clear conscience upon the event of his submission to the ceremony, as affirmed by the apostle Peter. (1 Peter 3:21) There is no way that any

man on earth can have a clear conscience without submitting to baptism.

That is why even the churches that deny the necessity of baptism have not dispensed with it all together. Their consciences will not allow it, despite the fact that their doctrine, if heeded, would demand it.

3. The ceremony of immersion called baptism is the God-ordained rite of initiation into Jesus Christ; and that status of being the appointed device by which God inducts the penitent into corporate union with the Son of God, that is, into His kingdom, church, or spiritual body—that status uniquely belongs to the baptismal ceremony. Vine, *Ibid*, noted, “Baptizing into the Name (Matthew 28:19) would indicate the property of, the one into whose Name he was baptized.”

Three times the New Testament declares that men are baptized “into Christ,” or into His “body.” (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13)

R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 278, recently assented to the key thesis maintained here, namely, that “baptism is the occasion when the Spirit brings to new life him that believes in the Son of Man!” This is true; and if, through failure to obey the Lord in baptism the occasion never comes, then neither will the new life.

4. Thus it is clear that the baptismal ceremony is retrospective as regards the past sins of the believer, being the pivot in which he is forever separated from them all and endowed with a new status of innocence. Earned! A million times, no! The new status is a gracious gift of God to the unworthy sinner who penitently took God at His word and obeyed the gospel, the baptized believer being added, not by men, but by God, to the kingdom or church of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:47)
5. But that is not all. The new baptized convert, having a clear conscience, and being forgiven of all past sins, and having been added to the Spiritual body of Christ, receives the Holy Spirit, not to make him a

member of Christ (his baptism did that), but because he is a member. (Galatians 4:6) This is the second element in the new birth.

But, is not the latter thing all that matters! In a sense perhaps, it is; but this all important thing is connected with the ceremonial element (baptism) and made a contingent of it, a consequence following Christian baptism. That is why both are required, both are essential and that they are not separate births but one new birth. The apostles honored this requirement of both elements before there can be a new birth. On Pentecost, Peter said, “Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

In this passage, the baptism of penitent believers is made to be a prior condition of receiving the remission of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; and in this also appears why the Holy Spirit is called the “Holy Spirit of promise.” (Ephesians 1:13)

From our discussion most of what is said relates to induction into Christ’s kingdom, the receiving of forgiveness of past sins, the receiving of a clear conscience, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit—all of these things upon the occasion of baptism and contingent upon obedience to that ceremony—and all of which achievements are accomplished by God and not by the ceremony.

What does the ceremony do? It demonstrates and proves that the faith of the believer is of a sufficient degree to save him, it is the sinner's acceptance of Jesus’ promise of Mark 16:16; it is therefore his “accepting Christ” by accepting His promise.

Baptism is a renunciation of self in permitting the whole person to be buried under water as a pledge that self shall no longer rule in the life of the convert; it is successful passing of God’s ordained test of faith to determine if faith is sufficient to save; and, as such, it corresponds exactly with Abraham’s offering of Isaac upon the altar, whereupon God said, “For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son.” (Genesis 22:12)

God did not justify Abraham until he offered Isaac (James 2:21); and, if God did not justify Abraham till he had passed such a test as offering Isaac, how could it ever be imagined that God will justify any sinner who believes, and purely upon the sinner's assertion of it? Never! Baptism, the water ceremony itself, is the terminator that separates between the saved and the lost; and as long as the faith of any person is insufficient to prompt his obedience to God's universal commandment of baptism, there is no way that such a faith could save. That is why Jesus said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)

The operation of the ceremony of baptism itself is retrospective regarding past sins, the second element of the new birth, the reception of the Holy Spirit, is prospective and looks to the perfection of the believer in Christ. It is this progressive work of the Holy Spirit that leads to a greater and greater degree of sanctification in the heart of the saved.

When a person is baptized (and only believing, penitent persons can be truly baptized), as Christ commanded, God sends the Holy Spirit into his heart (the second element of the new birth); and, when viewed in connection with this Divine fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, baptism is the new birth; but it is not a birth of water only, but a birth of "water and of the Spirit" as Jesus said.

Verse 6

Just as there are two elements in the new birth, there are two elements in man that require it. The flesh is born of the water (baptized), and the spirit is born of the Spirit (receives the Holy Spirit); but these are not two births, only one new birth.

"Born . . ." The etymology of this word bears witness to the nature of the ceremony of baptism, coming from an old Anglo-Saxon word, "to be drawn forth from."

A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 37, wrote, that Jesus was saying to Nicodemus, “Do what my disciples have done; first submit to John’s baptism, and then come join My company.” If he had done so, the second element of the new birth, the reception of the Spirit would have been completed after Pentecost.

Verses 7-8

These verses record Jesus’ help of Nicodemus to believe and understand the invisible power of the new birth. A baptismal ceremony can be seen; but the forgiveness, clean conscience, and receiving the Spirit cannot be seen.

Alfred Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 203, said, “Jesus tells him that he should not reject a doctrine merely because he could not understand it. Neither could the wind be seen, but its effects were well known, and no one doubted the existence or power of the agent.”

Nicodemus, schooled in all the Mosaic ritual, found the concept of a new birth difficult to accept; but he is not the only one who ever had trouble with these words of Jesus.

H. R. Reynolds, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 17, p. 118, said, “If the rite of baptism provided the moment and occasion of the spiritual result, we should know whence it came and whither it went. We might not know how; but we should know when and whence the spiritual change took place. But this knowledge is distinctly negated by Christ who herein declares the moment of the spiritual birth to be lost or hidden to God.”

This interpretation is typical of the gimmickry employed in vain efforts to talk the rite of baptism out of this passage and out of the whole New Testament.

Can anyone believe that Jesus was here telling Nicodemus that he could not tell “when” the wind was blowing?

Christ revealed the when of the new birth; it is when we are baptized into Christ. As Paul said, “Being then made free from sin” (Romans 6:17-18), that is, when we have been baptized.

Paul was discussing Christian baptism in that passage, and he did not hesitate to make the Christian’s baptism the exact moment, the then of his being made free from sin and becoming a servant of righteousness.

Verse 9

The natural man finds it very difficult to receive spiritual things, due to his inherent preoccupation with the mechanics of them, the “how” of everything. Nicodemus’ question is therefore one of remarkable interest to all.

HOW CAN THESE THINGS BE?

Wherever there are dark and knotty problems, or things hard to be understood, there a man stands, the great inquisitor, demanding to know, “How can these things be?”

In a sense, this attitude is the glory of the human race, resulting in countless discoveries and inventions; and yet, there are certain areas that God seems to have reserved for Himself, for even in Paradise there was a tree forbidden to man. In a little different sense, there remain certain questions of the deep things of God, which, by their very nature, are unanswerable. This is such a question, nor does it stand alone. However, the question of “how” God does this or that is not necessary to the enjoyment of God’s gifts. Jesus said in Mark 4:26-29, “And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who cast seed upon the ground, and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. The earth produces crops by itself, first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

From this word of Jesus, it is plain that men should be more concerned with obeying God’s laws than in searching out the “why” and the “how.” Nicodemus

apparently permitted his puzzlement over the “how” of the new birth to prevent his ready acceptance of Christ’s word. Obedience should not wait upon the resolution of all problems.

Some of the questions which are similar to the one Nicodemus raised here are:

1. How did God create the heavens and the earth?

Men strive in vain to answer this; but they cannot agree. Enough for the child of faith to believe that “God spoke and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast.” (Psalm 33:9)

2. How does God answer prayer?

Does He answer by performing a miracle? How can prayer do any good when God already knows everything? We must confess a little sadly that we do not know; but we believe that, “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” (James 5:16)

3. How are the dead raised up? (1 Corinthians 15:35) This is another “how” that torments the intelligent endlessly; but the believer holds that it is no more difficult for God to give one another life than it was for Him to have given in the first life.

The soul’s deepest instinct demands belief in a resurrection; but “how” it will come to pass is a problem beyond the perimeter of man’s ability to solve problems.

“How can a man be born again when he is old . . .?” His mistake of waiting till he had all the answers was tragic. His greater concern should have been the acceptance of what he knew, namely, that he should have accepted the baptism of John. If he had submitted to that, as did Christ and the apostles, he would have experienced more, in time, and would have been truly “born again.”

Verse 10

The Lord's words to this ruler of the Jews were the blunt equivalent of "Look, you Pharisees stop rejecting John's baptism; obey God by submitting to it; but that is only part of it; you must allow the Spirit of God to dwell in your heart, and that can come about only by your following Me." (Luke 7:30)

Greater importance attaches to John's baptism than is usually supposed. Jesus submitted to that baptism, as did (presumably) all the apostles, for it is inconceivable that the disciples of Jesus would have refused baptism of which Jesus Himself submitted. Also, those disciples baptized others during John's ministry; and they could not have done this without themselves accepting it and obeying it. Though called the baptism of John, it was actually God's baptism administered by John.

It was mandatory for all Israel even for the priests and Pharisees; and it was the only baptism in force till Pentecost. With Pentecost and the preaching of the great commission, John's baptism was supplanted by that of the commission; but it was valid until then. The function of John's baptism was exactly like that of the great commission in the particulars of its being by immersion.

The Pharisees, including Nicodemus, had already rejected God's baptism administered by John, even though Jesus Himself submitted to it; and that was the key to their ultimate rejection of Christ.

The ignorance of the Pharisaical party regarding the sacred ordinance of baptism was the immediate beginning of the end of the whole Jewish nation as the covenant people.

That stubborn blind ignorance, as it appeared so stark and adamant in Nicodemus, called forth the exclamation of Jesus in this verse.

No wonder Israel was in trouble spiritually when even her noblest teachers rejected the idea of being born of water and of the Spirit.

In such rejection, it was clear that the major part of Israel would continue to trust in Abrahamic descent, despite the warnings of both Jesus and John the Baptist.

How strange is it that the same pattern of evil is endlessly repeated? Just as the Pharisees of Jesus' day stumbled at being "born of the water," that is, at being baptized, just so, many today stumble at the very same thing and it is no less a marvel now than it was then.

Verse 11

In this verse, Jesus changed to the plural "we," a change that may be viewed

1. as inclusive of the disciples there gathered with Him, and also sharing in the witness of the power of the new birth, or
2. as an employment of the editorial "we" instead of the first person singular. If the former is correct, it would have the force of saying, "Nicodemus, I am not merely speaking the truth to you, but the demonstration of it is also before your eyes in the person of My disciples; and yet you do not receive the truth."

Verse 12

The earthly things Jesus told Nicodemus regarded the new birth, an experience received by ordinary men during their earthly sojourn. Mysterious as it is, the new birth is a common everyday fact, "earthly" in the sense of men being in actual contact with the phenomenon and aware of it constantly. Thousands of Israel had already responded; but the Pharisees never made it.

"Heavenly things . . ." is a reference to such things as the incarnation, the death of Christ for the sins of the world, the existence of the spirit world above our own, the final judgment, heaven, hell, and all of those great spiritual realities lying utterly beyond earthly vision.

Verse 13

Jesus here claimed His unique office as God's messenger who descended to man out of heaven, and yet, in a sense, who was still in heaven.

During the personal ministry of Christ He continued in the full possession of His heavenly attributes.

Verses 14-15

The connection between these verses and verse 13 is in the title, "Son of Man."

Verse 13 gave Jesus' identity as God incarnate, and these cite the necessity for His Passion, that is, His being lifted up on the cross, and through that, lifted up on High.

"Moses lifted up the serpent . . ." refers to the last of Moses' miracles, which took place on the border of Canaan. Fiery serpents had been sent among the people producing suffering and death; Moses fashioned a serpent of brass and lifted it upon a pole in the center of camp, and those who looked upon it were healed.

Those who would make the brass snake a type of Jesus Christ go much too far. Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. V, p. 533, noted, It does not appear that the brazen serpent was ever intended as a type of Christ. It is possible to draw likenesses out of anything; but, in such matters as these, we should take heed that we go no further than we can say, "Thus it is written."

The "usual analogies" drawn from the brass snake are these:

1. In each case, those who were benefited could not have been aided any other way.
2. The lifting up in each case was before all Israel, the serpent in the camp, Jesus on the cross.

3. The design in each case was to save life, the serpent physical, the Lord eternal life.
4. The manner of the cure is similar, the Israelites having merely to look on the serpent in order to be cured, the Christians, of course, having to do nothing except believe in order to be saved!

There are far more dissimilarities than there are similarities.

1. The brass serpent was of different material from the deadly snakes that were tormenting Israel; but Jesus was made in all points like His brethren. (Hebrews 2:17)
2. Israel was forbidden to worship the brass snake; but all men are commanded to worship Christ.
3. The brass snake eventually became an idol and was defiled and burned up. (2 Kings 18:14)

The manner of appropriating the blessing is exceedingly diverse in each case, there having been no moral or spiritual conditions whatever in the healing of snake bites, not even faith. Now, when the Pharisees looked upon Jesus on the cross, were they saved? No! Far more than looking is required for salvation in Christ, as revealed in the next verse.

As for those who would take this verse as the basis for promising salvation to all who: “look upon” Jesus, and then interpret that to mean “faith only,” it should be pointed out that Jesus had just revealed to Nicodemus that absolutely nothing short of being born again, born of water and the spirit, could suffice for entry into God’s kingdom.

“Whoever believes may in Him have eternal life . . .” The particular construction of these words reveals that eternal life is promised not to “whoever believes,” but to all believers who are “in Him,” that is, in Christ.

The misconception sometimes substituted for the promise here is that “all believers shall be saved, whether or not they are ever baptized into Christ.” The key word in this clause is “may,” meaning the right or privilege of entering Christ and thus receiving eternal life in Him.

To be sure, “may” and “shall” are poles apart in meaning. To read that believers “shall be saved,” is to read what is nowhere taught in the Bible; but to read that believers “may be saved” is to read the truth of God. The corruption of this text and that of verse 16 by rendering “shall” instead of “may” or “should” must be rejected.

Both here and in verse 16, the true rendition is “may” or “should” and not in a thousand years, “shall have eternal life.”

Verse 16

We reject the notion of that school of exegetes who make a break at this place, removing this from the interview with Nicodemus and attributing these words, not to Christ, but to John the apostle. The connective, “for,” at the beginning of the paragraph shows that there is no break. We do not have here a new section, but the continuation of the interview with Nicodemus.

“For God so loved the world . . .” This announcement of God’s universal love was made to a representative of the narrowest and strictest sect in ancient Judaism, who taught that God’s love was the special providence of Israel, who were at that very time hoping for their long-awaited Messiah, who would, according to their views, restore the kingdom of Israel and judge the whole Gentile world with an overwhelming destruction.

Here Christ hurled into the very teeth of the Sanhedrin the mind-blowing concept that God loved everyone on earth, the whole creation! (1 John 2:2)

God’s love for mankind is pure, spontaneous, and constant. Jesus did not die of the cross to compel God to love men, but because He already loved them, the cross being a result of God’s love, not the cause of it.

“That He gave His only begotten Son . . .” although the initiative of the Father appears here in the word “gave,” Christ also gave Himself for man. In the Christian religion alone it is God who provides the offering for sin.

The thought in focus here is the sacrifice of Christ. Such is the nature of sin and rebellion against God, that only God could extricate fallen humanity from the morass into which they had fallen; and God could do it only at awful cost in the giving of Jesus as an offering.

No man could have died for all men; only God in the form of man could have done it. The highest angel in heaven would not have sufficed to provide such an offering as Jesus.

This was the mystery hidden before times eternal, that God would enter the lists of humanity as a man, paying the penalty of human transgression Himself in the person of His Son and discharging the debt due to the fall in Eden. It was primarily for the purpose of delivering the flesh of the Messiah to humanity that the device of a chosen people had been provided by God in the days of Abraham and, despite the will of the chosen people to reject Him, Christ here unfolded the full mystery to one of the noblest and best men in the very council of the Sanhedrin itself.

“That whoever believes in Him . . .” Faith is the great principle of Christianity, motivating every act of obedience, securing the believer in times of bewilderment and distress, and sustaining the disciple through tribulations and distress, and enlightening the soul during every darkness. Faith is the first of the preconditions of redemption in Christ Jesus, and it is also the last, there never being a single moment of the Christian pilgrimage when faith is not required, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11:6)

“Should not perish . . .” Note: The so-called translations that read this place “shall not perish” are incorrect. “Perish . . .” is a reference to the overthrow of the wicked in hell, and is a hint of the judgment when God will settle accounts with evil.

Tender as the love of God is, it does not extend far enough to include any Divine acceptance of man's rebellion against the Creator.

“But have eternal life . . .” Everlasting life is antithetical to such things, being eternal both in its excellence and in its duration.

The careful student should not overlook the fact that this passage (verse 15) reveals that the eternal life which is available to men is located “in Christ.” This means that eternal life is available only for those who become identified with Christ in the absolute sense of being united with Him that they are in fact “Christ.” (Galatians 2:20)

Nor is this teaching ever lost sight of by the apostle John. “And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” (John 5:11-12)

Verse 17

These words have a pertinent application to the prejudices of Nicodemus and the class to which he belonged, to such a degree that it is mandatory to believe they were spoken to Nicodemus by the Savior, and that they were not anything projected into this context from the thoughts of the apostle John.

The Sanhedrin and all of the leaders of Israel were anxiously expecting a Messiah who would put the Romans out of their country, blast the whole Gentile world with the judgment they hoped God would execute upon them, and restore the political economy of the chosen people.

Christ flatly rejected any notion that He had come to execute any such judgment upon the Gentiles, hence He said, “God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world . . .” (that is, in the sense they expected).

What was denied was Christ's conformity to the Jewish expectation of judgment upon the Gentiles.

Christ's first advent was not to pronounce and execute judgment upon the nations abiding in God's wrath; but rather, His was a saving mission, commensurate with God's love of the whole human creation.

Verse 18

The change of tense in this verse, regarding the believer who is not judged, and the unbeliever who hath been judged already, is significant. The believer is not judged, because he is "in Christ," totally identified with Christ and as Christ, being therefore not subject to judgment, but being "perfect in Christ."
(Colossians 1:28)

On the other hand, the unbeliever is under uttermost condemnation, not merely from the fact of all men being lost apart from Christ, but from the additional reason of his having rejected the only means of grace and salvation.

"Only begotten Son of God . . ." from the aspect of the Father expresses the unique relationship between the Father and the Son; and from the human viewpoint, this pinpoints the singleness of mortal hope in the fact that there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Verse 19

Christ had just mentioned that He had not come to judge the world in any such manner as the hierarchy expected; but, to be sure, there was a judgment going on already, a judgment precipitated by the dramatic appearance of the Messenger of the Covenant who had suddenly come to His temple.

It was a judgment required by the dazzling Light of all nations in the first advent of our Lord. As men reacted to that Light, their fate was sealed. That moral judgment could not be put off till some distant cataclysm; it was in full progress while this interview with Nicodemus was going on.

This verse forever lays to rest the conceit that unbelief is an intellectual problem; on the contrary, it is basically a moral problem.

“Men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil . . .” Jesus thus revealed that loving darkness rather than light is due, not to intelligence or learning, but to evil works.

It’s very first application, of course, was to the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus’ time, who pretended such a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, but who, in the last analysis, knew nothing at all about them.

This verse still applies to unbelief, because the moral judgment going on when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus is still in progress. Believers in Christ are not judged, being safe “in Him;” but unbelievers have been judged already by their rejection of the only hope of the world.

Verses 20-21

These two verses are a further explanation of verse 19, spelling out the universal law regarding the hatred of evil men for the truth of God, called “the Light.” Also, there is the converse of it, namely, that good men seek and desire the truth. The whole spectrum of human behavior appears in this concise statement of eternal principles.

“Who does evil hates the light . . .” Wicked people are essentially night operators, being afraid of the light which could expose them. Most crimes are committed in darkness, and the police force is always busiest at night.

Spiritually, the same principles hold. Wicked and unspiritual people stay as far away as possible from any study or discussion of God’s Word. If they attend worship at all, it is prompted by other considerations than a desire to know God; and for the vast majority of the wicked, worship services are absolutely off limits.

“Lest his deeds should be exposed . . .” This is the reason the wicked avoid contact with truth. Not only would the Word of God condemn his deeds, but his own conscience would be aroused against himself if it became enlightened, a

discomfort which the wicked will not willingly endure, fleeing from the light to avoid it.

“He who practices the truth comes to the light. . .” The person with the honest and good heart desires to walk uprightly before God and man, loves the truth, and seeks to know more of God’s will. The light does not need to seek him; he seeks the light and shuns the works of darkness.

“His deeds may be manifested . . .” The good heart does not shrink from testing his behavior against the teachings of the Lord, being willing to correct deficiencies or aberrations in his life upon becoming aware of them.

“Having been wrought in God . . .” This is the end of walking in the light. Human behavior is so corrected and disciplined that the whole life and all of its actions are wrought “in God.” (Philippians 2:13)

In this connection, it should be observed that: God in men and men in God, Christ in men and men in Christ, the Spirit in men and men in the Spirit, the mind of Christ in men and the Word of Christ in men are not references to various conditions, but to one condition. Who is the person of whom such expressions are valid? He is the Christian, the one born of water and of the Spirit who is faithful to His trust.

This concluded the Lord’s interview with Nicodemus, an interview reported only in part, we may be sure, but enough was recorded to make it one of the most significant ever to occur on earth.

Here was enunciated, probably for the first time, the doctrine of the new birth; and, from Jesus’ words in this interview, there can be no doubt that this doctrine lies at the very heart of Christianity.

In order to enter fellowship with God, one must be baptized into Christ and receive the Holy Spirit—such is the sacred and eternal law laid down here by the Lord.

FINAL WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Verse 22

“Came into the land of Judea . . .” is somewhat of an indefinite location of Jesus’ activity at this point; but William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, p. 146, suggests the location was “not far from Jericho, near the fords of the Jordan.”

This gospel gives the Judean ministry of Christ, almost totally omitted by the synoptics. The Spirit of God directed the apostles in the choice of the material they included. Jesus had definitely stressed the fact that the gospel should first be offered to the Jews then to the Gentiles, and “to the Jew first” became a slogan of the missionary work of Paul, and presumably of all the apostles. (Luke 24:27; Acts 1:8)

How fitting, therefore, that the Lord Himself should have carried His great message, first to the Jews as revealed in this gospel. The great Judean ministry of Jesus occurred before John the Baptist was cast into prison, a fact John stressed, thus making it very early in the Lord’s ministry.

“His disciples . . .” probably refers to the six already mentioned in this gospel; Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel.

“Spending time with them, and baptizing . . .” It must be assumed that Jesus took up the work of carrying forward God’s work already being evident in the labors of John the Baptist, and that the baptism administered by Jesus (through His disciples) was God’s baptism exactly like that of the great herald. Jesus refrained from administering God’s baptism personally, doing so only through His disciples.

This taking a hand in the preaching of baptism, on the part of Jesus, was probably the result of our Lord seeing the urgent need in His interview with Nicodemus. With the blindness of the religious leaders in their rejection of John

the Baptist's preaching, it was clear that John needed all the help he could get; therefore, Jesus encouraged His disciples to take a hand in the baptizing.

Nothing may be made of the fact that Jesus baptized not, but His disciples baptized. What one does through his agents he is lawfully said to do; therefore Jesus baptized. Why did He refrain doing so personally? It might have given rise to jealousies and strife, later on, through some claiming greater privilege in having been baptized personally by the Lord.

Verse 23

Scholars differ as to the exact location of Aenon, but, true to the Holy Spirit which provided this information, the essential fact that there were "many waters there" is given.

J. W. Shepherd, *Handbook on Baptism*, p. 91, said, "From these words, we may infer that John and Christ administered baptism by plunging the whole body beneath the water."

Neal Lightfoot, *Ibid.*, p. 92, said, "There are some passages that seem to carry a color of conformity of the one to the other. At Matthew 3:6, "They were baptized of John in Jordan." (Matthew 3:16), Jesus came straight out of the water." (Acts 8:38), "The eunuch went down into the water:" and the words in hand, "John baptized in Aenon because there was much water there."

Immersion is the ceremony recognized as baptism by Christ and the apostles; and the appearance of other actions called baptism in the historical church should not obscure this fact.

Verse 24

There could have been no reason for this statement unless the apostle John was familiar with the other three gospels and knew that his readers were also fully acquainted with them.

Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear Gospel-English New Testament*, p. 367, said, “The Nestle Greek text gives “prison” as a legitimate rendition,” and so we read, it carries the weight of “the imprisonment of John,” thus an event already established in the common knowledge. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 147, wrote, “Taking it for granted that believers had read the earlier gospels, the author corrects a possible misunderstanding and shows that between Christ’s temptation and the arrest of John the Baptist there was a considerable period during which Jesus and John were in a parallel ministry.”

Verse 25

The fact of Jesus and John baptizing at the same time might have raised a question of the relative importance of the two administrations, whether both were of equal value, and if Jesus was to supersede John.

Verse 26

Jealousy was clearly the motivation of this question, shedding light upon the extensive popularity of Jesus at that time, suggesting the great success of our Lord’s efforts in baptizing multitudes.

Verse 27

“Receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven . . .” The words are true in two senses.

1. Jesus could not have enjoyed such widespread success unless God had given it.
2. John’s decline could not have occurred unless the Lord willed it.

How wonderful it would be if every minister accepted the principle that, “It is God who gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6) All power, ability, talent, intelligence, skill, beauty—everything comes from God. (Deuteronomy 8:18)

Verse 28

“You yourselves . . .” John the Baptist had already thoroughly instructed his disciples regarding his own subordinate position with reference to Christ. Thus their jealous advocacy of the supremacy of their leader was prompted by unworthy motives.

“The Christ . . .” John the Baptist's designation of Jesus as the Christ, in these words, is different from “Lamb of God” which he called Him at first. Both titles carry the same great weight; but “Christ” had a sharper and more dramatic meaning for Israel. John’s use of it indicates that he recognized the full import of Jesus’ mission on earth.

Verse 29

In the New Testament, the church is called the bride of Christ; but this verse does not mean that the church was, at that time, established and that Jesus had possession of it. “The bride” here has reference to the Spiritual Israel of God.

Although the Spiritual Israel had been commingled with secular Israel throughout history to that time, the separation was then being made through the instrumentality of the baptism preached by John, a separation that would become final at Pentecost and afterward.

“Rejoices greatly . . .” Far from being envious or jealous of Christ, John was delighted and gratified to see His popularity, even going so far as to say that his joy was made full.

Such a perceptive leader as John the Baptist, to say nothing of his inspiration, found this metaphor, “the bride” most appropriate. The image of the bride and the bridegroom is found often in the prophetic books of the Old Testament where it is used to describe the relationship between God and His people. (Hosea 2:19; Ezekiel 16; Malachi 2:11)

Verse 30

The parallel ministries of Jesus and John, both with the design of baptizing multitudes preparatory to the coming kingdom, existed as a transitional device, and without any heavenly intention of promulgating two distinct systems. In God's providence, John would shortly be cast into prison and lose his life to the sword of Herod, an event that would make it easier for John's disciples to follow Christ.

Verse 31

A large school of commentators understand this verse and to the end of the chapter, not as the words of John the Baptist, but as reflections of John the apostle, alleging this on the basis of what they call a change in style, a more advanced recognition of the true status of Christ, and a supposed reference to the conversation with Nicodemus.

There are a number of glaring weaknesses in the reasoning of such scholars, whose allegations of a change of style turns out to be nothing but a change of tense! There are a number of other considerations to confirm the conviction of this writer that the words should be understood to the person to whom they are ascribed in the gospel.

“He who comes from above . . .” These words regarding Jesus contrast with John's admission that he himself was of the earth., meaning that he did not come from heaven in the sense that Jesus did.

Verse 32

John the Baptist's own disciples were not accepting Jesus; and in the situation recounted here, a delegation of them were openly critical and jealous of Jesus and apparently intent on doing something to counteract the rising popularity of the Master.

It must have been a matter of deepest wonder on John's part that his own disciples, many of them, rejected Jesus, heedless of his own emphatic identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Son, and the Christ.

Verse 33

God had spoken out of heaven in broad open daylight in the presence of a multitude, affirming of Jesus that, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased:" and John here asserted his unwavering confidence in God's witness of Christ.

"Has received His witness . . ." contrasts with "no man receives His witness" in verse 32, leading to the conclusion that John the Baptist here spoke of himself.

Verse 34

Verse 32, above, was a statement that what John the Baptist had seen and heard was that of which the herald had borne witness; but the words were equally applicable to Jesus Christ and His message; and here the same declaration is made in such a manner as to show that Jesus is the One named.

"He gives the Spirit without measure . . ." The descent of the dove alighting and remaining on Jesus (1:33) is in view here leading to the conclusion that it was a measureless gift of the Spirit received by Jesus, and the inevitable corollary that Jesus spoke the true words of God. These words further indicate that Jesus was in full possession of God's Spirit, not merely in some manifestation of it, or some portion of it, but to the fullest and total extent.

On the other hand, Christian disciples receive merely "an earnest" of the Holy Spirit, and not even the apostles possessed the Spirit in the total sense that Jesus did.

Verse 35

Again, the baptismal scene was in the mind of the Father: "This is My beloved Son."

God was trying to counteract the jealousy of the disciples who would not follow Jesus by repeating the deduction which He had made following the baptism of Jesus, namely, that God had given all things into Jesus' hands, a deduction He could not have avoided, for "Beloved Son" would have required it.

Verse 36

With these dramatic words, John the Baptist disposed of the jealousy that marked the attitude of some of his disciples toward Jesus. In the Son of God eternal life was available for those who obeyed Him; and for all others, they would continue to be under the wrath of God.

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life . he who does not obey the Son.

In all instances, it is an obedient faith that is meant, and never is some special quality of faith apart from obedience intended.

Salvation by "faith alone" is an erroneous tenet of human creeds, but it is not the teaching of God's Word. He who does not obey the Son, in the practical sense, is an unbeliever; and all faith of whatever degree is dead without obedience.

"The wrath of God . . ." New Testament passages regarding God's wrath are extensive, and far more is intended by them than God's displeasure at men who do not accept the Son and obey the gospel. It has reference to the basic antagonism between light and darkness, goodness and evil.

The total race of men from Eden and afterward is a fallen and rebellious race, their fellowship with God having been broken by the fall of humanity; and God's face is set against fallen and unregenerated men.

He has appointed a day in which the unredeemable portion of humanity will be judged and punished, and when evil will be cast out of God's universe. Mercy and hope for all are available in Christ, but it must be received and appropriated, and the penalty of rejecting the Son of God is the forfeiture of all hope.

In this chapter appeared the principle that evil men love darkness and hate the light (3:19), and that principle is still the device of judgment for all who were ever born.

Allen Bowman, *Is the Bible True?* expressed it, “The great obstacle to men’s acceptance of the Bible is not intellectual. It is Spiritual. It is not that the Bible is unreasonable. It is that men do not want Christ. They choose to reject God’s way in order to follow their own way.”

An amazing example of the operation of this principle appears in the concluding words of this chapter. The disciples of John the Baptist, who loved and honored him, and who believed what he said, nevertheless rejected Christ, And why? They were evil in themselves.

Chapter 4

This chapter relates the journey of Jesus and His disciples through Samaria (verses 1-5), recounts the interview with the woman at the well (verses 6-26), gives the conversation with the disciples upon their return (verses 27-38), sums up the results of Christ’s teaching in Samaria (verses 38-42), narrates the continuation to Galilee, and records the performance of the second of the seven great signs (verses 43-54).

Verse 1

The disciples of John the Baptist were already jealous of Jesus’ success; and the Lord knew that the mighty acclaim hailing His efforts, if uninterrupted, would shortly bring upon Him a premature confrontation with the Pharisees; and, in order to avoid it, He promptly switched the scene of His labors.

Verse 2

An important deduction from the fact of Jesus’ many baptisms, none of which were administered by Himself personally, yet being referred to as His baptisms

and His accomplishment, is this: All who are baptized in obedience to God's specific command, and by the hand of the Lord's disciples in harmony with His will, are truly baptized by Jesus!

Verses 3-4

Samaria lay between Jerusalem and Galilee—the most direct route. The boundaries of Samaria varied in history; but in the time of Christ it was a small province about twenty miles wide, north to south, and about thirty miles long, east to west. The eastern boundary was the Jordan River, and the southern line lay about seven miles north of Shechem. The capital was the city with the same name, occupying an impressive butte some six miles northwest of the area where the events of this chapter happened. (Peloubet, *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, p. 582)

Verse 5

“Sychar . . .” was near Shechem and the piece of ground Jacob had purchased from the sons of Hamor for a hundred pieces of money. It was the scene of the bloody episode revolving around Jacob's daughter Dinah. It was the place where Jacob dug that famous well and it belonged to the sons of Joseph.

When the children of Israel brought with them out of Egypt the bones of Joseph, here is where they buried them.

Verse 6

“Jacob's well . . .” contains all that is certainly known about this well, as to its origin; because the Bible nowhere mentions Jacob's digging a well, although it is recorded that Abraham and Isaac dug wells. Still, this reference is enough.

The well is still there and is in all probability, one of the few authentic places that can be identified as the place where Jesus sat.

J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*, p. 56, after visiting the well wrote, “Jacob 's well is still there, about one hundred feet from Mt. Girizim, which rises

high above to the west. The well is a perfect cylinder, seven and a half feet in diameter, walled with stones of good size, smoothly dressed, and nicely fit together, an excellent piece of masonry. Its depth was stated by the earliest modern who visited it (Maundrel) at 105 feet with fifteen feet of water. In 1839, it was found to be seventy-five feet deep with ten or twelve feet of water. All visitors of more recent date have found it dry and gradually filling up from the habit of throwing stones into it to hear the reverberation when they strike the bottom.”

“Being wearied from His journey . . .” The perfect humanity of Jesus is very evident in John. He alone recorded the saying from the cross, “I thirst.”

It would appear that the Lord’s unusual weariness might have resulted from the fervor and enthusiasm with which the preaching and baptizing had been accomplished in the preceding days. It was the kind of letdown that every great campaigner feels when the effort is over; and the long march up from Judaea had intensified His weariness.

“Sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour . . .” In this light, the “sixth hour” would have been about noon, six hours after sunrise, by the Jewish method of reckoning; or, by the Roman method, it would have been six hours after noon, or about six o’clock in the evening.

It seems that the extensive results that flowed out of this episode, such as the coming of the whole city out to meet Jesus, and their inviting Him and His disciples to stay with them, indicate that the event happened at noon.

INTERVIEW WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

Verse 7

“A woman of Samaria . . .” The tragic story of the Samaritans and the contempt in which those unfortunate people were held by the Jews endow this incident with the deepest interest.

Following the capture of the ten northern tribes by Shalmaneser (722 B.C.), the cities and villages of Samaria were totally depopulated and left to the wild beasts.

Not willing to let the land lie idle, the king of Assyria repopulated the area with people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avah, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. Of course, they brought their old idol worship with them; but they were introduced to the Jewish Scriptures in the following manner: the people were troubled by the marauding wild beasts, and the king of Assyria decided that the trouble might have been due to the new settlers having neglected the “god of the land.” So he dispatched one of the captive priests of Israel to enlighten the people; and thus the Samaritans came into possession of the Pentateuch, the only part of the Hebrew Bible which they accepted. They set up a system of religion based partially upon the Pentateuch, but containing also a number of foreign elements.

When the Jews rebuilt the temple, following the captivity of the southern tribes, the Samaritans desired to help, but were rebuffed. Animosity and hatred multiplied; and, at the time here spoken of, the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans (although they traded with them); they had exhausted their vocabulary of verbal attacks.

“Jesus said to her, Give Me a drink . . .” In this account, one is confronted with a contrast of remarkable dimensions:

Here is a contrast between God and man.

Here is a contrast between man and woman.

Here is a contrast between royalty and commonality.

Here is a contrast between wisdom and ignorance.

Here is a contrast between the unmarried and the oft-married.

Here is a contrast between purity and immorality.

Here is a contrast between Jew and Gentile.

These multiple contrasts of race, sex, religion, moral status, marital status, social position, ability, wisdom, etc., must be accounted the most dramatic and significant of any that occurred in our Lord's ministry. Yet, Jesus and that woman had one thing in common; both wanted a drink of water.

Unerringly, Jesus saw the common ground between them and did not hesitate to stand with her upon the common platform of their mutual need. How loving, tender and considerate was our Lord in His attitude toward this daughter of Samaria!

"Give Me a drink . . ." By these words, Jesus placed Himself in the position of one requesting a favor, and by such a gesture assumed a social equality with her which astonished her and led to the conversation that followed.

Here Jesus did for her only what He did for all of wretched and fallen humanity; for He came from heaven to become a man, to take upon Him the form of a servant, and to die for the sins of the whole world.

Verse 8

The disciples for some reason did not appear to have been as tired and weary as Jesus; but this is not strange. To the leader of such a campaign as they had just terminated, there is always the greater intensity, enthusiasm, and emotion exhibited by all great leaders.

Verse 9

"How is it . . ." How? It was the Master's way of opening a door into her heart that He might give her eternal life. How? It was the Savior's way of recruiting one of the most effect missionaries He ever had. How? It was Jesus' means of entry into that city as an honored guest for two days and nights. All of it began with this request for a drink of water.

"I am a Samaritan woman . . ." (Jews had no dealings with Samaritans.) The first estimate of Jesus formed by this woman was stated in these words; but her

knowledge and understanding of Jesus grew rapidly. Not the following: “A Jew” (verse 7), “Sir” (verse 11), “a prophet” (verse 19), and “the Christ” (verse 29).

Verse 10

“If you knew . . .” you would have asked . . . “ This is the glory of that woman. These words show why Jesus accomplished this interview. He saw that the woman, despite her fallen life, would respond to a genuine opportunity to know the truth. In that precious quality, she was far superior to many of every age who indeed know the Lord of Life but who will neither ask of Him nor respond in any way to His mercy.

“Given you living water . . .” is a reference to the water of life. The metaphor was probably suggested by the thirst which had brought them both to the well. Just as the body requires water, just so the soul, if it is to live, must drink at the everlasting fountain of God’s word.

“The gift of God . . .” In this, Jesus referred to Himself as, the gift of God to all the world. Amazingly, the supreme gift of God from all eternity sat at that very moment on the ledge of Jacob’s well; but the poor woman, dodging the scorn of neighbors, and coming to the well in the heat of the day had suddenly confronted the Lord of Life.

How blind are our eyes, how deadened our senses, how feeble our souls, when face to face with God, we nevertheless cannot see Him!

Verse 11

The woman’s response shows that she did not understand what was meant by “living water.” Hence the question of its source especially in view of that fact, that Jesus had no rope.

“Where then do You get that living water . . .” indicates that the woman had already apprehended the fact that Jesus was not talking about the water of Jacob’s well.

Verse 12

“You are not greater than our father Jacob . . .” Some have understood her words as a scornful denial that Christ had any power to give the living water He had mentioned; but it appears that something far different from scorn was intended by this reply.

Verses 13-14

Jesus defined the living water He promised as a Spiritual power leading to eternal life. The source of such a blessing is uniquely in Jesus Christ; and it may not be earned or merited, but is a heavenly gift to fallen and sinful men.

The gift, however, is conditional. The woman would not have given Jesus a drink of water unless He had asked it, nor would Christ have blessed her unless she had asked.

The Lord will not endow any soul with living water unless that soul shall ask in the appointed way through compliance with conditions prerequisite to His blessing.

“Eternal life . . .” here plainly identified the blessing Jesus promised the woman of Samaria.

Verse 15

Some element of misunderstanding is evident in this request, but she rose to the height of asking the blessing in its fullest extent. Those who would be blessed should never wait until they know fully all that they ask; and, for the most spiritual person on earth, there is the likelihood that he like this woman, would have many incorrect ideas of the ultimate blessing.

The important thing is to ask; and, as Jesus said at the beginning of the interview, this woman was a person who would ask.

Verse 16

“Go, call your husband . . .” The reason for Jesus’ rather abrupt, injection of this command into the conversation may have been complex. The gift of eternal life is not a blessing that anyone receives alone; it is always for others also; and those others always include, first of all, those who are members of one’s family. Also, the gift of eternal life is never bestowed apart from the correction of the moral conditions of the recipient.

Sins, however, are never easily confessed, and her reply fell short of revealing any moral fault.

When any soul would turn to Christ and receive His inexpressible gift, the one desiring salvation is always confronted with a similar command with reference to his life.

Verse 17

This, of course, was truth, but far from all of it. The Lord already knew everything in her life, and He had not asked for information but was eliciting from her recognition of her moral condition.

Verse 18

This was an astounding revelation to the woman that the stranger at the well knew all about her sinful and unhappy life; and yet this had not prevented His earnest conversation with her, nor His asking a drink at her hands. The marvel is that she did not fall upon her knees.

Note that this woman had had five husbands, meaning five persons to whom she had been married, and that she was living with a sixth man without benefit of a marriage ceremony.

It is easy to allege sin where it does not exist; and the sin uncovered here was primarily an immoral relationship with a sixth man, and not necessarily the fact of her having been so often married. The Lord left out of our sight the reason

for the break-up or termination of those marriages, some of which could have been due to the death of the husband, rather than to the wanton adultery of this woman whose heart hungered after eternal things.

Verse 19

Before the day ended, she would hail Him as the Christ, but her perception at this point had not reached that height.

Only a few minutes earlier, she had recognized Him only as “a Jew,” who she had every right to suppose hated and despised her; but now she hailed Him as a prophet. The more deeply conscious any person is of his sins, the higher Jesus rises in his sight.

Verse 20

The view that these words were a mere device on the woman’s part to change the conversation appears to be wrong.

It reveals the deep religious interest of the questioner, and the presence of one who she had just hailed as a prophet, gave her the opportunity to learn the truth about a question that had troubled her heart a long time.

Deep within every heart the abiding question of how men “ought” to worship God is firmly implanted; and no encrustation of sin, however coarse, can fully eradicate it.

Verse 21

Jerusalem had been until that time the correct place to worship God, but Jesus deferred that part of the answer in order to reveal that a totally new system was about to be initiated, in which the place of worship would have no significance at all. God may be worshiped properly anywhere, provided only that the Divine worship is tendered in spirit and in truth.

Verse 22

“You worship that which you do not know . . .” The Samaritan worship was faulty in several important factors. It was founded upon only a part of the word of God (the Pentateuch), and even that part was not strictly obeyed. Also, many polluting elements of paganism had been incorporated into it.

“That which we know . . .” Thus Jesus affirmed the truth of the Old Testament and the validity of the covenant with the chosen people, affirming the authenticity of the Hebrew religion.

“Salvation is from the Jews . . .” Even the church today is the Israel of God, and all Christians are “the seed of Abraham.” (Galatians 3:29)

Verse 23

“An hour is coming, and now is . . .” indicates that a new dispensation was about to be initiated by Jesus Christ.

Within only four years after this interview, all of the regulations concerning the worship of God in Jerusalem were superseded by the ordinances and requirements of the new covenant.

“The Father seeks to be His worshipers . . .” These are the ones who are not false, vain, or the ignorant worshipers of every age who have improperly worshiped God. Who are the true worshipers? They are those who worship God in spirit and in truth.

Verse 24

“God is Spirit . . .” God may be spoken of in terms of the activities of men, such as walking, seeing, hearing, etc., but there is a sense in which God is not like man at all. God is a Spirit, eternal, immortal, invisible, omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (everywhere), omnipotent (all powerful), and pervading. He is above all and through all and in all. Nothing can be hidden from God. He

is the first Cause, Himself uncaused, the Creator and sustainer of everything that exists. He is nonetheless personal, hence the anthropomorphisms of Scripture.

“Those who worship Him . . .” Just what is worship? Is it the carrying out of any kind of ritual, the observance of any days or times, or the presentation of any kind of gifts and sacrifices? Actual worship is Spiritual.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Isaiah 6:1-8, is a good description of worship. Worship is:

1. An awareness of the presence of God,
2. A consciousness of sin and unworthiness on the part of the worshiper,
3. A sense of cleansing and forgiveness, and
4. A response of the soul with reference to doing God’s will, “Here am I send me!”

In the New Testament, it is evident that the worship of God involved the doing of certain things:

1. Meditating upon God’s Word in sermon or Scripture reading.
2. Singing of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
3. Praying to God through Christ.
4. Observance of the Lord’s Supper.
5. The giving of money, goods, and services for the spreading of the faith and the relief of human needs.

Very well, then, does the person who does these things worship God? Not necessarily, because an apostle spoke of certain persons who ate the Lord’s Supper in a manner unworthy of it, not thinking about the Lord’s body.

Moreover, the singing and praying were commanded to be done “with the spirit and with the understanding also.”

True worship is the soul’s adoration of the Creator functioning obediently to the Divine will.

“Must worship in spirit and in truth . . .” This speaks thunderously of the fact that the worship of God must be done properly, the two requirements being that it must be engaged in with utmost sincerity and as directed by the word of God.

PROHIBITIONS REGARDING WORSHIP

The verse before us is a powerful prohibition. Also, Jesus said, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Mark 7:7)

(Scriptures—Acts 17:24-25; Revelation 22:18; 2 John 9; Matthew 15:6; and 1 Corinthians 4:6)

From these specific prohibitions, as well as from the spirit and tenor of the entire Bible, it is clearly impossible for man to approach his Creator in worship except as God has directed.

ONLY TWO WAYS TO WORSHIP GOD

Worship is as old as the human race, but in the long history of mortal events only two ways to worship God have ever been discovered. These are: God’s revealed way, and any other way that man might have devised himself.

God’s way to worship.

Men are commanded to worship God, and it is simply inconceivable that God has not instructed men how to obey this commandment. (Revelation 14:7) Of the ancient tabernacle, only a type of the worship men offer today, God said to Moses, “See that you make all things according to the pattern” (Hebrews 8:5), and there is no way to avoid the application of this to Christian worship.

And what is the New Testament pattern of Christian worship? “The things which are written” (1 Corinthians 4:6) reveal that the New Testament churches:

1. Offered prayers to God through Christ; (Acts 2:46)
2. Observed the Lord’s Supper; (Acts 20:7)
3. Gave of their means; (1 Corinthians 16:2)
4. Taught the Sacred Scriptures; (Acts 2:46)
5. Sang certain kinds of songs; (Colossians 3:16)

No student of the Bible will deny that both precept and example for the above pattern of worship is found anywhere, but the New Testament. If this is not God’s pattern of worship, what is it?

Man’s way of worshiping.

This has varied in time, place, and circumstance; but a survey of the entire field of worship, as it has developed since the foundation of Christianity, reveals numerous activities, subtractions and substitutions with reference to the things that are revealed.

There are even examples of incorporating elements of the old covenant, and of the acceptance of pagan elements into the sacred arena into the sacred arena of Christian worship.

It would be nearly impossible to list all the human changes, additives, and aberrations inflicted upon Christianity by the historical church, but a complete list is not necessary. Following is a partial list that will show what is meant:

Auricular confession (spoken directly into the ear of someone), baptizing of images, baptizing of infants, baptizing of desire, baptizing for the dead, burning of incense, canonization of saints, celibacy of the clergy, communion under one kind, elevation of the host, extreme unction, invocation of saints, lighting of blessed lamps and candles, Lenten fasts and ceremonies, monasticism, order of

monks and nuns, societies of Jesus, purgatory, prayers for souls in purgatory, paschal candles, priestly robes and vestments, holy paraphernalia, penance, redemption of penances, pouring for baptism, sprinkling for baptism, the rosary of the virgin Mary, the sale of indulgences, the sacrifice of the mass, sacrifices for the dead, the sign of the cross, the separation of clergy and laity, tradition received on a level with the word of God, the doctrine of transubstantiation and of consubstantiation, the sprinkling of holy water, the stored-up merit of dead saints, works of supererogation (good works), the use of mechanical instruments of music, ceremonies of Ash Wednesday, the development of a hierarchal system of earthly church government, etc.

This writer has never met a person, throughout a lifetime of discussing Christianity, who would deny that at least some of the above deviations from God's pattern of worship are sinful. But, of course, the thing that makes any one of them sinful makes them all sinful, because they were not first spoken by the Lord. (Hebrews 2:3) Their authority derives not from God but from men.

Verse 25

What a priceless jewel of faith lay at the bottom of this poor beleaguered woman's heart. All the sins and mistakes of her life had not effaced her knowledge of the essential truth that Christ would come into the world and teach men all that they need to know of salvation.

Verse 26

Why did Jesus speak so forthrightly here, while on so many occasions He was so careful not to say plainly that He was the Christ?

This poor woman's word however, was not good in any priestly court, due to her being a Samaritan; and thus it was perfectly safe for Jesus to tell her that He was the Messiah. This same phenomenon appears later in this gospel, in the case of the man born blind; who, after being cast out of the synagogue was not an acceptable witness in Jewish courts, and who was also told plainly by Christ that He was the Son of God.

Through this woman Jesus taught an entire city and yet left the Pharisees without a single word that they could use in any trumped-up charge against Jesus. It is remarkable how the Lord walked unharmed and untouched through every trap that Satan laid for Him.

Verse 27

“They marveled that He was speaking with a woman . . .” The low estate of women in that generation is evidenced by these words. It simply was not done. No holy man, after the custom of the times would have done what Jesus did here.

Clarence Edward McCartney, *Great Interviews of Jesus*, p. 38, wrote the following, “Woman, who made it fit, decent, and moral for a prophet to talk to you? Who threw a zone of mercy and protection around thy little child? Who lifted thee up and changed thee from man’s chattel and property to man’s friend and equal and inspirer? Who obliterated the brand of the slave from thy face and put on thy brow the halo of chivalry and tenderness and romance? Who so changed thy lot, that instead of marveling today that a prophet should talk with a woman, what men marvel at is that there ever was a time when men should have marveled that Christ talked with a woman? Come then, woman; break thine alabaster box, filled with the ointment precious and very costly. Come break the box and pour thine ointment of love and gratitude upon His head and feet. Come, wash His feet with the tears of thy love and wipe them with thy hair for a towel.”

Verses 28-29

“So the woman left her water pot . . .” When from our low plain of sin and morality, the soul of man glimpses light of the Eternal City, all temporal and secular concerns recede.

Important as the water pot was to that woman, what a negligible trifle it became to her whose heart had just been lifted up to see the Christ! Here was that same motivation that inspired the fishermen of Galilee to leave their nets

and their father and mother, and Matthew to leave his seat of custom, and follow Jesus.

No mortal considerations can withstand the blast of that solar wind which emanates from the Sun of Righteousness.

“Come see . . .” With these same words, Philip persuaded Nathaniel (1:46); and with the same words Jesus invited the disciples to His abode (1:39); and, with the same words an angel of heaven said, “Come see the place where the Lord lay.” (Matthew 28:6)

“This is not the Christ is it . . .”? There is no reason to suppose that this woman had any doubt that Jesus was the Christ; but she wisely presented her witness in such a manner as to require the citizens of Sychar to provide their own answer to so great a question.

Verse 30

There was some little distance between the well and the city, a distance traveled twice by this woman before any person in Sychar could hear the message. All of these things taken together suggest that the hour was noon, not 6:00 o'clock in the evening.

The movement of the multitude toward Jesus across the plain that separated between the well and the city deeply touched the Savior's heart. The prevailing color of all clothing in those days was white, dyes being so expensive that only the rich used them; and the Lord's reference to the “white” harvest fields a little later had reference to that field of people dressed in the white garments of the poor moving toward the Lord under the glare of the noon sun.

Verse 31

“The disciples were requesting . . .” This urgency on the part of the disciples that Jesus should eat might be the key to the excessive fatigue of Jesus. Perhaps Jesus, caught up in the glorious enthusiasm of the previous days of baptizing great numbers, had not eaten much.

A great multitude of villagers, visible in the distance, were moving toward the Lord of life; and He would break for them the bread of life before relieving His physical hunger. What a difference between the Lord of glory and human dignitaries.

Verse 32

Jesus explained that the “food” here mentioned was “to do the will of Him who sent Me.” Christ’s notice of the approaching multitude had not been shared by the apostles; and, of course, they misconstrued his words, taking them literally, as the next verse shows.

Verse 33

In a Samaritan village, there was indeed a slight likelihood that someone might have brought food to Jesus; but the disciples were struggling with a literal misunderstanding of Jesus’ words, and the possible solution they suggested was as good as any.

Verse 34

Jesus had not, as yet, received any food at all; but the amazing responsiveness of the woman at the well had triggered an opportunity to convert a whole city, moving at that very moment upon Jesus and His disciples; and the satisfaction of His physical hunger would have to wait, despite the Master’s weariness.

Verse 35

“There are yet four months . . .” B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 75, noted, “That the harvest began about the middle of April and lasted till the end of May.” This would make the date of this episode to lie somewhere between the middle of December and the last of January, another piece of evidence favoring noon as the time of day in this narrative. In either December or January, it would have been dark shortly after six o’clock.

“They are white for harvest . . .” The white-clad multitude passing over the green fields between the village and the well had indeed tuned them white; and our Jesus was looking upon the immediate harvest of souls as contrasted with the grain harvest yet four months in the future.

This comparison of converted souls to a harvest made a profound impression upon John who made five references to it in as many verses. (Revelation 14:14-19) “Send forth your sickle and reap; for the hour to reap has come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe,” etc.

Verse 36

These words were spoken by Jesus during the interval before the arrival of the multitude. There is never a harvest without a sowing and a reaping. “He who reaps is receiving wages . . .” It is not known if Jesus was here thinking of the reaping that Philip the evangelist would do in Samaria (Acts 8:4-13), or if He was thinking of the multitudes who would believe that very day (4:41) or perhaps both.

“Rejoice together . . .” Sowers and reapers alike rejoice in the harvest of the gospel. Jesus was the sower who planted the word in the heart of the woman; but the fruit was coming over the fields at that very moment; and the apostles, who hardly knew that any sowing had taken place, were about to participate in the reaping.

Evidently the Lord intended in these words to show the equal importance of both sowing and reaping, both being necessary, and to show that the reaper should always, in humility, remember the one who had sown. That Christ was indeed the sower here is indicated by, “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.” (Matthew 13:37)

Verse 37

“One sows, another reaps . . .” “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:6) In Paul’s usage of the metaphor, the gospel

preacher is the one who plants, and the one who waters, and he added, “So then neither is he that plants anything, nor neither he that waters; but God gives the increase.”

Verse 38

This was a stern reminder to the apostles that the great in-gathering they were about to see was in no sense the result of their own efforts and abilities, and that they were to consider themselves instruments of God in reaping the fruit of the labors of others, in this case the labor of the Master Himself and of the woman.

THE HARVEST IN SAMARIA

Verse 39

The secret of all soul-winning is that of making oneself of “no reputation,” even as did our Lord. (Philippians 2:7) We can only marvel at this woman’s willingness to make the exposition of her shameful life the principle evidence that would lead a city to the Jesus.

The turnout of this city to accept Jesus Christ was a stark contrast with the snobbish rejection of Jesus by the hierarchy in Jerusalem.

Here again quite early in the Savior’s ministry, was wholesale evidence that the Gentiles would turn to Jesus when they received the opportunity.

The overwhelming display of affection for Jesus in Samaria should have been a warning to Israel that the day of grace was running out for them and hastening to the day foretold by God through Moses when it was prophesied that, “I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation. With a nation void of understanding I will anger you.” (Deuteronomy 32:21)

Verse 40

Such had been the success of the woman's efforts that Christ was immediately invited by the whole city to dwell there, and the Master graciously accepted their invitation. The heart cries out that this is the way it should have been everywhere that Jesus went; but, alas, this Samaritan village stands uniquely apart in the warm welcome they extended to the Savior of the world.

Verse 41

Many people who had been convinced by the word of the woman did believe, however, as soon as they heard Jesus Himself.

Verse 42

"And they were saying to the woman . . ." What a change is this! The poor soul who only two days previously had gone to the well in the heat of noontide, in solitary isolation, and shrinking from the scorn of neighbors, has suddenly been elevated to a status of equality and acceptance on the part of all. Those who extended the hospitality of Sychar to Jesus did not fail to include also the lonely and sinful woman who was their link to the Lord of Life.

"The Savior of the world . . ." Acute indeed was the perception of that village. They were not looking for a knight on a white horse who would throw out the Romans and resurrect the vanished empire of Solomon. They took Jesus for what He truly was and ever is, not a political or military hero, but a Redeemer come to give eternal life to men.

JESUS ENTERED GALILEE AGAIN

Verses 43-44

"After the two days . . ." These were the two days just spent in Sychar.

“A prophet has no honor in his own country . . .” The injection of this proverb in such a manner as to make it a reason for Jesus’ going into Galilee (which was His own country) presents a problem that has been solved in various ways.

Some think that Jesus intended to bring about a decline in His popularity, that being exactly why He had stopped baptizing and headed north. If that indeed was Christ’s purpose in order to avoid a premature crisis with the Pharisees, then the proverb fits.

However, the very next verse states that the Galileans received Him, having seen the miracles done in Jerusalem when they went up to the feast. Jesus’ mention of the proverb might have been intended to suggest somewhat indirectly the reason for His going to Galilee.

Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 125, suggests, “If a prophet, as Jesus Himself testified, is without honor in His own country, He must earn it in another. And this Jesus had done in Jerusalem. He now brought with Him the honor of a prophet from a distance. Hence too He had found acceptance with the Galileans because they had seen His miracles in Jerusalem.” (2:23)

The degree of acceptance in Galilee was not sufficient to thwart the Lord’s purpose of achieving a decrease in His popularity. The next verse mentions the Galileans’ reception of Him, but it left much to be desired. Jesus said in chapter 4:48, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”

Verse 45

This reception of the Galileans sprang not from any spiritual rapport with Jesus, but derived from the miracles they had witnessed in Jerusalem. Thus far, John had recorded only one of the seven great signs, that of the miracle in Cana; but there have been repeated references to a great plurality of “signs” (2:23; 3:2, and all the things mentioned here).

Galilee afforded no outpouring of welcome like that of Sychar. If indeed Jesus intended a decrease of popularity, Galilee proved to be exactly the place to find it. At Cana He would do the second of the seven great signs.

Verse 46a

“Therefore . . .” seems to make some event previously related the reason of Jesus’ going on to Cana a second time. The fact of the Galileans having received Him as soon as He entered the province appears to be that reason.

Jesus did not remain in the area where they had hailed Him, due to the improper basis upon which they received Him, that is, as a mere miracle worker and not as the Savior of the world. Therefore Jesus went on to Cana, located not very far from Nazareth, which was a seat of unbelief against Him. There at Cana He continued His ministry.

THE SECOND SIGN

This is the second sign only in the sense of being the second recorded by John.

Verse 46b

“A certain royal official . . .” The identity of this person is not known. Richard C. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, p. 127, said, “The precise meaning of nobleman or (royal official) can never be exactly fixed. Either he is one of the king’s party, a royalist, one who sides with the action of the Herods, a king’s officer, or one attached to the court.”

Verse 47

“Come down and heal his son . . .” The faith of the nobleman was sufficient to send him to Capernaum, a distance of some sixteen miles, over hilly and rough terrain. The fact of the son’s being at the point of death is pertinent; because only the direst necessity could have sent this nobleman to the despised prophet

of Galilee; but it is possible that he had witnessed some of the miracles in Jerusalem and decided as a last resort to seek healing for his son.

He supposed that it would have been necessary for Jesus to come to his son in order to heal him. Still, a little faith acted upon is far better than inactive big faith; and, to the immense joy of this ancient nobleman, his efforts were successful.

Verse 48

“Unless you people see . . .” is plural, thus it seems that Jesus was here identifying this man with that extensive class of Jews of the same attitude, suggesting that the nobleman himself was a Jew.

“Signs and wonders . . .” is not a reference to two kinds of miracles, but rather to the two qualities in every miracle. A wonder is something exciting, phenomenal, and extraordinary; but the same deed, viewed in the light shed upon the person of Jesus, is a sign of the Lord’s deity.

Verse 49

The nobleman did not pretend to a faith he did not have, but only poured out the agony of a broken heart before the only one who he knew could help.

Verse 50

Little faith had suddenly grown strong. In Jesus’ presence, under the impact of the imperative word, and in the light of all he remembered from Jerusalem, he believed the word of Jesus. Having believed, he obeyed at once, returning to Capernaum as soon as he could.

Why did not Jesus accept the nobleman’s plea to go down to Capernaum and heal his son? Richard C. Trench, *Ibid.*, p. 130, said, “Here, being entreated to come, He does not; but sends His healing word; there, being asked to speak at a distance the word of healing, he rather supposes himself to come; for here, as Chrysostom explains it well, a narrow and poor faith is enlarged and deepened;

there a strong faith is crowned and rewarded. By not going, He increased the nobleman's faith; by offering to go, He brings out and honors that centurion's humility."

Verse 51

The reward of the nobleman's faith did not wait for his complete return but was brought by his servants who set out with the good news as soon as they could, which was the next morning, due to the lateness of the hour when the son was healed.

Verse 52

The word of the servants was not of an improvement in the son's condition, but a word of his healing. The fever did not merely abate; it left him! The miracles of Jesus were always wrought with dramatic and final authority. There was no piecemeal healing with Him.

Verse 53

"He himself believed . . ." But was he not already a believer? In a sense, he was, but far more is intended here. Far more than merely believing that the Lord had healed his son, he now believed in the Lord as the Savior of the world.

"And his whole household . . ." What a weight of responsibility rests upon every father. The decision of this father brought redemption to an entire household.

Verse 54

"A second sign . . ." means the second fully recounted in John.

The evident purpose of including this wonder in the list of seven was to show that the physical presence of the Lord was not required in the performance of His signs, but that His holy will was effective from any distance whatever. Such

a miracle as this is never even attempted by modern claimants of miraculous power; and yet, why not? If one can do it at all, the distance is not a factor.

Chapter 5

This chapter is a narrative of proof that Jesus is equal to God. Here, the proof is that of the healing of a long-time cripple at the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath day; following which, Jesus gave an organized testimony of His oneness with God and of His being the Messiah.

Discounting His own witness to that effect, for the moment only, He appealed to the witness of the Father Himself, the witness of His mighty works, and the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures. This sign is the third in the great series of seven.

THE THIRD SIGN

Verse 1

So much depends upon the meaning of “a feast of the Jews” in this verse that controversy has argued over it for centuries, the importance of it lying in this, that if the Passover was meant, then the ministry of Christ would be calculated at about three and one-half years; but if some lesser feast was meant, then His ministry could be calculated as much shorter.

“A feast of the Jews . . .” is the reading of many ancient manuscripts, which if allowed, would make this almost certainly the Passover.

Richard C. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*, p. 264, wrote, “If this feast of the Jews was a Passover, then John will make mention of four Passovers, namely, this one, and in 2:13, 6:4, and the last. Thus we shall arrive at the three and one half years, the half of a “week of years” for the length of Christ’s ministry, which many, not altogether unreasonably, have thought they found designated beforehand for it the prophecies.” (Daniel 9:27)

Verse 2

“There is . . . “ The present tense in this has led to the supposition that John was written before the destruction of Jerusalem; but it may be explained

- (1) by the pool still standing there after the ruin of the city, or
- (2) by the apostle’s vivid memory of it leading to his use of the present tense.

“By the sheep gate . . .” The word “gate” is not in the text and was supplied by the translators. The gate was near the temple and was the portal through which the animals were brought to the sacrifices.

“Having five porticoes . . .” These were the colonnaded areas, partially open, under which people could take refuge from rain or strong sunlight.

A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 56, gave us his thoughts on why this healing at Bethesda was made one of John’s seven signs is interesting. He said, “Possibly because it involved his favorite symbol of water. The water of the pool, though it seemed to offer healing (newness of life), had yet failed to cure a man crippled for thirty-eight years. We are perhaps meant to think of “the Law given through Moses” and its failure to give life. Over and against it, in this miracle, stands the life-giving word of Christ.”

Of John’s seven signs, the third and the sixth occurred at the pools of Bethesda and Siloam; the first was changing water into wine; and the fifth was walking on the water. In addition, John’s “born of water” and the “living water” of chapters three and four, make it clear that the apostle did remarkably stress “water” in his gospel. There is also the “blood and water” of the crucifixion.

(19:34)

Verse 3a

“In these . . .” that is, in the five porches of the pool. This pool was a popular health resort similar to such places all over the world.

Verses 3b-4

These words, have been removed from the text but retained in the margin of your Bible, because they explain the common conviction regarding the pool which resulted in its popularity.

Whatever healing ever occurred there would thus have been attributed to the power of an angel of the Lord, and what would be so unreasonable about that?

Note: Is not all healing of God; and do not the scriptures teach that God's ministering spirits are sent out to render service for the sake of them who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14)

Verse 5

The text does not say that he had been at the pool for thirty-eight years but that his disease was of such lengthy duration. The Lord's mention of the man's condition suggests that he acquired the condition in his youth.

Verse 6

Jesus did not need to inquire concerning the man's condition, its cause, or its duration, but knew all that inherently.

"Do you wish to get well . . .?" This was an offer of the Lord to heal the man, but the form of the question implied that the desire to be made whole was prerequisite to his healing. There was a recognition here of the fact, known to every physician, that certain persons, long invalid, finding it more satisfactory to rely totally upon the services of others than to assume any burden themselves, do not really desire to get well. What is true physically is likewise true spiritually, that is, that the will to be made whole sometimes subsides or disappears from the heart of the sinner.

W. F. Howard, *Interpreter's Bible*, p. 541, writes, "His real difficulty lies precisely here (and so it is with us). We hear the promises, and our hearts run out to claim them; and we believe that we mean what we say. Yet this has

happened time on time and with some of us far longer than thirty-eight years, and this is all that has come of it. And why? Because we really do not want what we say we want and think that we want. Men often mistake their imagination for their heart; and they believe they are converted as soon as they think of being converted.”

Verse 7

The sick man was not offended by the Lord’s question, and his reply bears the interpretation that it was not want of will but want of ability that had frustrated him till that time.

Verse 8

The bed was not likely a type of portable pallet, much like a camp bed, or the bed roll that cowboys carried on their saddles; but even so mild a burden could not have been lifted and carried by an invalid.

Verse 9a

Every soul has the power to do what Jesus commands, granted only that there is the will to obey Him. The man was made whole at a word from Jesus; and the man’s response was prompt and obedient.

What if he had said, “Look, Lord, I do feel a lot better; and , later on, if I still feel this way, I’ll try to do what you said”? Who can doubt that such a response would have forfeited his blessing?

Verses 9b-10

Christ had chosen deliberately to do such a deed on the Sabbath as a platform from which to call attention to His authority and power, and also for the purpose of exposing the ridiculous extensions and additions to God’s Sabbath regulations which had been so mercilessly bound upon the people by their priests.

There are three legitimate grounds upon which all alleged guilt of Jesus in breaking the Sabbath is totally removed.

1. It was well known among the Jews that a prophet might for cause, set aside the Sabbath; and the Prophet like unto Moses, Jesus had every right to do so.
2. As God incarnate, Christ had total authority, even referring to Himself as once as “Lord of the Sabbath.” (Matthew 12:8)
3. The Lord’s actions often referred to as breaking the Sabbath, such as this man’s carrying his bed, constituted no violation whatever of God’s true law regarding Sabbath observance, but only violated the hair-splitting interpretations of it so dear to the Pharisees.

Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 227, said, “The Jews extended the obligation of the Sabbath beyond what was intended . . . observed it superstitiously, and Jesus took every opportunity to convince them of their error. This method He took to show them what the Law of God freely permitted on that day, and that works of necessity and mercy were lawful.”

William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, p. 193, quoting Jeremiah 17:19-27 and Nehemiah 13:15 noted that, “In these passages, the reference is clearly to that type of burden-bearing which was connected with the performance of ordinary labor for gain, with trading and marketing.

By forbidding a cured man to pick up his mat, as if that were comparable to a burden that he was carrying to the market-place in order to sell it at a profit, they were making a caricature of the law of God.”

The Divine law also permitted the securing of one’s property as Barnes noted in the above reference; and the carrying of his bed was necessary to that. If he had walked off and left it, it would have deprived him of it; and the Master’s blessing would have been partially nullified. Not a jot or a title of the law did Jesus ever break.

“The Jews ... “ who accused Jesus here were the Sanhedrinists, the ruling hierarchy of priests, including the Pharisees and the Sadducees, as well as all the leading persons of that class in the city.

Verse 11

The former cripple had already made the deduction that one with the authority to heal him surely had the power also to command him to take up his bed and walk.

What a shame that the priests were so self-blinded that they could not see so plain a thing as that.

Verse 12

One of their petty little hair-splitting regulations had been violated, and that was all they cared about. Therefore they ignored the healing and inquired only of Him who had commanded to take up and walk.

Verse 13

We may not suppose that the cured man merely walked away without inquiring of the one who had healed him, for the initiative in their being separated is here attributed to Jesus. Due to the great throng, it was easy for Jesus just to disappear in the crowd. The man picked up his roll, looked around, but Jesus was nowhere to be seen.

Verse 14

This explains the reason for Jesus' disappearance. He wanted a private interview with that man, sparing him the humiliation of having his sinful life exposed before all, a thing that would have been far less effective in the former cripple's case than what happened privately in the temple.

“Do not sin anymore . . .” This shows that sin was connected with the infirmity which had so long debilitated the cripple. There is indeed a

connection between sin and suffering. This is far from teaching that all sickness or suffering is specifically related to the sin of the sufferer.

Jesus Himself stressed in (9:3) that the blindness of the man He healed was not related to either his or his parents' sin. Richard C. Trench, op, cit., p. 276, expressed it, "As some eagle pierced with the shaft feathered from its own wing, so many a sufferer, even in this present time, sees and is compelled to acknowledge that his own sin fledged the arrow, which has pierced him and brought him down."

"That nothing else worse may befall you . . ." What could be worse than being an invalid for thirty-eight years? The fate of unbelievers is worse. Also, there is a temporal application as well, because there is no condition of human wretchedness so bad that further sin might not aggravate and increase it.

Verse 15

What is to be made of this? Can it be that a man so blessed of the Lord would deliberately have identified him to his bitterest enemies with any view of helping them in their persecution of the Savior? Against such a view is the fact that he spoke of Jesus making him "whole," a word the Pharisees did not wish to hear.

Verse 16

Those zealots who had made the word of God of none effect by their tradition were adamant in their refusal to allow the slightest possibility of any error on their own part. Their foolish and unscriptural Sabbath regulations were so dear to them that they would crucify the Christ of glory rather than yield on the tiniest iota of their conceited interpretations.

Verse 17

"My Father . . ." Jesus here, as usually, affirmed the unique relationship between Himself and God. Jesus' argument here is that such an interpretation as the priests insisted upon would make God Himself a Sabbath-breaker! Does

God not heal on the Sabbath? Is not the maintenance of the universe a work of God going on every second of time, Sabbath days and all? These are the implications of Jesus' words, "My father is working until now.."

Also, it should be noted that Jesus here, by the use of the first person possessive "My Father," and by His statement that He also works (on the Sabbath day) claimed equality with God, a claim made more dogmatically later on in the interview, but clearly visible here also.

"And I work . . ." Jesus affirmed that He was doing exactly what God was doing.

Verse 18

"He was not only breaking the Sabbath . . ." is the allegation of the priests, not the statement of the apostle John.

"Making Himself equal with God . . ." How strange it is that some can read the New Testament and then deny that Jesus claimed to be God. Even His enemies knew full well the implication of His words.

These two verses (17-18) are among the most important in Scripture, especially as they relate to the heresy of Arius (died 336 A.D.) and Sabellius (circa 230 A.D.), the former teaching that Christ was a created being, and latter affirming that God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ are identical, and that Jesus was not God come in the flesh.

Richard C. Trench, *Ibid.*, p. 280, wrote, "Other passages may contain as important witness against Arian, others against the Sabellius' departure from the truth; but this upon both sides plants the pillars of the faith."

This open break between Jesus and the ruling hierarchy was sharp and irrevocable; and, fittingly, Jesus spoke upon this occasion at some length to His enemies in a vain effort to persuade them of the truth of His words and of His claim to be the Messiah. The rest of this chapter is taken up with this overwhelming testimony of the Lord Jesus concerning Himself.

Verse 19

In the words of Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 135, gives us the action of Jesus. “To convince His foes, if they will suffer themselves to be convinced that His action has been in harmony with the will of God. In doing this, He is not called upon to emphasize His personal distinction from the Father (that was admitted by His accusers), or to insist directly on His equality with the Father (for to do that would be to confirm their impression that he was a blasphemer), but rather, without denying either of these, to convince them, if possible, of His absolute unity with the Father in action.”

All the actions of Jesus were in complete harmony with God’s will; neither is the Son of God capable of doing anything contrary to it.

“The Son can do nothing of Himself . . .” This stresses the obvious truth that no mere man could have healed the cripple, demanding the deduction that Jesus displayed the power of God in doing so great a wonder.

“The Son also does in like manner . . .” Jesus’ actions were in full harmony with God’s actions, not only regarding their quality, but with reference to the manner of their being done. Jesus’ words here are nearly the equivalent to the deduction of Nicodemus, “No one can do these signs You do unless God is with Him.” (3:2)

Verse 20

“For the Father loves the Son . . .” This fact should have been known to the priests, for God had so declared it vocally at Jesus’ baptism.

“Shows Him all things that He Himself is doing . . .” It would be difficult to imagine a more powerful claim to deity than this. Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 230, wrote, “From apostles, prophets, and philosophers, no small part of the doings of God show Him all that is done, he must be possessed of omniscience, for no finite mind could be imparted a knowledge of all the works of God.”

“Greater works . . .” By this, Jesus meant that the Pharisees had by no means seen the exhaustion of His mighty powers. In the very next verse, He indicated that He would even raise the dead.

Verse 21

These words of Christ were fulfilled in the raising of Lazarus; and, in context these words amount to a promise that Jesus would indeed raise the dead before the very eyes of His enemies. These words also have a spiritual application that Jesus stressed a little later. (5:25)

Verse 22

This is not a contradiction of 1:17f; for, in that place, the thing refuted by Christ was the false expectation that the Messiah would execute a military and political judgment against the Gentiles; and, with reference to that kind of judgment, Jesus came not to judge but to save.

The judgment in view here is the eternal judgment, which God has made the exclusive province of the Son of God, all judgment having been placed in His hands.

Verse 23

No stronger statement of the deity of Christ appears in Scripture. How is God honored? He is honored by the soul’s purest adoration and worship. This is the way Christ should be honored. These words are equivalent to Jesus saying, “I am God and I am entitled to the honor belonging to the Father.”

Verse 24

“Hears My word and believes Him who sent Me . . .” Hearing and believing Christ’s word are equivalent to believing God who sent Him. Believing Jesus is believing God! Thus, here is another skillful advocacy of His deity.

“Has eternal life . . .” This focuses upon the true mission of our Lord’s coming into the world, to bring men eternal life. The Pharisees, had they been the type of persons who are interested in such a blessing, might have been convinced by such a promise; but they were too busy with their earthly concerns to pay any attention to the great hope held out in these words.

Eternal life is here spoken of as a present possession of the recipient; but that present possession must be understood as a title deed in the form of God’s own promise of a state of bliss following the resurrection of the dead.

“Does not come into judgment . . .” This is the secret of how eternal life is made available to men. If men should come into judgment in their own names, standing in their righteousness alone or pleading their own identity and worthiness, none shall be able to stand.

Every man who ever lived will fail in such a judgment as that—hence the profound promise of Jesus here that the saved “come not into judgment!”

How can this be? Will not God judge all men? Yes, of course; but those who believe and are baptized into Christ, and continue to be united with Him, being found at last “in Him”—those persons shall not come into judgment in their own identity at all, but as Christ!

No man shall ever be saved upon the basis of his own personal merit or righteousness; but in Christ, and as Christ, all who are truly united with the Lord shall be saved, the grounds of their justification and redemption being nothing less than the perfect faith and obedience of the Son of God Himself.

“Has passed out of death into life . . .” Apart from Christ, the entire race of men is in a state of utmost condemnation. On the other hand, eternal life is in Christ. Thus the soul that receives Jesus Christ as Lord passes out of death into life.

Verse 25

The three verses, of which this is the center, are among the most instructive in God's word. There can be nothing less than the first resurrection, as the contrast of it with the final resurrection in the next verse proves. This is a spiritual rekindling of life, and that a physical resurrection from the grave.

What a terrible warning to those foes who at that very moment, were rejecting His word, not allowing even for a moment His true interpretation of God's Sabbath law, but plotting to maintain their own ridiculous interpretations.

Verse 26

The Pharisees had already decided to kill Jesus (5:18) and were diligently seeking some means of carrying out their plans; and in that context, these words carry the weight of 10:17-18, where Jesus plainly said they would not be able to murder Him, but that He would lay down His own life and take it up again. Jesus affirmed here that the Son is co-equal with God in the possession of life in Himself.

Verse 27

"Authority . . ." is the great word with reference to Christ. None of the apostles failed to be impressed with it. Matthew summarized it in Jesus' own words as "all authority in heaven and upon earth." (Matthew 28:18)

"Because He is the Son of God . . ." God would not judge the intelligent creation whom He fashioned in His own image, until first He Himself had become a man in the person of the Son, in order that His judgment would therefore be more merciful, righteous, and just.

Verses 28-29

These words, however, dogmatically declare that Christ will raise all of the dead on earth, that the dead of all ages will respond to His voice, and that Christ will judge them and assign the eternal destiny for both the good and the evil.

“Shall come forth . . .” These are the words addressed to Lazarus (11:43) and show that Jesus had fully decided this early in His ministry to perform just such a wonder, in order to confront the unbelieving hierarchy in Jerusalem with a sign so absolutely beyond the power of any man that their unbelief of it would be utterly inexcusable.

The priestly community in Jerusalem ignored and belittled the healing of a man crippled for thirty-eight years.

Therefore Christ hurled a challenge in the face of His enemies by promising to raise the dead to life again; but even that, when it occurred, did not convince them, for their error was not a matter of intelligence or reason, but the error of a wicked heart.

“Resurrection of judgment . . .” In the teachings of Christ, one great decree is always in view. There will be a simultaneous judgment of all creation at a time already appointed when absolute justice tempered with mercy for those in Christ shall be executed upon all.

Such a concept is inherent in two indisputable facts of the Spiritual world:

1. the eternal righteousness of God, and
2. the immortality of the soul. Given these two basic conceptions, and the necessity of judgment, reward, and punishment is demanded.

Verse 30

In these verses, Christ changed His approach to the closed minds of the priests, still trying to induce them to believe.

“I can do nothing on My own . . .” These words have a double application:

1. I see that nothing I can say will have any weight with you, and
2. My signs should be interpreted by you as revealing that Myself alone, apart from God, could never have done such a thing as cure the invalid.

“My judgment is just . . .” is the equivalent of, “My witness of Myself is absolutely true, because I am doing the will of God who sent me.”

Verse 31

“If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true . . .” This means, “But you are rejecting My witness of Myself because I am the One witnessing.” Thus this verse is a line of the conversation which the Pharisees did not utter, but which Jesus read out of their hearts.

Verse 32

God was here referred to as “another witness,” thus revealing a personal distinction between Jesus Christ and God. Equal to God, Jesus is, the same person as God, Jesus is not.

Verse 33

“You have sent to John . . .” refers to the deputation (1:19) sent out by the priests and to the positive witness of Christ which was borne by the great Herald (1:19-35; 3:23-36).

The hierarchy should have believed John’s witness:

1. that Jesus is the Christ,
2. that Jesus is the Messiah,
3. that Jesus is the Bridegroom, and
4. that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Verse 34

“From man . . .” Thus John the Baptist was not the witness Christ here called on His own behalf. The Savior did not appeal to human testimony at all.

“That you may be saved . . .” The witness of the great Herald was for the benefit of Israel, and for that purpose Jesus repeated it here; but His office of Messiah rested upon more solid testimony than that of any man.

Verse 35

“He was . . .” suggests that at this time John had already been cast into prison.

“You were willing . . .” shows that what willingness they had shown at first no longer existed. There is a subtle but powerful argument here which meant, “Look, you wrongfully changed your position regarding John the Baptist.”

“Lamp . . . light . . .” A lamp is not a light, but the bearer of light. Jesus Himself is called the “Lamp” of the eternal city by this same author. (Revelation 21:23)

Verse 36

John performed no miracle. God had spoken out of heaven in broad open daylight in the presence of thousands saying, “This is My beloved Son.”

The works of Jesus, empowered by God, were the most fantastically powerful deeds ever done on earth, nor had there ever been any successful denial that such world-shaking signs were literally and actually done by Him.

Verse 37

His very presence on earth was a witness from God. Here was the seed of woman, promised from the gates of Paradise; here was one whose birth was announced by the angels of God, one whom the sword of Herod could not slay, one whose life was sinless, perfect, and beautiful, one who spoke as never man spoke, one whose questions as a twelve-year-old confounded the mightiest doctors of religion, and one whose delivery into the world had been since the days of Abraham the sole purpose of God’s patient forbearance with the chosen people.

Jesus' very person, in the full glory of His perfection, was truly the Father's witness of Himself. "You have neither heard His voice . . . nor seen His form." How blind they were and deaf, that, in the presence of Christ Himself, they could hear nothing by a contradiction of their picayune rules.

Verse 38

This verse introduces the third phase of the Father's witness, that of the Holy Scriptures.

Verse 39

"You search the Scriptures . . ." is not a command for His hearers so to do, but a recognition of their familiarity with the Old Testament.

If they had known God's word, they would have recognized and received the true Word of God in Jesus Christ. God's holy revelation, however the Jewish rules might have been familiar with the syllables of it, simply had no place at all in their hearts.

KNOWING AND YET NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES

The paradox of knowing the Scriptures and yet not knowing them still exists. These people to whom Jesus spoke these teachings had perverted their knowledge of the word of God in such a manner as to remove all true knowledge of it. And how had they done so?

1. They had made the word of God of none effect by their traditions; having substituted their own petty and ridiculous rules in the place of God's true Sabbath law.
2. They had also changed the meaning of the words of God had given them. God had promised a Messiah whose paradoxical qualities of glory and humiliation should have been sufficient to identify Him when He came; but the hierarchy promptly projected two Messiahs, making one of them the lowly and suffering priest, and the other the mighty

conqueror who would chase the Romans and restore the Solomonic Empire.

3. They rejected out of hand many of the plainest prophecies, especially those projecting the call of the Gentiles to salvation. (Romans 9:25-29) True knowledge of God's word is a far different thing from familiarity with Scriptural texts.

There are one-third of a thousand specific promises in the Old Testament pointing to the unerring identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of Glory; but these searchers disbelieved, perverted, and rejected every last one of them.

Verse 40

Spoken with infinite sorrow, these words are the summary of the interview thus far. No doubt, He marveled at their unbelief; but there was an excellent underlying reason for their unbelief before Him, and Christ moved at once to a withering attack upon their consummate wickedness.

Verses 41-42

Here the Lord dealt with the reason for this clash with the leaders. First, He disposed of the reason which they would probably have given, and which Jesus knew to be in their hearts. If asked to explain the conflict, they might have responded in the manner suggest by William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 210, who wrote, "He is irked because we criticized Him, for breaking the Sabbath and for implying that He is equal to God; if we had only praised Him for what He did to the man in the pool, He would have been satisfied."

To their evil thoughts, Jesus replied that He would not even receive as valid the praise of any unbeliever. He revealed that He was not the slightest concerned with getting glory from men. The trouble was not the wounded vanity of Jesus, but the lack of the love of God in the hearts of wicked men.

“You do not have the love of God in yourselves . . .” This lack of love of God in their hearts was the inherent cause of their rejection of Jesus. It was the same thing that caused many of them not to confess Him even though they believed on Him; not even after they were absolutely certain that He was the long awaited Messiah. They would not obey Him, because, “They loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God.”

Verse 43

The very oneness of Jesus with God was repugnant to men who did not love God, and it is still true. Jesus’ life of humility, purity, justice, love, and meekness infuriated and disgusted the proud, arrogant, selfish, and lustful rulers of Israel.

“If another shall come in his own name . . .” such a person would be like themselves, full of pride, arrogance, and conceit; and such a leader would be acceptable to them, as being like them and one of them. Jesus was not thus, but demanded of the noblest of them (as in the case of Nicodemus) an utterly new life.

Scores of pretenders to Messianic glory have risen since Christ; and as Alvah Hovey, *op. cit.*, p. 210, noted, “The Jews who were ready to imbrue their hands in the blood of Christ, were just the men to be blinded by the flatteries and taken by the schemes of audacious pretenders to Messianic dignity.”

Also, it should be noted that Jesus’ prophecy of false Messiahs was literally fulfilled. William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 210 noted: “This prophecy was fulfilled over and over again. One false Messiah was Theudas; another was Judas of Galilee. (Acts 5:36-37) Then came Barkochba (132-135 A.D.) . . . There have been several score of others since their day . . . All of these presented themselves without proper credentials; they came “in their own name.”

Verse 44

This says the Sanhedrinists could not believe in Jesus because it would have made them unpopular with their peer group. They were primarily in love with

themselves; and their society was founded upon mutual flattery, mutual deceit, and mutual glory reflected among themselves. The Savior of all men was *persona non grata* in such a society.

Exactly the same blight rests upon Christianity today in the destructive and sinful theology which has been received and promulgated in some high intellectual circles.

Verse 45

Our Lord emphasized His true character as the judge of all men. Christ is eternally the Advocate in the presence of the Father; but He is not the accuser of men; He is their defender, provided only that they will come unto Him and rely upon His righteousness to save them.

Tragically, the Jews Christ addressed were trusting for salvation in the Law of Moses, blissfully ignorant of the law's total ineffectiveness to save anyone.

It provided no means of forgiveness, no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and there was a continual remembrance of sin in it; and the foolish notion of the leaders of Israel that their strictness in keeping some of the law's externals could entitle them to eternal life is among the most pathetic delusions of all time.

Verses 46-47

How strange that those leaders, thinking so strongly that they had eternal life through Moses, were actually unbelievers of the writings of the great lawgiver. Such is the deceptiveness of sin, that persons who truly imagine themselves to be believers are in fact no such thing!

The significance of the testimony of Christ here is great. God is the author of the Old Testament, no less than the New Testament; and there is no way by which a true believer in Christ can avoid full acceptance of God's word as revealed in the Old Testament.

CONCERNING THIS DISCLOSURE

Jesus' words here addressed to His enemies are among the most profound and instructive in holy writ. Philip Schaff, *Ibid.*, said of this passage, "This discourse is truly wonderful for depth and simplicity and boldness. As uttered by the holy Son, it must have astounded "the Jews" holding them spellbound with awe. It is so characteristic, grand, pointed, and telling, that the idea of an invention is preposterous."

After such a presentation of the truth to Jesus' enemies, one may only marvel that hardened men could have continued in their rejection of the Holy Savior and have gone forward with their plans to murder Him. (5:18)

In all this magnificent progression beginning with the healing of the invalid, and then moving steadily and logically from that event

1. to the promise of "greater works,"
2. to the promise that His foes would marvel at it,
3. to the teaching of a great spiritual resurrection,
4. and to the announcement of Himself as having authority and power over the final resurrection and judgment of the last day—in all of these things, there is a dramatic and constant movement toward the tomb of Lazarus and the event of Jesus' raising him from the dead.

CHAPTER 6

Christ the Bread of Life is the theme of this grand chapter. First, there was the fourth great sign (1-14), then the people's efforts to make Him king (15), the fifth of the seven signs (16-21) next the discussions on the other side of the lake and the extended metaphor of the bread of life (22-51), then the "hard saying"

regarding the eating of His flesh, etc. (52-59), and also the turn downward in the Lord's popularity. (60-71)

THE FOURTH SIGN

In the feeding of the five thousand, we have a miracle ranking with the resurrection itself as the only wonders recorded by all four gospels.

Verse 1

“After these things . . .” is an indication of an indefinite time lapse—in this case a whole year. Jesus' reason for withdrawing beyond Galilee was probably complex. His disciples needed rest and recuperation; John the Baptist had been put to death by Herod who was desirous of meeting Jesus, with inevitable overtones of danger to our Lord; and it seems likely that these and perhaps others considerations caused His decision to cross Galilee, thus taking himself beyond Herod's jurisdiction.

The Sea of Galilee, (or Tiberius), which near the end of the first century Galilee became the common name for the sea. Note: The name Tiberius was derived from the city of Tiberius founded on its western shore by Herod Antipas in the year 22 A.D.

Verse 2

Human curiosity combined with the holiday atmosphere of the Passover season, brought great throngs of people to Jesus. None knew any better than the Lord the undependable nature of such crowds and the essentially mundane motives and aspirations of the people. Regardless of their shortcomings, Jesus loved them, a fact very evident in what followed.

Verse 3

The great crowds did not honor Jesus' wish to retire for a rest and recuperation with His disciples, but simply ran around the north end of the lake and gathered around Him at Bethsaida Julius.

F. N. Peloubet, *Peloubet's Bible Dictionary*, p. 91, says, "That Bethsaida Julius and Bethsaida of Galilee, although in two provinces, were separated by a narrow stream and were practically one town, situated on both sides of the Jordan River as it enters the Sea of Galilee on the north."

"The mountain . . ." refers to the massive headland overlooking the grassy slopes where this sign took place.

Verse 4

About a year had elapsed since the healing at the pool of Bethesda, just mentioned in the preceding chapter. "The Passover . . ." explains the great throngs of people and also points to the Exodus when the Passover was set up, and making it an extremely appropriate time for the teaching on the bread of life.

Verse 5

Why Philip was confronted with the problem may be seen in Jesus' desire to help that disciple to greater spirituality in his thinking. Philip, however does not appear to have benefited much. This same disciple showed the same lack of perception later. (14:8)

Verse 6

John did not wish to leave an impression that Christ needed to ask such a question merely for information. The Lord discerned the thoughts of all men; and one evident purpose of this gospel is to bring into sharp focus the divine, supernatural character of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 7

This coin was worth about eight pence halfpenny, or nearly seventeen cents, but the true value more accurately appears in the coin's being the amount of a day's wages. (Matthew 20:9)

Even a partial supply of bread for so many would have required the amount of money a man might have earned by 200 days' labor.

Verses 8-9

The finding of this lad with his small supply did not take place till after Christ had commanded the disciples to feed the people; and even that, they did not bring to Jesus until commanded to do so.

Barley loaves were not the bakery-size loaves of our own times, but small flat cakes associated with the diet and eating habits of the poor. The small fishes were used as a relish with the bread.

“Andrew. . .” is the apostle who brought to Jesus the loaves, the fishes, his own brother and the Greeks.

Many a difficult problem has been solved by bringing it to Jesus!

“What are these for so many people . . .?” In their thinking it was impossible for them to feed the crowds as Jesus had commanded. Human resources were not sufficient to meet the tremendous need before them; and it is a rare disciple of Christ who has not similarly felt the utter lack of human ability to carry out the Lord's commands, especially in such an area as evangelizing the whole world.

Even Moses had this perplexity. (Numbers 11:21-23)

Verse 10

It was a manifestation of faith that they all sat down with no visible store of food in sight. The Lord's simple command was a sufficient reason for their obedience.

Verse 11

“Having given thanks . . .” emphasizes the need for giving thanks at meals, such a duty being constant; nor is the widespread neglect of it any excuse for omitting it.

“He distributed to those who were seated . . .” suggests that only those who sat down were fed. It is not recorded that any refused to sit down, but it may be received as true that if any had refused to obey the Lord’s command, they would have forfeited the blessing.

Christ was not the waiter on that occasion, but the provider. All spiritual benefits of all ages come like that bounty came, from Christ, the provider.

Verse 12

“That nothing may be lost . . .” If Jesus was solicitous regarding the mere crumbs left over from His creation, how much more would He desire that no human soul whatever should be lost.

“Gather up the left over fragments . . .” refers to crumbs as well as larger pieces. Thus Jesus disregarded the popular superstition of the times that demons lurked in crumbs.

Verses 13-14

Nothing sheds any more light on the wonder recorded here than this deduction from it by the people who saw it.

The prophet with whom they identified Jesus is the Christ. This perception of the multitude exposes their fraudulence of rationalistic “explanations” of this event. One device of the rationalistic commentators is to make the entire thing a psychological experience!

Jesus, so they say, took a lad's contribution, pointed out his willingness to share with others, and thus shamed them into sharing whatever they had with others.

The good will spread like a contagion; and suddenly they all had a feast out of what they already had! Those unbelievers who offer such an explanation" deny the sacred record.

Verse 15

The multitude was fully convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and they proposed to make Him king and move against the Romans! With the Messiah feeding them, as God had done so long ago, the problem of the quartermaster was solved!

It was time to throw off the yoke of Rome; and they would have violated the sacred wishes of Christ Himself to further their own schemes. Israel never learned in the long pre-Christian ages, nor in the times of Christ, that an earthly kingdom was never in God's plans from the very beginning, not then, not ever. Yes, they had been granted an earthly state with a king; but at the moment of its inception God had warned them, "I shall not reign (be king) over them." (1 Samuel 8:7)

Throughout the ages, the earthly monarchy of the Hebrews was their project, not God's; and, although God accommodated Himself to it, it was never His will.

The great sign just done before the people, instead of setting their hearts upon the Messiah's teachings, only set on fire their earthly ambitions for the restoration of Solomon's throne, a project that was never for one moment contained in the purpose of Christ.

Christ had been fully aware all that day of what was going on; and there is more than a possibility that the apostles themselves had been infected with the virus that had seized the crowd. The Lord counteracted it by compelling the

disciples to get into the boat, despite threatening weather, and go back to the other side of the lake. (Matthew 14:22)

Jesus rejected the efforts to make Him king, by sending the apostles away and then withdrawing up into the mountain, leaving the vain frenzy of the mob to frustrate itself in the gathering darkness.

THE FIFTH SIGN

Verses 16-17

Here and through verse 21, is recorded the fifth great sign, that of Jesus walking on the sea. In a sense, the trouble in which the apostles soon found themselves was of their own doing. If they had been less inclined to cooperate with the unspiritual mob in their efforts to crown Jesus king, it is not likely that the Lord would have sent them away. It is clear that they did not wish to leave. (Mark 6:45)

“Jesus had not yet come to them. . .” suggests that Jesus had promised to join them, but it was not stated where or when He had planned to do so. They were surprised at the manner of His joining them.

Verse 18

The weather which had resulted in the great wind could have been anticipated by the disciples and thus have reinforced their wish to remain with Jesus; but their sympathies with the “king” movement made it absolutely mandatory that they be sent on ahead.

Verse 19

“Rowed about twenty or thirty furlongs . . .” This reveals that the Holy Spirit did not supply technical data such as the exact distance, but gave only such information as men needed. A furlong was approximately twice the length of a football field (582-600 feet) or 0.11 of a mile. Thus the distance the apostles had

rowed was between 2.75 miles and 3.3 miles, or, with reference to the size of the lake, about halfway across.

"Jesus walking on the sea . . ." Moses, as God's servant, divided the sea; Jesus, as God's Son, walked on it! Rationalism refuses to accept this, saying, "There was really no miracle; the disciples were mistaken; the Lord was only walking on the shore near the vessel; and the superstitious fear of the disciples made them think He was walking on the sea; and that they put ashore and took Him on board, etc." Such views are impossible of reconciliation with the New Testament records of what happened.

J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, p. 344, stated, "If the disciples were in the midst of the sea" and two or three miles from shore, how could they possibly have seen the Lord walking on the shore at night and during a storm? They would not have distinguished anyone on shore, even supposing they could have held a conversation with anyone onshore."

"And they were frightened . . ." The fear of the apostles sprang not merely from the weather and the danger of the sea but also from their lack of harmony with the Lord. It was thus intensified when they saw Him approaching the vessel.

Verses 20-21

The book of Mark says the apostles' "heart were hardened," (Mark 6:48), a remark that proves there was a conflict between Christ and the apostles over the events on shore. Matthew gave the happy ending of the brief estrangement in his account of how the apostles confessed Him and worshiped Him after He came aboard. (Matthew 14:31-33)

"And He intended to pass by them . . ." (Mark 6:48), is another detail omitted by John, but it shows that Christ will always pass by His disciples unless they call upon Him.

“It is I; do not be afraid . . .” is the constant admonition of faith. This was the word of the angels to the shepherds the night our Jesus was born; it was the repeated word of our Savior’s ministry; and in John’s final vision of the Christ, it was the word that led all the rest. (Revelation 1:17-18)

Timidly, and with much apprehension and fear, men daily confront the changing scenes of life; and no word could be helpful than the Savior’s “Fear not!” And why should men not fear? Because, regarding the Christian, nothing can happen to him! Disease may ravage his body, misfortune sweep away his wealth, and time erode his every strength; but he himself is secure. All the problems on earth shall at last be solved in the light and bliss of heaven; and even the calamities of life shall be laid under tribute to enhance the power and beauty of the soul that relies on the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Immediately the boat was at the land, to which they were going.” Immediately is a far different thing from “instantaneous,” and commentaries have thus concluded that no further miracle is in view here.

However, this sign is a whole complex of supernatural occurrences:

1. Christ’s knowledge of the disciples’ condition,
2. His “seeing them” at night in a storm,
3. Jesus walking on the sea,
4. Peter’s walking on the sea,
5. Christ’s rescue of Peter, and
6. the sudden stopping of the wind.

Verses 22-24

The next day, a part of the multitude who had partaken of the loaves and fishes confronted Jesus on the western shore, near Capernaum; and they first

demanded to know how Jesus had gotten away from them. They knew that there had been only one boat and that He had not entered it.

John's mention of the boats from Tiberius in this place is a reference to taxi boats which, after the storm subsided, had gone to Bethsaida Julius in search of fares. It is possible that some of the crowd had probably used the taxis as a means of catching up with Jesus.

Verse 25

They were burning up with curiosity as to how Jesus had eluded them; but He did not give them an answer, moving at once to correct their spiritual condition.

Verse 26

The Lord had overcome the temporary hardening of His apostles' hearts, but it would prove impossible to change the adamant position of the unspiritual multitude. They had seen the great sign; but instead of its opening their eyes to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, they had at once contrasted it unfavorably with the feeding of Israel for forty years in the wilderness.

They wanted Him to do something like that, thus subsidizing their scheme of chasing out the Romans. They were not looking for a spiritual leader; all they wanted was a military and political victory over their enemies.

The temptation still exists for men to view holy religion as primarily concerned with the economic sector. But when preachers forsake the spiritual aims of the church and pander to the economic and social desires of the people, they succeed only in arousing hopes and ambitions that are doomed to frustration.

Let any church start a literal feeding of the multitudes; and it will be found, as it did here, to tend in the direction of some kind of social upheaval, and not in the direction of any moral and spiritual betterment. Look what happened when Christ fed the multitudes; far from taking this as proof that a Savior from sin had arrived, they at once supposed that He should feed them to dedicate their full

energies to destroying the Romans! When Christians or churches seek to provide for men what men should provide for themselves, the hopes and ambitions released by such efforts are just as sinister as those released so long ago on the grassy slopes of Butaiha.

Verse 27

“Do not work for the food which perishes . . .” The great passion of men should be subordinated to the far greater things; but these should be subordinated to the far greater goal of procuring food that gives eternal life.

This does not mean, “Do not work for your daily bread.” The very opposite is commanded. Even in Paradise, Adam was commanded to labor; and toil was ordained as man’s occupation after the fall.

No man should be ashamed to work; our Lord Himself spent the greater part of His earthly sojourn in a carpenter’s shop; Paul the apostle sustained himself as a tent-maker; and the admonition here does not forbid work as the normal employment of a Christian’s time. The injunction here is an order to keep first things first and secondary things secondary.

The church in general, at this juncture in time, needs this instruction no less than the unspiritual crowd that gathered around the Lord in Capernaum.

CHRIST AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Two kinds of food are under consideration here: that which perishes, and that which abides unto eternal life; and the problem of keeping these separate and distinct needs in the proper focus is one of the great challenges confronting Christianity today.

The great concern of true religion is in the realm of the moral and spiritual; and the consideration overriding all others is that of the final attainment unto eternal life. To that glorious goal of Christian faith absolutely everything else must be subordinated.

It was this very thing that came into focus in the Savior's wilderness temptation when Satan proposed making bread out of stones. (Matthew 4:4)

And why not, it would have solved the economic problem absolutely. From the miracle recorded, it is clear that Christ could have done it. He could have made enough bread for all who ever lived or ever would live on earth. Why did He not do it?

Jesus would have done it if miraculous bread had been the correct answer, whither for Jesus' own personal need, or for the needs of all men. In rejecting Satan's proposal for himself, Jesus also rejected it for all men. Bitter as the truth might appear in some circumstances, there are other things more important than bread.

It is the failure of men to receive this truth, and in some instances, the failure of the church itself to receive it, that requires attention.

Organized Christianity in our day has been swept far out to sea in the inordinate stress of material and social improvements, while neglecting to love and preach that sacred body of truth which can alone endow the church with any true meaning.

W. F. Howard, Interpreter's Bible, p. 554, warned, "What vexes Christ the most in the economic situation is not that material things are so badly distributed, but rather that they are so grossly overvalued. In His standard of measurement, they rank very low indeed. And He looks in amazement at a world pressing and jostling like swine around their feeding troughs, paying life away for what to Him are trifles at the best."

This does not deny some importance to fleshly and material needs, nor the binding obligation of Christians to alleviate to the fullest extent of their abilities such needs of their fellow beings, and especially of their fellow disciples. But let men slow- down in their mad pursuit of secular and material values and more adequately concern themselves with the ultimate needs of the soul.

“But for the food which endures to eternal life . . .” How may one work for such food as that? Let them study the Scriptures as lost men in a wilderness might study a map, searching daily, as did the Bereans; let them seek and attend their corporate worship services, bringing their whole hearts into the public assemblies, and truly worshipping God in spirit and truth; let them meditate upon the word of God day and night, honor its precepts, heed its warnings, obey its prohibitions, recover its promises, and trust it as God’s word absolutely.

“Which the Son of Man shall give to you . . .” Christ did not here reveal the shocking truth which He would later stress that He Himself was the true bread from heaven; here He identified Himself only as the giver of it.

“For on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal . . .” J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 356, noted, “The expression applied to our Lord in this place stands alone, but there is no doubt of its meaning. It signifies that in the eternal counsels of God the Father, He has sealed, commissioned, and designated the Son of Man, the Incarnate Word, to be the giver of everlasting life to man. It is an office for which Christ has been solemnly set apart by the Father.”

John’s use of “sealed” appears as an assurance of the absolutely sufficient power of God to provide salvation through Jesus Christ.

Verses 28-29

Christ had just enjoined upon His hearers the mandate that they should work for the food that perishes not; and their reaction was quite naturally, “Well, what must we do?” thinking no doubt that He would mention some of the commandments from the Old Testament; but it was not merely a more particular fidelity to the Old Testament that could lead to eternal life, but the complete acceptance of an entirely new system that would be required not only of them but of all men. That new system of Christianity, though of grace and unmerited favor, was nevertheless a system with works of its own—works of a far different nature from the laws, but still “works of faith,” for Christ said in this verse, “Work for the food that endures to eternal life. (Verse 27)

“This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent . . .” In all the New Testament, there is not a more instructive verse than this which designates faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a work performed by men, but also in the ultimate sense a work of God. This statement demolishes the prevalent Protestant heresy that, “There is nothing you can do to be saved!”

As C. E. W. Dorris, Commentary on John, p. 94, noted, “This verse illustrates the truth that the works of God are works ordained by God to be performed by men.”

There is a difference in believing and in “believing in” or “believing on” the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ demanded absolute faith in Himself, and still does.

“What shall we do . . .” means “What must we do to be saved?” On Pentecost, in the jail at Philippi, and on the Damascus Road, the question, “What shall I do” was the initial movement of souls toward the Lord.

In answer to this question, the Holy Spirit said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins calling on His name.” (Acts 16:31; 2:38; 22:16)

Verse 30

The marvelous wonder of the day before was lost on that carnal multitude. Instead of being convinced, they demanded sign upon sign, even suggesting a moment later that Jesus’ miracle was inferior to Moses’ miracle (it was not Moses’ miracle, but God’s) of the manna. The manna had been provided for a period of forty years and was held to be superior to the barley loaves Jesus created. However, God’s purpose was different in two cases. In the wilderness, the survival of the chosen people was the objective; but in the ministry of Christ, it was the identification of Jesus as the Messiah and Divine Son of God which was the objective; and for the later purpose, creation of barley loaves for five thousand people was just as effective (or should have been) as feeding a million people for a whole generation.

“What then . . . for a sign . . .” This demand of a sign was characteristic of that people. The Pharisees demanded a “sign from heaven,” no doubt meaning some spectacular wonder of their own choosing. (Matthew 16:1; 12:38)

Mark stated on another occasion that Jesus, “Marveled at their unbelief. (Mark 6:6) Surely Jesus must have marveled here also.

THE MARVEL OF UNBELIEF

Unbelief is such a wonder that Christ Himself marveled at it!

1. Unbelief is a state in which man consciously accepts for himself the status and destiny of a mere animal.

Contrary to the deepest instinct of the soul and the prompting of his own ego, the unbeliever rejects the status available to him as a child of God, claims descent from anthropoid ape ancestry, and ascribes to himself a destiny identical with that of a rat or a worm.

2. Unbelief is contrary to man’s nature.

Man’s very nature is to believe, an inveterate trait locked into the deepest instincts of human life. Evil men know that trait is in men and take full advantage of it, all of the schemes ever devised for defrauding men having as the dominant characteristic a reliance on man’s willingness to believe almost anything. What a wonder that men will not believe in God, but will believe in witchcraft! No wonder Jesus marveled at unbelief.

3. Unbelief is a denial of man’s highest hopes.

The unbeliever forsakes the hope of heaven, forfeits all cosmic value for himself, and flaunts his conviction that he shall descend to the rottenness of a grave and remain there forever. Such a spiritual renunciation is soul suicide; and even Christ marveled at such a thing.

4. Unbelief is a denial of the senses and a closing of the windows of the mind. It is a refusal to see, to hear, and to understand the mountainous evidence calling men to believe in the Lord Jesus.
5. Unbelief is reverse logic. In Mark 6:6, where it is stated that Jesus marveled because of their unbelief, the reference is to the citizens of Nazareth who rejected Jesus because He lived in their village! This was their logic (?): We are unworthy and of low position; Christ came from one of our families; therefore He is unworthy and of low position!

Unbelief is a display of human ignorance, perversity, and conceit turned wrong side out, that staggers the imagination and is no easier to understand than the death march of the lemmings.

Verse 31

It is best to be on guard when Satan quotes Scripture. Their quotation of Nehemiah 9:15, was misquoted, because they made Moses the antecedent of “he” rather than God, an error Jesus corrected.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus had claimed to be greater than Moses; but that carnal multitude, still intent on using Jesus in their schemes against the Romans, contrasted His miracle unfavorably with what they improperly called Moses’ miracle, the manna, of course, having been provided for many years.

What they were really trying to do here was to intimidate Christ into feeding everybody for years on end; but of course they would have liked a better diet than those barley loaves.

The carnality of those men and the vulgar boldness of their daring suggestion constitute a remarkable proof of the fourth sign, for it is perfectly clear that they recognized in Jesus Christ the power to do what they wished Him to do. How easily could Jesus have fed an army to be used against the Romans—that was their view and their motivation for what was said here.

Verse 32

They were wrong in their inference that Moses was greater than Christ, for God, not Moses, fed them in the wilderness. Moses was God's "servant."
(Nehemiah 9:14)

In the second clause, Christ again tried to lift their eyes to the far more wonderful thing that God was at that very moment doing for them in His providing the "true bread out of heaven," namely, Christ the Savior.

There are two miracles in view in sign four. The primary wonder was the barley loaves, the higher marvel being Christ Himself, the true bread of heaven.

Jesus never succeeded in lifting the eyes of His audience to that higher level of seeing the true bread of life the barley loaves, the barley loaves, the barley loaves!

Verse 33

"Gives life to the world . . ." Not for Israel was the true bread, but it was for the world. The true bread was far greater than the manna in these particulars;

- (1) it gives and sustains spiritual life, a far greater thing than merely sustaining physical life;
- (2) it is for the world, not merely for Israel alone;
- (3) it creates spiritual life leading to eternal life, which no manna could have done.

Verse 34

Strongly suggestive of the woman's words at the well (4:15), this was as close as they came to believing; but here was no following on to know the Lord. There is the strong possibility they were still thinking of supplies for an army.

Verse 35

“I am the bread of life . . .” is one of the seven great of John. This is an apt metaphor of God’s providing in Christ the means of human redemption. In that age, bread was essential to every meal, the staff of life, a fit emblem of Christ the soul’s food.

“Who believes in Me shall never thirst . . .” The living water and the bread of life being separate metaphors for one thing only, Jesus Christ.

“Believes in Me . . .” should not be understood as an affirmation of the popular superstition regarding salvation by “faith only.”

Verses 36-37

“All that the Father gives Me . . .” refers to all who shall be saved, none being excluded, so long as they truly come to Christ, that being the thrust of the second clause.

This verse makes no reference to faith like that in the previous verse; but this does not exclude faith. Coming to Jesus is equivalent to entering His kingdom; and entering that requires one to be born of water and the spirit. (Chapter 3:5) “Coming” is something that a man does, not something that he thinks, believes, or feels.

Verse 38

A bolder statement of the virgin birth of Christ cannot be imagined than this offhand, factual statement from the lips of Christ, “I have come down from heaven.”

From first to last John stresses the eternal existence of Christ and His prior residence in heaven, the virgin birth being an inescapable corollary. How else, pray tell, could God have entered our earth-life as a man?

“Not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me . . .” Jesus’ absolute submission to the Father’s will is stressed throughout John.

Verses 39-40

These verses are a double affirmation of the most stupendous claim ever made by the Son of God, declaring that the highest authority in the universe has guaranteed the fulfillment of what Jesus here promised.

“All that He has given Me . . .” refers to all the souls who shall respond to the offer of salvation, their response being viewed here as the Father’s giving them to Jesus, which is indeed true. Even when men believe and obey the gospel unto eternal life, the reception of it is still the gift of God.

“I lose nothing . . .” Not merely what happens in this life is in view here, for He spoke of the whole sweep of time to eternity. Not even death shall defeat the purpose of God in the redemption of them that believe and come to Jesus.

“Raise him up on the last day . . .” This countermands all the sorrows and frustrations of life. The use of neuter pronouns as “all” and “it” do not compromise the plain meaning of this purpose, human souls being viewed not as masculine or feminine. (Galatians 3:28)

“The last day . . .” is repeated four times in this chapter (Verses 39, 40, 44, 54)

J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 786, said, “These words show that Christ came to abolish not natural, but spiritual death. Believers will die, but their death will be followed by a glorious resurrection.”

Destructive critics have vainly tried to edit the doctrine of eternal judgment out of the writings of John by interpreting “last day” to mean the day of the believers death and the “raising” his translation into paradise.

J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 379, noted, “Such interpretations are utterly destitute of foundation.” John did indeed teach of the last day and the general resurrection

of the dead with the assignment of appropriate destinies for both the righteous and the wicked. (5:24-29)

Regarding the last day, Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 157, said, "Till that day, the bodies of the saints will sleep in the dust of the earth; but then they will be raised incorruptible, glorious, and adapted to the wants of the spirit. Christ will thus effect the salvation of the whole man."

"Beholds the Son, and believes in Him may, have eternal life . . ." These words should not be understood as outlining "all that is required" of those to be saved, as some love to conclude, but they are a statement of the important first steps toward salvation. Jesus had just said that men must "come" unto Him. (Verse 37)

The uttermost confidence belongs to the true believer in Christ. No power of flesh, darkness, or hell can take the Christian's crown by force.

Christ shall prevail unto the final salvation of the total body of the redeemed; and, upon the astounding promises here recorded, speculative theories of election and predestination have been grounded. Any theory that reaches a degree of presumption that denies the possibility of a saved person's falling is anti-scriptural and untrue.

The Christian's crown may not be forcibly removed from him by any power in the universe; but, through the freedom of will, one may defect; and, in the light of this fact, this same author admonished, "Hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown." (Revelation 3:11)

Even John Calvin, *Ibid.*, p. 381, wrote, "They are madmen who seek their own salvation, or that of others, in the whirlpool of predestination, not keeping the way of salvation which is exhibited to them."

Verses 41-42

"The Jews . . ." John's repeated use of these terms in reference to his own countrymen emphasizes the hostility and antagonism of the chosen people

toward Christianity. He no longer identified himself as a Jew, thus exhibiting the new identity in Christ, of which Paul said, “In Christ . . . there can be neither Jew nor Greek.” (Galatians 3:26-28)

“Grumbling . . .” implies a malignant and reprehensible opposition. Most commentators detect a break in these verses from the situation earlier in the chapter, indicating that the discussion from here to the end of the chapter took place in the synagogue, where official members of the Jewish establishment took up the argument against Christ. If so, this would account for the more hostile trend of the conversation. (Verse 59)

“I am the bread that came down out of heaven . . .” Jesus had not used these exact words; but they are a fair and logical deduction from what He had said. (Verses 33, 35, 38)

The opponents were correct in their understanding of what Christ meant; but they were aroused and angered by it. Why? Evidently Christ’s lowly condition on earth was the great stumbling block to their acceptance of Him.

If the Master had come as an all-powerful monarch, in riches, splendor, and earthly glory, they might have been willing to receive Him; but a poor, lowly, suffering Messiah, without property or social position, whose chief followers were fishermen, and who had nowhere to lay His head—such a Messiah they reviled and detested, their human pride refusing to believe that such a one came from God. His lowliness and poverty, and finally His death on the cross—these things were the stumbling block to the Jews. (1 Corinthians 1:23)

“Is not this Jesus . . .” J. C. Ryle, *Ibid.*, p. 386, said, this phrase “Has a latent sneer in it, which our English versions cannot fully convey. It is as if they said, ‘Is not this fellow, etc.’”

“The Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know . . .” The conclusion of the leaders in the synagogue at Capernaum that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary was a deduction based on ignorance. They thought they knew, no doubt, and might even have investigated in Nazareth with a hope of finding

some taint in Jesus' background; but if Joseph and Mary were interrogated by them, one may be certain that they refused to tell the evil rulers of the synagogue any of the marvels that attended the Lord's birth.

The crowd in the synagogue, were correct in, and that was their conclusion that Jesus' teaching contradicted their supposition about His being the natural son of Joseph, thus making Jesus' teaching in this place to be an affirmation of His virgin birth.

Verses 43-44

Those who find in this an irresistible and sovereign act of God in calling individual sinners find much more than is in it, for the very next verse tells exactly how the drawing is accomplished: "They shall all be taught of God."

To suppose that God draws some and not others would be to suppose that God is partial and unjust. (Acts 10:34) The grumblers in this passage had rejected the teaching of God relative to the lowliness of the Messiah, thus thwarting God's drawing of them unto Himself.

Verse 45

"The prophets . . ." Jesus' words here seem more reasonably construed as a reference to the general teaching of the Old Testament that in the days of the new covenant men shall receive teaching from God. Those who heed God's word, come to Jesus, being in such a manner drawn to Him and drawn of God.

If God does not draw men by His word, how is it done? Is not the word a sufficient instrument? Was it not the word that hurled the suns in space, and lifted up the cross, and stilled the sea? Why should some other means of drawing be imagined? The Divine word is more than enough.

In the book of Acts, not a single record exists in the history of apostolic preaching in which even one person was converted who had not first heard the word of God; and it is therefore concluded that all who are converted are converted by the word of God.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 239, wrote, "It is not true that 6:45 cancels, or at least weakens 4:44. The expression, "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God" does not in any sense whatever place in the hands of men the power to accept Jesus as Lord."

Despite such views, John himself taught that those who "believe on His name" through hearing God's word, are given the "power to become children of God." (1:12)

The theory which stipulates that one who has heard God's word, consequently believing on Jesus Christ, does not thereby have the right to become a child of God until some mysterious further action on the part of God Himself in "drawing" the sinner is repugnant; because, in the final analysis, it makes God and not the sinner responsible for whether or not he accepts the Lord. God has already given His word to men; to the whole creation; and therein is also the power for all who choose to do so, to become God's children.

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, p. 99, said, "The power is the power of God unto salvation. It is the drawing power. It draws by its manifestation of the love of God, by its revelation of the crucified Savior. If man's will consents, and he yields to the drawing power, he comes; but, if he will not, and refuses to be drawn, he does not come. God will not force him."

Verse 46

This teaching, guards against the notion that one could know God by means of the Old Testament alone. The true revelation of God could come only from one, even from Him "that is from God," which is Christ.

Verse 47

The preconditions of receiving eternal life are not the subject of this verse. Here Christ was not speaking of them that "believe on" Jesus, but of those who "believe" the word of God. There is no authority for translating this place, "He

that believes on Me has eternal life.” Christ did say that everyone that believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (3:16; 6:40)

Verse 48

“I am the bread of life.” Christ’s discussion as the “bread of life” is discussed in verses 32, 33, and 51.

Verses 49-51

These verses are a brief restatement of the Lord’s teachings in verses 32-33, and with the additional new element regarding His crucifixion, that is, giving “His flesh” for the life of the world.

“Flesh” in this context is a reference to the human body of the Lord, and is not used in the sense that Paul sometimes used the term. I was the human life of the Divine Savior that was sacrificed on the cross to provide bread for all men unto eternal life, bread appearing in this metaphor as the principal and dominating element of human diet. Christ is the soul’s true food.

Verse 52

“How . . .” This is the usual question of unbelief. What Jesus meant by this was the soul’s appreciating and assimilating the benefits derived from His death upon the cross. Christ is to the soul what food and drink are to the body. Without food and drink, the body dies; without Christ the soul dies.

Any Christian who has for a lifetime studied the Holy Scriptures in their reference to Christ, and prayed to Him daily, and worshiped Him constantly, and who has sat down every Lord’s day for many years in a weekly assembly where tokens of His flesh and blood are actually eaten—such a person finds the flippant question of the skeptics mentioned here a lot more ridiculous than Jesus’ statement must have appeared to them.

Verse 53

Taken literally, the passage would be cannibalistic and repulsive, thus requiring a spiritual understanding of it.

It is a metaphorical reference to the soul-saving benefit procured on behalf of the human family by Christ's atoning death on the cross and the shedding of His blood. The eating and drinking refer to the soul's proper appropriation of that benefit.

Verse 54

Is there any reference here to the Lord's Supper? A reference to the Lord's Supper is surely here. Our Lord said of the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper, "This is My body . . . this is My blood;" and there is no logical way of dissociating those remarks from what is said here. This is not to say that "eating the flesh and drinking the blood" of the Son of God refers exclusively to the Lord's Supper; but there is no escape from the positive certainty that the Lord's Supper is included.

Therefore, it is denied here that persons who are neglecting or refusing to observe the Lord's Supper as Christ commanded are in any manner whatsoever "eating and drinking" in the manner mentioned here.

The oldest interpretations that have come down through history affirm the reference here to the Lord's Supper. Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer*, the Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. V. p. 452, said, "When therefore He says that whosoever shall eat of His bread shall live forever; as it is manifest that those who partake of His body and receive the Eucharist by the right of communion are living, etc." Note: This interpretation is offensive to some, as for example, Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. V, p. 563, said, "This can never be understood of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper,"

- (1) Because this was not instituted till a year later;

2. It cannot be said that those who do not receive the sacrament shall perish everlastingly; and
3. Nor can it be supposed that all who do receive it are necessarily eternally saved.”

Clarke’s objections have no weight, because:

1. John spoke mysteriously of the Holy Spirit long before he was given. (See 7:39 and its comment). This prophesies the supper.
2. Clarke’s objection here refutes the interpretation that would make the Lord’s Supper the only thing meant by Jesus’ words; but, of course, the totality of Jesus’ teaching as it regards the Lord’s Supper has no promise whatever of eternal life. Men may scream about this if they please but it is what the word of God says.
3. In this, Clarke’s words are true enough but irrelevant as an argument against a reference to the Lord’s Supper as being intended here. Clarke’s argument is just this: “Look, if this refers to the Lord’s Supper, it would mean that the people who observe it are saved, and those who don’t are lost and that cannot possibly be true!”

Well, why not? If the Lord’s Supper is a normal and conspicuous element of Christianity, designed to be partaken of by the whole body of the redeemed of all ages and to be continued until the second advent of the Son of God; and, if the Lord’s Supper is the only ceremonial ordinance commanded to be observed repeatedly throughout the full lifetime of every Christian, it is not therefore absolutely true that the saved and the lost of all ages may be accurately identified as those who do, or who do not observe it? Of course it is. The trouble with the commentators is that, so long they have construed salvation by faith as meaning “by faith only,” that they similarly interpret the obvious reference to the Lord’s Supper here as “Lord’s Supper only.” However their reference to the Lord’s Supper in this place, which is stoutly affirmed, is not to

the supper only, but to the entire system of Christianity for which it (by metonymy) stands.

Verse 55

The soul's true and only food leading to eternal life is the body given and the bloodshed by Christ, hence the soul's true food and drink.

Verse 56

“Abides in Me . . .” brings into view the spiritual body of the Lord, which is His church, and the eating and drinking of His flesh and blood is a reference to serving Christ within that body, including the faithful observance of His commands relative to the Lord's Supper.

“In Me . . .” The implications of this tiny prepositional phrase are perhaps the profoundest in the entire Bible. In Paul's writings, this phrase, or its equivalent (in Christ, in Him, in whom, etc.), is used 169 times. This is the Holy Spirit's manner of declaring that the concept of being “in Christ” is about the most important thing in Divine revelation.

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me . . .” The person who is faithfully observing the Lord's command regarding the Lord's Supper is abiding in Christ; and those who remove themselves from such faithful observance also remove themselves from being “in Christ.”

Some religionists may not find this truth to their liking; but there does not seem to be any honest way to remove such a conclusion from this text. “He that eats and drinks abides in Christ.” Although certainly included, the Lord's Supper is not the only eating and drinking characteristic of the Christian's life. Paul declared that “In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13) Here the receiving of the Holy Spirit is the same as to “drink of” the Holy Spirit.

“And I in Him . . .” In this passage the mutual union of Christ and believers is spoken of as the saved being in the Lord, and as the Lord being in the saved. These are not descriptive of two states but of one.

The blessed union between the saved and God is variously described in the New Testament as: God in men, men in God, Christ in men, men in Christ, the holy Spirit in men, and men in the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ in men, and the word of Christ in me. These are not eight states or conditions of spiritual life, but one, the saved state.

Verse 57

Eating Christ is a metaphor for accepting the whole system of Christianity in faith and obedience.

Verse 58

This and the preceding verse are a repetition for the sake of emphasis of the words in verses 31-35.

Verse 59

Earlier in this chapter, it was noted that the discussions were brought on by the fourth sign at Bethsaida Julius. When they tried to make Jesus king, He left them and returned to the western shore where some of them followed Him. Apparently some of the discussions were held outside. (Verses 25-40) The discussions continued before the rulers of the synagogue inside that edifice at Capernaum. (Verses 41-59).

Verse 60

“Difficult statement” . . . was a correct designation. It was so judged by them that first heard it; and therein appears ample justification for setting aside all interpretations that would make an easy thing out of this, such as declaring that it means “Whoever believes shall be saved!” The right interpretation must take into account the difficulty.

Verse 61

The omniscience of Jesus, so often referred to in John, is apparent here also. The Lord read the hearts of His disciples and moved at once to help them.

“Does this cause you to stumble . . .?” A literal understanding of Jesus’ teaching here was never intended; but the glory of the metaphor is seen in the fact that the truth it was designed to convey is no less astounding than the shocking metaphor used to teach it. That the soul’s only food and drink leading to eternal life must be Jesus Christ—that truth still causes men to stumble.

HARD SAYINGS OF JESUS

Many of Jesus’ plainest teachings must be accounted “hard sayings.” His teachings concerning judgment, hell, and eternal condemnation are so hard, in fact, that some reject them. His doctrine concerning the new birth, going the second mile, turning the other cheek, and the forbidding of divorce are hard sayings; and men are still offended by them, even as some disciples were offended then. For the child of faith, the sayings of Christ are received in meekness, whether fully understood or not; because true confidence in the Lord will not permit the setting aside of anything that He taught.

Verse 62

This is a reference to the ascension of Christ into heaven, an event which would, of necessity, be preceded by the sufferings and death of the Lord. The Lord spoke these words with a view to raising the question of how His disciples’ faith would be able to withstand the far greater stress of events leading to His ascension.

Verse 63

This was Jesus’ way of saying, “Look, with regard to what I said about eating My flesh and drinking My blood, you must not take that literally, but spiritually. “The flesh profits nothing . . .” Of course, eating My literal flesh would be to no

profit; but My words are spirit and are life. It is My teaching which you must assimilate.”

Verse 64

Again the omniscience (all knowing) of Jesus is in view. The foreknowledge of God, or of Christ, is difficult for some. How can it be, they ask, that God knows what will happen without in such knowledge becoming the cause of what happens? No one can explain how that may be; but there is a counterpart to it in man's life which might possibly shed some light on it.

Thus, a person knows what happened yesterday, but such knowledge does not mean that he caused whatever happened. Just so, God knows what will happen tomorrow without thereby becoming the cause of its happening.

Verse 65

The Lord's evident purpose here was to encourage the faithful disciples. The defection of many, the unbelief of some, the treachery of one—all of these events which were due to the fact of their rejecting God's word by which they would have been drawn to Jesus, and thus it was not given to them by the Father to be Jesus' disciples and to have eternal life.

Verse 66

The more carnal majority of the throng that heard Jesus found the events and discussions of that day an insurmountable obstacle to their following Him any longer. It was clear that Jesus had no intention of feeding them while they made war on Rome; and, when the Lord tried to teach them of the true bread from heaven, they scoffed at it. It became evident as the day wore on that they would have none of the spiritual food that Christ offered. As a last resort, He hurled a shocking metaphor into the teeth of the crowd that wanted to eat, eat, eat, at His hands saying, “Except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, you have no life in you!” Thus the Lord gave them the excuse they needed to leave Him.

Verse 67

These words were spoken sorrowfully and with deepest concern lest the Twelve themselves should be swept away by the great defection; nevertheless, the Lord would not force even them. Every man was free to leave if he chose to do so. Plans always go forward, with or without men's cooperation.

Verse 68

Here, in Peter's answer, was the secret of why many defected that day, and a few did not. It was not that God in some imperial, inscrutable election, before all time and eternity, had decreed that some should go and others stay. Far from it! Peter had regard to the word of God which Jesus was teaching; and that word was the anchor that held Peter, despite the fact that the metaphor must have shocked him as much as it did the multitude. Those who defected were not taught of God, due to their own character, and not for any lack of opportunity; therefore they were not drawn of God, being drawn instead by their own carnal preferences.

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

1. Peter's question carried the implication that all men require someone to whom they can go. It is not in man that walks to direct his steps; he is never free to order his own affairs but is always the slave of the philosophy he accepts.

Man's constitutional nature is such that he is free only to choose a master, a choice that narrows down to God or Mammon. This explains man's irrevocable commitment to religion. He may have the true religion, or any one of a thousand false religions; but religion he must have. For example, dialectical materialism is nothing but a godless, anti-Christian religion, the same being also true of any other systems and "isms."

2. Peter's reply carried also the implication that human loyalties are inherently directed to a person, rather than to some philosophy, system,

or ethic. Peter did not ask, “To what shall we go?” but rather, “To whom shall we go?”

James Hastings, *The Great Texts of the Bible*, p. 277, said, “Since the world was, man has never been able, among ten thousand faiths, to have a religion with a personality enshrined at the heart of it. It may be questioned if to an abstract principle men have ever yet, since the world was, built one solitary temple, reared a single altar, offered a single sacrifice, or breathed a single prayer.”

3. This need for going to someone is inherent in the helplessness of humanity.

Peter’s reply made mention of “eternal life,” and therein is the admission that the present existence is mortal and ephemeral. Man’s mortality, ignorance, and sin are components of his need, which, like an open wound uncovered, sends him to another.

4. “Only You have the words of eternal life . . .” Peter had already found the Lord to be food and drink for his soul; and although Peter, like the others, was no doubt shocked by Jesus’ metaphor, nevertheless, the meaning of it he already knew. Of all the teachers who ever instructed the human race, only Jesus Christ delivered a convincing body of truth regarding eternal life and the procurement of it by men. To turn away from Jesus our Lord is to turn into darkness and despair.

Mankind is like one lost in a lifeboat on the sea in a storm at midnight; and across the boundless ocean only one beacon penetrates the vast darkness that engulfs him, and to turn away from the only light is to choose darkness and death. Jesus is the world’s only light.

Verse 69

Knowledge is properly held to be valuable, but it is not in knowing, but in believing, that one discovers spiritual reality. If one shall wait until he “knows in

the absolute sense of that term, he shall never believe; but if with all his heart he shall “believe” in the fullest sense of the word, then he shall know with certainty and absolute assurance the great truths unfolded in the word of the Lord.

“We walk by Faith, and not by sight,” the apostle said, and as the soul of man would ascend into that eternal realm of the spirit and take hold of the inheritance of the saints in light, he will find faith a far better conveyance than mere knowledge.

May all who read these lines “believe,” and then they shall know that Jesus is the holy one of God. The warning should be heeded that the decision to believe or not to believe is not an intellectual choice at all, but a moral choice; but those who make the moral decision to believe inevitably find also that it is fully supported by all of the gifts of reason and of intelligence as well; and the believer shall find, as did the apostles, that believing, he shall know the truth.

Verse 70

“One of you is a devil...” does not mean that Judas had been a devil from the beginning, or that he was a devil when Jesus selected him as an apostle. Judas “by transgression fell” (Acts 1:35); and it is impossible for one to fall from an eminence he does not have. Some considerable time had passed since Judas was chosen; and, during that interval, the fall had taken place, hence Jesus’ use of the present tense, “is a devil.”

Verse 71

Perhaps the purpose of Jesus’ introduction of this shocking revelation was to prepare the other apostles for the impact of so dastardly a deed as the betrayal; and there could have been no better time for such a warning than the very moment when Peter was affirming so strongly their faith and knowledge of the Son of God.

The placement of this warning concerning Judas at this particular place in the gospel supports the supposition that Judas had been taken in by the arguments

of those who wanted to make Jesus king, and that the traitor found the demands of his carnal nature more in harmony with the enemies of than Lord the in companionship with the Lord of Life.

CHAPTER 7

Chapters 7-10, record the great controversy that raged around the name of Jesus during the last six months of His ministry. It was October, at the beginning of this chapter, a full six months having elapsed since the tremendous events of chapter 6; and, during that intervening period, the Lord had continued His work in Galilee, beyond the reach of His enemies in Jerusalem. The synopsics reveal that in this same interim, the Lord had repeatedly schooled His disciples concerning the approaching Passion and His resurrection.

It was time to face eventualities in the capital city, the account of which events comprise the rest of the book of John. A short break would again occur (10:4-12) at the end of this section of controversy, in which the Lord briefly withdrew to await the final Passover.

This chapter relates the events related to the Feast of Tabernacles in October, prior to the Passover in April at which Jesus was crucified.

The rapids begin to roar in this chapter; the rising storm of hatred against the Lord would not diminish till a cross arose upon Golgotha.

The marvelous value of this section (chapters 7-10) is in the surgical manner of John's exposing all the complex elements leading up to the crucifixion. Jesus never allowed others to signal the time of His actions; and just as He rejected the suggestion of His mother at Cana (chapter 2:4), He here rejected the suggestion of his brothers regarding attendance of the feast, attending not all of it, but the last half of it (verses 1-13). He defended Himself against a charge of Sabbath-breaking (verses 14-24); a feeble attempt to arrest Him failed (verses 25-

36); He spoke of the living water (verse 37-44); and Nicodemus spoke a word in His defense (verses 45-52).

Verse 1

The plot to kill Jesus had been in existence about eighteen months already. (chapter 5:18)

Verse 2

This feast was the equivalent of a harvest festival “tabernacles” referring to booths, or arbors made of tree branches, in which the people camped out in commemoration of the wilderness sojourn of Israel (Leviticus 23:34-36) It occurred in October.

Verse 3

“His brothers. . .” contrasting with “disciples,” compels the understanding of this in the ordinary sense of His human brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. (Matthew 13:55) They at this time did not believe in Him. (verse 5)

They said in effect, “Get on to Jerusalem and perform some more miracles to encourage the people down there who believe in You.”

Verses 4-5

“For no one does anything in secret . . .” was their way of saying that Jesus was merely wasting His time in Galilee. “If You do these things . . .” shows that they did not believe in Him and recalls Satan’s words. (Matthew 4:3)

Verse 6

In due time, Jesus would reveal Himself in Jerusalem, by means of His death and resurrection; but that would have to await the time appointed by the Father. Although out of June with Jesus’ will here, these brothers eventually became followers. (Acts 1:14)

Verse 7

Jesus' brothers and their friends had not broken with the hierarchy in Jerusalem and thus it was all very well for them to go up to the feast; but Jesus had broken with it, and they were plotting to kill Him. (5:18)

For the Lord to have walked boldly into the trap laid for Him in Jerusalem would have been folly. The priests were determined to kill Him.

Verse 8

"I do not go up to this feast . . ." was true in the sense that Jesus attended only half of it. Besides, in the Jewish sense, one attending only half of it was not said to have attended it.

Verse 9

The brothers went on to Jerusalem without Him, leaving the Lord free to enter at a time and circumstance of His own choice. The Pharisees were laying a trap for Jesus, but they would find themselves in His trap before the week was over.

JESUS GOES UP TO THE FEAST

Verse 10

This strong favorable attitude toward Jesus among the populace was balanced by the hatred of the leaders, whose plot to kill the Lord was known; and, through fear, many considered it unsafe to speak of the Lord openly.

"As it were in secret . . ." Friends of Jesus would have aided His quiet and unobtrusive entrance into the city; but it must not be thought that Jesus was, in any sense, hiding from the authorities. Three and one-half days was not enough for the Pharisees to accomplish their purpose of killing Him.

Verse 11

The Lord's name was on every tongue during the first half of the feast when He did not appear. His enemies sought Him but found Him not.

Verses 12-13

Christ's name was upon all lips; His mighty deeds were the biggest news that ever happened in Jerusalem; the people loved Him; the leaders hated Him; and conversation buzzed all over the city; but if any of the Pharisees appeared, the conversation ceased.

The threat of murdering the Son of God lay like a mantle of poison gas over Jerusalem during that feast. There was a dreadful air of impending disaster; Satan was in control of the government of the Holy City.

JESUS APPEARS IN THE TEMPLE

Verse 14

Once more the messenger of the covenant came suddenly to His temple; and such boldness frustrated and unnerved the Lord's enemies. They did not know how to deal with it. His learned dissertations in the temple were persuading many to believe on Him; and the Pharisees were unable to reconcile such wisdom with the fact of Jesus' never attending the rabbinic schools.

Verse 15

"The Jews therefore were marveling . . ." but what men have marveled about ever since is the bigotry that said, "How could He know anything if He did not learn it from us?" "This man . . ." has the meaning of "this fellow" and was intended to place Jesus on a lower level than the rabbis and priests. Nicodemus having a higher opinion of Christ referred to Him as "Rabbi." (3:2)

Verse 16

By this, Jesus claimed that His own words were the words of God, and, in the light of all that has occurred in the intervening centuries, it is clear enough that Jesus did indeed deliver the words of Almighty God to mankind. It was this quality of identifying His teachings as God's teaching that infuriated the leaders.

Verse 17

These remarks are the equivalent of His saying, "Look, if you really want to do the will of God, you will recognize that it is God's will, and not mine own, that I am proclaiming.

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, p. 111, noted, "Does not this involve the conclusion that if anyone in the world really desires to do the will of God, he will be brought to know that will? Is it possible that God would give His Son to die to open the way of salvation, and then leave one to die in ignorance of that way who would accept it if he knew it?"

J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, p. 440, wrote, "The difficulty of finding out what is right in religion is a common complaint among men. They point to many differences among Christians and profess to be unable to decide what is right. Such a person should use what little knowledge he has, and God will soon give him more."

The source of knowing God's will is the Bible; but reason, intelligence, experience, obedience, and love are among the instruments by which true wisdom from its sacred pages may be won. And even more important than those instruments is that of human will desiring to know the truth. Many accept blindly whatever teaching they received as a child without ever striving to know if it was really God's will that they learned.

Verse 18

In all ages, these ministers who proclaimed God's word, relying on the inherent authority of that word to win men—those have been true ministers.

Another class of teachers, cutting and plucking at the word of God with their scissors and editing pencils, claiming for themselves the right to declare what is or is not the word of God, glorifying themselves with their revisions and theories—such men are of Satan.

Verse 19

Thus Jesus publicly exposed the plot to kill Him on a trumped-up charge of Sabbath-breaking, pointing out at the same time the paradox of such notorious violators of Moses' law, as were the Pharisees, plotting to kill Jesus for, of all things, breaking the Sabbath.

Keep the Sabbath day? Of course, they did not. They circumcised on the Sabbath; and they had devised some kind of a by-pass for practically all of the Sabbath restrictions.

For example, with reference to walking no more than seven-eighths of a mile, which was the allowable distance according to their rules for a Sabbath's journey, they often walked along distances, pausing at each seven-eighths of a mile to partake of a bite of food previously cached there in anticipation of the journey, and thus taking any length journey on the pretext that they had changed their residence at each pause! Here, Jesus openly charged them with not keeping Moses' law.

“Why do you seek to kill Me . . .?” Why such men would seek to kill the holy Son of God is a part of the mystery of iniquity.

Verse 20

Many in the multitude were ignorant of the murderous plot of the priests who had sought to conceal their intentions. “You have a demon . . .” for a list of the slanders against Jesus, see Matthew 11:18-19.

Verse 21

This reference to healing the man at Bethesda, eighteen months earlier, which, even by their judgment, as a single violation of the Sabbath (though actually not so at all) was made by Jesus for the sake of contrasting that lone act of mercy performed on the Sabbath with the continual and constant violation of the Sabbath on the part of the Pharisees by circumcising on the Sabbath.

Verse 22

This verse and the 23rd verse establish the fact that circumcision is an older ordinance than the Sabbath (Nehemiah 9:13-14), the Sabbath having been given through Moses and circumcision having come before Moses. These verses are the end of any notion that the Sabbath goes back any further than Moses.

Jesus was pointing out that if a circumcision, commanded to be performed on the eighth day, fell on a Sabbath, the Pharisees allowed it to be done. (Leviticus 12:3)

Verse 23

“If a man . . .” is a reference to a child eight days old. Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 257, noted, “This is not an adult man, but a man child (John 16:21 (KJV), ‘She remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.’”?

“Made an entire man well on the Sabbath . . .” indicates that Jesus had cured the entire man, soul and body, thus making it all the more necessary and righteous that the Lord should not have delayed such a blessing another day in order to avoid doing it on the Sabbath.

Verse 24

Jesus here charged His foes with having made a false judgment, based solely on the fact that Jesus had apparently broken the Sabbath; but here He explained that the performance of an act of mercy and salvation took precedence over

Sabbath law, a principle which they recognized in connection with a far lesser thing, the rite of circumcision. Thus their Sabbath-breaker was an evil judgment, based solely on superficial and unsound premises.

By openly discussing the charges on which they sought to put Him to death, Jesus did two things:

1. showing that the multitude was ignorant of the truth, and
2. exposing the falsity of the charge on which they wanted to kill Him.

Verses 25-26

“They are saying nothing to Him . . .” means that they were not attempting to interrupt or forbid His teaching. The Pharisees could not stand before Jesus in open debate and hold their ground; He won every argument, as in the case of the Sabbath discussions; and the multitude came slowly to realize that the rulers did know that Jesus was actually the Christ. Any insinuation that these evil rulers did not know whom they crucified should be rejected.

They knew He was the Christ; but, because He was not the kind of Christ they wanted, they murdered Him. True, they did not know that Jesus was God in the flesh; and it was of that ignorance which Paul spoke when he declared, “If they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.” (1 Corinthians 2:8)

Verse 27

The evil rulers made many arguments against the Messianic claims of Jesus.

1. Here they argued that the Messiah would have some mysterious origin; and, of course, they pretended to know all about the origin of Christ, although they did not.
2. They insisted that no prophet could come out of Galilee, because none ever had come from Galilee; but , in their arrogance, they were wrong on both counts, Jonah having come from Gath-Hepher, only three and

one-half miles from Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25), and the Christ Himself hailing from there!

3. They insisted that Elijah must first come; but they ignored John the Baptist's being the fulfillment of that prophecy.

“No one knows where He is from . . .” Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. V, p. 571, said, “The generality of the people knew that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem ; but from Isaiah 53:8, “Who shall declare His generation?” They thought that there should be something so peculiarly mysterious in His birth or in the manner of His appearing, that no person could fully understand. Had they considered His miraculous conception, they would have felt their minds relieved on that point.”

The Pharisees had evidently talked with Joseph and Mary; but, if so, it is certain that those devout souls would have told those nosey representatives of the ruling class nothing whatever of the visit of the angel Gabriel, nor of the miraculous birth of our Lord. Whatever investigation the Pharisees had concluded, it failed to reveal either

1. the fact of Jesus' birth at Bethlehem, or
2. the miraculous conception.

Their arrogance in pretending to know all about Jesus and then daring to make their presumed “knowledge” the basis of projecting Him as the Messiah is an example of human self-deception and conceit unsurpassed in the history of the world.

Verse 28

“You both know Me . . .” This is sarcastic irony. If they had known Christ, they would have known God who sent Him; not knowing God was proof they did not know Christ in any sense whatever.

“Whom you do not know . . .” The leaders did not know God; and that was the basis of their failure to know Jesus.

Verse 29

Jesus’ oneness with God was the burden of the teaching of His entire ministry. As God’s Son, He brought God’s message, spoke God’s words, did God’s works, and was in fact God come in the flesh.

Verse 30

Confounded and openly contradicted by Christ, the Pharisees were furious and eagerly wanted to take Him; but the press of the people around Him was so great, and there were so many who believed in Him that considerations of prudence restrained their evil purpose. “His hour had not yet come . . .” also implies a supernatural restraint imposed upon Jesus’ enemies.

Verse 31

The tragedy in view here is that the vast throng would gladly have hailed Jesus as the Messiah, but out of deference to the leaders they hesitated. How great was the blame of those evil rulers, who not only rejected the Lord for themselves but were the principal cause of a nation’s failure to receive Him!

Verse 32

Having decided months earlier to kill Christ, they were here spurred to action by the growing sentiment of the people that would have hailed Him as the Christ. Their strategy of meeting such an event was to attempt His arrest; but the power of God restrained them until His hour had come. (verse 30)

Verse 33

“For a little while . . .” It was October, and Christ was appointed to die at the Passover in April. During that intervening six months, all the powers of hell were not sufficient to have harmed the little finger of Jesus.

“I go to Him who sent Me . . .” A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 79, wrote, “Possibly the Greek word meaning “to go up” carries here not its usual geographical sense but the spiritual one it has in 3:13, 6:62, and 20:17. It would then refer to Christ’s ascent to the Father by way of the cross: “I am not going up (to My father) at this feast.”

“I go to Him who sent Me . . .” These words are Jesus’ way of speaking of His approaching death and resurrection.

Verse 34

Alvah Hovey, *Commentary on John*, p. 177, said this language means, “That their (Israel’s) longing and looking for the Messiah will continue after the rejection and crucifixion. Vainly will they expect the great Prince foretold in their Scriptures; and bitter will be their disappointment, from age to age, because He does not appear. But clinging to their false hope of what the Messiah should be, and hardening themselves against the evidence that He has already appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, they will never find the deliverer whom they seek.”

“Where I am, you cannot come . . .” means that men who reject God’s Son, can never come into God’s presence while rejecting the Savior. Jesus is the only way to the Father; and men shall come unto God through Christ, or they shall not come to God at all.

Verses 35-36

Brooks Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 122, wrote, “This man . . .” means. “This strange pretender . . .” The pronoun here in the Greek carries an accent of surprise and contempt.”

“The Dispersion . . .” refers to the Jews who were scattered abroad among the Gentiles; and the suggestion that perhaps Jesus was planning to go to them has the effect of saying, “Why, a crazy Messiah like He is, might even go to the Dispersion and try to build a following among them.”

“What is this word which He said . . .” There is an element of puzzlement on the part of His foes in this. They rejected what He said, as a matter of course, but their minds kept returning to it in wonderment of just what could have been meant by Jesus in the clauses they murmured over and over. B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 122, said, “In spite of all, Christ’s words cannot be shaken off. They are not to be explained away. A vague sense remains that there is in them some unfathomable meaning.”

EVENTS OF THE LAST DAY OF THE FEAST

Verse 37

The Feast of Tabernacles was concluded on the final day. A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p 84, wrote, “A high point in the ritual of Tabernacles was the pouring out in the Temple court of a golden pitcher of water from the Siloam Pool. This libation was held to symbolize the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Messianic age.” In such a context, Jesus’ cry for men to come unto Him and drink was the equivalent of His promising the Holy Spirit to all who would follow Him. Thus, in this gospel, there is another recurrence of emphasis upon water. (Chapter 4:2)

Verse 38

In verse 37 Jesus said, “Come to Me and drink” and in this verse He said, “He who believes in Me . . . from his innermost being shall flow.” These two expressions are poles apart in meaning, faith being an action of the mind and heart, and coming being an action of both soul and body. Faith is subjective; coming is objective. Faith is allied to thought; and coming is allied to deeds.

Therefore these two verses are a reference to the future giving of the Holy Spirit to Christians in consequence of and subsequently to their believing in Christ and obeying the gospel, obedience being the meaning of “come to Me” in verse 37, and “believing on Me” being the thing mentioned in verse 38. Both are required.

Verse 39

This verse is the proof that the first portion of chapter 3 is spoken of Christian baptism, not at that time commanded, but anticipated by the Lord's remarks there, just as the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost is anticipated here.

“Glorified . . .” refers to the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, Jesus' fulfillment of all the prophecies in those related events being fully a glorification of God whose words were thus fulfilled.

Verse 40

“The prophet . . .” refers to the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15, 19, where the term “prophet” was applied prophetically to Christ.

Verse 41

“Galilee . . .” was indeed the residence of Jesus, but the people seemed ignorant of the fact that He Was born in Bethlehem as the prophet had foretold. (Micah 5:2) It seems that they merely assumed that since He lived in Galilee He had also been born here.

Also added to the difficulty of the people was the slander of the Pharisees that no prophet had ever come out of Galilee; but they were wrong about that also, Jonah, the first of the prophets, having come from Galilee. (2 Kings 14:25)

Verse 42

The priestly conclave, if they knew of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, denied it by their distorted emphasis on the place of His residence in Galilee. They were not above falsifying a matter of that kind , even trying to deceive Pilate through their reference to Galilee.

Verse 43

Although the multitude continued to be divided, the division within the Sanhedrin was rapidly diminishing, as the hatred of practically all of them hardened toward Jesus.

Verse 44

Although the purpose of the Pharisees was set upon taking Jesus and destroying Him, God restrained them until the appointed time.

THE IMPOTENCE OF THE PHARISEES

Verses 45-46

The arresting detail met Jesus face to face, and they were so taken back by His marvelous powers that they aborted their assignment and returned without Him.

Needless to say the Pharisees did they not like the answer they received regarding the failure to arrest Him.

“Never did a man speak . . .” There is a necessary inference here in these words that Jesus was more than a man. Otherwise, there words would have been, “No other man ever so spoke.” This implication was not lost on the Pharisees. Having detected such a tender little bud of faith in the officers, they moved against it with all the savage ferocity of a wild boar.

Verses 47-49

This defense of their position with the arresting party suggests that the detail sent to take Jesus contained a number of priests. “Nobody should dare to believe in Jesus as long as we Pharisees have not done so; we are the people; we decide what is true or false.”

Notice the pronouncement against the multitude as “accursed,” such a statement exposing the loveless, selfish, and hateful character of that evil company.

Verses 50-51

Not all of the Sanhedrinists were evil men, Nicodemus being one of the notable exceptions. He had already been to Jesus (3:iff) and was obviously out of harmony with the satanic spirit prevailing in the Sanhedrin. Such men as Nicodemus, and there may have been a considerable number of them, were helpless regarding the policies of the organization.

The men who controlled that body had already decided eighteen months earlier to kill Jesus (5:18); and, at the point of Nicodemus’ objection, Satan was already in charge of the hierarchy. It was far too late to reverse the purpose of murder in their hearts.

Nicodemus apparently knew that his question would be shouted down, and that probably accounts for the mild manner in which he stated it.

Verse 52

Religious error must defend itself; and, even if no honest defense exists, a shouted lie will serve well enough for the hardened heart.

Those bigots demanded that Nicodemus search the Scriptures; and such a demand sounded like they knew what they were talking about; but this whole ploy was a bold unqualified lie, an unscrupulous bluff, the same being one of Satan’s favorite disguises, that of a “roaring lion.”

“No prophet arises out of Galilee . . .” The first of the prophets was Jonah; and he had come out of Galilee, having come from Gath-Hepher which was only three and one-half miles from Nazareth! But that is not all. The one prophet whom God made a type of the Messiah was this same Jonah.

Christ Himself had spoken to the multitudes regarding the “sign of the prophet Jonah” (Matthew 12:38-41), making it absolutely certain that Jesus appealed to Jonah as a type of Himself.

It continues to be amazing that religious literature gives so little space to the typical importance of Jonah. Note the following:

Both Jesus and Jonah were asleep in a ship at sea in a storm.

Both were awakened, Jesus by the disciples, Jonah by the captain.

Both were involved in the ship’s security, Jesus for safety, and Jonah for peril.

Both freely gave themselves to save others, Jesus to save all men, Jonah to save the sailors.

Both produced a great calm, Jesus by fiat, Jonah by being cast into the sea.

Both passed through that “three days and three nights” experience mentioned by Christ. (Matthew 12:38-41)

Both converted Gentiles, Jesus through the apostles, Jonah by his preaching at Nineveh.

Both were from Galilee. (2 Kings 14:25)

Despite all this, they shouted Nicodemus down with the lie that no prophet arose out of Galilee.

CHAPTER 8

In this chapter, the controversy continues. There is the case of the woman taken in adultery (7:58-8:11); Jesus the Light of the world (12-20); teaching of His heavenly origin (21-30); and the passage of the true children of Abraham (31-59).

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

This paragraph (7:53-8:11) is omitted from later versions of New Testament, upon the basis of convincing arguments denying it a place in the sacred canon. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John II*, p. 35, wrote, “Though it cannot now be proved that this story formed an integral part of the Fourth Gospel, neither is it possible to establish the opposite with any degree of finality. We believe moreover, that what is recorded here really took place and contains nothing in conflict with the apostolic spirit.”

Verses 7:53-8:2

“Early in the morning . . .” is a detail that suggests the report of an eyewitness.

“He sat down and began to teach them . . .” refers to his assumption of the formal position of a teacher. (Matthew 5:1)

“All the people . . .” There is what is called a change of style here and throughout the paragraph evidenced by the stringing together of one thought after another by the use of “and.”

This is also the only mention of the Mount of Olives in the book of John.

Verses 3-4

Overshadowing the moral lapse of the woman was the brutal, unfeeling, sadistic behavior of the hypocrites who thus broke up a religious discussion by such an intrusion. Their partiality in not bringing her partner makes it possible to suppose that one of them was the guilty man. “Adultery . . .” indicates the woman was married.

Verses 5-6

The Pharisees were misapplying Moses’ law here, since “stoning” was commanded for a betrothed girl before her marriage. (Deuteronomy 22:24-24)

The woman before them was married. They cared nothing for the law and were only interested in cooking up some charge against Jesus.

“Testing Him . . .” has the force of “tempting Him.” What did they hope to gain?

1. If Jesus had concurred in asking a death penalty for the woman, they would have hailed Him before the Romans who had made it illegal for the Jews to assess such a penalty.
2. If the Lord had recommended mercy, they would have placed Him at variance with Moses and made a lawbreaker out of Him!

“He stooped down . . . and . . . wrote on the ground.” The Savior reacted to such a grotesque and embarrassing situation with silence and by stooping and by writing on the ground.

This is the only instance of Jesus writing; and the fact of His writing being quickly trampled underfoot strongly suggests the only other instance of deity’s writing, namely that of God’s inscribing the tablets of stone. The Ten Commandments too were quickly trampled underfoot (spiritually), and Moses smashed the tablets of stone. (Exodus 32:19)

Verse 7

Jesus, as ever, found the answer in the Scriptures. Deuteronomy 17:7 says, “The hand of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.”

Thus Jesus demanded that the witness, nowhere visible in this interview—that the witness should reveal himself and cast the first stone; but the Lord demanded something else—such a witness would himself have to be without sin.

Again the Pharisees’ trap had closed without taking Jesus. The Lord had neither condoned any kind of sin nor contradicted Moses. He just turned the

tables by an appeal to conscience, there being no coward like a guilty conscience.

Verse 8

Another period of silence ensued as the Lord kept writing. The older heads in the Pharisees' company saw instantly that their scheme had failed. They failed to produce a witness, much less a sinless witness.

Verse 9

The Savior's silence, the total absence (or silence) of any witness against the woman, and the watchfulness of the mighty throng surrounding the little circle of Pharisees with Jesus and with the woman at the center—all of that became suddenly a situation of profound embarrassment to the Pharisees. The oldest, being the more perceptive, led the way, and they all left.

Verse 10

“Woman, where are they . . . “ Indeed, where are they all who opposed and rejected the Lord? God only waits a little while, and the most powerful and vicious sinners fade away.

Verse 11

The woman's humble and respectful answer, Jesus' refusal to condemn, despite His Divine knowledge of all the truth, and His gentle admonition, “sin no more”—this is as beautiful a conclusion of this incident as could be imagined.

Hendriksen, *Ibid*, wrote, “Augustine definitely stated that certain individuals had removed from their codices the section regarding the adulteress, because they feared women would appeal to this story as an excuse for infidelity—asceticism played an important role in the sub-apostolic age. Hence the suggestion that the section (7:53-8:11) was actually part of John's gospel but (later) removed from it cannot be entirely dismissed.”

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Verse 12

“I am the light of the world . . .” As the sun is the source of all light , power, and energy on earth, Jesus the Son of righteousness is the source of all spiritual light, power, and energy. Light is the only thing that can come into contact with filth and remain uncontaminated.

Christians are the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), but theirs is a reflected light. Light either kills or develops vegetation, depending on whether or not it is rooted in soil; and the gospel has that same function. (2 Corinthians 2:15ff)

Verse 13

This proves that Jesus was reading their hearts when He answered this same objection before. (5:31) In this instance, the Lord refused, even for a moment, or for arguments sake, to notice their objection, having checkmated it in advance through His presentation of Himself as the light of the world. Light, by its very nature, is a witness of itself.

Verse 14

Back at the pool of Bethesda, (5:31), Christ had waived momentarily His right of bearing witness of Himself; but, finally, light cannot do otherwise than bear its own witness. How fortunate are we that Christ did bear witness of Himself in the most dogmatic and convincing manner. If He had not done so, it would have cast a cloud over the faith in Christ.

“Where I came from and, where I am going . . .” None except Christ could bear witness to such things as these. He came from God to walk among the shameful dwellings of men; and He would go, when His mission was ended, back to the right hand of the majesty on high. H. R. Reynolds, *The Pulpit Commentary, Luke—John*, p. 352, commented, “The whole of our Christian virtues turns upon the consciousness by Jesus of that which lay before and after that human life of His. He embraced the two eternities in His inward self-

consciousness. That "whence" and that "whither," with all their sublimity and solemnity, give adequate evidence and sufficient weight to His personal claim to be the Light of the world."

Verse 15

"You people judge according to the flesh . . ." means that they were judging the Prince of life from fleshly and carnal premises.

"I am not judging anyone . . ." In the sense of merely condemning people, which is what the Pharisees were doing, Jesus judged nobody. There was no need for the Savior to come into the world to condemn it; it was condemned already. (3:17)

It is possible that there is also in this a hint of Jesus' refusal to condemn the woman (1-11); for they are right who insist that such an incident fits neatly into the whole framework of this gospel.

Verse 16

His oneness with God was proof that any judgment by Himself was not merely His, but God's judgment also.

"For I am not alone . . ." This was addressed to the slander that Jesus' witness of Himself was to be rejected. His witness was plural, both His and the Father's witness concurring.

Verses 17-18

"Your law . . ." was so-called because the Pharisees professed such high regard for it. "It has been written . . ." refers to Deuteronomy 17:6, Numbers 35:30, etc, where Moses' law taught that two concurring witnesses were sufficient for imposing the death penalty. Two concurring witnesses were therefore sufficient for establishing the authenticity of Christ and His message.

Verse 19

From 7:27, it is clear that the leaders claimed to know “from” where Jesus came; and both Matthew 13:55 and Luke 3:23 mention the supposition that Joseph was Jesus’ father. Jesus’ declaration here that they did not know the Father is eloquent testimony of His virgin birth.

“If you knew Me, you would know the Father also . . .” This truth applies with equal force to the Pharisees then and subsequently to all of every generation. Only God could be the Father of such a one as Christ; and the failure of men to behold the glory and godhead of Jesus carries with the corollary that such men are likewise unable to recognize God.

Verse 20

This area was actually called the court of women; but against the wall in that court were some large boxes to receive the offerings of the people; and thus this came to be called the treasury. The significance of Jesus’ teaching here without molestation derives from its being at the very center of Jewish activities.

“His hour had not come . . .” God’s providential care would continue to guard Jesus until the time appointed for His death.

Verse 21

“Shall die in your sins . . .” gives the reason why the Pharisees would be unable to go where Jesus was going. Only the pure, the forgiven, and the redeemed will follow the Lord there.

Verse 22

This sneering allegation that maybe Jesus might kill Himself was an insult to the Christ of glory whose prophecy that they would die in their sins was ignored.

Verse 23

One might as well have tried to elicit appreciation of Handel's Messiah from a mule as to explain spiritual matters to the Pharisees. Jesus explained it again; but they were not operating on any wavelength that would have permitted them to receive what the Lord said.

Verse 24

This was another of the "hard sayings" (6:60) of Jesus, especially so for the Pharisees. Refusal to believe in Him is forfeiture of eternal life. Jesus is the unique source of salvation. It was the battle cry of the early church that "there is none other name under heaven given among men" wherein we must be saved.

No other system, philosophy, ethics, morals, or anything else can provide the tiniest ray of hope apart from Christ. Everlasting life is "in Him;" it is nowhere else.

Verse 25

This verse should be interpreted with the meaning, "I am the same as I have been telling you from the beginning."

"Who are You . . .?" could indicate some hesitation in their headlong rush to destruction, as if they had said, "Wait, maybe we are overlooking something; who are You anyway?"

Jesus did not condescend to elaborate further. His witness of His Messiahship and His absolute oneness with God had been so overwhelming that the most insensible among them should have known long before this conversation that Jesus was God come in the flesh. If He had plainly said so, it would only have given them a chance to denounce Him as a blasphemer; in fact, that opportunity was what they sought by the question.

Verse 26

“Concerning you . . .” They had demanded a more definite statement from Christ of His identity; but He responded with a promise to tell the whole world who they were. His was spoken sadly in view of the deepening of the chasm between Himself and the leaders of the chosen people.

Brooks Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 137, noted, “In them unbelief was embodied. So the sentence follows: ‘I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you.’ The uttering of these judgments will widen the chasm between us, but they must be spoken at all cost; (for) He that sent Me is true. In His message there is no superfluity and no defect, and the things heard from Him, when I came on earth to do His will, these things speak I unto the world.”

Some of the judgments Jesus would speak against those men followed at once, as when He identified them as sons of the devil. (Verse 44) Other such denunciations were in the three parables of

1. the two sons,
2. the wicked husbandmen, and
3. the marriage of the king’s son. In the latter, He prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem.

Verse 27

Jesus told them plainly that He came from God, from heaven, from above, that God was His Father, that the Father had sent Him, and that He and the Father are one—but all that was lost on them. They simply did not get it. Such is the power of pride, worldliness, conceit, and self-righteousness to blind the eyes of the soul.

Verse 28

“When you lift up the Son of man, then you will know . . .” Some of the priests (in fact, many of them) would believe (Acts 6:7), but not until the crucifixion, resurrection, and world-wide proclamation of the faith.

Verse 29

In this interview, Jesus confronted the ugly fact that the cruel, apostate leaders would continue to be His stubborn enemies; and it must have been one of the saddest moments of the Lord’s life on earth. Only the Father’s comforting love was available to Him in such a strait; but that was enough.

Verse 30

Holders of the “faith only” theory of salvation force themselves through all kinds of mental gymnastics in their vain efforts to separate these “believers” from that class of adamant enemies of Jesus with whom they are here identified. Calvin got around it by supposing these “believers” not to have had “genuine faith;” others suppose a transition of subject matter from the Lord’s enemies to another class who believed; but William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 51, noted, “No transition of any kind from one group of men to another sharply contrasted group is apparent to the ordinary reader of the Greek text or of the English translation. Thus it is very difficult to see why the men in verse 31 would have to be completely different group from them . . . in verse 30.”

For us, there is no problem. Something over and beyond faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has always been necessary to salvation; and the “believers” in this verse, having faith only, and being at once exposed as enemies of the Lord, were never saved in any sense. This is not the only such case in John, see chapter 12:42.

Verses 31-32

“Those Jews that had believed Him . . .” refers to the “believers” in verse 30. “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine . . .” Jesus did not say

to those believers, “You have believed on Me, therefore you are saved;” but He said in effect, “Now that you have believed, if you really want to be My disciples, do what I have commanded.” The ultimate salvation of those “believers depended then, as it does today, upon their obeying the gospel of Christ.

“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . .” Their faith had not made them free, nor does faith alone make men free today. Abiding in Jesus’ word, knowing the truth and obeying it—these also are prerequisites unto eternal life.

“Abide in My word if you would truly be My disciples!”

Verse 33

In view of the whole nation’s being in bondage at that time to Rome, one wonders just how to take a boast of this kind. Perhaps it merely meant that they had never willingly consented to any such servitude, which was true.

“You shall become free . . .” Jesus, of course, was talking about their being in the slavery to sin, despite the fact that they had “believed on” Him; their actual release from such spiritual bondage would come under the benevolent terms of the new covenant—that is, if they would follow Christ and obey the gospel.

Verse 34

Political freedom Jesus did not bring; but He brought a far more important spiritual freedom. Thus Jesus tried to relieve their error.

Verse 35

This is a reminder to sinners all that the penalty of sin is death. Bondservants of sin that men are, their days in the house of flesh are limited. This introduced another element of the bondage from which the truth makes free, that is, the bondage of our mortality. William Hendriksen saw an additional implication: “The old dispensation with its special privileges for Israel had ended.” Abraham’s true children will remain in His household (the New Covenant) and

enjoy the privileges permanently; but Abraham's slaves (think of Hagar) will be driven out. Only a son enjoys freedom. If therefore the Son of God will make them free, they will be free indeed."

Hendriksen is probably correct in seeing Ishmael as the bondservant, and Isaac as the "son" of this verse. The distinction between sons of Abraham, that is, the "spiritual seed" and the mere fleshly descendants, is of utmost importance in understanding the Scriptures. Christ is the true "seed" of Abraham; and all of the "spiritual seed" of Abraham are "in Christ."

Verse 36

The Pharisees had claimed to be Abraham's seed; but they were merely his fleshly descendants; and the truth Christ was presenting is that to be truly Abraham's "spiritual seed," they would have to be "in Christ," or "in the Son," and thus reckoned a part of the "seed" singular. (Galatians 3:16) Until they accepted Christ, their status would continue to be that of the slave and not that of a son of Abraham.

Verse 37

Jesus freely acknowledged their physical descent from Abraham, but in the same breath pointed out their murderous intentions against Jesus Christ. Spiritually, those men were the sons of the devil, as Jesus would shortly say.

Verse 38

Who really was the father of those vicious opponents confronting Him? His first mention of their "father" here would not be explained till verse 44; but the Lord would build the conversation to the climax there.

Verse 39

"Abraham is our father. . ." In the sense that this relates to God's redemptive promises through the patriarch Abraham, it never did mean persons physically

descended from Abraham, but those with a spiritual likeness. The Jewish leaders were totally unaware of this.

“If you are Abraham’s children . . .” is equivalent to saying that these men Jesus addressed were not Abraham’s children, that is, they had no spiritual likeness to the great patriarch and were not his children at all in the Biblical sense.

Verse 40

Jesus here pointed out the proof of their spiritual corruption, that proof being that they wanted to kill the Lord. How can this be reconciled with the admitted fact that these spiritually corrupt “believed on” the Lord Jesus Christ?

The answer is that theirs was “faith alone!” Today, the world is full of people who “believe on” the Lord Jesus but would rather kill Him than to do what He commanded, being in such a state the spiritual descendants of those “believers” on exhibition here.

Verse 41

His hearers at last recognized the spiritual import of Jesus’ words, stopped pleading their physical descent from Abraham and boldly claimed God as their Father; but Christ rejected such a plea.

Verse 42

“You would love Me . . .” If men are of God, they will love Jesus. “Faith alone” cannot justify or save men, because there is a higher requirement than faith; and if that higher qualification is lacking, as it was in the case here, “believers on” Jesus may be in fact the sons of the devil. The genuine test is not “Do we believe?” but “Do we love the Lord?” That is why Paul ranked “love above faith” (1 Corinthians 13:13); and the answer to “why” the greatest of these is love” derives from the revelation of Christ that if men love the Lord they will obey Him. (14:15) It is not necessarily true that if men believe they will also obey. These men believed but did not love nor obey Christ.

Verse 43

Their inability to hear was not a defect from which they might have been excused. Jesus held them responsible. The Lord had patiently explained again and again the truth of God to those evil men, trying to get them to see what the true spiritual children of Abraham would exhibit a spiritual likeness to Him, and as a consequence love the Lord Jesus.

Verse 44

It should be noted by the student that these men, so denominated as sons of the devil, were “believers on” the Lord Jesus; but they did not love Him and would not obey Him. If men are justified by “faith alone,” these sons of the devil are justified.

“Your father the devil . . .” Satan has many sons on earth today, and the hatred of Christ and His teaching is inherent in their nature.

Satan, a being so powerful that angels dare not bring a railing accusation against him, is nevertheless himself a creature, fallen from his first estate, and destined to be destroyed at last. He does not share control of the universe with God; but, due to the fall, finds mortals naturally inclined to yield to the temptation he exerts upon them.

Verse 45

For evil persons, no reason on their part is required for rejecting the truth, except for the fact of its being so. Evil cannot love righteousness.

Verse 46

“Which one of you . . .” The total sinlessness and perfection of the Savior’s life proved His godhead; and all who ever knew Christ concurred fully in this judgment of absolute holiness pertaining to Him, a fact that His bitterest enemies allowed to stand unchallenged.

“Why do you not believe me . . .” It was what He taught that they disbelieved (Matthew 21:38); and their hatred of the truth was so great that they deliberately decided to kill Christ and run religion according to their own preferences. This spirit is still in the world.

Verse 47

The only proof needed to demonstrate that men are sons of the devil is that of their being unwilling to “hear” in the sense of “obeying” the word of God.

Verse 48

They meant, “We are not children of the devil; You are the one who has a demon.”

“Samaritan . . .” was a gross racial epithet reserved for persons utterly hated. (For a list of ten such slanders against Jesus, see Matthew 11:18-19.)

Verse 49

Jesus refuted their insinuation that His judging them to be sons of the devil was demoniacally inspired, pointing out that their dishonoring of Himself was proving them to be just what He had called them.

They were dishonoring Jesus,

- (1) by failure to love and obey Him, and
- (2) by the groundless slanders just perpetrated against Him.

Verse 50

The Lord refused to be outraged by their insults. Here, fallen men appeared in the role of reviling the Son of God. The Lord did not fly into a rage but calmly reminded them that God would seek and judge.

Verse 51

This is not a promise of escape from mortality but of eternal life, and no more glorious promise ever came to man. What a flower was his that bloomed in the sewer of their hatred of Jesus!

Verse 52

The whole thrust of the entire interview had been Spiritual, but they would have none of it, literalizing His words and mocking Him in scorn; there was no way to break through the crust of their hatred.

Verse 53

In the words of Christ standing before their very eyes was the blessed promise of breaking the bonds of death for all who ever lived on earth, but those crude fellows only bellowed their rage and unbelief that anyone could be greater than Abraham or one of their prophets. Behold a greater than Abraham is here!

Verse 54

If they had believed His promise (verse 51) they would have recognized at once His being greater than Abraham; but it would have been useless to repeat it.

“It is My Father who glorifies Me . . .” John would return to a specific instance of God’s glorifying Jesus through the mighty signs He was empowered of God to perform.

“Of whom you say, He is our God . . .” What an incredible wonder was this, that those evil persons so stoutly claiming to be God’s children should have been so vindictive in their hatred of that same God’s eternal and only Son!

Verse 55

“And you have not come to know Him . . .” Despite all the superficial love of the law of Moses, and all the feasts and sacrifices, neither those persons then

face to face with Jesus nor the nation as a whole had really come to know the Lord. In the presence of Christ that ignorance was acute; because the Savior was one with God in all things.

“A liar . . .” The Lord could not have concealed the truth from those men without violating His own sacred commission.

“But I know Him and keep His word . . .” B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 139, paraphrased this, “Even in this crisis of separation, when My words will be understood and so widen the breach between us (verse 26), I proclaim the knowledge which I have and fulfill My mission by keeping His word.”

Verse 56

This is one of the most interesting things Jesus ever said. When did this occur? It did not happen in Abraham’s lifetime, for “All these died in faith without receiving the promise, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance.” (Hebrews 11:13)

Thus, this verse goes beyond what happened in Abraham’s lifespan, suggesting that just as Moses and Elijah had been granted personal conversation with Jesus (Matthew 17:30), something similar may have been granted to Abraham.

Verses 57-58

“Have you seen Abraham . . . ?” Certainly, Jesus had seen Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:iff); and there is more than a possibility that He had similarly seen Abraham during his personal ministry, but Jesus answered by an affirmation even more wonderful than that, declaring that He had existed before Abraham was born.

The majestic “I Am” with which Jesus concluded this confrontation suggests God’s “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14), and there can be no reasonable denial that Jesus here claimed equality with God. A check of the teachings in this chapter reveals that Jesus presented Himself as one with the Almighty God no

less than a dozen times. Fittingly, it should be concluded with the greatest of John's, "I AM's."

Verse 59

Interpreting Jesus' words as blasphemy, they had a notion to stone Him. The statement that Jesus existed before Abraham is an affirmation of His deity. "Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple . . ."

H. R. Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 374, wrote, "There is no need to imagine more than the exercise of His majestic energy before which demoniacs quailed, Pilate trembled, and the guards of the temple fell on their faces. The crisis was approaching. How often would He have gathered them, and given them eternal life, but they would not."

One can only be amazed at the patience, persistence, and determination with which Jesus struggled to break down the chasm of separation between Himself and the leaders of the chosen people; and, when all prospects of healing their hearts was past, it is equally amazing to behold the majesty and authority with which He declared His godhead and proceeded to deliver God's message on earth.

CHAPTER 9

This whole chapter is devoted to the healing of a man born blind, the sixth of the seven signs, and to the discussions afterward which derived from the impact of so great a wonder upon the man himself, his parents, the neighbors, and the religious hierarchy. Presented with remarkable fullness of detail, this great sign, in addition to being a witness of Jesus' deity, was also designed as a type of Jesus' saving men from their sins.

SIXTH OF THE SEVEN GREAT SIGNS

Verse 1

“As He passed by . . .” Many of life’s greatest opportunities occur unexpectedly and incidentally to life’s normal progression.

“He saw a man . . .” Jesus saw the human tragedy beneath the beggar’s shirt. When men look upon each other they are inclined to see a doctor, a farmer, a rich man, or a beggar; but Jesus always looks upon the man himself.

“Blind from birth . . .” This was mentioned because healing of the congenitally blind has ever been possible for men.

Verse 2

The universal instinct that hails all sorrow and disease as the consequence of sin is correct, all of such things deriving, in the last analysis, from the debacle in Eden; but it is not true that every specific instance of handicap, disease, and sorrow should be invariably ascribed to the individual sin of the sufferer.

Without regard to such truth, the apostles were quite ready to blame this man’s blindness upon himself, or if not upon him, then upon his parents. It seems ridiculous to us that parents’ sin could be committed; but J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 790, noted, “The disciples thought that possibly the man had sinned; either in a previous state of existence (in accordance with the doctrine of transmigration of souls—the passing of the soul into another body at death), or more probably as an infant before birth. To the Jews who attributed intelligence to unborn children (Genesis 25:22-26; Luke 1:41, this last was a natural idea.”

William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, p. 73, said, the Jewish Rabbis held that Esau had tried to kill Jacob in the womb, before either was born.” This writer rejects the idea that the apostles of Jesus believed either of those monstrous fantasies.

Although even Calvin and Beza thought that they had transmigration of souls in view, there is no evidence whatever of the apostles entertaining such notions, the basic assumption throughout the entire Bible having always been that “the body” is the soul’s unique instrument. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

The mistake of the apostles here was that of imputing blame where none existed. Both the man and his parents were declared by Jesus to have been guilty of nothing which might have caused the blindness. Therefore, one must hold those apostles guilty of a cruel and unfeeling question. They were like millions today who think that every sufferer has in some manner deserved the evil that came upon him.

The reasons underlying this disastrous human prejudice are apparently psychological outcroppings of man’s innate selfishness and pride.

J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, p. 583, said, “It has the advantage of rendering it needless to weep with them that weep. It saves a man of the obligation, when he sees heavy affliction, or smiting his breast and saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” It gives the natural man the comfortable feeling that he is so much better than the sufferer, as he is the more fortunate.”

Christ taught here the fact of underserved suffering. This is one of the great problems, and the Scriptures shed His light upon it. Jesus said that the rains and floods beat upon both houses, the one on the rock and the one on the sand. (Matthew 7:25) God makes His sun to shine on the just and the unjust.

Time and chance happen unto all men. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Therefore, may those whose child was born handicapped, or only to die; and those unfortunates whose lives have been overwhelmed with disease and sufferings; and all whose lot has been to walk in weakness, pain, and humiliation—may all of them take heart. Christ sees and knows; and, for many of them, perhaps it is true that they suffer that “the works of God should be manifest in them!”

Verse 3

Jesus' reply did not mean that either the man nor his parents were sinless but that they were guilty of no sin that had caused the blindness. The reason would seem to be that God intended that man should never get too cozy, as far as his hope of tomorrow is concerned. "You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow." (James 4:14)

"That the works of God might be displayed in him . . ." The truth that God has a plan for every person ever born shines in this. That child was born blind in anticipation of the wonder wrought in this episode. What a lifetime of agony the parents of the man born blind had endured! How often had they been the butt of scorn or open charge of sin; and yet how wrong they were who felt no pity and, in their smug self-righteousness, slandered and criticized them! God had a plan for the life of that blind man that led at last to light and glory and salvation at the pool of Siloam.

Verse 4

The urgency Jesus felt is here too. There was so much to do and so little time. Every man, like Jesus, should confront each new day in the consciousness that "on my day of life the night is falling." Like Him, may we all fill every fleeting hour with love and labor for mankind.

Verse 5

This is the second of the great "I Am's" of John. "When I am in the world . . ." has the meaning of "as long as I am in this world", an admission that there would come a time when Jesus would no longer be on earth; but reference only to His physical life. Such was the glory of Christ that, through the preaching of His apostles, the light would continue to shine unto all generations.

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

The world cannot do without Jesus. He is as vital and necessary as the sun itself is to the physical world. All energy and life derive from Him.

1. This metaphor reveals Jesus as God.

Only of one identified with deity could it be said of Him that He is the light of the world. Therefore, when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," He forever lifted Himself above the category of mere mortality. Only a lunatic, or the world's true Savior, could sincerely have said such a thing as this; and the receding centuries have left no doubt that the Redeemer said it and that He is indeed the world's light. He was God come in the flesh.

2. This metaphor teaches the sinless and undefiled nature of Christ, light being the only thing that may fall upon rottenness and corruption and itself remain uncontaminated.

The light of the world shines upon the wretched ugliness of our shameless world, saves it, changes it, and lifts it up, but is not Himself contaminated. No matter how squalid (dark) the room in which the light shines, the light remains pure. (2 Peter 1:19)

3. This light obligates all who see it.

Men may be pardoned for stumbling in darkness; but those who close their eyes against the light commit a sin against nature as well as against God,

4. Jesus is the light of the world eternally, for even in heaven, "Its Lamp is the Lamb" in the eternal city. (Revelation 21:23)

5. This metaphor is an apt figure of the universality of the gospel, there being no place on earth where light cannot reach. The saving message of Christ shines throughout all the earth. Jesus, is "even the Light which enlightens every man." (1:6-9)

6. Men are commanded to respond to the light.

They should believe on the light and become sons of light (12:36); they should walk in the light (1 John 1:6-7; they should put on the whole armor of light (Romans 13:12); and they should arise and shine in the reflected glory of the light (Isaiah 60:1). The import of all this is that all men should exhibit an obedient faith in Christ.

Verse 6

Why did Jesus do this? We may never know, but it might have been to emphasize His humility. The anointing with clay also had the function of emphasizing the blind's man condition. Even a casual glance at his mud-anointed eyes would eloquently reveal his handicap to any who chanced to see him.

Verse 7

The big thing in this verse, aside from the loving mercy of the Savior's awesome power, is the blind man's obedience. Let it be supposed, for a moment, that this blind man exhibited the same attitude prevalent in our times. Suppose he had said, "Now look, Jesus, this pool Siloam business is not really necessary, You know. I believe in You and will just take my eyesight right here where I stand; and after I am able to see clearly, then I will go and wash, like You said, just to show I trust You.

Certainly water cannot cure eyesight; so I'll just take it here and now by faith only! Of course, I'll go and wash later to show I trust You."

What would have resulted from such an attitude? Can anyone doubt that he would have died as blind as he was born, if he had responded with any such proposal?

Blindness, from the most ancient times, has been held as a type of sin. This does not mean that a blind man is a sinner but that the terrible handicap is a forceful illustration of a sinful condition. (Luke 6:39) Thus blindness is a

Scriptural type of sin. Most of John's signs are thus to be understood in their dual significance in both the physical and spiritual sectors.

Salvation from sin is specifically promised by Christ, thus, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16)

If one can understand why the blind man received his sight after washing in the pool of Siloam, and wholly apart from any power of those waters, and without in the least supposing that the waters of the pool had anything to do with his healing, then such a person should have no difficulty with the analogy of the way one is saved in the washing of the waters of baptism, when he is baptized into Christ, and yet without supposing the water had any efficacy.

The blind man was healed in the act of washing in Siloam. He did not go seeing and then wash; but he went and washed and came seeing.

THE POOL OF SILOAM

"Go wash in the pool of Siloam . . ." Peloubet identified the name Siloam with its earlier name Shiloah. (Isaiah 8:6) Therefore, the word Shiloh (Genesis 49:10), which was the name Jacob gave the Messiah, appears to be the original form of the name Siloam. Thus, in Scripture, this name had three forms, Shiloh, Shiloah, and Siloam, all of them laden with an immense weight of symbolism pointing to the Savior of the world.

"Shiloh" was the poetic name of the Messiah; and Isaiah had made the soft waters of this humble water hole a metaphor of the peaceful government of the Lord as contrasted with the rapacious government of Assyria, the latter being compared to the rampage of Euphrates at flood stage. It was from this pool that the golden pitcher of water was brought to pour out in the temple court during the feast of Tabernacles (7:37); and, in the presence of those waters from Siloam, Jesus invited all to "Come to Me and drink!"

The filling of Siloam came through an underground conduit that entered at the bottom, causing the waters to rise silently, hence Isaiah's reference to "the waters that go softly."

Verse 8

For thirty years, or more, the blind person of that community had been observed by all; and suddenly he was whole, able to see as well as anyone. Everybody knew the blind beggar with his cup in a conspicuous place every day; and the amazed neighbor's question of his identity probably resulted from the change in the man's personality caused by the marvelous gift of sight.

Verse 9

Even those with any uncertainty confessed a positive likeness to the beggar they remembered. The man confirmed his identity.

Verses 10-11

This exchange with the neighbors probably occurred after the man had seen his parents but still only a short while after his healing. His explanation was simple and direct. Jesus had commanded; he obeyed and received his sight.

Verse 12

The blind man's naming Jesus as his healer confronted the people with a dilemma. Many knew of the plot to kill Jesus and were certain that any acceptance of Him would result in their excommunication. Perhaps many of them thought, therefore, that with such a sign as this to report, they might be able to persuade their leaders to accept him, thus resolving their own uncertainty.

Verse 13

This event was before a gathering of the entire hierarchy. That such a full-dress meeting of the Sanhedrin occurred was a testimony of the priority which

the religious leaders gave to the problem of Jesus' growing power and influence among the people.

Verses 14-15

“Now it was a Sabbath . . .” is written here in anticipation of the objection that would be stated in verse 16. The name of Jesus dominated that hearing. Neither the healed man nor the examiners mentioned it, suggesting that they had forbidden any mention of the Lord's name.

Verse 16

The bitter schism in the Sanhedrin itself dominates this part of the narrative, a division mentioned in 7:43, and 10:19 also. The enemies of Jesus were the dominant majority; and it is clear that they were moving to silence the contrary elements in their own body as well as against any recognition of Jesus' miracle.

“He does not keep the Sabbath . . .” The fault of their reasoning here derived from their falsely equating their own traditions of keeping the Sabbath with God's true law of keeping it.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 81, noted, “The Pharisees identified their own trifling, hair-splitting Sabbath regulations with the law of God. Hence . . . “All people who are from God keep our Sabbath regulations” Because these premises were false, the conclusion was no longer dependable.”

Once again in the New Testament is revealed the incredible damage of mingling human traditions with God's word. The confusion of those men in identifying their own legislation as God's law blinded their eyes to the Sun of righteousness when He rose with the healing in His wings!

It is alarming that, even today, the old Pharisaical falsehood that Jesus broke the Sabbath is alleged in modern pulpits. Christ kept the law of God perfectly, all of it, not excepting even a jot or a tittle; and yet, in spite of this, such is the mystery of evil, that the old lie of the Pharisees still surfaces in the assemblies of the saints.

Verse 17

“What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?” “He is a prophet.” Some progression in the man’s thinking appears in this. He referred to him first as “the man that is called Jesus,” and now as “a prophet,” reminding one of the progressive enlightenment of the woman of Samaria in chapter 4.

This recognition of Jesus as a prophet carried a strong negative thrust against the Pharisees' charge of Sabbath-breaking.

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 791, pointed out that, “Prophets had authority over the Sabbath.” Likewise Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. V, p. 586, stated that, “According to a Jewish maxim, a prophet might dispense with the observance of the Sabbath.” Thus the blind man refuted the Pharisees’ charge; but they would not allow to Jesus even the status of a prophet.

Verses 18-19

Such unbelief on the part of the majority of the Sanhedrin suggests the quotation ascribed to Voltaire. J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 600, “If in the market of Paris, before the eyes of a thousand men, a miracle should be performed, I would much rather disbelieve their two thousand eyes and my own two, than believe it.”

Voltaire has many spiritual descendants, some of them being in pulpits, and this is the true explanation of what is called “modernism” in the religious community of our day. The attitude of the Pharisees here shows the folly of supposing that evidence of any kind can persuade men whose purpose is to disbelieve. Faith is a moral thing, as well as intellectual. (3:19)

“They called his parents . . .” They overreached themselves in this, for they promptly corroborated the son’s identity and the fact of his being born blind. The whole neighborhood could have done the same. It was another example of how the Lord “catches the wise in their craftiness.” (1 Corinthians 3:19)

J. C. Ryle, *Ibid*, quoted Chrysostom who thought that, “Whom you say” insinuated that they supposed the parents to be imposters, and that they were acting deceitfully, and plotting on behalf of Christ, by spreading a report that their son was born blind.”

The very fact of calling the man’s parents shows the desperate nature of the Pharisees’ position.

Verses 20-21

The hope of the Pharisees perished. They could not deny that the miracle had occurred. Their insinuation of fraud was totally demolished.

“He is of age . . .” indicates a mature person; and according to Adam Clarke, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 87, “Mature age, as fixed among the Jews, was thirty years.”

The testimony of the parents that they did not know how or by whom the sign was wrought, although technically correct, was really an avoidance of testifying to what they did actually know. Their fear of the leaders prompted this reluctance on their part.

Verses 22-23

“Afraid of the Jews . . .” This means fear of the Sanhedrin, a fear mentioned four times in John: here, and in 7:13, 12:42, and in 19:38. Excommunication was the dreaded penalty by which unscrupulous leaders enforced their will upon the people.

Verse 24

No device of denying the miracle being left to them, the leaders moved to rob Jesus of the credit for it, if possible: and having intimidated the parents into denying that they knew “WHO” did it, they tried here to enlist the son in a similar denial.

“Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.” Thus they forbade him to give glory to Christ. Glory to God . . . ah, yes, that was all right, only so long as God’s beloved Son was not mentioned. The Pharisees were compelled at last to authenticate the miracle itself. Being absolutely unable to deny it, they would still, if they could, deny Jesus any credit for it.

Verse 25

This return of the healed man to the facts of the wonder was the last thing the Pharisees wanted; and his words are construed as an opposition to their designs. The miracle was proof that Jesus was no sinner; and the Sanhedrin knew this, as one of their own members had admitted. (3:2)

Verse 26

Drowning men catch at straws; and those evil leaders, confronted with a true miracle of Jesus, again questioned the blind man as to “how” it was done, hoping to find something they could condemn.

Verse 27

The blind man had hardened his attitude in the face of their unreasonable denials, tacitly admitting himself to be a disciple, and sarcastically demanding to know if they “also” would become His disciples! Disciples indeed! They were His sworn enemies, determined at any cost, moral or otherwise, to kill Jesus; and one can only marvel at the impact these words must have had upon the religious court.

Verse 28

This was a false boast on the part of the Pharisees. Jesus Himself said if they had believed Moses, they would have believed Christ. They were not the Israel of God in the spiritual sense. (Romans 9:6-8)

“You are His disciple . . .” Such an indirect admission was all they needed; and they at once heaped upon him the full weight of their scorn, invective, and slander. They reviled him.

What had the blind man done to deserve their hatred and abuse? He had merely recognized in deepest humility and appreciation the mercy extended to him by the Lord. What a shock this encounter with the religious leaders must have been to him!

Verse 29

“God has spoken to Moses . . .” “This man . . . we do not know where he is from.”

Some have fancied that these words do not contradict what these hypocrites said earlier, “We know where he is from (7:27); but of course they do contradict it. As a matter of fact, truth was no consideration to those sons of the devil who would have said anything that seemed, at the moment, to suit their purpose.

Verses 30-33

The poor beggar suddenly emerged here as a thinker and remarkable and penetrating insight into God’s moral; government of the universe.

“Here is an amazing thing . . .” Unerringly, he fingered the greatest marvel in the structure of the day’s events, that being the obstinate unbelief of the Pharisees. “We know that God does not hear sinners . . .” This great premise deserves further attention.

ON GOD’S HEARING SINNERS

A remarkable body of teaching in the Old Testament affirms the truth of what the blind man said here of God’s not hearing sinners. Note: Jehovah will not answer (the wicked). (I Samuel 8:18) God will not hear the cry of the godless. (Job 27:9) I will not answer the wicked. (Proverbs 1:28) When you pray, I will

not hear. (Isaiah 1:15) Your sins have hid his face from you, so that He will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

It is astounding that the erstwhile beggar fully understood the truth of God's not hearing sinners, whereas the learned leaders of the people had not the slightest regard of such a fact.

Of deep significance is the implication of the words here to the effect that the miracle had been wrought in answer to Jesus' prayer, a thing not stated, but implied by the mention of God's "hearing" Him.

"If any man be a worshiper of God, and do His will . . ." The actual doing of God's will, as distinguished from merely believing, was properly understood by the healed man as the basis of God's hearing any person whomsoever; and, in such a perception, he was superior not only to the Pharisees but to the majority of the divines in Protestantism.

"Since the world began . . ." appeals to the absolutely unique quality of the miracle Jesus wrought.

"If this man were not from God, he could do nothing . . ." In these three verses, the healed man propounded a syllogism of his own, thus turning a favorite weapon of the Pharisees upon themselves and defeating them with it, thus:

MAJOR PREMISE: God does not hear sinners, but He hears those who worship Him and do His will.

MINOR PREMISE: God heard Jesus in the working of the great miracle before us.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, Jesus is of God; and, if He were not of God, He could do nothing.

It should be observed that God's not hearing sinners had reference to His not hearing them in the sense of not empowering them to perform a miracle. God heard the prayers of Cornelius (Acts 10:4) at a time when he was technically a sinner; and Jesus heard the petition of the demons (Matthew 8:31-32), granting their request.

From these and other New Testament teachings, comes the conclusion that God may answer any prayer, provided it fits into the will of God. Nevertheless, there are classes of prayers in which God will never answer sinners, the example cited by the blind man being an example. It should also be noted that Cornelius' prayers, to the extent they requested salvation from sin, were not answered except in the secondary sense of God's sending him a preacher of the gospel who told him what to do to be saved.

Verse 34

The rage of the Pharisees is understandable. A publicly known beggar had defeated them with a syllogism which they could not answer and which was strongly believed by some of their own number (3:2)

He no longer said, "Whether he is a sinner, I know not," but now hurled the challenge in their faces, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing!"

"You were born entirely in sins. . . " This slander had already been refuted by Jesus (9:3), but they employed it anyway.

"And they put him out . . ." that is, out of the synagogue. Upon what grounds was he put out? If it must be spoken, it is upon grounds of spite. It was not upon the grounds of his confessing Christ, for he had not yet done that; but, as they saw his thinking moving in that direction, they cast him out for what they supposed that he would do, and not for what he had already done.

His witness proved that Jesus was indeed the Messiah; and their drastic action against him was actually directed against proof.

Verse 35

Jesus had no doubt heard with joy of the man's triumphant defense of the truth before the Sanhedrin, and He moved at once to lead him to higher and higher levels of faith and obedience.

Verse 36

The man evidently had an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, as indicated by his boldness before the Pharisees; but he had not received any testimony except his own deductions from the miracle, to the effect that Jesus was the Son

of God. Such testimony therefore, from the Master Himself He sought and received.

Verses 37-38

Lightfoot said this was the first worshiper and confessor of Christ to suffer for the Lord's sake as John the Baptist was the first martyr. The Pharisees in their rage made contradictory allegations against the formerly blind man, first denying that he had been born blind (9:18) and later declaring that he had been born blind due to sins. (9:34)

The healed man confessed Christ at once and worshiped Him. The Lord's acceptance of his worship thus adds his own sacred testimony to that of the healed man that Jesus is indeed God come in the flesh.

Both here and there Christ declared in the most emphatic manner possible that He was indeed the Christ; and, in both instances, the persons to whom such declarations were made could not have been allowed as the basis for any charges the Sanhedrin might have brought against Jesus before secular authorities, this being due to the fact of the woman's being a Samaritan, and the previously blind man an excommunicated person.

Verse 39

Two kinds of "seeing" are in view here, "they that see not," in the first instance referring to the physically blind and "they that see," in the second instance being a reference to the normal eyesight of the Pharisees, who were nevertheless, spiritually blind.

In these words, Christ indicated His fulfillment of two classes of prophecies, those stating that the Messiah would bring "recovering of sight to the blind" (Isaiah 61:1-2), and those stating that certain of the Israelites would be blinded spiritually. "

"And seeing you shall see, and shall in no wise perceive." (Isaiah 6:9-10)

"For judgment . . ." In one sense Christ did not come for judgment, but in another sense He did. In this reference, His actions were producing the hardening of Israel which had been prophesied, that hardening being indeed an

act of Divine judgment against Israel. Evidently the Pharisees heard the conversation and witnessed the man's worshipping Jesus, as the next verse shows.

Verses 40-41

We are not blind too, are we . . ." was a sneering, insincere question, such as Pilate's "What is truth?"

"If you were blind . . ." cannot mean "if you were physically blind;" and there can be no doubt that Jesus considered them to be spiritual blind; then why the "if"? It means "if" they had only admitted their arrogance, pride, and ignorance, they might have found salvation. The verse is addressed to their conceit. They were the ones who shouted, "We know!" (9:29); and they were typical examples of the men described by Paul (Romans 2:17-20), who boasted of themselves that they were a guide to the blind. Blindness was the last thing on earth the proud Pharisees would have attributed to himself; yet how blind he was.

"Now you say, we see; your sin remains." This is a reference to the conceit mentioned above. Those who would receive life and salvation of Christ must come in meekness and humility, confessing their sins, denying themselves, and crying, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner."

The entrenched pride and conceit of the religious leaders were utterly repugnant to the Lord; and, as long as men were wrapped up in such a cloak of self-righteousness, there was absolutely no hope for them.

"We see . . ." And yet, despite the sixth sign, they could not even see the Son of God!

CHAPTER 10

Chapter 9 ended on a theme of judgment (9:39); and here the deserved judgment of the evil shepherds is uttered. A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 100, said, "Jesus swiftly turned the tables on His judges and sentenced them."

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 173, said, "Truly, truly" does not ever introduce a fresh topic." This is further evidence for the

unity of these two chapters (9-10) in Jesus' presentation of Himself as the Divine Messiah under the metaphor of the "Good Shepherd," contrasting the evil shepherds who had cast out the blind man.

The importance of the "Good Shepherd" metaphor lies in its use by Jesus,

- (1) to establish His claim of being God in the flesh, and
- (2) to identify Himself as the "Son of David," Israel's great Shepherd King.

The concept that the Messiah would be the "Son of David" was not a mere notion but a solid conviction founded upon the Old Testament and honored by the very first verse in the New Testament. It was accepted by Christ Himself and was without doubt the reason for Christ's effective employment of the metaphor of the Good Shepherd in this chapter.

The second half of the chapter (22-42) records events of some weeks later at the feast of dedication, the additional references to the "Good Shepherd" being made necessary by His foes' insistence that Jesus tell them "plainly" if He was the Christ.

Verse 1

"Enter by the door . . ." Christ is the true door (verse 7) of access to the sheep who are the true Israel of God. It was Christ the door who opened up the whole burden of Old Testament prophecy concerning Him and His coming into the world was the only reason for the existence of Israel as a chosen people. On the other hand, the vicious, secular priests then in charge of Israel had usurped authority over God's Israel, having not entered through Christ the true door at all, but having climbed up by the political and coercive means.

"He is a thief and a robber . . ." Jesus referred to the same men as having made the temple a den of thieves and robbers; and here they are compared to violent outlaws who climb the wall to plunder the sheep belonging to another.

Verse 2

All religious authority of any actual validity derives from Christ who came into the world to redeem it. He was the true door of access to the spiritual

Israel, the children of the promise, who at the time were commingled with the fleshly, hardened Israel.

“By the door . . .” Everything Jesus did was in perfect harmony with the Father’s will contrasting sharply with the evil devices employed by the usurpers for maintaining control over the people. It had all started back there when they rejected God and chose a king of their own (1 Samuel 8:7); and throughout the ages afterward, the combined forces of a reprobate priesthood and an evil monarchy overshadowed the true Israel, that is, the spiritual seed.

That evil hierarchy desired nothing in heaven or upon earth so much as the restoration of their earthly sovereignty through a king of their own choice; and their hatred of a spiritual kingdom like that of Jesus knew no boundaries or limitation.

Verse 3

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, p. 150, gives us a precise analysis which is helpful. “In the first parable, Jesus is the Shepherd entering into the fold and calling His sheep. In the second, Jesus is the door by or through which the sheep enter the fold of God.”

Christ is the door in two senses,

1. the door of access to the spiritual flock, and
2. the door of access for the sheep themselves into fellowship with God.

“To him the doorkeeper opens . . .” Efforts of expositors to assign some significance to the “doorkeeper” are proof enough that no spiritual meaning is clearly discernible. Some hold that the Holy Spirit is meant; J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, I, p. 629, thinks the “doorkeeper” means Moses; *Ibid*, David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 152, thought the “doorkeeper” was John the Baptist; J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel*, p. 469, “If the “doorkeeper” represents anybody, it is God;” Webster thought the “doorkeeper” stood for ministers and teachers in the church, (J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. 629); J. C. Ryle, *Ibid*, said Wordsworth and others saw the “doorkeeper” as Christ, who is not only the door and the good shepherd but the “doorkeeper” also.

The view here is that the “doorkeeper” was just one of the facilities of the sheepfold, like the wall or the thorn hedge, or like the bag out of which the sower planted his field, in that parable, the bag not being mentioned but necessarily inferred.

THE ORIENTAL SHEEPFOLD

The shepherd led his sheep but did not drive them, and a very intimate and loving relationship existed between the shepherd and the sheep, even extending to the shepherd’s habit of giving each sheep a name and teaching them to respond to his voice and commands.

At night, he usually led them into a safe enclosure, often laying across the entrance and thus forming literally the door. Flocks from several shepherds often occupied the same enclosure, the separation taking place next morning when each shepherd went his way, calling his sheep to follow, the sheep invariably following their true shepherd. Such shepherds were devoted to their sheep, risking or even giving their lives in defense of them against marauding beasts or thieves and robbers.

John Freeman, *Life on the Uplands*, p. 20, said, “For the sheep live in their Shepherd, the Center of their unity, the Guarantee of their security, and the Pledge of their prosperity. In the morning he goes before them to lead them out, and in the evening lies down in their midst. This Shepherd's life is one of such loving devotion that it readily lends itself to religious impression. Certain it is that David’s spiritual nature owed much to his having been a keeper of Jesus’ sheep.”

“Calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out . . .” All such expressions become clear in the light of the above summary of the Eastern shepherd’s relationship to the flock.

Verse 4

This has no reference to Jesus' putting His followers in and out of the church. The whole service of caring for the sheep stands for the salvation and security of them that follow the Good Shepherd.

Verse 5

“The voice. . .” is mentioned three times here in six verses and refers to the distinctive quality of Jesus' teaching. The voice of strangers brings philosophies, theories, and speculation; but only the voice of Jesus brings salvation.

The poor blind man was a perfect example of sheep that heard and followed the true Shepherd's voice. The strangers indeed had called him, demanding that he deny glory to the Lord; but instead he worshiped Jesus.

Verse 6

The Pharisees whom Jesus had already called “blind” (9:39f) did not have the slightest idea about what Jesus meant by these teachings. Two months later (verse 24) they seem to have caught on to at least a part of what Jesus meant.

Verse 7

Jesus is the means of access to the true spiritual children of God, as explained under the above six verses. Jesus to this point had not categorically called Himself the door; but here He stated it plainly.

Verse 8

Alan Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 131, noted, “To the rulers who fattened themselves at the expense of the flock, the Sadducean high priests, and Pharisaic doctors, the Herods and the Roman procurators—all these wicked shepherds (in the sense of Ezekiel 34) had climbed into their place of domination over the flock by illegitimate means; and it was they who conspired against the Divine Shepherd,

who would lay down His life for the flock and who would gather together into one flock the scattered children of God.”

Verse 9

“I am the door . . .” has here a different meaning. In verse 8, it referred to the access of the Lord to His flock; here it refers to the access of men to salvation, or, in, terms of the metaphor, access to the sheepfold.

Sheep do not find salvation, and Christians do not find pasture; but both concepts are in this verse.

Remarkably, the same mixed metaphor is in the Old Testament, “So we your people and sheep of your pasture will give You thanks for ever.” (Psalm 79:13)

Of course, sheep do not give thanks; but it was part of the genius of inspiration that metaphors were mingled in both testaments. Of course, sheep do not give thanks; but it was part of the genius of inspiration that metaphors were mingled in both testaments. Attention to such details as this is prerequisite to understanding this remarkable passage.

Verse 10

The religious hierarchy of hardened Israel was the murderous thief intent on killing and destroying, and Christ is the true shepherd who came to bring abundant life to the people of God.

“Abundantly . . . “ How grotesque and unreal are the ideas of those who think the Christian leads a life of boring inhibition, sitting out his years in the chilly twilight of monastic gloom, forbidden to do anything that everyone else wants to do, and always cowering in fear before an angry God! On the contrary, the Christian life is the happy life, free, abundant, and overflowing, adventurous and exciting beyond any other kind of existence. Why cannot men believe their Creator, to the effect that the way of Christ is the way of joy and fulfillment?

W. F. Howard, *Interpreters' Bible, Luke-John*, p. 625, wrote, "(Concerning) those who fling their lives away in an avid questing for sensation, seeking to make a collection of experiences as others do of stamps, and esteeming every new experience of any kind and addition to their store, who will get drunk, simply for experience, and touch unholy things that they may taste the whole of life:—they do not realize, poor duped fools, misled by hobbledehoy thinkers, so called, who have cooked these immature ideas into a kind of messy philosophy—they do not realize that in life, as in arithmetic, there is a minus sign as surely as a plus; and that certain experiences do not add to, but subtract from, what we had and were before, each new indulgence in forbidden things leaving us poorer, leaner, emptier, and at length beggared."

One in full possession of his intelligence cannot seriously suppose that God would have created man with a constitution that would enable him to be happier in the service of the devil than in the service of God. The abundant life is not with the evil one, but with Jesus Christ our Lord."

Verse 11

Almighty God appears throughout the Old Testament as the true shepherd of Israel. The 34th chapter of Ezekiel is given over to this metaphor of God as the good shepherd and the false leaders as the evil shepherds. This great chapter is the key to all that is spoken here.

Now, in the light of this very extensive metaphor in the Old Testament making God to be the only true shepherd of Israel, how is one to understand Jesus when twice He thundered the message that, "I am the good shepherd."

It is no less a declaration that Jesus is God than if any other words had been employed to say it. He did intend it thus is proved by the fact that when the Pharisees finally realized what He meant, they attempted to stone Him for blasphemy. (Verse 33)

"Lays down His life for the sheep . . ." What is this if not a prophecy of the cross? Here the reality far surpasses the metaphor; for, while it was true that

shepherds were known to lose their lives in defense of sheep, there is no record of any having consented to so voluntarily. Jesus willingly gave Himself up to die for men.

Verse 12

The contrast here between the hireling keepers of the flock and the Lord who truly loved the sheep, enough to even die for them, has an application far beyond this. In the church of all ages there have been evil and good shepherds in the full character of these on view in this verse.

“Hireling . . .” is not a reference to all who work for wages, the laborer being fully worthy of his hire; but it denotes a class of persons who merchandise holy things, not out of regard for sacred values, but purely from selfish and carnal motives.

“The wolf . . .” was Jesus’ usual designation of false teachers (Matthew 7: 15ff); and the modus operandi of such is always that of scattering the flock. A “church buster” is invariably a wolf, regardless of his pretensions.

Verse 13

“Is not concerned about the sheep . . .” The true shepherd is one who cares for his charges. This contrasts with the heartless and pitiless disregard of such religious leaders as those who cast out the blind man in the hope of advancing their own nefarious schemes.

Verse 14

This verse should be read in close connection with this verse 11, because the union between the Father and Christ is like that between the Lord and His church. Although His own did not know the Lord with the same completeness of knowledge that He has of them, nevertheless they know Him. His mind is in them; His name is upon them; His service engages them; His joy sustains them; His love forgives them; and His Spirit guides them. The union of Christ and His servants is beautiful and sufficient.

Verse 15

J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, II, p. 10, said, “The full nature of that knowledge which the First Person of the Trinity has of the Second and the Second of the first, is something far beyond man’s finite understanding. It is in short a deep mystery . . . (It is) a knowledge, so high, so deep, so intimate, so ineffable that no words can fully convey it.”

The doctrine of the Trinity is rejected by some; but this student finds in such a doctrine the only explanation of many things in the word of God which otherwise have no explanation at all.

Verse 16

“Not of this flock . . .” These are the Gentiles whom Christ would save, who together with the spiritual Israel (a remnant of the whole) would henceforth compose the “one flock” of God. Jesus used the term “one flock” rather than “one fold” because it might otherwise have appeared that the Gentiles were to be called into the institution of the Jews. There was to be a new institution, God’s “one flock.”

Not the least of the sure evidences of Jesus’ supernatural wisdom appears in this prophecy of the “one flock,” including Jews and Gentiles alike of every tribe and nation.

Verse 17

“I lay down . . . that I may take . . .” Jesus here expressed His absolute freedom and authority both to die and to rise from the dead. There are three differences between Jesus’ laying down His life for the sheep and that of the shepherds’ doing so in the metaphor.

These are:

1. Jesus' death is altogether voluntary, but not like the shepherd's involuntary death while fighting against a robber. The shepherd might indeed die, but not willingly,
2. Christ's death actually saves the sheep eternally, whereas the death of a shepherd would only hasten the death and destruction of the sheep.
3. Christ will lay down His life, but with a purpose of taking it up again, something no earthly shepherd could do.

Verse 18

This necessity of Christ to express the voluntary nature of His forthcoming death probably derived from His dual purpose:

1. of preventing the exultation of His foes in thinking that His death would be their victory and,
2. of preventing the despair of His disciples in thinking that death might defeat Him.

“This commandment I received from My Father.” All that Christ did on earth was done in complete harmony and obedience to the will of God. The thing in view here was the Lord's vicarious death and resurrection, but the same is true of all that He did. Of mortals, only they are good who obey the word of God. This was the glory of the Savior that He did the will of the Father, conforming His every action to the Father's will.

This verse amounts to a shout into the very face of His enemies that they could not kill Jesus until He was ready to die for the sins of the world. That it was true would be proved before the present interview ended; for they took up stones to kill Him, but could not. (Verse 31)

Verse 19

“There arose a division . . .” has reference to 7:48 and 9:16. R. C. Ryle, *Ibid.*, II. p. 17, said, “It may seem strange, at first sight, that He who came to preach peace between God and man should be the cause of contention. But herein were Jesus’ own words fulfilled, “I came not to send peace but a sword.” (Matthew 10:34) The fault was not in Christ or His doctrine, but in the carnal mind of His hearers.”

Verses 20-21

Their rage and rejection against Jesus sprang from His being nothing like what they had imagined a Messiah would be. Instead of leading an all-powerful army against the enemy, here He was talking about dying and taking up His life again! They were simply not tuned in on any such wavelength. Some bluntly accused Him of being mad or being possessed by a demon; and the voice of the minority who knew otherwise was not strong enough to break the personal barrier of hatred and antagonism which sinful and arrogant men had built up in themselves against Jesus.

“These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed...” “A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind . . .” Such thoughts as these should have penetrated the hearts of the adamant majority but did not. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. (Romans 7:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14)

In contrasting results of Jesus’ words and works in Jerusalem, one sees the fulfillment of Paul’s words that the gospel is life to some and death to others. (2 Corinthians 2:15). J. C. Ryle, *op. cit.*, II, p. 18, said, “We must not find fault with the gospel if it stirs up men’s corruption and causes the thoughts of many hearts to be revealed. (Luke 2:35)

One amazing quality of the gospel is that men find it impossible to ignore it, however some may pretend to do so. It has the power to polarize men, making all of them either the friends of God or His enemies. Jerusalem could not ignore Christ.

We should not leave this verse 21 and the question, “A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?” until we look at the miracles described and the conversations following it that dominant the narrative from 9:1 to this point.

It was the false shepherd’s behavior which led the Savior to announce Himself as the Good Shepherd.

It was their judging the blind man and casting him out that led to Jesus’ judgment of them.

It was their evil character that led to the denunciation of them as thieves and robbers.

It was their shutting the blind man out of the privileges of Judaism that prompted Jesus to open up for him the privilege of the new kingdom about to begin.

It was their selfish disregard of the sheep that led Jesus to speak of His love for the sheep and of His laying down His life for them.

It was their determination to kill Jesus that led to Jesus’ announcement that no one could kill Him.

It was their domineering arrogance in the exercise of sacred privilege to which they had no moral right which led to the charge that they had climbed up some other way.

All of this was an elaboration of the blindness with which Jesus charged them. (Chapter 9:41)

Following this instructive section, some two months passed. Winter fell upon the Holy city, and the feast of the dedication came; but the time-lapse did not resolve the division that arose over Jesus. His old antagonists, the Pharisees, appeared once more, intent on winning an argument they had already lost.

Verses 22-23

A. T. Robertson, *Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 184, noted, “There is a considerable time-lapse between the events in 10:1-21 and 10:22-39, possibly nearly three months (from just after tabernacles 7:37 to dedication 10:22). Jesus had apparently spent the time in between in Judea. (Luke 10:1--13:21)

A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 106, wrote, “The feast of dedication was begun by Judas Maccabeus B.C. 164 to commemorate the cleansing and rededication of the temple after the defilement through pagan worship under Antiochus Epiphanes, and was celebrated every year for eight days beginning on the 25th of the Jewish month Casleu. It was not one of the great feasts handed down from Moses; but it was popular among the people who called it the feast of lights. Hunter also said, “It was held at the winter solstice (Christmas) . . . and was called the “The feast of the New Age.” (I Maccabees 4:59 (New York: Catholic Publishing Co., 1942), *The Douay Version of the Holy Bible*.

“It was winter . . .” explains Jesus’ seeking the shelter of Solomon’s porch; our Lord preferred to preach outdoors as in the Sermon on the Mount. B. W. Johnson, *The New Testament Commentary*, p. 164, described Solomon’s porch thus: “It is generally supposed to have been in the southeast part of the temple enclosure, overlooking the valley of Kedron. Josephus describes it as a stadium in length, and as having three parts, two of them thirty feet wide each, and the middle one forty-five feet. He contends that it was built by Solomon, which is doubtful.”

Flavius Josephus, *Life and Works*, p. 244, wrote, “A stadium was twice the length of a football field (582’-600’) according to Peloubet’s dictionary. Johnson’s doubt of Solomon building it seems strange, because it is hard to imagine anyone else having done so and naming it after Solomon. Josephus not

only attributed it to Solomon but stated that he built it before the temple itself.” The roof was terraced, some portions of it being 120 feet in height.

Verse 24

“The Jews . . .” refers to the religious hierarchy. The noble Jews in great numbers accepted Christianity, but in doing so, lost their identity as Jews; and thus the very name gradually came to mean the enemies of the gospel; but it is clear that John always used “the Jews” to mean the priestly class in Jerusalem. John himself was a Jew, as was our Lord, and most of the apostles.

“How long will you keep us in suspense . . .?” On the surface, this almost sounds like a fair question; and there is a temptation to wonder why Jesus did not speak right up and say, “Yes, of course, I am the Christ.” Jesus’ repeated declarations earlier that He was “The Good Shepherd” certainly meant that He was the Christ, God come in the flesh; but He had not used the word, “Christ,” because the Jewish conception of what that word meant was totally incorrect. And, if Jesus had used this word here, they would have made their incorrect notion of what it meant the basis of a charge of sedition before the Romans. The Pharisees by this time had figured out what Jesus meant by calling Himself the Good Shepherd; and here they were only trying to trick Him into using a word they could pervert into a charge of sedition. At a time of His own choice, Jesus would testify that He was the “Christ” (Mark 14:62); but His refusal to use that word here was righteous and holy.

Verses 25-26

Jesus was not deceived by the sweet reasonableness of their friendly (?) question, for He well knew their murderous designs.

I told you and you do not believe . . .” Christ’s bold declaration of Himself as the Shepherd of Israel was clear enough in all of its glorious Messianic implications; but the spiritual overtones of that title made it useless for the diabolical purposes of the Pharisees; and what is equally important, they did not believe it. From their viewpoint, therefore, what they were trying to do was to

get Jesus to commit blasphemy (in their eyes) and to do so in terminology that could also be used by them as a legal charge before the governor. The proof of this is what they actually did when Jesus did swear under oath that He was he Christ. (Mark 14:62ff)

Their own gross immorality is inherent in what they thought they were doing. They thought they were trying to get a fellow-mortal (as they thought) to commit a capital crime (as they viewed it) for the sake of getting Him killed! No wonder Jesus addressed them as, "You serpents; you brood of vipers." (Matthew 23:33)

"The works that I do in My Father's name . . ." brought forward the mighty signs Jesus did, but that subject was extremely distasteful to those hypocrites. They only wanted some basis for having Him legally murdered.

"You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep . . ." These words recalled His declaration of Himself as the Good Shepherd, which by that time they fully understood in all its implications. (Verse 33) Here as always, Jesus made unbelief to be the result of immoral character.

Verse 27

Men who close their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts cannot hear the Shepherd's voice, through no fault of the Shepherd, but because of their own willful sin. Those of honest and good heart, on the other hand, will hear the Shepherd's voice and follow Him.

Verse 28

"Eternal life . . ." Who but God could make a promise like this? Thus, the Pharisees had another chance to see the light; but this additional statement of Christ's Divinity was worthless to them, because it could not serve as a legal charge before the Romans.

"And no one shall snatch them . . ." The utmost security of the saved in Christ lies in the fact that no external power shall ever be able to dislodge them

from the Master's love and protection. In this same vein of thought are Paul's great words of Romans 8:31-39; but in both passages, only external things are in view as possible destroyers of the soul; and external things shall not be able to do it. Yet, it must be remembered that a believer may turn away from the truth, become entangled with sin and overcome. The sovereign right of choice is never taken away from man.

Verses 29-30

Here is the reasoning that underlies the promise of verse 28, that the sheep of Christ shall have eternal life. There is no way to understand Jesus' words here except as an affirmation of His supernatural nature, claiming equality with God Himself, or, as the Pharisees expressed it in verse 33, making Himself God!

A. T. Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 187, said, "This crisp statement, 'I and the Father are one,' is the climax of Christ's claims concerning the relationship between the Father and Himself (the Son). This stirred the Pharisees to uncontrollable anger."

J. C. Ryle *op. cit.*, II p. 30, said, Augustine saw in this single text the complete refutation of two major heresies, saying, "It silences the Sabellians, who say there is only one Person in the Godhead, by speaking of two distinct Persons. It silences the Arians who say the Son is inferior to the Father, by saying that the Father and the Son are one."

J. C. Ryle, *Ibid*, paraphrased the thought thus: "I and My eternal Father, though two distinct Persons, are yet one in essence, nature, dignity, power, will, and operation. Hence, in the matter of securing the safety of My sheep, what I do, My Father does likewise. I do not act independently of Him."

Verse 31

Some "moderns," so-called, have alleged from this verse that the author of John was a stranger to the laws and customs of Judaea before 70 A. D. But as

Alan Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 135, said, “Acts 7:58f records a case of mob stoning such as is said to have been impossible.”

“Again . . .” indicates that the Jews had repeatedly sought an opportunity to stone Jesus (8:49; 11:8); William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, II, p. 126, “Concluded from this that the Jews carried stones.”

According to the law, blasphemy was punishable by stoning (Leviticus 24:16) but only after legal trial and sentencing. Such niceties as the legal requirements of the case, however, were no kind of deterrent to Jesus’ foes. The commentators who fancy that legal prohibitions, either Jewish or Roman, cast any doubt on the truth of John’s record have missed altogether the illegal and unscrupulous nature of the whole cabal against Jesus. Did such prohibitions prevent the same group of men from stoning Stephen to death? (Acts 7:58)

Verse 32

Christ kept focusing attention on His mighty works, those being the last thing on earth the Pharisees wanted to consider.

“Are you stoning Me . . . “ has the meaning of “You are trying to stone Me.”

“From the Father . . .” stresses the oneness of Jesus with the Father, indicating that the great signs were accomplished in answer to prayer, and in full harmony with God’s will. This proved that Jesus was not guilty of blasphemy; but the priestly enemies would receive no evidence of any kind. Intent on murder, they blurted out any capital charge that came into their minds.

Verse 33

“Make Yourself out to be God . . .” Yes, the Pharisees fully and correctly understood, at last, exactly what Jesus meant; and their fury rose and overflowed. Jesus meant to claim unequivocally His equality and oneness with God. Significantly, if Jesus’ claim was false, He was a blasphemer and deserved death; and in this, appears the sharp dilemma concerning Christ. He either was, or was

not, what He claimed to be; and there has never been a middle position. If Jesus was not the Holy Christ, He deserved death as the law decreed. (Leviticus 24:61)

If He was in truth the Divine Messiah, His enemies deserved death for charging Him with blasphemy and shutting their eyes against the light. If Jesus was not indeed God come in flesh, then He was not a noble prophet but a liar, not a great leader but a fool, not a wise teacher but an idiot. Every man confronts this dilemma, invariably receiving Christ as ALL or nothing. An equivocal or halfway reception of Jesus Christ is, in fact a rejection of Him.

Verses 34-36

This is the passage to which Jesus referred, “God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? I said, “You are gods, (Divinely appointed judges) and all of you are sons of the Most High.” (Psalms 82:1-2, 6)

The unjust judges of Israel were the subject of these verses, God calling them “gods” in order to stimulate and encourage them to render just judgments.

It was not blasphemy for a man to call himself “son of God” in that sense. Jesus did not imply by this appeal that He claimed to be “Son of God” in the ordinary sense; for both He and His enemies knew that it was in the unique sense of being “the only begotten Son of God” that Jesus used the title.

“Your law . . . to whom the word of God . . . the Scripture . . .” These triple designations refer to the entire Old Testament. There is no stronger testimony in the Bible to the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures than this remarkable passage.

“The Scripture cannot be broken . . .” This was only a parenthesis in the words of Jesus but, in the long view, a parenthesis embracing creation, all time, and eternity.

THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN

1. What does this mean?
 - A. It means that the Bible is inspired.
 - B. It identifies the Old Testament as Scripture in the fullest sense.
 - C. It means that Jesus believed the Bible.
 - D. It means that the Bible is an infallible book, the one judge and jury before which all men and their deeds shall at last be tried.
 - E. It means that the sacred scriptures are as immutable as God's other laws, such as those of gravity, etc.
2. Many have not believed this text.
 - A. Those who sought here to stone Jesus did not believe it.
 - B. The rulers of this world's darkness, such as Herod, Agrippa, Felix, Festus, Nero, Caligula, and countless others, did not believe it.
 - C. The apostate church did not believe it.
 - D. Faithless Christians of all ages have not believed it.
 - E. So-called "modernists" who explain away the Scriptures do not believe it.
 - F. The world does not believe it. (3:19)
3. And yet the text is true. For generations, men believed the earth was flat, but their belief did not alter the truth; and so it is with the unbreakable word of God. If every man on earth disbelieved and repudiated the Bible, it would make no difference, except in regard to the destiny of them that disbelieved. Absolutely nothing can break the word of God.

- A. Time cannot break it.
 - B. Disobedience cannot break it, as witnessed by such examples as Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Judas, and Demas.
 - C. Neglectful disciples cannot break it.
 - D. The advance of knowledge cannot break it.
 - E. Satan cannot break it.
 - F. Death and the grave cannot break it.
4. Even when it seems that the Scripture is broken, it remains yet unbroken.
- A. Pilate condemned Jesus; but no, it was Pilate who was condemned to perpetual infamy.
 - B. Judas sold Jesus, at least that is what he and the Pharisees thought; but it was Judas who was sold to a suicide's death.
 - C. Herod placed the apostles in jail; but they were released, and Herod was eaten with worms.
 - D. Millions of men fancy they have broken the Scripture, and even churches have denied and broken the scripture, so they thought; but, of all who do so, it is they who are broken.

The earth's kings and captains, the mighty and the proud, have broken the Scripture in the sense of ignoring and disobeying the word of God—but wait. Stand at the judgment and behold who is really broken, “And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him, who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:16-17)

Let no man dare to believe that the Scripture can be broken. If one shall so believe, Christ has made him a liar by this text.

“Because I said, I am the Son of God . . .” This refers to Jesus’ revelation witnessed by some of the Pharisees; thus Christ plainly allowed the interpretation that He had “said” this when he told the blind man, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He also accepted the blind man’s worship. (9:35-38)

Thus, Jesus was generous in allowing the allegation of His critics that He had said He was the Son of God; but as Alvah Hovey, Commentary of John, p. 223, observe, “How could they charge Him with blasphemy in claiming to be the Son of God, when their own (evil and unscrupulous) judges had been styled “gods”?

Furthermore, it was God Himself who had styled those judges, “gods,” evil as they were, and solely out of respect to their position. Jesus, in contrast, was holy, sinless, and undefiled, having every right, even from a human standpoint to say, “I am the Son of God.”

“Whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world . . .” This contrasted the holy office of Jesus and His perfect fitness of character in His sacred office with the evil lives and crooked justice of the judges mentioned in the Psalm 82:6, Jesus quoted.

Verses 37-38

Jesus vanquished His foes with the argument from Psalm 82:6. He then returned to His constant theme of oneness and equality with God, although in such terms as to avoid the legal charge they wanted to make.

Verse 39

Just how Jesus avoided capture here is not related. His will alone was more than enough to prevent it. John later recorded the incident of a whole detachment of soldiers falling to the ground in His presence, even though they had come to arrest Him. (18:6)

Verse 40

A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 100, wrote, “These verses describe a ministry of Jesus east of Jordan, that is, in Peraea, a ministry also recorded in Mark 10:1. Jesus, perhaps because of mounting hostility, goes back to the place where the Baptist had baptized and borne witness to Jesus. (1:28) If the Jerusalem Jews had rejected their Messiah, here in Transjordan, humble folk acknowledge the truth of what John had said and confess their faith in Jesus.”

“He went away again . . .” This does not mean that Jesus had made another journey to the district in Transjordan.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 130, noted, “It must be interpreted in the light of what immediately follows, namely, “To the place where John was at first baptizing . . . and having previously reported two places where John baptized, . . . (He) is now thinking of the first place, namely Bethany across Jordan . . . fifty miles from the Bethany near Jerusalem.”

Verse 41

John’s identification of Christ was in itself a mighty sign and consisted of his daring and unequivocal identification of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. The people seemed to be saying here that such an identification was a far greater sign than miracles would have been.

Verse 42

“Believed in Him . . .” has one meaning throughout the Scripture; and thus it is amazing how the commentators rush to explain how “It does not necessarily mean that all these believers embraced Him with a living faith.”

That some who believed on Him did not follow Jesus may be considered certain; in which case, it was not their faith which was at fault but their lack of obedience.

The great error of the last half of a millennium is the heresy of supposing that if one had the right kind of faith he is therefore saved by that alone. The Scriptures teach no such thing.

“There . . .” points up the difference between the rejection in Jerusalem and the widespread acceptance of Christ in Peraea.

CHAPTER 11

This entire chapter deals with the resurrection of Lazarus, the seventh of the great signs.

The resurrection of Lazarus is omitted from the synoptics; but if that is a reason for denying it, then the omission by John of the other two instances of Jesus’ raising the dead is grounds for denying them!

Why was this sign omitted from the other gospels?

1. The synoptics reported the miracles done in Galilee.
2. Lazarus was still alive when the synoptics were written, and it would have endangered his life to have included this miracle, the Sanhedrin being determined to put him to death. (12:10)
3. It might have endangered the soul of Lazarus. He had already won the crown of life but was recalled to all the dangers of mortal existence with potential consequences so grave that Jesus wept at the contemplation of his recall.
4. The most convincing reason of all was outlined by J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, II, p. 54, “Each evangelist was inspired to record what God saw to be best and most suitable. No one, I suppose, imagines that the evangelists recorded a tenth part of our Lord’s miracles, or that there were no other dead persons raised to life, of whom we know nothing at all.” (21:25)

The inspired writers were not governed by ordinary rules and were unaffected by considerations which uninspired men would have honored; and this is nowhere more evident than in the selection of materials for their writings. It is a marvel that the inspired men would have recorded the martyrdom of the apostle James with only seven words (in the Greek) and devoted nine verses to the undisturbed grave-cloths.

The gospels defy the arrogance of men who seek to understand them apart from their inspired origin.

Another device for denying this miracle is that of making it a fiction, invented by John to make a point. Alan Richardson, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 139, wrote, "Luke related a parable of Jesus in which it was declared that, even if someone returned from the dead, the unbelieving Jews would not repent. (Luke 16:19-31) John turns the saying into a story in which someone actually does return from the dead—and the Jews do not repent. Significantly, the name of the person who has died in each story is Lazarus!"

If Lazarus' resurrection was not historical, how does one explain the fact that the event has been perpetuated in the name of the village where it happened? "Bethany is called "El Azeriyeh," meaning "'The place of Lazarus.' "

All efforts to discredit this narrative perish in the overwhelming gospel history of the event, so complete, so thoroughly in balance, so exactly fitted to the historical matrix in which it is embedded, and so thoroughly believable. Nobody, but nobody, ever invented an event like this. J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 793, said, "The last and greatest of the seven "signs" recorded in John is related with such photographic minuteness of detail, that it is clear that the evangelist was present. Three points about it are especially noteworthy:

1. that it was a physical miracle, which no ingenuity can reduce to a case of faith-healing;
2. that it was definitely worked to produce faith in Christ (verse 42); and

3. that, more than any other miracle, it was performed under test conditions—"Lazarus was really dead (verse 39), and hostile witnesses were present (verse 42)."

Jesus had said that "greater things" than healing the invalid would be done by Himself, and that such a "greater" work would be the occasion of those very men's marveling at it. (5:10)

The Son of Man had power to raise all the dead who ever lived. (5:25-29) Thus nearly two whole years previously to this, Jesus had announced what He would do and named the witnesses before whom it would be done (the Pharisees and priests) and that they would "marvel."

THE SEVENTH OF THE GREAT SIGNS

Verse 1

Specifics with reference to Lazarus were necessary due to the common nature of the name; therefore members of his family were named to make identification certain and also in view of their own importance to the gospel records.

"Of Bethany . . ." distinguishes Lazarus from others of the same name; and "of the village of Mary and . . . her sister Martha" distinguishes which Bethany is meant. This one was less than two miles from Jerusalem; the other was fifty miles away beyond the Jordan River.

Verse 2

There were at least two anointments of Jesus, possibly three; and the Roman Catholic interpretation of melding all three into one is without doubt incorrect. John here identified this Mary with the one in Mark 14:3-9, the event recorded there taking place in the home of Simon the leper; and there is no basis for supposing that he was the same as Simon the Pharisee.

Verse 3

Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 295, observed, “The transactions recorded in this chapter occurred nearly four months after those mentioned in the previous chapter; those occurred in December, and these at the approach of the Passover in April.”

These sisters did not say to Jesus, “Do something; heal our brother; come quickly,” or any such thing.

Verse 4

“Not unto death . . .” meant that death would not be the end of the matter, but that the Son of God would be glorified in the event. This was evidently uttered in the presence of the messenger who brought Jesus the word of Lazarus’ sickness; and there is every reason to believe that he reported this observation of Jesus to the sisters. (Verse 40)

Verse 5

Jesus loves all of His followers, and not merely in groups or families; hence, it is as individuals, and not merely in groups or families; hence it is recorded not that Jesus loved the Lazarus family, but that He loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus.

Verse 6

Brooks Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 165, is doubtless correct in maintaining that, “The supposition that the interval was left in order that the Lord might raise the dead instead of heal the sick, and so show greater power and win greater glory, is alien equally from the spirit and from the letter of the narrative.”

The journey from Bethany to where Jesus was would have required at least a day; and thus Lazarus died when the message came.

Verses 7-8

“Then after this . . .” means after the two days delay after receiving the message of Lazarus’ illness.

“The disciples said to Him . . .” This shows that the apostles had been with Jesus throughout the events related in these chapters and were thus eyewitnesses of all Jesus had done. They were astonished that Christ would incur the risk of going back to the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Verses 9-10

“Twelve hours in a day . . .” This means that the days of life will be continued sufficiently for life’s work. Jesus’ enemies could not murder Him till the hour arrived for His death—an hour appointed by the Father.

Matthew Henry, Commentary, Vol. V, p. 1045, stated it, “Man’s life is a day. . . The consideration of this should make us not only very busy, as to the work of life, but also very easy as to the perils of life; our day shall be lengthened out till our work is done, and our testimony finished.”

Thus, if Jesus had yielded to the fears of His disciples, ignoring the manifest will of the Father that He go and raise Lazarus from the dead, it would have been to walk in the night, and to stumble. The light which men receive is from God and should be followed without regard to considerations of human wisdom and prudence alone.

ASLEEP IN JESUS

Verse 11

“Lazarus has fallen asleep . . .” Of all that Jesus ever said of death, this is the most encouraging.

1. Sleep is a temporary thing; and so by this our Lord revealed that death too is not permanent.

2. Sleep refreshes and rejuvenates; thus in the resurrection this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruptible shall but on incorruption.
3. From sleep, men awaken; and the promise is secure in the Master's words that all that are in the tombs "shall come forth." (5:29)
4. Sleep is a time of rest; and the dead also "shall rest from their labors." (Revelation 14:13) The respect of the human race for this word of Jesus Christ is revealed in the fact of their inscribing these words, "Asleep in Jesus," upon millions of tombs in all ages since then.

"But I go that I may awaken him out of sleep . . ." Jesus never told how bad it was with men. Except that in the same breath He provided the remedy. The announcement that Lazarus was dead was followed by the word that Jesus would awaken him. Jesus reveals our sin, but in the same breath offers pardon, salvation, and eternal life.

Verse 12

"If he has fallen asleep, he will recover . . ." regards the usual fact that when seriously ill people have passed a crisis, they sleep. There could have been the thought of the disciples that "Since he is going to get well anyway there is no need for us to go."

Verse 13

There was no easy way out, such as seems to have been suggested by the disciples; all of them would go to the tomb of Lazarus, and they were filled with fear at the prospect of it.

Verses 14-15

Paraphrase: I am glad I was not there; if I had been, I would have yielded to the cries and entreaties of the sisters. Healing him would have been a great wonder, but raising him from the dead will be a greater one; and I am glad for this opportunity to raise your faith to a higher level.

Verse 16

Arno C. Gaebelien, *The Gospel of John*, p. 197, wrote, “When Thomas said this, he expressed fear that if the Lord returned to Judaea He would be killed. While much has been said about “doubting Thomas,” here we behold that his heart was greatly attached to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Well, it may be; but it appears that Thomas had the gravest doubts of the Lord’s power to raise Lazarus; and, indeed, if he believed any such thing, it was surely submerged and invisible in his reply.

Verse 17

Matthew Henry, *op. cit.*, p. 1048, placed the healing of a blind man at Jericho and the interview with Zacchaeus within the interval between verses 16-17. If this was the case, it would indicate no hurry on Jesus’ part to arrive in Bethany.

“Four days . . .” William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 146, wrote, “According to rabbinical tradition, the soul of a deceased person hovers round the body for three days in hope of a reunion, but takes its final departure when it notices that the body has entered a state of decomposition.”

“He found . . .” Jesus already knew what the situation was there; thus He “found” it to be what He already knew it was. Due to the superstition of the rabbins, cited by Hendriksen, “the four days of Lazarus in the tomb was significant.” Jesus removed from His enemies any such possible explanation of the resurrection of His friend Lazarus, “an explanation” they doubtless would have resorted to if it had not been removed.

Verse 18

This is mentioned to explain the presence of so many distinguished mourners.

Verse 19

Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 231, said, “The Greek words here rendered “Martha and Mary” are so written that they include the meaning of “with the women about them.”

The usual time of mourning was about a week; and the death of a member of a wealthy, prominent, and distinguished family like that of Lazarus and his sisters accounts for the multitude of mourners.

Verse 20

Martha, as the more practical of the two sisters, left the house and hastened to meet Jesus; but Mary remained shut up with her grief. Martha had risen above personal grief to assume the duties of hostess.

How many noble and industrious women there are who, in the last analysis, are best decried as daughters of Martha!

Martha’s haste to go and meet Jesus could have sprung from her desire to speak with Him first in the presence of friends, rather than before His enemies; for it must be remembered that many of the mourners were among the bitter foes of the Lord.

Verses 21-22

“Even now I know . . .” meant that she had not ruled out the possibility of a resurrection; although, from some of the things she later said, it seems that she did not really expect Jesus to raise Lazarus.

“If You had been here, my brother would not have died . . .” This must not be understood as a complaint that the Lord had not come soon enough, for Lazarus died about the time the Lord got the message. It was an exhibition of the kind of thinking that always accompanies the death of a loved one. “If . . .” if we could have received a doctor, if only the ditch had been dry, if she had only

stayed at home, If she had only left the window open—a million "ifs" torment the survivors.

Verse 23

Martha should have accepted this as assurance that Jesus would raise Lazarus; but she was not exempt from the common human failing of limiting the promises of God. She limited what He said to what she supposed He meant.

Verse 24

This statement of Martha is one of tremendous hope and consolation. The intimacy of that family with the Lord gives great weight to her confidence of the resurrection at the last day.

Verses 25-26

In this lies the full explanation of Jesus' words, "If anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death." (8:51)

Such statements of Jesus never were intended to deny the necessity of physical death. This is one of the most beloved passages in all of the Sacred Scriptures.

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

This is the opening sentence in the litany for the dead in the Book of Common Prayer. It's healing comforting message has echoed over millions of graves, and as bodies were buried at sea, or wherever the bereaved have turned in sorrow from the faces of their beloved dead. This statement of Christ is the great inheritance of the human family.

1. Jesus' words here contrast a belief in a doctrine with a belief in Himself.

Martha found little comfort in the thought of a resurrection at the last day; but Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Without disparaging

Christian doctrine in any sense, we may say that it is faith in a Person, given in Jesus, that makes all the difference.

2. This means Jesus is God in human form, a truth He promptly proved by raising Lazarus.

Jesus had claimed God-hood as Light in the world, the Good Shepherd, the giver of eternal life, the door of the sheep, as existing before Abraham was born, and in numerous other ways. Here He appeared as Resurrection come in the flesh.

3. This means far more than an assertion of Jesus' power to raise Lazarus, extending to all the dead who ever lived. (5:24-29) The "Come forth," shortly to be sounded over Lazarus' grave, is the same cry that shall awaken all the dead on earth.
4. In this appears what is meant by "shall not see death." The Lord has not abolished physical death, but its significance, having made it a beginning instead of an end. A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 115, said, "The Christian will of course pay the last debt to nature; but because of that saving link with Christ, the physical death he must one day experience loses all reality."

"Do you believe this . . . ?" Jesus probed Martha's heart to bring out her faith; and her announcement of it was as great as any apostle's.

Verse 27

The weight of this confession is colossal. In the words, "I have believed," is the meaning that for an extended time she had believed and that she continued to believe in Jesus as a supernatural person. She called Him "Lord" and "Christ" and "Son of God" in a single breath. What a magnificent confession!

Verse 28

Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 299, observed, Jesus probably directed Martha to do this, “Though the evangelist has not recorded it, for she said to Mary, “The Teacher is here, and is calling for you.”

“Secretly . . .” There is no evidence that Jesus instructed secrecy in this call of Mary; but Martha discretely understood that it might not be proper to let Jesus’ enemies know that He had arrived.

Verse 29

Speculations as to why Jesus did not go at once to the house of mourning, but remained at a distance, having suggested many reasons for it, the most convincing being that Jesus was at the tomb where Lazarus slept because this is where the wonder would occur. The Lord would not go to the mourners; they would come to Him. The spiritual overtones of this are significant. Mary’ response was prompt and obedient.

Verse 30

This was probably at the tomb of Lazarus, but the sacred record does not so state.

Verse 31

It may be assumed that Jesus had intended that this sign be performed in the presence of His foes (5:20); and, therefore, the following of Mary by the Jews was a providential overruling of Martha’s intention to secrecy.

Verse 32

Mary’s unabashed worshiping of Jesus was received by Him, even as He received that of the blind man (9:38), indicating that Jesus desired and accepted human worship, the same being another proof of His identity with God.

“Lord, if You had been here . . .” These were also the words of Martha, showing that the sisters had often spoken thus to each other during Lazarus’ illness.

Verses 33-34

“He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled . . .” A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 115, said that this is, “Clear proof that Christ’s miracles were not done without cost to Himself.” Of what was Jesus angry or indignant?

H. R. Reynolds, *The Pulpit Commentary*, II, p. 93, wrote, “Death itself caused this indignation . . . He saw all the agony of it in millions of instances. There flashed upon His spirit all moral consequences of which death was the ghastly symbol. He knew that within a short time He too, in taking upon Himself the sins of men, would have taken upon Himself their death; and there was enough to raise in His spirit a divine indignation, and He groaned and shuddered.”

“Lord, come and see . . .” Here is the place where the progression to the tomb is recorded; but this does not preclude the possibility that all of them were already at the cemetery though not exactly at the tomb.

Verses 35-36

The weeping of Jesus is another mystery. Was it merely the sympathetic reaction of the grief and sorrow of loved ones, or was there some deeper reason for it? Our Lord was about to call back to our world of temptation and sin a soldier who had already won the crown of life; and, in such a thing, there was an undeniable danger to the soul of Lazarus.

The prospect of Lazarus again facing life with its inevitable dangers to the soul, and particularly with the additional burden that would be imposed by his resurrection, (for the Pharisees would try to kill him)—all such considerations are of such profound weight that they may be rightly viewed as plunging the Son of God into tears as He thought of them.

Verse 37

Those hypocrites who had so stoutly opposed admitting that any miracle had occurred in the healing of the blind man appear here as perfectly willing to admit it if it can be made a tool of slander in the present case.

There were two classes of witnesses:

1. Some said, "Look how He loved him!"
2. Others said, "Well, here is certainly a man he could not heal, no matter about the man born blind!"

Verse 38

"Being deeply moved within . . ." likely refers back to verse 37.

Verse 39

"Remove the stone . . ." Jesus never did for any man what the man might do for himself. His Divine power could have caused the stone to roll back of its own accord; but He commanded that men move it.

P. H. Welshimer, *Welshimer's Sermons*, p. 33, said, "God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, and God never does what we are able to do. This is seen in both the natural and spiritual realms."

"Martha . . ." like Peter who walked on the sea, Martha at first believed and then faltered. Her remonstrance here was designed to prevent what she, in her moment of weakness, feared would be an embarrassment of the Lord. The opened grave would reveal only a decaying corpse.

Verse 40

This mention of what Jesus had previously said to Martha was doubtless a reference to the word sent back by the messenger of Lazarus' illness. (Verse 4)

Thus it is clear that men must believe the word of Christ sent by His appointed messengers (the apostles) no less than the words He spoke Himself.

“Did I not say to you, if you believe . . .” Where is the soul who does not need this admonition to be repeated every day of life? In every doubt or temptation, in sorrow, suffering, or in death itself, let the redeemed say in faith, “I shall see the glory of God,” that is, “if I truly believe the Lord of Life.”

Verses 41-42

“They removed the stone . . .” This second command was obeyed at once, there being no further objection from Martha.

“I thank Thee that Thou heard Me. And I knew that Thou hears Me always . . .” All of the miracles done by Jesus, it may be supposed, were done through answer to His prayers.

“That they may believe . . .” Those who would take this word from Jesus and make it the basis of addressing admonitions to the audience in a public prayer might be justified, if they truly follow Jesus’ example by performing a miracle immediately afterward!

Verse 43

“With a loud voice . . .” This was not merely to awaken Lazarus but to enable the multitude to connect the cry with the raising of Lazarus. It is written that there will be a mighty “shout” at the final resurrection. (I Thessalonians 4:16)

“Come forth . . .” The final resurrection will be accomplished upon the pronouncement of this very command. (5:20)

“Lazarus . . .” Why this use of Lazarus’ name? If the Lord had not specified the one to be raised, Jesus’ powerful command, ‘Come forth’ would have raised all the dead upon earth; and it was not time for that!”

Verse 44

All quibbles about how Lazarus might have been able to walk while still wrapped in the grave-cloths are on the same level of questions of how the dead in their tombs shall rise in judgment with all that weight upon them. It is not stated that Lazarus “walked out,” but that he “came forth.”

“Unbind him, and let him go . . .” Lazarus was still bound and could not “go” unless released.

Whatever similarities exist between Lazarus’ resurrection and the resurrection of all men at the last day, there is one great difference. Lazarus did not rise “through the tomb” as Jesus did but came forth out of it horizontally to the same life he had before, still cumbered with mortality, still subject to all conditions of earthly life.

Verse 45

“Many therefore . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 794, noted that, “The Greek interpreted strictly, means that all the Jews who were present believed, and that some of them went to the Pharisees.”

The truth shines, however, that “believers,” regardless of what kind of faith they have, must find something beyond it and in addition to it, in order to be saved, that being the love of Christ.

Verse 46

Those who went to the Pharisees must have gone in good faith, hoping that so convincing a sign as they had just witnessed would be sufficient to convince others in the Sanhedrin; but it was a vain hope.

Verse 47

The hatred of Jesus by His enemies was past healing by any power, even that of raising Lazarus. The answer of the Sanhedrin to this greatest of the signs was to convene a council and formulate plans to kill Jesus, and even Lazarus also.

“What are we doing?” It should be noted that there was no hesitancy in their acceptance of the resurrection of Lazarus as a fact.

When Satan is unable to answer an argument, his response here, and another example of the same, is found in the martyrdom of Stephen. (Acts 7:58)

It was on the selfish fear of losing their power and privilege that they based their murder of the Lord; and to be sure, on that basis, the Pharisees readily supported them.

Verse 48

The testimony of Jesus’ enemies in this place is invaluable, for it declares the resurrection of Lazarus to have been an authentic event and one capable of convincing any unbiased person that Jesus was the Christ. Their motivation in killing Jesus is spelled out perfectly. They were afraid of losing their position of power and wealth, and, with characteristic blindness, identifying themselves as “the nation.” Ironically, their murder of the Christ did not prevent the Romans from taking away “both their place and nation” in 70 A.D. when the armies of Vespasian and Titus sacked and destroyed the city.

Verses 49-50

“Who was high priest that year . . .” This expression does not indicate that John thought the office of high priest changed hands every year, but is a simple affirmation that in “that year,” that awful year when Jesus suffered—in that year, Caiaphas was the high priest.

“One man should die for the people . . .” This was intended by Caiaphas merely as the blunt statement of a political expedient to the effect that it was

better to kill Jesus than to wait till the people hailed Him as the Messiah, thus bringing on them the wrath of the Romans.

Verse 51

J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 794, wrote, “The high priest unwittingly proclaimed Christ as the true paschal lamb whose blood would atone for the sins of the world. By sacrificing Jesus, he brought about a blessing he never dreamed (the remission of sins), and compassed for the nation the very evil he sought to avert.”

Verse 52

John here interpreted the words “die for the people” in a far wider frame of reference than Caiaphas ever intended. His view of “the people” was not merely limited to the Jewish nation but further restricted to mean only himself and the other evil priests who were running the establishment.

Verse 53

After the decision to murder Christ, everything else was subordinated to their objective. The hierarchy would deliberately carry it out with no regard for the sinful, illegal, and unscrupulous devices that they would employ in achieving it.

Verse 54

The Lord’s purpose required Him to suffer at the Passover; and thus His hour had not come. Therefore He withdrew, compelling the hatred of men to await the Lord’s own choice of the occasion when He would lay down His life of His own accord for the salvation of men. Ephraim . . . near to the wilderness . . . “ This is another telling word of an eyewitness.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 166, located this place “about fourteen miles N. N. E. of Jerusalem, about the same distance east of the Jordan River, and about eighteen miles south of Jacob’s well.” How strange that the Lord of

life should have spent the last months of His ministry in this out-of-the-way place.

Verse 55

The Passover feast, called “Rosh Hashanah” by the Jews, was attended by all the adult male population of Israel with ability to attend it. Little did the gathering throngs pressing into the capital for the great feast realize that the true and holy Passover for all men would be sacrificed “that year.” To them, it was only another Passover; but to the Christians of all ages since then, it has been the one sacrifice of the True Passover for all men.

Verse 56

As the time of the great feast came on and the crowds grew, the people spoke of Jesus, wondering if He would dare to come. The death sentence against Him was widely known.

Verse 57

The hierarchy had at last tipped their hand to all the people. Long ago, they had decided to kill Christ but entertained the design secretly; but now they issued what amounted to an order of arrest. It was however, a very unpopular decision, as attested by:

1. the events of the next chapter wherein a great company made a feast in Jesus’ honor, and
2. the revelation that the Sanhedrin, for fear of public opposition, decided to delay killing Jesus till after the Passover (Matthew 26:1-3), and
3. their decision to assassinate Jesus privately, rather than to risk a public execution.

The raising of Lazarus being the event, more than any other that hardened the purpose of the Sanhedrin. Their pronouncement of a death sentence against

Him without a hearing or a trial, the resulting order for His apprehension, the approach of the Passover when the event of His crucifixion would occur, the withdrawal of Jesus to Ephraim to await the coming of His “hour,” the refusal of the people to cooperate with their evil leaders, and so, on and on these events all fit into the progression.

CHAPTER 12

Jesus’ public ministry was concluded between the events of the last chapter and the Passover which comes into view in this chapter. A number of important things in the life of Christ took place between verse 54 and verse 55 of chapter 11.

A. T. Robertson, *Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 138ff wrote the following.

1. Christ started the last journey to Jerusalem, via Samaria and Galilee, healing ten lepers en route, (on the way). (Luke 17:11-37)
2. He gave two parables on prayers, those of the importunate (persistent) widow and the Pharisees and the Publican. (Luke 18:1-14)
3. He gave His teaching on divorce. (Mark 10:1-12; Matthew 19:1-12)
4. He received little children. (Mark 10:13-16)
5. He spoke with the rich young ruler and gave the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. (Mark 10:17-31)
6. He healed Bartimaeus and a companion at Jericho. (Mark 10:46-52)
7. He visited Zacchaeus, gave the parable of the pounds, and went on up to Jerusalem. (Luke 19:1-28)

All of the events were in Galilean and later Perea ministry, thus accounting for their omission by John who recorded, for the most part, events in Judaea and Jerusalem.

This chapter falls into four divisions:

1. the supper for Jesus and Lazarus (1-11),
2. the triumphal entry (12-20),
3. coming of the Greeks, and the voice from heaven (21-36), and
4. Jesus sums up His claims (37-50).

Verse 1

For purposes of this study, the date here is construed as Friday night.

Verse 2

This is the only New Testament reference to activity on the part of persons raised from the dead by Jesus; and the glimpse of Lazarus' life is one of normality. As might have been expected, the friends of Jesus and of Lazarus made them a supper, defying the order of the Sanhedrin that they should be informed of Jesus' whereabouts.

Verse 3

"Spikenard-ointment . . ." Alan Richardson, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 147, wrote, "Spikenard, was a perfume highly prized by the ancients, and was produced from *Nardostachys jatamansi*, a small plant (which is) a native of the Himalaya Mountains.

The high cost derived partly from the transportation of it thousands of miles from India to Jerusalem. This was expensive pure nard (perfume) itself.

"Anointed the feet . . . and the house was filled with the fragrance . . ." again the unmistakable mark of an eyewitness appears in John. The possession of a whole pound of so rare a perfume is evidence of the wealth and social position of the Lazarus family.

THE TWO ANOINTINGS:

IN LUKE

In home of Simon the Pharisee.
Dinner given by a critic of Jesus.
Dinner was not in Jesus' honor.
Occurred at least a year before
The Lord's death.
This took place in Galilee.
The woman here was a "sinner."
The woman wept.
This woman wiped her tears
from Jesus' feet.
Here, Simon the Pharisee was
rebuked.
Jesus forgave the woman's sins
but not Simon's sins.
This was received as a token of
the woman's love.

IN JOHN

In home of Simon the leper.
Dinner given by friends.
Dinner was in Jesus' honor.
Occurred the last week of
The Lord's life.
This occurred in Bethany.
This woman was noble Mary.
Mary did not weep.
Mary wiped the excess ointment
from His feet.
In this, Jesus rebuked Judas
Iscariot.
The sins of Mary are not in view
at all.
This was received as a preparation
for His burial.

Verses 4-5

In Matthew and Mark, it is the “disciples” who complained of the waste of the spike-nard; in John, the center of the objection is revealed as Judas.

Judas, of course, had persuaded other disciples to go along with his objection, Matthew himself probably having been one that did; and thus it would have been improper for Mathew to have laid all the blame on Judas for something he participated in.

“Three hundred *denarii* . . .” The word in the Greek (*denarii*) denotes a coin worth about eight pence half-penny, or nearly seventeen cents. The relative value of the coin appears in the fact of its being a day’s wages. (Matthew 20:9)

The value of the spikenard would have been the amount of money a man might have earned for three hundred days of labor.

Verse 6

It is incorrect to believe that John here improperly added to the odium properly belonging to the name of Judas; on the other hand, it is a true statement of the traitor’s conduct and remarks, together with a revelation of what motivated him.

Verse 7

“In order that she may keep it . . .” Jesus’ perfectly clear meaning is: “Let her do what she has done (kept it against the day of my burying).” “She may keep it for the day of My burial,” indicates the achievement of a timeless and world-wide memorial to Mary’s name and honor. Christ commanded that the record of this loving deed be preached throughout time till the judgment.

Did not Joseph of Arimathaea keep his tomb and the lid his basket, after giving them to Jesus? Did anyone ever give anything to Jesus without at the same time “keeping it”?

What is given to the Lord is kept; all else is lost; and can it be any different with this spikenard?

Verse 8

The priority of Jesus Christ and His requirements, even above and before the legitimate needs of the poor, appears in a statement such as this.

The claims of the poor upon the believer's bounty are high; but the obligation to Christ is higher.

Verse 9

"The great multitude . . . of the Jews . . ." This construction explains John's use of "Jews" throughout the gospel as primarily a designation of the religious hierarchy who opposed Jesus; thus it was necessary to explain the distinction here,

"Jews . . ." was never used by John in a racial or anti-Semitic manner. The common people loved Jesus and believed on Him.

Verses 10-11

W. F. Howard, *Ibid*, made a condescending remark that, "The chief priests were alarmed at this recrudescence of popular fanaticism and added the name of Lazarus to the list of the condemned" is to be deplored for its use of the term "fanaticism," applied to the popular movement toward Jesus. Are those who still seek and believe on Jesus also "fanatics"?

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Verses 12-13

William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, II, p. 184, noted, "The triumphal entry is in all four gospels declaring that "although" the accounts differ, they do not conflict in any way."

“Went out to meet Him . . .” The two sources of the great throng of people were:

1. the crowd following from Bethany, and
2. the great crowd who, hearing that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, went from the Holy City to meet Him.

“Branches of the palm trees . . .” This was a customary greeting of popular heroes; and the prevalence of many palm trees facilitated this type of demonstration. “Hosanna . . .” has the meaning of “O Jehovah, save now!” It had overtones of deep religious feeling.

Brooks Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 179, writes, “This Psalm was written as the dedication Psalm for the second temple,” making the quotation both appropriate and significant.

“The King of Israel . . .” It would appear to be certain that Jesus permitted such an outpouring, along with this reference to “the King of Israel,” in order to bring about the confrontation with the hierarchy. The Pharisees, having already decided not to kill Jesus during the Passover (Matthew 26:1-5), would be overruled in their strategy of delay; and such a thing as this triumphal entry was exactly calculated to spur them into a change of strategy.

Verses 14-15

“A DONKEY’S COLT . . .” John did not narrate the manner of this beast’s procurement, as in the synoptics, but did make reference, as they did to the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.

Verse 16

The failure of Jesus’ most intimate and faithful disciples to comprehend the spiritual nature of His kingdom, and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him, was evidently due to their also having been so full of the “earthly kingdom” idea which dominated the minds of the Jewish leaders.

Not until after the resurrection did the apostles finally get everything into the proper focus and have the full understanding.

We should be thankful for this because here is the positive and unanswerable proof that the disciples, having the attitude they held, could not possibly have contrived any such thing as stealing Jesus' body, or any kind of hoax regarding His resurrection.

Verse 17

This means that the multitude were shouting His praises and telling to all men the marvel of how Jesus raised a man from the dead who had been dead four days. Only John pointed out the contribution made by the witnesses of the seventh sign to the triumphal entry.

Verse 18

It was the raising of the dead that triggered the appearance of such a large and enthusiastic multitude; and the people who had seen it were telling the story to all whom they met.

The popular frenzy at the thought of seeing one who could do such a thing increased as Jesus approached Jerusalem, an immense throng being caught up and swept along by the momentum of such a demonstration.

Verse 19

Here again, the Pharisees' comment, probably inspired by, or even spoken by, Caiaphas, was prophetic without their intending it so. The whole world had indeed gone after Jesus; even the Greeks would shortly afterward make their appearance! Of course, the Pharisaical answer to such popular approval was to murder the Lord judicially, little dreaming that their very act of doing so would accomplish exactly what Jesus came into the world to do.

THE COMING OF THE GREEKS

Verses 20-21

John Knox, *The Fourth Gospel and the Later Epistles*, p. 64, observed, “The Greeks were Gentiles—we do not know from where—who had already become proselytes to Judaism or faithful friends of the synagogue (God-fearers). . . Notice that it is the desire of the Greeks to see Jesus.”

Throughout John to here, the enemies of Jesus could not harm Him because His hour had not yet come; but Jesus saw in the awakened interest of the Gentile world that the time had come. It was His “hour,” and there would be no further providential hindrances of what His enemies planned to do.

Verse 22

What was it that they told Jesus? Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Gospel of John*, p. 227, wrote, “Eusebius mentions a tradition (and it is merely that) that these men had been sent by the Syrian King Edessa with a commission to invite Jesus to come to his realm, assuring Him a hearty and princely welcome. The leaders of the nation were seeking even then to kill Him, but the Gentiles came to seek and to know Him; rejected by His own, the Gentiles would turn to Him.”

“Andrew . . .” once more appears in Scripture as the man who brought someone to Jesus, corresponding with what is said of him in the instances of his bringing Peter and the lad with the loaves and fishes.

Verse 23

Far from being glad to have an offer of sanctuary (if such a thing was involved), Jesus instantly recognized that the moment of His suffering was at hand. His sufferings, death, and resurrection would be the, “glorification” referred to here. In that would be the means of His winning millions of souls.

Verses 24-25

Three applications of this metaphor are:

1. in nature, the death of seeds is necessary to their production of fruit;
2. Jesus consented to die as a means of winning the world to Himself; and
3. for all who would be saved, the process is the same.

One must renounce himself, loving not his own life, but losing it, and taking up fully the identity of Jesus in order to be saved.

Note here the promise of eternal life. The doctrine of the “last things,” or eschatology, as some like to call it, is alleged by some to be lacking in this gospel; but W. F. Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 109, noted, “That favorite term in the Johanine vocabulary, “eternal life,” is eschatological (the last things) in its origin.” John’s gospel is no different from the others.

Verse 26

“Where I am . . .” is also a reference to last things. J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 796, wrote, “(This means) where I am soon to be, viz., in heaven,” this making Jesus’ promise to be, that His true followers shall soon join Him finally in heaven.

“If any one serves Me, the Father will honor him . . .” claims an equality between Jesus and the Father, requiring the deduction that serving Jesus is the same as serving God.

Verse 27

“Save Me from this hour . . .” means that Jesus would thus have prayed if His purpose had been otherwise than that of dying to save men.

“My soul has become troubled . . .” The events unfolding before Jesus were extremely ugly and tragic, not simply for Himself, but also in the profound

implications for the chosen people. The total rejection and casting off of Israel loomed ominously in this visit of the Gentiles who would accept Jesus.

B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 181, expressed it, “The shock has come already . . . The presence and petition of the Greeks foreshadowed the judgment of the chosen people and brought forward the means by which it would be accomplished. The prospect of this catastrophe was perhaps the crisis of the Lord’s present conflict.”

Verse 28

Three times God spoke out of heaven during the ministry of Jesus: here, at the baptism, and at the transfiguration. The Jews are said to have regarded thunder as an echo of the voice of God; but, Alan Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 255, said, “In all four gospels, it is no mere echo of God’s voice that is heard, but the direct speaking of the Father to the Son.”

“Glorify thy name . . .” Offered in the emotional tension arising from Jesus’ consciousness that His “hour” was at hand, His prayer is surprising in that it has no petition for Himself, but only for the glory of the Father’s name.

“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again . . .” Alvah Hovey, *op. cit.*, p. 255, wrote, “Christ had glorified God by His ministry among the Jews, and He was now to glorify Him by His death for all men, and by the gradual spread of the gospel among all nations.”

Verse 29

That some of the multitude heard the words is obvious. The apostle John heard and understood the words himself, without any need of anyone’s interpreting them to him (for no such thing is mentioned).

It is one of the mysteries of life that some see and hear the things of God and others do not see nor here. Daniel was by the river Hidekel when he saw the holy vision, but his companions were not aware of it; and Paul’s companions on the Damascus road heard the voice but not the words of the Lord out of heaven.

Verse 30

Since the voice was given for the multitude's sake, it follows that they should have understood it. That some did not may be a reflection upon themselves, in that their moral condition did not permit them to hear God's voice. Jesus did not need such a testimony, but the carnal multitude did need it.

Verse 31

The crisis of all ages had arrived. Jesus would die on the cross to redeem men from the curse of sin, enabling them to be saved eternally and to restore the fellowship with God, broken such a long while before by the disaster in Eden. The head of Satan would now be "bruised" in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. This great victory is here called the casting out of the prince of this world.

"The ruler of this world . . ." refers to Satan, called also the "god of this world," and "the prince of the powers of the air." The casting out will be accomplished by the cross, as the next verse shows.

Verses 32-33

Batsell Barrett Baxter, *If I Be Lifted Up*, p. 1, wrote, "It is difficult to realize the tremendous faith which this expression reflects. We hear these words through twenty-one centuries of Christian history which followed them; but, when Jesus made the statement here, there was little visible evidence to make anyone believe that these words might literally come true. It must have seemed to those who heard it the most presumptuous statement ever made."

"If I be lifted up . . ." The primary reference of this is to Jesus' death by being lifted up upon the cross; but the words suggest other truth also. Christ was lifted up from the grave; He was lifted up into heaven; He has been lifted up in the hearts of men by the preaching of the gospel in all ages since then.

"Draw all men to Myself . . ." He draws men in that He alone loved men sufficiently to die for them, in that He is the only true revelation of God, in that

He is the only perfect soul who ever lived on earth, and in that He alone is the satisfaction of the soul's deepest desires.

Verse 34

“Out of the law . . .” means out of the Old Testament, rather than being restricted in meaning to the Pentateuch. The multitude was also present when Jesus spoke of the Son of man, and thus it was no impropriety for them to question “Who is this Son of man?”

They had wrongly construed the above prophecies as meaning that Messiah would continue on earth forever as a literal ruler over God's people; but this is not strange in view of the fact that some still misconstrue them in the same manner.

“Son of man . . .” was far and away Jesus' favorite title for Himself.

Verses 35-36a

Though not an answer to their question, this was an answer to the attitude of the people. Jesus had proclaimed Himself the Light of the world, but they were not willing to walk in it.

“A little while longer . . .” is a tragic reference to the fact that the “hour” had come and that the Savior would shortly be sacrificed. Israel's day of grace was fading.

The sneering, fault finding, questions of the sinful, would be endured only a few more days. Their one remaining great opportunity was then and there. If they had believed, it would have conferred upon them the right to become sons of God, but such a blessing would not wait much longer upon them.

Verses 36b-37

Frank L. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 83, commented that, “The public ministry of Jesus had closed. Two summaries of this ministry are given: one by John and the

other by Jesus and recorded by John. John's summary is in verses 37-43 and Jesus' summary is in verses 44-50."

"So many signs before them . . ." There were countless signs besides the one John recorded. (20:30; 21:25)

"They were not believing . . ." refers to the majority of Israel, and especially to the leaders; but John at once pointed this out as a fulfillment of prophecy.

Verse 38

"Might be fulfilled . . ." does not mean that the Pharisees disbelieved in order to fulfill prophecy, but that their unbelief had been foretold by Isaiah. The very same unbelief that greeted the words of Isaiah also greeted the message of Jesus.

Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament, Luke-John*, p. 312, noted that, "Isaiah's message was despised by the nation, and he himself put to death. And it was also true, by the same causes, by the same nation, that the same gospel message was rejected by Jews in the time of Christ. The same language of the prophet fully expresses both events; and no doubt it was intended by the Holy Spirit to mark both events."

Verses 39-40

"They could not believe . . ." This accounted for the sad remark of Jesus (verse 35). It was already too late. The people had closed their eyes, stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts.

Verse 41

Isaiah did indeed see the glory of the coming Redeemer and was especially effective in the portrayal of Messiah's dual nature.

Verses 42-43

These two verses are among the most important in Scripture in regard to their bearing upon the question of whether or not one is justified by faith only, making it impossible logically to believe that faith alone can justify.

“Believed on Him . . .” is alleged to have been faith of a *different kind* from that required for salvation.

It is astoundingly clear that many of the rulers had a completeness of faith. B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 186, leaves no doubt whatever that the Greek New Testament teaches this. Therefore, the deduction must stand stark and mandatory that something beyond faith (even if one has a complete faith) is required for salvation. The device of supposing that one kind of faith comes from the heart and another kind from the mind, or intellect, is ridiculous, because the Scriptural heart, is the mind.

Furthermore, the Bible has absolutely nothing about kinds of faith, distinctions of so-called varieties of faith deriving from human speculation and not from, God’s word. It must be rejected out of hand, therefore, that the faith of the rulers (in this verse) was anywise different from the faith of any man coming to Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. There was only one thing wrong with their faith. It was faith alone!

“Lest they should be put out of the synagogue . . .” The social pressures in the community were sufficient to restrain some from acting in harmony with their faith in Christ. The same is true today.

“They loved the approval . . .” Regardless of the faith that may exist in the heart, it is the love of God which must sustain and activate it if it is to issue in any benefit to the believer.

Love is greater than faith, even a complete faith; and the reason for this was announced by our Lord Himself who said, “If you love Me keep My commandments.” A statement nowhere made concerning faith. (Verse 14:15)

How strange it is that men claim exactly the same thing for faith that Christ claimed for love, making faith the fulfilling of all the commandments.

Verse 44

Here begins Jesus' own summary of His teachings, the same being a recapitulation of teachings already recorded in John.

Verses 45-47

This priority in our Lord's purpose appeared earlier. (5:23, 9:5, and 3:17f.)

Verse 48

"The last day . . ." Again the doctrine of the last things comes into prominence in this gospel.

Here it is affirmed dogmatically that the basis of the eternal judgment will be the word of Jesus Christ.

The word of Christ, as delivered to men by the apostles, is the final dogmatic authority in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, "Whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20) is the burden of the church's commission, thus making His teachings the constitution and bylaws of the kingdom of God, or the church. The reason underlying the truth enunciated here (that His word shall judge all men).

Verses 49-50

The words of Jesus are eternally important because they are the words of God. Significantly, our Lord never requested men to believe Him as a man, but as the true messenger of Almighty God.

What a difference prevails among human authorities. The rule of thumb for claiming attention on the human level is this: a bishop has spoken; a pope has published an encyclical; the council has made a decision; the head of the church has spoken; an archbishop had said, etc.

Not even the holy Christ Himself, while on earth as a man, demanded that His words be accepted on the basis of any earthly trust or position that he occupied, His sole claim upon human credibility and acceptance being in this alone, that He delivered the true word of Almighty God!

CHAPTER 13

A dramatic break in the outline of this gospel appears here.

The previous chapters related to Jesus' revelation to the chosen people who rejected Him, and with significant overtones of revelation to the entire world.

Beginning here, the narrative develops Jesus' special revelation to the disciples who received Him, despite the betrayal of Judas and Peter's denial.

This chapter details the washing of the apostles' feet (verses 1-11), statement of Jesus' purpose in the painful disclosures about to be made (verses 12-20), identification of the traitor (verses 21-30), the new commandment (verses 31-35), and the prophecy of Peter's denial (verses 36-38).

This section, which begins here and extend through chapter 20 covers the events of the final week, climaxed by the resurrection.

Verse 1

“Before the feast of the Passover . . .” We take words in their simplest and most obvious sense as declaring that the supper about to be narrated occurred in advance of the Jewish Passover; and, although it resembled the Passover in so many details, it was nevertheless not technically the Passover.

Jesus was crucified on the Preparation (19:31), and the Passover was eaten after sundown the day Jesus died. There is no way the Passover itself could have been called the Preparation. The synoptics are in perfect harmony with this, Matthew

making it clear that Jesus ate this meal reclining (26:30), which He would not have done had it been the Passover.

“Knowing that His hour was come . . .” Christ was fully aware, throughout His ministry, of the Father’s ordering of all of His steps and was fully conscious that the moment of His offering upon the cross was at hand.

“He loved them to the end . . .” might also be rendered, “unto the uttermost.” The true meaning probably includes both thoughts. It was the great love of Jesus for His own that motivated His supreme act of giving Himself up to die for the forgiveness or remission, of sins.

Verse 2

“The devil . . .” The great protagonist of evil on earth is a person, called here the devil, and identified as Satan throughout the Bible. He is a being of supernatural power but is himself a creature and does not share control of the universe with God. Satan has the power to suggest and motivate evil deeds, as here; but this power is effective only in those souls who have consented to evil domination. Judas had already consented to evil domination. Judas had already consented to sin and readily become the instrument of Satan through an act of his own volition.

CONCERNING JUDAS ISCARIOT

“Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son . . .” Judas was named one of the Twelve by Jesus and, along with the others, was commissioned to “heal the sick and raise the dead” (Matthew 19:7) and it must therefore be inferred that at the time of his call Judas was not evil. However by the time of the great defection recorded in John 6, Judas had fallen. “One of you is a devil.” (6:70)

A deduction from the events recorded in chapter 6 indicates that Judas, like so many of his countrymen, expected a temporal Messiah; and the knowledge that Jesus would never be that kind of Messiah turned his heart away from the Lord. In any case, he became unsympathetic to the ideals of the Master, used

the common treasury, which he carried, for his own purposes, and drifted more and more into rebellion and defiance, even betraying the Lord, at last, for thirty pieces of silver.

Judas, like all men, had freedom of the will and might have elected a more honorable course, but chose instead to betray the Lord. The thesis so often advocated that men “are not responsible for what they do, and that society is to blame for the vicious acts of criminals is negated by the record of Judas.

That Judas was truly an apostle at first is verified by the sacred record that he “by transgression fell.” (Acts 1:25)

All sins can be rationalized, and Judas might indeed have rationalized the betrayal; but all such rationalizes of criminal behavior are futile. The deed of betrayal itself was one of unique shame and ugliness.

Verses 3-4

“All things into His hands . . .” The Lord was about to give an object lesson in humility, but it was given in full consciousness of His power and godhead.

“Rose from supper . . .” If this had been the Passover, Jesus could not have eaten it reclining. (Exodus 12:11) Jesus rose up from the reclining position customary at meals in those days, laid aside His outer robe, or garment, and girded Himself with a towel, the clothing suggestive of a slave.

Verse 5

The background of this moving incident includes the jealousy of the Twelve among themselves as to who was “greatest,” a jealousy that had been aggravated by the request of Zebedee’s wife that James and John should have the chief seats in the new kingdom.

Apparently, the supper had actually begun without the customary foot-washing having taken place. This was not a ceremonial act at all, but a necessity

due to the type of sandals worn and the dusty condition of all roads in those days.

It would have been uncomfortable for them to have continued without washing their feet; but, since the task was usually performed by servants, and none of those disciples jockeying for position as “head man” in the kingdom would touch so menial a task, the Lord did it! In this act He truly took upon Him the form of a servant. (Philippians 2:1-9)

Verse 6

Peter was certainly among them who coveted the position of “head man” in the coming kingdom; and the paradox of Jesus the Lord of life stooping to wash his feet was such an incongruous thing that Peter protested it.

Verse 7

The Lord was in the act of teaching an incredibly effective lesson in humility; but the full significance of it would not be realized by any of the apostles till long afterward.

Verse 8

“Never shall You wash my feet . . .” Peter was like many in all ages who suppose that certain kinds of work are demeaning; but, in this marvelous episode, the Lord dignified the work of a slave by taking the towel into His own hands.

“If I do not wash you . . .” Here Jesus spoke of washing in a different sense. Unless Peter should be washed of his false pride and ambition, unless he should share in that ultimate cleansing of the soul that would result from Jesus’ sacrifice, thus being truly “washed,” he could have no part with Jesus.

Verse 9

Peter vacillated between extremes. He could walk on the water and cry out a moment later for help. He confessed Christ but promptly assumed a stance of rebuking the Lord. He affirmed undying loyalty to Christ and denied Him the same day.

Here he first refused Jesus' washing of his feet and then demanded to be washed all over. Peter mistakenly thought that Jesus was still referring to the physical act of foot-washing, when actually He was referring to the spiritual cleansing so much needed by Peter and all of them.

Verse 10

What Jesus meant was, "Only your feet need washing." It is only at the end of this verse that Jesus left off speaking of physical things, the final clause intended spiritually.

Verse 11

Jesus' thoughts in this incident are quite clear, "their spiritual cleanness is what is needed." The thought of their spiritual cleanliness, or rather uncleanness, encompassing the treachery of Judas and the denial of Peter, led to the painful revelation of those events later during the supper.

Verse 12

"Do you know what I have done to you . . .?"

Verse 13

"Lord . . ." The use of this term by the apostles shows the exalted nature of their concept of Jesus Christ, thus hailing Him as the Divine Ruler of Life. The use of "Teacher" along with this title does not diminish the impact of it.

Verse 14

Jesus' reversal of the two titles, placing "Lord" first, is significant, because it is as "Lord" that He must be confessed. (Romans 10:9) This dramatically emphasized His humility in washing their feet. Menial service for one's fellow Christians is taught by this example.

Verse 15

This verse is the anchor of certain religious teachings which would honor as a continuing ordinance the ceremony of washing feet; but this was not a ceremony in any sense of the word.

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, p. 210, noted, "There is nothing in this that could indicate a special ordinance or formal observance to be perpetuated in the church. The foot washing of both the Old Testament and the New Testament was an act of helpful kindness when needed."

Foot washing was a social custom of those times, founded on the wearing of sandals and the prevalence of dusty roads; and the time Jesus washed the disciples' feet, it filled a definite need, a need no longer in existence and which, if feigned in some kind of ceremony, amounts only to play-acting.

Certainly, the Lord did not say of this, as He said of the communion, "This do till I come."

No apostolic instructions have come down to us with reference to when, where, or how such a thing should be observed; and the fair conclusion is that it was never observed as any kind of a religious ceremony during the times of the holy apostles. Also, it is not amiss to point out that the ceremonial washing of clean feet by some religious groups today bears no resemblance whatever to what the Lord did here.

In Paul's words, foot washing appears in a list of good works and on a parity with bringing up children and showing hospitality to strangers; and, until churches are willing to make a ceremony of the other good works of this

passage, it seems that they should also refrain from making a ceremony of foot washing. (I Timothy 5:10)

William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, II, p.235, said, "No, He is not commanding the disciples to do what He did; but He has given them an example in order that they, of their own accord, may do as He has done . . . Jesus has shown His humility under their very eyes."

Verse 16

An expression similar to this was used by Jesus to show that His disciples would be hated and persecuted like Himself (Matthew 10:24; John 15:20), and that the disciples of the Pharisees were as blind as their leaders. (Luke 6:40)

Tertullian, *De Fuge in Persecutions*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol, IV, p. 110, made the words of this verse a mandate that no disciple might advocate a doctrine contrary to the teachings of the Lord saying, "If Marcion be even a disciple, he is not yet 'above his Master.'"

Here Jesus taught that disciples should not hold themselves above performing menial tasks for each other.

Verse 17

It is not in the mere knowledge of sacred truth, but in the faithful obedience of it, that men are blessed. One of the Twelve (Judas) was not in fellowship; and, therefore, Jesus promptly indicated the exception.

Verse 18

J. W. McGarvey, *The fourfold Gospel*, p. 651, paraphrased this verse:, "I do not speak of blessing you all, for there is one who shall never be blessed. His conduct does not deceive or surprise Me, for I know those whom I have chosen whether they be good or bad."

“That the Scripture may be fulfilled . . .” Even the treachery of an apostle was prophesied in Psalm 41:9, which reads:

“Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate My bread,
has lifted up his heel against me.”

Of the Twelve, only Judas carried the bag and sat next to Jesus at the table, even dipping his hand in the dish with Him. There is no implication in this that Jesus chose Judas for the purpose of the betrayal.

Verse 19

The treachery of Judas and denial of Peter were events of such negative force that Jesus moved to protect His disciples against the impact which such actions would have upon their faith. The whole terrible ordeal of the trials, crucifixion, and death, was almost upon them; and the apostles were here schooled against the very worst that could happen.

“That I am He . . .” Jesus never lost sight of the fact which He came into the world to establish, namely, that He was God appearing in human form, entitled to human worship and adoration upon the part of all who would enter into eternal life, and Himself being the source of that eternal life.

Verse 20

The rejection of Jesus is the rejection of God. This was a constant theme of Jesus’ entire ministry, and it means that Jesus is God come in the flesh. It was probably reiterated here in the final hope that Judas might, even at that late hour, repent.

Verses 21-22

The prophecy had been quoted, along with the fact that a familiar friend would betray the Lord, and Jesus had taken the trouble to reveal His reason for the sad disclosure about to be made.

“One of you will betray Me . . .” was a shocking announcement. Each disciple seems to have found some sense of evil in his own heart; and they began to question, “Is it I?” (Mark 14:19) What a dark hour it was when the innermost circle of the Lord’s followers read the stain of sin within themselves and pondered the awful prophecy that one of themselves would betray Him. A baleful doubting fell upon them all.

“Troubled in spirit . . .” No wonder the Lord was troubled. The agony approaching was more than enough to fill the soul with dread, even the soul of the Blessed; but there was also the problem of the Twelve. Could they stand the acid test they were about to endure?

The secret of their eventual triumph was disclosed in the first verse of this chapter, “He loved them to the end.” That love proved to be motivation enough to overcome all human weakness.

Verses 23-24

“There was reclining on Jesus’ breast . . .” According to the custom of the times, the guests surrounded the table which was not an elevated platform at all, such as modern tables, but only a slightly elevated place, or only a covering placed on the floor. Each guest lay on his elbow, leaving one hand free for eating.

“Whom Jesus loved . . .” This expression appears seven times in John, twice with reference to Lazarus and his sisters, and five times with reference to John himself.

“Simon Peter . . .” used some kind of body language in his request of John, beckoning to him to find out who Jesus meant. Whatever the gesture was, John understood it.

Verse 25

Jesus promptly complied with John’s relayed request from Peter. Matthew indicates that Jesus’ reply was addressed openly to all.

Verse 26

Jesus was identifying the traitor by an action often engaged in before, but not with the overtones of this situation. As soon as this was done, Judas knew that his identity was known to all but pretended that it was not true, saying, "Is it I?"

Verse 27

The entering of Satan into Judas at this time indicates an unusually malevolent entry; because Satan had been in Judas before, as for example, when he bargained for the thirty pieces of silver. Therefore, this indicates that Satan took possession of Judas permanently, in consequence of his judicial hardening.

Till this point, there had been hope for Judas; but, after Satan took him over, his descent into wretchedness and death was swift, dramatic, and irrevocable. The example of what happened to Judas here should give every person pause in the contemplation of evil. Once the die is finally cast and Satan claims possession of the soul, swift and inevitable destruction always ensues.

"What you do, do quickly . . ." God will not always oppose the will of evil men. There comes the day when Balaam is commanded to "Go with the men" (Numbers 22:22), and Judas is ordered to get on with the betrayal.

"I shall dip the morsel . . ." is mentioned here and cannot fail to emphasize the triviality of Judas' reward. Judas received a mere handful of change for betraying the Savior.

Verses 28-29

Here is final and certain proof that the meal eaten was not the Passover; otherwise, it would have been impossible for some of the disciples to have thought that Judas was being dispatched on an errand to buy things needed for its observance.

"Give something to the poor . . ." This affords an indirect glimpse of the habit of charity practiced by the apostles under Jesus' direction.

Verse 30

“And it was night . . .” What a commentary is this upon the situation confronting the Lord on this last night with His disciples before the crucifixion.

The traitor was on the way to the high priest; within the hour, plans would be made for soldiers to take Him; the Sanhedrin switched their strategy and would stage a formal trial, doubtless presuming upon what they hoped would be effective testimony from Judas; the Shepherd would be apprehended and the sheep scattered; suborned witnesses would spin their lies in exchange for temple gold; Caiaphas, who had already determined to kill Jesus, would pretend to be shocked and rend his priestly garments contrary to the law; and for an hour, the wicked hypocrites would prevail.

Even resolute Peter would falter under the questioning of a girl; and before the night ended runners would fan out over the dark city to summon a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin; which body would put out, so they thought, the Light of all nations; but instead they put out the light of Jerusalem and plunged their city into a darkness from which it would not emerge for twice a thousand years. “And it was night!”

“He . . . went out . . .” is another expression with connotations greatly in excess of the denoted fact that Judas left the sacred company. Sin always casts the sinner out.

The parents of all living sinned and were cast out of Eden; Jacob sinned and lied against his brother and his father’s sightless eyes went out that night to rest his head upon a stone; Gehazi sinned and lied to Elisha and went out a leper white as snow; the prodigal son sinned and lusted after the wine shops and bright lights of the far country and went out from a loving father to be a swineherd; Peter sinned and denied the Lord and went out into the darkness to weep; Judas sinned and betrayed the Lord and went out to a suicide’s death and eternal infamy.

On and on the record of sin repeats the monotonous tale, “Out, out, out . . .” Always out! And the present day is no exception. Sin enters men’s hearts, and then they go out; out from the homes of father and mother, out from the love of wife and child, out from the sacred fellowship of the church, out from the Bible school, out from the prayer meetings, out from the study of the word of the Lord, out from the tender devotions of the family, out from every descent and uplifting influence, out from hope and salvation; and finally, when sin is done with the sinner, it casts him into eternal darkness and remorse. When sin is permitted to have dominion over a man, his epitaph has already been written, “And he went out!”

Verses 31-32

Four times the verb “to glorify” appears in these verses; but why this shout of victory at the very moment the traitor was dispatched for the act of betrayal? John wished to stress that the sufferings and death of Christ were not forced upon Jesus by circumstances out of His control, but were in fact accepted and directed by Himself throughout.

Far from cowering before the blackness of the gathering storm, Jesus sent the traitor to perform that act that would trigger its release, The storm would not come, as the Pharisees planned (Matthew 26:1-5), after the Passover had ended, but in the midst of it; because Jesus, not the Pharisees, was the architect of those awful events.

“Will glorify Him immediately . . .” The emphasis here is upon “immediately.” It is as though Jesus had said, “Now the purpose of all ages shall be realized; let it begin now; action!”

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II p. 251, observed that, “Whenever we think of Christ’s sufferings, we never know what to admire most: whether it be the voluntary self-surrender of the Son to such a death for such a people, or the willingness of the Father to give up such a Son to such a death for such a people.”

Verse 33

“Little children . . .” is found nowhere else in the gospels and was used here, perhaps, for the first time by the Lord. This tender address and the circumstances under which it was used endeared the words to John who made them a permanent part of his vocabulary.

“As I said to the Jews . . .” In those instances, Jesus referred to the eternal impossibility of wicked men having fellowship with Himself; but here He referred to the temporary separation of the Lord from the disciples by reason of His approaching death and departure to the heavenly world.

Alvah Hovey, *Commentary on John*, p. 277, noted, “In going to His Father through the dreadful pathway of death, He would enter upon a life distinct from the present, and inaccessible to his own in their earthly state. In view of this impending separation, He proceeded to enjoin them to love one another.”

Verses 34-35

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

If this commandment had been merely a restatement of the Mosaic principle of loving one's neighbor as himself, it would not have been new. The newness of it is implicit in the words, “Even as I have loved you.” H. R. Reynolds, *The Pulpit Commentary*, II, p. 196, stated, “So a new type of love is given, as the Greek expositors generally have argued. There is a deeper intensity in this love than can be found in Moses,' “Love your neighbor as yourself.” In that commandment which embraces the whole law, self-love is assumed and made the standard for the love of neighbor. The new commandment, on the other hand, is based on a new principle, measured by a higher standard than love of self. This is based on Christ's love, which was self-abandoning and self-sacrificing love.”

B. W. Frank, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 453, stated, “In Christian thought, “God is love.” An everlasting, all-comprehensive, benevolent, and sacrificial love

is held to be the very essence of God. This redeeming love was revealed in Christ who summed up the law and the prophets in the two-fold commandment of love.”

In the earliest ages of the church, there seems to have been far more success on the part of Christians in obeying this commandment than in present times. The lack of love among Christians is a glaring weakness of faith today.

H. Rf. Reynolds wrote: “So long as this great power prevailed, the church made astonishing progress: when the so-called disciples of Christ began to hate and kill one another the progress was arrested. But thank God, “the new commandment” has always had marvelous power over the church of Christ.”

Verse 36

Peter was determined to follow Jesus both to prison and to death, and there is no doubt of Peter’s sincerity. What he did not at that time realize was that the power to do such a thing is not resident in men but comes only from above.

The access to such heavenly strength would come to Peter only after the victory of Jesus upon the cross had made it possible. In his reply, Jesus addressed Peter’s intentions, not his question, and pointed out,

1. Peter’s present inability to follow the lord, and
2. the full ability of Peter to do so after the enabling sacrifice on Calvary had been made.

Verse 37

Peter’s sincerity was so genuine that he could not understand why Jesus did not accept his intentions as fact. Peter had only mortal and imperfect knowledge of all things. Peter’s unwillingness to accept Jesus’ words revealed the weakness in Peter even in this moment of his boldest assertion of strength.

His bold assertion of willingness to lay down his life for Jesus had a contradictory note in it, being squarely opposed to what Jesus had just said of his not being able now to follow Jesus.

Verse 38

This was the second bombshell detonated in that small company on the dark betrayal night. Not only Judas—but Peter would deny the Lord! The reason for so painful disclosures was given (verse 19); and Jesus stressed such things to prevent the faith of the whole group from utter collapse under the sledge hammer blows that would fall during that tragic night.

CHAPTER 14

The supper with its tragic revelations was over. Judas had departed, and all of the disciples were in a state of shock and grief following the announcement that even Peter would deny the Lord.

The greatest tide of evil ever known on earth was already rising around that little company huddled in the upper room. The forces of darkness, with God's permission, was in command; and there was no room in the blackness of that spiritual night which settled like some evil fog over the Holy City.

It was a time of doubts and fears and falling tears. The unaided strength of natural man was no match for the desperate frustrations and shattered hopes of that critical hour; but Jesus was more than a match for the satanic storm moving so ominously upon them.

In words of supernatural calm and confidence, the Lord reassured His chosen ones, loving them, encouraging them, and protecting them in every way possible.

Before leaving the scene of the supper, He spoke the words of this chapter concerning:

1. the Father's house,
2. the Way, the Truth, and the Life,
3. the Comforter, and
4. the eternal necessity of what He was about to do.

Verse 1

“Let not your heart be troubled . . .” is the theme of this chapter, the same words being repeated in verse 27.

“Believe in God, believe also in Me . . .” These words mean either: “You believe in God”(indicating affirmation of fact), or “Believe (you) in God” (imperative commandment to be obeyed. Thus one of the overtones of this passage is that believing in God and believing in Jesus are one and the same thing.

Verse 2

A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 141, has a very perceptive comment on this verse, “The day before, Jesus had sent two of His disciples to secure a “large room upstairs” for the Last Supper. (Mark 14:12f) They did not know the way but had to follow the owner. Arriving, they found everything “prepared.” It looks as if Jesus here made the disciples’ journey of the day before a parable of eternity, in which the upper room foreshadows the home of God with its many habitations.”

Speculations regarding the “many mansions” are fruitless. It is enough for us to know that they are indeed a reality despite their existence beyond the perimeter of mortal vision.

The souls which are of the faith of Jesus Christ shall truly inherit the upper and better habitations, and the Lord is even now preparing for the reception of the redeemed in the eternal world.

Here in these beautiful words of Jesus lies the secret of the Christian's triumph over every mortal disaster. Let the worshiper lift his eyes to see the City Foursquare coming down out of heaven from God. Such a refuge only Zion's children know.

Verse 3

"And if I go . . ." The second coming of Jesus is dogmatically affirmed here and throughout the New Testament. C. E. W. Dorris, *A Commentary on the Gospel by John*, p. 200, said, "Some refer this to the resurrection of Christ, others to the death of a believer as in the case of Stephen, and still others to the coming of the Holy Spirit. We think these positions inadmissible. The reference is not to Christ's return from the grave, but His return from heaven, the second coming of the Lord, which is a part of the Christian faith."

THE SECOND ADVENT

The second coming of Christ is emphatically taught, the same being one of the foundational teachings of Christianity.

1. What Christ will not do upon His return.
 - A. He will not offer Himself a second time for the sins of the world.
(Hebrews 9:26-28)
 - B. He will not restore any phase of fleshly or national Israel. The Scripture makes it absolutely clear that race is nothing with God.
(Galatians 3:27)
 - C. He will not set up a kingdom, having already done that, the church being His kingdom.
 - D. He will not extend a second chance for unbelievers to repent.
(Hebrews 9:27)
2. What Christ will do upon His return.

- A. All the dead shall be raised to life. (5:24-29)
 - B. The judgment will occur. (Matthews 25:31-36; 5:24-29)
 - C. The wicked shall be destroyed and the righteous rewarded.
(2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)
 - D. The crown of life shall be given to the faithful. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)
 - E. Christ will stop reigning delivering up the kingdom to God.
(1 Corinthians 15:28)
3. What Christ is now doing.
- A. He is reigning till all of His enemies have been put under foot.
(1 Corinthians 15:25f)
 - B. He is interceding for the redeemed. (Hebrews 7:25)
 - C. He is administering all authority in heaven and upon earth.
(Matthew 28:18-20)
 - D. He is providently overseeing the fortunes of His church on earth.
(Matthew 28:19-20)
 - E. He is preparing a home for the faithful. (14:3)

Verses 4-5

“You know the way . . .” means that the disciples in knowing Jesus did indeed know the way to eternal life; but the full realization of what they did, in fact, already know would not come until after the resurrection of Christ. Thomas was speaking for them all in this disclaimer.

Verse 6

Another of the great “I am’s” of John, this is one of the profoundest teachings ever uttered. It presents Jesus as the unique means of access to God. George A. Buttrick, *Christ and Man’s Dilemma*, p. 29, devoted most of an entire book to the mountain truth of this text, presenting Jesus Christ as the sole answer to the human problems of sin, ignorance, and mortality. As the way, Jesus is the answer to man’s sin; as the truth, He is the answer to man’s ignorance; and as the life, He is the answer to man’s mortality.

Buttrick also wrote, “Man is constitutionally ignorant, endemically wicked, and irrevocably mortal . . . There is no book logic to refute or uphold these contentions, only the logic of life . . . Man is not delivered from his lower life by his own power but remains helpless without the Great Companion.”

I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

Jesus is the Way. Apart from Him there is no solution of the problem of sin.

Part of the problem is the universal tendency to deny that sin exists. Every crime, however, vicious, is rationalized. Men fancy that if they can only shake off the chains that bind them they will be all right.

The sin problem is solved only in Christ. He alone reveals man’s sin, ransoms him from the tyranny of it, removes him from the practice of it, remits it, and even overrules it for his benefit—provided only and always that the sinner must yield himself to the Lord and walk in His way; for He is the way.

Jesus is the Truth. In this, our Lord is the answer to man’s ignorance; but, in this sector also, man professes no need, pretending to be wise. In the dictionary that he wrote Himself, is he not listed as “homo sapiens”? Look at the letters he has written after and before his name: Ph.D., Hon., Pres., etc., but, if man can bear to hear it he would be just as accurately listed as “homo ignoramus”!

Man’s vaunted knowledge has only multiplied his ignorance. He surveys from his tiny ant hill the morning star and the band of Orion; he cries for light,

wisdom, and knowledge; but, as he pursues this will-o'-the-wisp, he is mocked by his own ignorance. The silent stars go by, and the whirling suns rush him into the grave.

Jesus is the Life. In this, He is the answer to man's mortality. Death is an ugly problem for man, but how does he face up to it? He will not even speak of it. Even when the last agony is upon him, his physician will hardly tell him the truth; his wife assures him that he is better; and even his minister speaks of what he will do when he gets well.

Verse 7

There is hardly a paragraph in this gospel where the deity of Jesus is not either stated dogmatically, or, as here, emphatically implied. Knowing Jesus is equivalent to knowing God.

"From now on . . ." From that point onward, the apostles had in their full possession the sufficient knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus Christ to enable them to find eternal life.

Verse 8

"Philip . . ." It seems that Philip was slow in comprehending the world-shattering truth of God in Jesus Christ; but his limitation was that of all men.

Verse 9

This reluctance on Philip's part might have been the thing that prevented him from becoming a distinguished apostle. About all that has come down to us concerning him is his name and the reluctance evidenced by passages like this.

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father . . ." Could Jesus have stated the fact of His deity any more clearly than here? All that He had said of Himself as the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Living Water, the Son of God, the Son of man, the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life coupled with His mighty signs—all of this had still left Philip unable to make the great

step of faith in Jesus as God; and there seems to be in the Savior's words here an element of wonder that Philip had somehow failed to take it in.

“Show us the Father . . .” We do not know just what Philip meant by this request, but A. M. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 142, thought he desired to see a theophany wrote, “He asks for such a revelation of God as Moses enjoyed (Exodus 24:9f; 33:18). He would like Jesus to pull aside the veil separating the seen from the unseen—to disclose a great Father-figure. But such a theophany is quite unnecessary.”

Verse 10

This recapitulation of Jesus' teachings earlier (12:49-50) was for Philip's benefit.

Verse 11

Exactly the same teaching had been given previously. (See 5:36 and 10:37-38)

Verse 12

“Truly, truly . . .” With these words Jesus turned from replying to Philip and included them all (Judas absent) in the glorious promises about to be given.

“Greater works than these shall He do . . .” It is difficult to know exactly what Jesus meant by this, for no miracle could be greater than that of the enabling act of redemption on the cross.

D. Guthrie, *The New Bible Commentary*, p. 958, noted, “Greater works would then relate to the wider opportunities which the disciples would have when Jesus returned to the Father. It would then be possible for Jesus to work through His people. The book of Acts is a commentary on this promise.”

David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 224, wrote, “During the life of Jesus on earth, His work was restricted to the limitations of His physical presence; but, after He ascended to the Father and the Holy Spirit came in His name, a greater and

more extended work would be done by the fuller inspiration of the apostles, and the more extended mission they would fill.”

Jesus’ miracle of feeding the five thousand was as nothing compared to the feeding of all the populations of earth throughout history through the operation of God’s natural laws.

Similarly, the miracle of creating Adam and Eve was as nothing compared to the perpetuation of humanity through the ages by means of the natural laws of procreation. Just so, the miracles attending the establishment of the church, or kingdom of heaven on earth, and even including the miracles wrought by Jesus, are as nothing compared to the salvation of countless millions of men through the operation of God’s spiritual laws which were set in motion by Jesus.

William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel; According to John, II*, p. 273 said, “According to this great saying of our Lord, the greater works are the spiritual works. Does Jesus, by this means of comparison, which places the spiritual so far above the physical, hint that miracles in the physical sphere would gradually disappear when they would no longer be necessary?”

Three thousand souls were converted from death to life on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, a feat far surpassing anything that was possible before Jesus returned to the Father.

“Because I go to the Father . . .” The greater works wrought by the apostles did not take place in spite of Jesus’ going to the Father but because He did go to the Father.

Verse 13

“Ask in My name . . .” and whatever you ask that will I do. The Father will be glorified in the Son.

Verse 14

The insertion of “Me” in this verse, as in many manuscripts, suggests that prayers might be offered directly to Jesus, as well as addressed to the Father in Jesus’ name. (Note the prayer of Stephen in Acts 7:59)

J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 799, cited Acts 9:14, 21 and 1 Corinthians 1:2 where “calling upon the name of the Lord” was construed by him as examples of the same thing.

Verse 15

The great tragedy of modern Christianity is that of the elevation of faith above love in the economy of salvation. Love is the sine qua non of redemption. He who does not love cannot be saved. Love, not faith, is the fulfilling of all the commandments, as stated above. Paul went so far as to declare that one might possess “all faith” and yet find it worthless without love. (1 Corinthians 13:2)

Verses 16-17

“He will give you another Helper . . .” Note that the Holy Spirit, called here the Helper (Comforter), will come as a result of Jesus’ action in praying to the Father; and this is consistent with the thought that Jesus Himself sent the Spirit. His actions and the Father’s actions are one, as repeatedly affirmed through John.

Vergilius Ferm, An Encyclopedia of Religion, p. 560, gave his definition of the term “*Paraclete*” as, “A term applied in John to the Holy Spirit, though in 1 John it is used of Christ Himself. It means literally, “called to one’s side,” for the purpose of assistance and thus corresponds exactly to the Latin *advocatus*.”

In the newer versions of the New Testament, it is translated “advocate,” but this unduly narrows the meaning. It implies not merely intercessory help but help of every kind; and the old rendering, “comforter,” is still the best one, when taken in its original sense of “strengthenener.”

“Another Helper (Comforter) . . .” identifies Jesus Himself as the Helper (Comforter) of the disciples until that time, but he was preparing them for His departure to the Father.

“That He may be with you forever . . .” Unlike His own brief ministry, that of the Holy Spirit would be coextensive with the whole Christian dispensation.

“The Spirit of truth . . .” This is another name of the Helper (Comforter) and stresses His function of guiding the apostles into all truth.

“Whom the world cannot receive . . .” The life founded upon materialism and sense alone cannot partake of the indwelling strength available to Christians.

“You know Him for He abides with you . . .” The Holy Spirit “without measure” (3:34) dwelt in Christ during His ministry.

“And will be in you . . .” refers to the Spirit’s indwelling, especially of the apostles.

Verse 18

“I will not leave you as orphans (desolate) . . .” and from this premise, “I come unto you” is not speaking of the second advent but an interim coming of the Lord in the Person of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and afterward.

Verse 19

“Because I live . . .” is a prophetic reference to the resurrection, because Jesus was clearly speaking of a time when the world should no longer see Him. This is a second “because” like that in verse 12, and shows the necessity of Jesus’ return to the Father. The Divine plan of establishing a world-wide spiritual kingdom could have been hindered by the continued physical presence of Jesus on earth. Advocates of a literal return of Christ to a literal throne should take this into account.

Verse 20

Here is the whole prospectus of God's kingdom in embryo. Here is the achievement of God's righteousness, the secret of justification, and the basis of the redeemed avoidance of judgment—the whole works; it's all here!

"You in Me . . ." God's way of recounting men righteous is that of totally identifying them with Jesus Christ who is righteous. The righteousness God imputes to men is a genuine righteousness, a total and absolute perfection achieved by Jesus Christ and made available to men "in Him." Any so-called "righteousness" based upon anything else is spurious.

The identification of believers with Christ is revealed in this verse to be exactly the same as the identification of Christ with God. God is in Christ; Christ is in God; Christ is in Christians; and Christians are in Christ.

Verse 21

The thought here is like that of verse 15; also, the oneness of Christ with the Father is the constantly recurring theme of the gospel, and is apparent here in Christ's loving whom the Father loves, and in the Father's loving them that love Christ.

Verse 22

"Judas not Iscariot) . . ." Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Twelve*, p. 39, identified this Judas as, "Thaddeus, as Judas the son of James is called in Matthew 10:13 and Mark 3:18, is credited to this day in Armenian tradition with having brought the gospel to Armenia with notable success."

"Disclose Yourself to us and not to the world . . ." The belief that Christ would be some kind of overpowering earthly Messiah persisted even among the Twelve, and even after the resurrection. (Acts 1:6) Thaddeus' did not understand that the death on the cross would be a manifestation before the whole world.

Verse 23

Christ was ever interested in the salvation of men's souls, and that is why He shifted the emphasis back to what had already been taught concerning salvation. Thaddeus' dream of an earthly kingdom was of no concern at all to Jesus.

Verse 23

Christ was ever interested in the salvation of men's souls, and that is why He shifted the emphasis back to what had already been taught concerning salvation. (Verses 15, 20)

Verse 24

"He who does not love Me does not keep My words, and the word which you hear is not Mine." "Not mine, but the Father's." This repeats the thought of chapter 12:48-50. The confusion of the apostles, necessitating Jesus' repetition of things previously taught, was due to their misunderstanding the true nature of Christ's kingdom, a misunderstanding that would not be cleared up till after Pentecost.

Verse 25

Recognizing the limitations of disciples like Thaddeus, the Lord again returned to His promise of the Holy Spirit, stressing the fact that the Spirit would bring to their "remembrance" of all of those things they were finding so difficult to understand.

Verse 26

Teaching the apostles all things and bringing to their remembrance all that Jesus taught are parallel. Christ's message to men was perfect and complete; and the function of the Holy Spirit, even in the apostles, was not that of continuing an incomplete revelation already delivered.

The Spirit of God enabled the memory of the apostles to deliver to humanity the things Jesus said, those being the things they heard Him say. The apostles themselves taught Christians, “not to go beyond the things which are written.” (1 Corinthians 4:6)

This truth needs emphasis today. David Lipscomb, A Commentary on the Gospel of John, p. 234, said, “The ground of our certainty of the word of God is that the Spirit guided into the truth stated. All departure from the word of God concerning entrance into the church and into Christ comes from the idea that the Spirit teaches men outside the word of God. To give up the word of God as the only direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit is to give loose rein to dreams, imaginations, reasonings, and philosophies of men.”

“All things I said to you . . .” What Jesus taught is the one true foundation of Christianity.

Verse 27

“Peace . . .” This is the peace that passes understanding. (Philippians 4:7) “Let not your heart be troubled . . .” These were the opening words of this chapter, and they are appropriately repeated here.

“Nor let it be fearful . . .” Literally, this means “neither let it be terrified,” suggesting that Jesus saw in the disciples some rising symptoms of that carnal weakness which would prostrate them all before that night was over.

“Fear not . . .” is one of the central admonitions of Christian faith. Angels bore the same admonition to Joseph (Matthew 1:20), to Zacharias (Luke 1:13), to Mary (Luke 1:30), and to the shepherds. (Luke 2:10)

Verses 28-29

Jesus’ constant purpose that night was to strengthen the disciples against the ordeal through which they would pass. This was the purpose of His foretelling the treachery of Judas and the denial of Peter. Here He stressed the fact of His going away unto the Father by means of His death, resurrection and ascension.

“The Father is greater than I . . .” is not a denial of the deity and godhead of Jesus Christ but a contrast of the Father’s state in glory with that of the Lord in the depths of His humiliation.

Verses 30-31

“The ruler of this world . . .” is another reference to Satan.

“He has nothing in Me . . .” There is a hint here that Satan might have expected to have something in Christ; but the Savior calmly announced that He would do what the Father had commanded, that is, die on the cross; and how, it may be wondered, had Satan hoped to thwart that? Satan had already exhausted every resource in vain efforts to kill Jesus; but with the announcement that Jesus would lay down His life of His own accord (10:17-18), and that it was impossible for any man to take His life away from Him.

Satan changed his strategy, thereafter exhausting every satanic resource in making Jesus’ death such a shameful, repugnant, and humiliating thing, that the Lord might finally abort the mission of redemption by refusing to die such a repulsive death for such a people.

That such a temptation came to Jesus is certain from Matthew 26:53. Jesus here announced that Satan’s strategy had failed. The price of human redemption would be paid by the Savior.

“Arise, let us go from here . . .” Some believe that Jesus and His disciples immediately arose up and left the scene of the last supper; but William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II. pp. 290-291, believed it likely that the next three chapters, which might easily have been spoken in ten or fifteen minutes, were uttered while they were standing and prior to leaving. He stated, “This context implies there are still some things Jesus wished to say to His disciples. (14:30) Speaking calmly and deliberately, with no attempt to rush Himself. Jesus might have uttered the contents of chapters 15 through 17 within a period of ten minutes. We shall proceed upon the assumption that the contents of chapters

14-17 comprise a unit, and that all of this was spoken that night in the upper room.”

Chapter 15

The Lord gave the signal to conclude the meal and depart. Marcus Dodds, *The Gospel of St. John*, Vol. II, p. 175, said, “He saw their reluctance to move, and the alarmed and bewildered expressions that hung upon their faces; and He could not but renew His efforts to banish their forebodings and impart to them intelligent courage to face separation from Him.”

First, in this chapter, is Jesus’ metaphor of Himself as the True Vine and the admonition to fruit bearing; then follows a restatement of teachings and exhortations previously given, including another reference to the Holy Spirit.

Verse 1

This is parallel to verse 5 and the seventh of the great “I am’s” of this gospel.

“I am the True Vine . . .” Jesus’ choice of this metaphor has been attributed to

1. a fruitful vine growing over the window of the upper room where the discourses were spoken,
2. to the great ornamental vine decorating the door of the temple,
3. to the vineyards through which the Lord and the disciples passed when they left the upper room,
4. to Jeremiah’s words, through which God said of Israel, “I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed; how then are thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?” (Jeremiah 2:21), or
5. to the institution of the Lord’s Supper which occurred during the last supper just concluded.

Either (4) or (5) of the above, and perhaps both of them, explain the choice of metaphor here.

The stress of “true” focuses attention on Jeremiah 21:21, in which passage of the degeneracy of Israel was in view. Christ meant by this that He Himself is the true Israel of God, the seed of Abraham through whom all the prophecies were to be fulfilled. The degenerate Israel’s hatred of Him which was reaching its climax at that very time was a most impelling reason why Christ should have stressed His status as God’s true vine.

The husbandman, God, will reject and destroy the degenerate vine, and the spiritual seed will be continued in the true vine, that is, “in Christ.”

Verse 2

Not only will the husbandman (God) reject the degenerate vine, He will also give the strictest attention to the true vine, extended here to mean not merely Christ but all the church “in Him.”

“Every branch in Me . . .” One not in Christ has the same status as a severed branch. Even those who bear fruit are pruned to make them more fruitful.

That very evening had revealed Judas was a branch which the Father took away and Peter as a branch that would be pruned. “He prunes it . . .” All Christians need pruning! Matthew Henry, Commentary, p. 1123, said, “The best have something in them which is peccant (sinful), something which should be taken away; some notions, passions, or humors, that want to be purged away; which Christ has promised to do by His word, Spirit, and providence.

Verse 3

Christ here intimates that the apostles do not at the moment need “pruning,” having already been pruned enough by the devastating teachings and revelations of that entire evening. Their pride, secularism, trust of themselves, and their vain ambitions had all been swept away in the knowledge of Judas’

treachery, Peter's forthcoming denial, and the Lord's impending death, a fact that their minds could no longer avoid.

"Because of the word . . ." The instrument of cleansing from sin is the word of God.

Some have supposed the Holy Spirit to be the cleansing agent in redemption; but this is not true, if by "agent" is meant the means of cleansing. The Spirit is sent into men's hearts not to make them sons of God, or to cleanse them, but because they are already cleansed. (Galatians 4:6).

"The sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:17) Therefore, the word of God is the means and the Holy Spirit is the application or wielder of the means of cleansing from sin. What was true of the Twelve is true of all who are ever saved. It is "because of the word" of God.

Verse 4

"Abide in Me . . ." standing at both ends of this verse is, in short, the plan of human redemption. It all depends upon one's being "in Christ," and abiding "in Him" till probation has ended.

Verse 5

"Apart from Me you can do nothing . . ." As regards procurement of righteousness in the sight of God, no human being can ever achieve any semblance of it.

Christ Jesus wrought the only righteousness (in the ultimate sense) ever known on earth. No man could ever achieve the tiniest fraction of such righteousness as that of Christ; and therefore, no man can be saved as himself. The only way he can be saved is to be saved as Christ.

God makes sinners righteous, not by imputing to them "a righteousness" of some kind, but by transferring the sinner himself "into Christ," thus identifying him as Christ, and thus enabling the sinner to be presented "perfect in Christ." (Colossians 1:28)

The analogy in the metaphor is that the branch is in fact the vine, being in it and part of it: but when that union is destroyed by the branch's being cut off, it dies.

Verse 6

Here is the answer to the old question of whether or not a Christian can so sin as to be lost. Both the precept and the example are here. Judas, at first a true apostle, did not abide in Christ and was cast forth as a branch. Salvation for every man ever born turns upon two questions:

1. is he "in Christ"? and
2. does he remain "in Christ"? There is no way to be lost if one, "being in Christ," remains "in Him" till probation is ended. (Revelation 14:13)

The casting into the fire and burning are references to the final fate of the wicked who know not God and obey not the gospel of Christ.

"And they gather them, and cast them into the fire . . ." Men are not charged with such responsibility as this, the gatherers here being the angels of God. (Matthew 13:41, 49)

Branches of a vine have no choice of remaining or not remaining in the vine; but individuals in Christ do have such a choice. This concept is inherent in Jesus' command to "abide in Me."

Verse 7

"And My words abide in you . . ." This is here made the equivalent of Christ abiding in His disciples and of their abiding in Him.

"Ask whatever you wish . . ." is not a promise that anything that might be asked of God by any person will be done, but means that a person truly "in Christ," and asking in harmony with the Father's will, will have his prayers answered. This is one of the great promises.

Verse 8

“That you bear much fruit . . .” The world-wide thrust of Christianity is in this. The great promise of the Lord’s coming into our world was to save the entire human race if possible. “Whosoever will” is invited. The great commission was to the “whole creation.” In the very shadow of the cross, Jesus’ passionate desire was “much fruit” and Jesus’ stressing this here emphasizes the truth that the evangelization of the whole world is the first, last, and great duty of the church.

“Fruit . . .” may not be understood here as meaning exclusively the manifestation of the graces and virtues of holy living, although the fruit of the Spirit is definitely said to be such things. (Galatians 5:22)

A larger and more comprehensive meaning is included here, namely, that of producing more Christians. Conversions are the fruit Christ had in view here; and no Christian, and no church, can be considered truly “in Christ” unless passionately engaged in soul-winning.

CHRIST THE TRUE VINE

Christ is the True Israel of God, the seed of Abraham through whom all the prophecies were fulfilled; and union with Christ is the way to salvation and eternal life. Whether apostles or just Christians, all who hope for redemption must be “in Christ,” abide in Him, and be found in Him at last. Failure to abide in the Lord, that is, failure to abide in His teachings, or failure to remain in His spiritual body, shall ever result in forfeiture of all spiritual blessings. The great purpose of unity with Christ is the salvation of the world, to the extent it may be possible. Men shall recognize Christ’s disciples by the constant efforts to enlist others in the service of Christ. “And so shall you be My disciples.”

The father of James H. Childress penned the following thoughts on Christ as the true vine. He wrote, “On the true vine, the grapes always grow in clusters, that is in congregations; but on wild grapes, like the Muscadine, the grapes grow in ones and twos all over it. Therefore Christians must belong to congregations, and not float round like the grapes on the wild vine. Also, every cluster of

grapes has a few “no good” grapes on it; and there are no congregations which do not manifest the same characteristic.”

Verse 9

B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 219, noted: “It is simpler to regard the tense as chosen with regard to a work now looked upon as completed, according to the usage which is not infrequent in these discourses. The love of Christ, as it were, is looked upon as the atmosphere in which the disciple lives.”

“Abide in My love . . .” again presupposes the ability of the believe either to abide, or not abide, depending upon his own will, and not upon any capricious election from all eternity.

B. F. Westcott, *Ibid.*, stressed that, “This enjoyment depends upon the human side upon the will of man; it can be made the subject of a command.”

Verse 10

The love of Christ on the part of men means keeping Christ’s commandments. Even the love of the Father by the Son meant keeping God’s commandments. Once more in John, it is revealed that the relationship between Christians and Christ is the same as that between Christ and the Father.

Verse 11

Jesus had spoken of the Holy Spirit repeatedly during the evening; and since the fruit of the Holy Spirit is “love, joy, peace . . . etc,” (*Galatians 5:22*), it is rather significant that this triad of love, joy, peace finds such tremendous emphasis throughout this discourse.

This rather extended discussion on the fruits of the Holy Spirit must therefore be viewed as preparatory to Jesus’ return to the subject of the Holy Spirit later in the discourse.

“Joy . . .” here is not so much a subjective state of ecstasy as it is a state of spiritual serenity, much higher and more satisfying than a mere emotional state of euphoria. All such things as fun, pleasure, delight, happiness, gladness, etc., are on a lower level than the joy promised by the Lord.

Verse 12

This verse is identical with chapter 13:34. Although not so designated here, it is the “new commandment.”

Verse 13

These words evidently inspired the reference of the apostle Paul to the incredible fact that Christ died for men while they were yet sinners. The love of Jesus for men is here contrasted with the highest conceivable example of man’s love for men, the love of Christ far exceeding any love that men might have for one another.

Verses 14-15

The utmost desire on the part of God that men should obey Him and receive His blessing is seen in the teaching here. God manifested itself in the person of His Son; and, having every right to command, He nevertheless stooped to plead with men and to solicit them as friends to do His will.

“No longer do I call you slaves . . .” is not an excuse for Christians to abandon the concept of themselves as bond slaves of Christ; but the teaching is that the Lord treats His followers far better than any servant deserves to be treated.

“My Father . . .” Christ often used the first person possessive in speaking of the Father, a use not allowed to disciples who were instructed to say, “Our Father.” (Matthew 6:9)

“All things that I have heard from My Father . . .” Jesus’ revelation was complete; and, in its completeness, it was delivered to the apostles, who were

enabled to remember it completely by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Chapter 16:13)

If Jesus did not teach it, His followers should not be duped into believing it, no matter what it is. In the light of this, where do such works as Science and Health, The Book of Mormon, and the encyclicals of popes appear?

Verse 16

The supernatural nature of the call of the apostles to their God-appointed task is in view here. Their commission to teach all nations did not derive from some voluntary assumption of such an office on their part but was imposed upon them from above by Christ's choice of them for that work.

“But I chose you . . .” B. F. Westcott, *Ibid.*, said, “Here (and in 6:70 and 13:18) the eleven are regarded as representatives of the Lord in relation to His church, favoring the interpretation (that this is reference to a call of the apostleship). The power of the office of the apostles lay for them in the fact that it was not self chosen.”

This passage strongly suggests the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20) in the mention of Jesus being perpetually with them to provide whatever might be asked of the Father.

Verse 17

This oft-repeated commandment is here reinforced by the fact of their being co-holders of the sacred commission to all nations. Each of them had been empowered by God's specific act of choosing them to their sacred task; and, in such a dignity, they were even further entitled and admonished to love each other.

Verse 18

The bitter hatred of a sinful world was inevitable for the men singled out and chosen by Almighty God as His authorities in the solemn business of extending

eternal life to mankind and proclaiming the conditions under which it would be granted. There was no way the world could love such men, whose very lives and commission would ever be anathema to sinful men.

Verse 19

Inherent in the world's hatred of Christ was also the undying hatred of the apostles and the Divine message they delivered to men. In this lies the reason why sinful men have authored whole libraries of rejection and hatred against the gospel of John.

Can anyone believe for a minute that the word of Christ, through the apostles, is treated with any less bias and hatred than that which marked the world's treatment of Christ and the apostles themselves?

Verse 20

The thrust of these words is as follows: as the world treated Jesus, so will it treat the apostles, and so it will treat the word of the apostles, that is, the New Testament.

Slanderers of this gospel (God's word) may be instantly related to the hatred of Christ.

Verse 21

"But all these things . . ." are the hatred, disobedience, mockery, persecution, lying trials, scourging, and death itself, which marked the treatment of Christ by the world; and Jesus' promise here is that nothing will be left out in the world's similar treatment of the apostles.

The Holy Savior was the object of Satan's unrelenting scorn, hatred and opposition; and the apostles who would bear His name before kings, Gentiles, and the children of Israel would incur the full measure of satanic opposition.

In nearly two millennia, not one new thing has been alleged by the devil and his servants against the Christ of glory. The war has already been won, but so many do not know it.

Verse 22

This explains the implacable hatred of evil men for the truth. The wicked soul desires nothing so much as to be left alone; there is something terribly upsetting about an aroused conscience; and the sinner will avoid disturbing a conscience with the intensity of a burglar tiptoeing past the guard dog.

"Let us alone" has been the cry of the depraved and corrupted of all ages. If Jesus had not confronted men with the fact of their wickedness, they would have had an excuse to continue in it.

Verse 23

Jesus said, "I and the Father are one. (10:30) He that believes Me believes in Him that sent me (12:44)." Hating Jesus is one and the same thing as hating God.

Verse 24

Beginning at verse 18 and through verse 25, Jesus warned the little band of the attitude of the "world" toward them and their holy mission. It would be one of unyielding hostility and animosity, for there could never be any way by which the carnal mind would love and accept the teachings of Jesus.

A. M. Hunter, *the Gospel According to John*, p. 151, noted, "The world bears its characteristically Johanine meaning—"human society as it organizes itself apart from God." The world's attitude to His disciples, he forecasts, will be a continuation of its attitude to himself—hatred not love. True then, it is true still, and always will be."

Verse 25

“Written in their law . . .” stresses the inordinate regard the priests had for the external features of Moses’ law; and it was “theirs” in the sense of the affectionate regard they professed for it, while actually denying it by their sinful conduct.

“They hated Me without a cause . . .” means “without a just cause.” That there was indeed a reason why they hated Christ is plain in 3:19. Evil is its own sufficient reason for hating truth and righteousness. John never forgot this teaching and made it the basis of his comment on Cain, found in (1 John 3:12).

“That the word may be fulfilled . . .” Even in the dark hours that lay ahead, with all their sorrow, and even in the contemplation of the flood of evil that would engulf Him and His followers, the Lord calmly pointed out that nothing strange was happening; all was going according to God’s plan; the scriptures had foretold all that would happen in the dark hours ahead.

Verses 26-27

This is the third of the five “Comforter” passages. There is no contradiction in the fact of Jesus’ sending the Comforter and the Father’s sending Him. Critics who see a contradiction in these passages have simply missed the main point of this gospel, namely that Christ and the Father are one.

“The Spirit of truth . . .” is another designation of the Comforter and stresses the function of completing the apostles’ memory of all that Jesus had told them, the same being, in turn, all that God had told Jesus.

This reference to the Comforter is absolutely necessary to understanding

1. how it will be possible for the apostles to deliver the total message of Christ to the world (verse 15), and
2. how they are to realize such fruits of the Spirit as “peace” (chapter 14:27), “love” (verse 10), “joy” (verse 11), etc.

“Because you have been with Me from the beginning . . .” This has reference to a primary requirement for the office of an apostle (Acts 1:21-22); and the introduction of this clause by the word “because” shows that these teachings about the Holy Spirit; have reference to apostles and not to all Christians. It is true, of course, that Christians receive an earnest of the Holy Spirit; but it is simply not true, nor do the Scriptures teach it, that the Holy Spirit will guide Christians into all truth.

“All truth” is something that cannot be accurately associated with any Christian! The guidance into all truth (in the apostles) by the Spirit was to be accomplished by bringing to their remembrance whatsoever Jesus had said unto them. (Chapter 14:26)

How could the Holy Spirit help just any Christian to “remember what Jesus had said unto him,” when, as a matter of fact the Christian has never heard Jesus say anything at all? Thus, this final clause becomes a key to understanding the “Comforter” passages.

CHAPTER 16

This chapter concludes the discourse leading up to the great intercessory prayer. It has the whole world in view (1-11) with its relation to the Holy Spirit, emphasis upon the Spirit’s relation to the apostles (12-15), and final remarks before the great prayer (16-33).

Verse 1

“These things” indicates no break between these two chapters. Arno C. Gaebelien, *The gospel of John*, p. 302, noted that, “The thought might have arisen in their minds that the coming of the Spirit would change things as far as the world is concerned; but He guards them against such a false hope and gives them a prophetic warning so that they might not be offended.”

“These things” referred to were Judas’ treachery, Peter’s denial, the fact of His approaching death, and the continued hatred of the world.

“May be kept from stumbling . . .” Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 310. wrote: “In the New Testament, (this word) never denotes causing one to ,stumble physically, but always morally, in other words, meaning . . . “to cause one to fall into sin or apostasy.”

Verse 2

The apostles might have anticipated their expulsions from synagogues, for they had witnessed what was done to the blind man (chapter 9:34); but, at this stage of their development, they could not have been aware of the frenzied hatred that would fall upon them when they began their world-wide proclamation of the gospel.

“Outcasts from the synagogue . . .” This was a penalty dreaded by every Hebrew, meaning a loss of social acceptability, employment, and all access to the religious life of the community. Excommunicated persons were held to be worse than pagans and were the object of total rejection and hatred.

“Kills you . . .” The world’s hatred of the apostles would never be abated by the mere penalty of excommunication; they would be murdered. Christ also revealed here that their murder would be motivated by religious considerations.

Alfred Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 344, put it, “The people of God have suffered most from people who were conscientious persecutors; and some of the most malignant foes Christians ever had have been in the church, professed ministers of the gospel, persecuting them under pretense of zeal for the cause of unity in religion.”

J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 801, tells us that, “There is a Jewish saying, “Every one that sheddeth the blood of the wicked, is as he that offereth a sacrifice.” Paul himself, before his conversion, was a conspicuous example of this very type of persecutor.

Verse 3

The world's hatred of truth derives primarily from ignorance; but it is not an excusable ignorance.

Alvah Hovey, *op. cit.*, p. 311, wrote, "(The world's ignorance) is rather a part of their sin, but a part which accounts for the rest. That when light came into the world, they loved darkness rather than light (3:19), was in a high degree sinful."

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, p. 250, said, "It is but another way of saying that there is an eternal and uncompromising enmity on the part of those who know not God and His Son Jesus Christ against those who walk with God and believe on the Lord."

Verse 4

This does not mean that Christ had not previously taught them of the persecutions coming upon them; because there had been many strong words to the effect that they would have to "deny" themselves, take up the cross, and suffer ill will and hatred.

Christ revealed that they would be without His physical presence during the trials, sufferings, and death they would endure.

"At the beginning . . ." This repeated (15:27) phrase is of the utmost consequence, limiting the application of this discourse to the apostles, and making it inapplicable to Christians of all ages, except in a secondary and limited sense. Many sermons and devout students of God's word have missed this extremely important fact.

Verse 5

The apostles, overwhelmed with the sorrowful implications of the Lord's departure for themselves, were not considering the implications of that departure for the Lord Himself. Instead of rejoicing that Jesus would shortly

resume His eternal glory with the Father, they thought only of their own loneliness and suffering.

Verse 6

These words seem to have been spoken more in wonderment and tenderness, rather than in censure. The Lord knew how difficult it was for them to grasp the full meaning and significance of the crisis events then unfolding.

Verse 7

“But I tell you the truth . . .” shows that this reference to the Holy Spirit follows naturally the situation of sorrow and depression of the apostles. The departure of the Lord would not be the total disaster they were thinking of, but was a necessary prelude to the sending of the Spirit.

“It is to your advantage . . .” G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 260, wrote, “The high lines of politics,” said Caiaphas, “Is that we get rid of Him.” The high line of God’s policy, said Jesus, “Is that I go.” Thus all the folly and wickedness of man is at last resolved into harmony with the Divine government. “It is expedient (to your advantage),” said the politician; “It is expedient (to your advantage),” said the King and Redeemer.”

“I will send Him to you . . .” Jesus’ sending of the Spirit was the same as the Father’s sending Him.

Note: on the expedience of Jesus’ departure out of this world: The establishment of a world-wide religion with benefits of salvation from sin and eternal life for all humanity would have been impossible if the head of it had remained on earth, limited by earthly conditions, physically present at only one place at a time, inaccessible unless approached through other men, dependent upon human systems of communication, and his every contact with humanity subjected to monitoring and interpretation by human aides with their inevitable taint of fallibility and bias. An earthly head of such a thing as the true church of Jesus Christ is an impossibility revealed by this verse. If the Holy Head of our

blessed faith had Himself remained on earth, there would have been no Holy Spirit to guide and comfort. Jesus Christ is the one true head of the true church in heaven “and upon earth.” (Matthew 28:18-20) Whatever any man, therefore, may be “head of,” it is not the holy church of Christ.

Verse 8

“Convict the world . . .” The means of the Spirit’s convicting the world was explained by David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 253, when he wrote, “He will convict the world, not by direct work upon their hearts, but as the event shows (Acts 2:37), through the life of the apostles, declaring the wonderful works of God.. The Holy Spirit came not “unto the world” but “unto the apostles.” The world could not receive the Spirit directly (14:17), and never can, as the world. The apostles received Him, and through their testimony, He reaches the world.”

“And He . . .” Personal pronouns referring to the Holy Spirit throughout these pages emphasize the personal nature of the Spirit.

“Convict . . .” Regarding this word, B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 228, noted that, “It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestionable proof, of decisive judgment, and of punitive power. He who “convicts” another places the truth in a clear light before him, so that it must be seen and acknowledged as truth . . . He who then rejects . . . rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril.”

The Spirit will “convict” the whole world by witnessing the truth to the whole creation; but every man, through the exercise of his own free will, will determine his own destiny by his reaction to the truth, either receiving it or rejecting it.

“Sin . . . righteousness . . . judgment . . .” Over against these three words stand three proper names: Adam, Christ, and Satan. Through Adam came sin; through Christ came righteousness; and upon Satan the penalty of ultimate judgment shall fall. (verse 11)

B. F. Westcott, *Ibid*, p. 229, observed, “The “world” acting through its representatives, had charged Christ as a sinner (9:24). Its leaders trusted that they were “righteous” (Luke 18:9), and they were at the point of giving sentence against the “prince of Life” (Acts 3:15) as a malefactor (18:30). At this point the threefold error (Acts 3:17), which the Spirit was to reveal and reprove, had brought at last its fatal fruit.”

Verses 9-11

“Concerning sin . . .

The soul that does not believe in Jesus Christ is convicted of sin.

“Concerning righteousness . . . ” The world is convicted of this by

1. Christ’s return to God, and (2) the absolute finality of Christ’s work—
“you no longer behold Me.”

Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to God were irrefutable proof that His total message was from God; and His remaining thus at God’s right hand signaled the total completion of the righteousness which He wrought.

B. F. Westcott, *Ibid*, said, “This revelation once given was final, because nothing could be added to it (I go to the Father); because after Christ was withdrawn from human eyes (You see me no more); there was fixed for all time that by which men’s estimate of righteousness might be tried.”

“And concerning judgment because the ruler of this world . . . ” Calvary was intended by Christ’s enemies as their judgment of Him; but God made it the judgment of His enemies, particularly of Satan, the prince of this world. The cross indeed bruised the heel of the seed of woman, but it bruised the head of Satan. Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection condemned the value-judgments of men.

Wicked men, living lives of conformity to the will of their prince (Satan) behold in Christ the rejection by Almighty God of their principles of judgment. The way of Christ was declared by His resurrection to be the right way.

The Spirit of God would never cease from Pentecost and ever afterward to convict the world of what righteousness really is. The world's values were set aside by God's judgment of the cross; and the prince of this world has been summarily judged and condemned, and all who follow him shall partake of his judgment and destiny.

Turning now from the work of the Spirit as it concerned the world, Christ spoke of the work of the Spirit within the apostles.

Verse 12

This verse is not a separation between the fourth and fifth "Helper" sayings, but a connective making them, in fact, one saying—the first part dealing with the Spirit's revelation to the world, the latter with the spirit's work in the apostles. The need of the apostles that something should be done for them is what this verse states. There were many things the apostles could not understand till afterward. Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 347, said, "There were many things which might be said. Jesus had given them the outline, but He had not gone into details. These were things which they could not then bear."

The apostles were still full of Jewish traditions; and such ideas as the total replacement of Judaism by Christianity, the cessation of the sacrifices, and the elimination of circumcision and the office of the high priest—these were some of the things they could not have understood at the moment, although Jesus had indeed told them all things. Their true enlightenment would come under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 13

This is a verse of nearly incredible importance in the proper understanding of Christianity. Here is the cornerstone of faith. The errors grounded here are colossal, and the general misunderstanding of it has perverted millions of disciples.

“He, the Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all the truth . . .” The most poisonous errors have been widely held and devoutly believed by Christians of all generations, thus leaving an intolerable burden upon any view that would make these precious words a promise to all believers. Jesus was here speaking to “apostles only.”

The Father delivered all truth to Jesus (13:3); and Jesus delivered all truth to the apostles, promising that the Spirit would enable them to remember “all truth” (14:26); and, therefore, only the apostles of Jesus could have been guided into all truth. In the writings of the apostles of Jesus is found “all the truth” as far as Christians are concerned.

“He shall guide . . .” indicates a progressive revelation from one level to higher levels; and thus Revelation with its prophecies of the future exceeds what the apostles at first knew.

In fact, this gospel, written so long after the synoptics, has deeper insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of God than appears in them; but even here the Holy Spirit did not go beyond what Jesus said, the greater insight resulting from more extended study of Jesus’ words. Only in the matter of prophesying future events would it appear that the Holy Spirit empowered the apostles apart from the exact words of Jesus, and even this may not have been done except in the same manner as that of Old Testament prophets.

If this word “guide” indicates (from its suggestion of a journey) a progression, in some degree, beyond the actual words of Christ, it was strictly limited to the apostles. Such a proposition as the following is absolutely untenable. G. Campbell Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 263, said, “A guide always means a pilgrimage, and a guide always means a process. The whole church of God today has a fuller apprehension of truth than had those twelve men. The Spirit has been guiding us into all truth!”

The Lord did not promise that the Spirit would guide “us” into all truth, but “them,” the blessed apostles; and, as for the notion that arrogant, selfish, secular, materialistic Christendom, as now almost universally constituted, has a “fuller

apprehension” of truth than the apostles of Jesus Christ—that notion has all but destroyed Christianity from the earth.

“For He will not speak on His own . . .” indicates that the Spirit is not the originator, or primary source, of truth, but one who brings to their remembrance the truth conveyed by the Lord to the apostles.

Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 5, p. 27, gives us some words on this subject that are helpful. He said, “He does not speak from Himself, that is, independently of the Father and the Son. Furthermore, He will show things to come. This was fulfilled in the inspired witness of the apostles . . . Let no one therefore think that the Holy Spirit continues now to give prophecies through individuals. He has shown the things to come in the completed word of God, and we must turn there to know these future events.”

The subjective feelings of spirituals in all ages have been erroneously received as gospel truth, and the ravages of this error have been phenomenal.

Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 5, p. 27, recorded a remarkable incident from one of the crusades in which, “Two hundred thousand people (had as their) genuine leaders a goose and a goat, carried at the front, and to whom these worthy Christians ascribed an infusion of the Divine Spirit.”

Pitiful, but not any more pitiful than millions today, who are following some goose who is allegedly endowed with the Holy Spirit.

“He will disclose to you what is to come . . .” This also positively proves the limitation of this whole passage in its application to the apostles only. Can anyone believe that Spirit-filled Christians of the present age have the gift of prophecy? That the apostles had such a gift is devoutly believed, but it is here emphatically denied that any Christians now have such prophetic gifts.

Verses 14-15

J. R. Dummellow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 802, said, “This is one of the leading Trinitarian passages in the New Testament. In it

1. the three persons are clearly distinguished;
2. their relative subordination is clearly taught, the Father giving His all to the Son, and the Son communicating His all to the Spirit; and
3. their equality of nature distinctly affirmed, for the Son receives from the Father “all things whatsoever the Father has,” that is, His whole nature and attributes, and communicates them to the Spirit. “

Merrill C. Tenney, *John, The Gospel of Belief*, p. 239, wrote, “Each of the three persons is separate in personality and is distinguishable from the others . The three interact and also act separately; they are three individuals, yet but one God. Jesus offered no philosophical statement of the Trinity. His language was extremely simple, though the profundities of His words are still unplumbed.”

Verse 16

“A little while . . .” The difference in the verbs “behold” and “see” as associated with the two “little whiles” here has occasioned all kinds of exegesis as to what is meant by the second “see.” Does it refer to His appearances after the resurrection, or to their “seeing” Him in a spiritual sense at Pentecost and afterward, or is the Lord’s coming in the Second Advent indicated?

Arno C. Gaebelein, *op. cit.*, p. 306, strongly argued for a reference to Pentecost.

Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 349, declared flatly that, “After three days, He would rise again and appear to their view.”

B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 232, said that the best way to understand it is to make the meaning include all three. He said, “The fulfillment of this promise

must not be limited to one event, as the Resurrection, Pentecost, or the Return. The beginning of the new vision was at the Resurrection; the potential fulfillment of it was at Pentecost, when the spiritual presence of the Lord was completed by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This Presence, slowly realized, will be crowned by the Return.

Verse 17

In view of the various opinions men still have of the meaning, it is not surprising that the apostles wondered at it. The repetition of the same thought in verse 18 indicates that they spent some considerable time and discussion on the problem of what the words meant.

Verse 18

The question troubling the apostles was the apparently contradictory statements

1. that Jesus would go to the Father, and
2. the declaration that “in a little while” they should see Him.

The proximity of those two seemingly irreconcilable statements added to their doubt as to what Jesus meant.

Verse 19

Of great significance is the revelation here that Jesus knew exactly what was in the minds and conversations of the apostles, whether or not they were physically in His presence. His repeating their exact words, not having heard them, was a marvelous demonstration of His Divine power; and it made a profound impression on the apostles who responded by declaring, “Now we know that You know all things.” (Verse 30)

Verse 20

Jesus had often predicted His Passion, as recorded three times in Matthew; and here is another plain reference to the impending death and the rejoicing with which it would be hailed by His enemies. The apostles fully understood what Jesus meant here.

Verse 21

Jesus the seed of woman here referred to Himself as a woman in the pangs of childbirth, His apostles also being identified with Him as sharing in His sufferings.

“Her hour has come . . .” strongly reminds the student of Jesus’ frequent references to His own “hour.” The child is the church or kingdom of God, which was in fact delivered by the agonies of death through which the Lord passed. The woman’s remembering no more the anguish and rejoicing over the child correspond to the rejoicing that followed the Lord’s resurrection. Most remarkably, Jesus never lost sight of the joy of saving sinners, the same being the motivation that sustained Him upon the cross itself. (Hebrews 12:2)

Verse 22

This is a plain reference to the resurrection and the rejoicing with which the apostles would hail the victory over death.

“No one takes your joy away from you . . .” is a prophecy of the unflagging enthusiasm with which the apostles would joyfully proclaim the good news of redemption for all men throughout their lives. They were hated, persecuted, scourged, and murdered; but the last one of them went down to death shouting the joyful message, “He is risen!”

Satan exhausted the total resources of hell in a vain effort to counteract the testimony of that little band of men to whom Jesus gave these words, but their joy was never taken away from them; and Satan’s purpose was totally frustrated.

Verse 23

This means that in the totally changed situation after the resurrection, the apostles would not need the Lord's physical presence as an ever-available teacher to answer their questions and allay their doubts and fears. All that would be changed. They would ask Jesus nothing, that is, in the ordinary sense of inquiring of a human teacher. On the other hand, they would pray to the Father in Jesus' name.

This also indicates that the apostles would soon understand the great spiritual verities and would not need to ask, "Where are you going?" (13:36), or "How can we know he way?" (14:5), or "Show us the Father" (14:8), or "Lord, what has happened that Thou art about to manifest Thyself to us and not to the world?" (14:22), or "What is this that He said, A little while?" (16:18). These uncertainties would disappear in the light of the events which would, in a matter of hours, be unfolded.

"He will give it to you in My name . . ." These words show that Jesus intended that His followers should pray, not to Himself, but to the Father in Jesus' name.

It surfaces here also that the giving, as well as the asking, shall be in Jesus' name. In all petitions to the Father, the name of Jesus Christ should be mentioned as the ground of the petitioner's right to be heard.

High-sounding prayers offered in no other name, and upon no other grounds, than those of the petitioner, or even ambiguously, "In Thy name," can be nothing other than an affront to Almighty God.

Ignoring or by-passing the name of the One Mediator between God and man is presumptuously sinful. Particularly reprehensible is the custom of closing prayers with a mere "Amen," for fear that some unbeliever might be offended by the name of Christ.

Loving the praise of men more than the praise of God was fatal to believers in Jesus' day (12:42); and it is beyond question fatal to fall into the same error today.

Verse 24

There are two ways of understanding this:

1. as a reprimand of the apostles because of their failure to pray in Jesus' name, or
2. a mere statement of their habit up to that time, and mentioned only with a view to changing it.

Surely the latter is correct, because when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He did not at that time command them to pray in Jesus' name. (Matthew 6:9-13)

William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, . p. 335, observed that, "When a believer concludes His prayer by saying, "All this we ask in Jesus' name," he is not using a magic formula. What he means is, "We ask all this on the basis of Christ's merit and in harmony with His redemptive revelation."

It is true that, "in the name of Christ" is not a magic formula, but a prayer thus concluded is properly concluded.

The sinful and fatal shortcoming of many prayers is that they are offered in no name at all, pleading no connection with Christ who died for us, and having no effect of: "God, we want all this. Amen!"

The great fact underlying the absolute necessity of praying in Jesus' name is that, apart from the soul's connection with Christ, no man has any right whatever to ask forgiveness of sins or any other blessing. No man has access except "in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:6)

Verse 25

"In figurative language . . ." These would appear plain enough after Pentecost, but meanwhile, the heart of all of Jesus' teachings might have been called "dark sayings," or "figurative language."

The reason for this was complex.

1. It was a fulfillment of prophecy.
2. It was necessary to use a medium that could not be distorted by the Pharisees.
3. Finally, the "figurative language" or "dark sayings" proved in the long run to be more memorable and effective than any other method could have been.

Here are some of the subjects of Jesus' figurative language or dark sayings:

1. After the temple was destroyed, He would raise it in three days.
2. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God.
3. He would give living-water . . . if a man drink he shall never thirst.
4. Rivers of living water would spring up within the believer.
5. Except one eat the flesh and drink the blood, etc.
6. He that believes shall never die.
7. You are clean, but not all.
8. A little while, and you see Me no more; again a little while, and you shall see Me.

These “dark sayings” or “figurative language” should not be alleged as an excuse for unbelief, because there was far more than enough to make the true meaning clear for all who would apply themselves to find it.

“Speak no more in figurative language or dark sayings . . .” This would be fulfilled before the night was over. For practically all of His ministry, Jesus had presented Himself as God come in the flesh, but He had categorically voided (except in specific instances) saying plainly that He was the Christ, preferring to speak of the “True Vine,” “the Good Shepherd,” the Son of man,” etc.; but, before the night was over, Jesus would declare flatly that He was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, and that His enemies would behold Him sitting on the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. (Mark 14:62)

Verses 26-27

This is a further exhortation for the apostles to pray directly to God in Jesus’ name, on the grounds that the love of God was the result not merely of their belief in Christ (last clause) but was also based upon their love of Christ, the importance of His requirement being seen in the order of its statement here (being first), and also because, as used elsewhere in John, such love means keeping Jesus’ words and obeying His commands. (14:15)

Verse 28

These words, as Jesus promised, are not dark sayings at all but the plainest possible statements of the profoundest facts in Christianity. The incarnation, the godhead of Jesus, the passion (death, resurrection, and ascension) are all included in this.

“I am leaving the world . . .” The prophetic use of the present tense for the future here refers to His death, resurrection, and ascension.

“Going to the Father . . .” This also prophetically referred to the Father before the world was.

“I came forth from the Father . . .” This first clause marks Jesus’ entry into our earth life as an act of His own volition. He decided to come, chose the time, and place of entry, elected the particular race that would provide Him a mortal body, and timed the entire sequence of events to fulfill the 333 prophecies of the Old Testament bearing upon the first advent of the Messiah. Likewise, His departure to be with the Father was revealed here as an act of His own volition.

Verses 29-30

Strangely, the supernatural understanding of what was in the apostles' hearts seems from these words to have been more convincing to them than even the raising of Lazarus.

“No need for anyone to question You . . .” refers to the omniscience of Christ. This vision of His godhead was clear to the apostles at this point. They had seen His deity shining through the veil of His humanity and cried out, “Now we know . . . we believe . . .”

William Hendriksen, *Ibid.*, II, p. 340, noted, there were still some dark waters to be crossed, he wrote, “The light is shining brightly now, more brightly than ever before; but within a few hours it will be obscured once more. Yet, the confession made here will linger on in their subconscious minds, until, by and by, when the Lord raises from the dead and (a little later) pours out His Spirit, it will bear the fruit of calm and steadfast assurance, and this fruit will abide forever.”

Jesus was not deceived by the apostles' glowing words. He knew their weakness and promptly moved to strengthen them and warn them against the awesome events that were rushing upon them.

Verse 31-32

“Do you now believe?” . . . is not a questioning of their faith, which was genuine enough; but it was a warning against overconfidence. The Old Testament prophet had written, “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be

scattered” (Zechariah 13:7) and Mark (14:27) identified the scattering of the apostles during the Passion as the fulfillment of that prophecy.

The scattering of the apostles, the smiting of the Shepherd, the Savior’s being left alone, and His comment that He would not be really alone, for God was with Him—the thoughts that tug at the heart as one contemplates such events on the night of our Savior’s Gethsemane with the cross looming on the morrow are wholly tragic.

Verse 33

Jesus had unfolded for His apostles a full account of all that was about to happen. The betrayal by Judas, the denial by Peter, the scattering of all of them to their own homes, the hatred and rejoicing of the world at His death; and the exact fulfillment of all those prophecies would strengthen their faith after it was all over.

“That in Me you may have peace . . .” William Hendriksen, *Ibid.*, II, p. 343, is right in seeing this peace as a dual blessing, “It is both objective (reconciliation with God) and subjective (the quiet and comforting assurance of justification and adoption).”

“In Me . . . In the world . . .” Not even the apostles could receive the peace of God apart from being “in Christ.” In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All spiritual blessings in the heavenly places are in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3).

“In the world . . .” is the opposite state of being unsaved, without hope and without God in the world.

“Take courage; I have overcome the world . . .” The serene confidence and assurance of the Lord as He calmly awaited His agony and death are reflected in these words. How could He speak of “good cheer” in the face of all that He knew was about to happen? Only God could have exhibited such behavior upon such an occasion and in such a circumstance.

“I have overcome the world . . .” How? He had overcome the world by overcoming the world’s prince, Satan; He had overcome by rejecting the world’s value-judgments; He had overcome by a perfect willingness to endure the worst the world could bring upon Him without retreating from one word of His holy teachings; He had overcome by steadfast refusal to yield to the world’s temptations of lust and pride; He had overcome the world by living a life of total innocence and perfection and, at the same time, a life of total power, authority, and effectiveness. He had indeed overcome the world!

According to J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 803, “overcome” actually means “conquered.” He said, “See the sublime vision in the Revelation, where Christ goes forth conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:2) The victory of Christ over the world and the victory of believers through that victory are favorite themes of the Fourth Evangelist.”

The Holy Spirit did indeed, as Jesus promised, bring to His remembrance “all” that Jesus said unto them. What a wealth of spiritual truth is found in these precious words of the Lord.

CHAPTER 17

This whole chapter records the prayer that Jesus offered on the betrayal night in contemplation of the cross. There is the prayer for Himself (verses 1-5), for the apostles (verses 6-19), and for those of all generations who would believe on Him through the apostles’ word (verses 20-26).

H. L. Hester, *The Heart of the New Testament*, p. 199, said, “Chapter seventeen is the real Lord’s prayer. In this deeply moving experience He prays: first for Himself, for His disciples, and for the whole world—all believes in all ages.”

J. R. Dummelow, Commentary on the Holy Bible, p. 803, called it, “Christ’s high priestly prayer, because in it He solemnly consecrates Himself to be priest and victim in the approaching sacrifice.”

Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 352, commented that “It is the longest prayer recorded in the New Testament.”

B. F. Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John called it “The Prayer of Consecration.” Some have called it “The Prayer for Unity.”

G. Campbell Morgan, the Gospel According to John, p. 266 said, “I would ever be careful lest I should appear to differentiate between the value of one part of the Holy Scripture and another, but no one will deny that when we come to this chapter we are at the center of all the sanctities.”

Daniel A. Poling, The Romance of Jesus, p. 180, said, “Here, Jesus seemed to sweep away the last physical barrier that separated Him from the world above . . . He was as one in intimate conversation with God.”

Verse 1

“These things . . .” refers to the discourse just finished.

“Lifting up His eyes to heaven . . .” This has led some to suppose the prayer was offered outdoors after they had left the upper room, but this is not certain.

”The hour has come . . .” What hour? It was the hour for which Jesus had come into the world, the hour of fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies, the hour when the true Passover would be sacrificed, the hour when the Son of God would bruise the head of Satan and accomplish God’s purpose of achieving salvation for mankind.

“Glorify Thy Son . . .” The word John used to express Jesus’ desire in this prayer does not actually mean “pray” in the usual sense. Jesus’ petitions should therefore be understood as the expressed desire of a soul in complete harmony with God.

Verse 2

“Authority over all mankind . . .” Jesus’ use of the third person accounts for some strange expressions in the prayer (verse 3) the reason for this being found in the Lord’s mental and spiritual condition during the prayer. Here the God-man was caught up into a union with the Father so complete and intimate that, for the moment, His whole human nature was thought of by Christ as if it were apart from Himself.

“Over all mankind . . .” To Jesus alone, God committed the judgment of humanity.

“To all whom Thou hast given Him . . .” All mankind belongs to God, but not all are given to Christ. This clause shows that God gave Christ a special kind of authority over those given to Him, the authority to give them eternal life. Thus the gift of eternal life is conditional and available to them alone who are Christ’s.

Robert Shank, *Jesus, His Story*, p. 206, said, “All mankind rightfully belongs to God, as sovereign Creator; but those who seek to know and do His will are His in a special sense, and in them will be fulfilled our God’s real purpose in creation.”

Verse 3

Here is stated the fundamental condition of receiving eternal life. Men must know God and Jesus Christ in order to be saved,

“Jesus Christ . . .” Christ would declare Himself “Christ” that very night (Mark 14:62), a title purposely avoided till then. What better way was there of instructing the apostles than in this prayer uttered in the third person (partially), and in which the expression “Jesus Christ” was used for the first time on earth?

“That they may know Thee the only true God . . .” The saving knowledge of God includes also the knowledge of Jesus Christ as God’s revelation to men and is a far different thing from merely believing that there is a creator. Thus

knowing God and Christ is not a casual thing, but something extensive and profound.

G. B. F. Hallock, *Minister's Manual*, p. 117, said, "I sometimes wince at the careless way the question is asked, "Do you know Jesus?" . . ." Let us use a great word greatly and settle with ourselves that this word "know" is marvelously deep, and no man has ever touched bottom."

WHAT IT MEANS TO KNOW GOD

1. "The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:4)

Thus, without obedience, one may have a few ideas about God; but he does not know God.

2. "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Without love one cannot know either the Father or the Son. It would be as reasonable to suppose that a mole can see the stars as to think that one who does not love knows God.

3. "To know God is to be in Christ." "God has given us eternal life, and the life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11) No one can know God except by knowing Him "in Christ." This means to be united with Christ, bear His name, to confess Him as Lord, and to accept all the obligations entailed by being baptized "into Christ."
4. Knowing God, means receiving God's Spirit. Until that Spirit is known and received as an earnest of the soul's inheritance, there can be no saving knowledge of God and Christ. (Romans 8:9) "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." (1 John 4:13)

"To know God . . ." is therefore a concise reference to believing and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Verses 4-5

“I glorified Thee . . .” refers to Jesus’ life of perfect trust and obedience including His sufferings and death, here prophetically regarded as already accomplished.

“Glorify Thou Me . . .” refers to the receiving of Jesus back into the bosom of the Father where He had resided eternally. This necessarily included Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension.

“Before the world was . . .” In such a statement as this, Jesus affirmed His eternal existence, His oneness with the Father, and His equality with God.

David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* p. 263, said, Jesus here goes back of history, back of creation itself, and speaks of the glory which He had with the Father. This can be understood only in the light of the opening verses of the first chapter.”

The implications of this passage are profound. Christ was here praying for the Father to glorify Him with the glory that He had possessed from before all time; but it was as a human being that Christ would ascend to the Father and be endowed with everlasting glory; thus, man, himself, in the person of Christ is now seated on the throne! It is our nature that has been glorified in Christ.

Verse 6

“I manifested Thy name . . .” Jesus did this by referring all honor and glory to God throughout His entire ministry. He was ever careful to explain that the words He spoke, the miracles He wrought, and the teachings He gave were the Father’s.

“They have kept Thy word . . .” Keeping the word of God in the sense of believing it and obeying it, was the means by which Jesus’ disciples had become His and were continued in that blessed relationship; and it is impossible that any other means exists which could enable men to be Christ’s disciples.

Verse 7

This is a summation of the preceding thought and shows that Christ came to reveal God, His work, His love, His power, and His teaching. It is this identification of Christ with God Himself that is all-important.

Verse 8

“The words which Thou gavest Me . . .” The revelation brought to men by Christ was a revelation of “words,” not of thoughts or ideas. The consideration is of the most extensive importance in understanding the inspiration of the Scriptures.

“I have given to them . . .” This made the apostles custodians of the sacred revelation from God, thus endowing the New Testament with plenary authority for determining God’s will for mankind. This is true because only in the New Testament does one have the actual teachings of the apostles of Christ. Men need to learn how “not to go beyond the things which are written.” (1 Corinthians 4:6)

“They believe that thou didst send Me . . .” The use of the past tense here is prophetic and refers to the ultimate fidelity of the apostles to their Divine commission, passing over the little season that very night when the Shepherd would be smitten and the sheep scattered.

Verse 9

“I do not ask on behalf of the world . . .” Christ was not praying for the world but for His disciples. That Christ could not pray for His enemies in the same terms as for His own is natural. Alvah Hovey, *op. cit.*, p. 340, said, “The blessings which He would ask for His enemies must be different in some respects from those which He would ask for His friends.”

David Lipscomb, *op. cit.*, p. 264, concurred saying, “Jesus does not mean to say that the world is excluded from His sympathy; He was dying to save the world.” Later, Jesus prayed that the “world might believe.” (Verses 20-21)

“For they are Thine . . .” The apostles were not merely Christ’s any longer but were God’s chosen representatives to deliver the saving to humanity. It was

that new status with which they were shortly to be endowed that required this special prayer to be uttered in their hearing. It has all the effect of the great commission. In this part of His prayer, Jesus prayed not for the world but for those men upon whom the salvation of the world depended.

Verse 10

God in Christ, Christ in Christians, Christians in Christ, and Christ in God—this (mutual unity and identification) is another summary of how men are saved.

Verse 11

“No more in the world . . .” refers to the physical absence of Jesus after the resurrection and ascension. Spiritually, the Lord continues to be with His disciples. (Matthew 18:20)

“They themselves are in the world . . .” refers to the mortal state of the apostles who would continue to be the object of Satan’s bitterest hatred and opposition. Jesus’ physical departure would make them even more the object of Satan’s attack and their status even more precarious.

“Holy Father . . .” is one of three terms of address directed to God in this prayer, the others being “Father” (verse 1, 4, and 11) and “O Righteous Father.” (verse 25)

“Keep them in Thy name . . .” There is no way to avoid respect of the importance attached to the sacred name of “Jesus Christ,” and it is likely that here is a reference to the compound title introduced in verse 3. Let men face it, salvation is accomplished in an all-powerful name, a fact which the apostles strongly emphasized. (Acts 4:12)

Immediately after that statement, Peter pronounced that sacred name, and significantly it was the compound title found in this prayer, “Jesus Christ.”

“That they may be one . . .” was a plea for unity, primarily of the apostles, but by extension, applicable to all Christians.

Verse 12

“I guarded them . . .” Jesus Christ successfully accomplished the work that God gave Him to do, choosing, instructing, guarding, correcting, and encouraging the Twelve; and He was then praying for them with all of His heart, adding prophetically that not one of them would be lost except Judas.

“But the son of perdition . . .” This reference to Judas sheds light on the identity of “the man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), indicating that he will be another pretender ascribing to himself apostolic authority and power. Any self-styled “apostle” today must be judged in the light of these Scriptures.

Verse 13

“But now I come to Thee . . .” This clause contrasts sharply with Jesus’ being “in the world” only a few more hours. Consciousness of the dramatic change about to occur, added drama and tension to this remarkable prayer.

“That they may have My joy . . .” Two factors involved in the projected joy of the apostles were:

1. Christ’s necessary departure to be with the Father, and
2. this prayer upon their behalf.

“My joy . . .” Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 356, referred this to, “The joy of the apostles respecting the Savior which would result from His resurrection.”

Verse 14

“Thy word . . .” The frequent use of the singular noun where the Divine word is concerned is significant. Though consisting of many words (verse 8), the word of God is nevertheless one. It is one in that it is a single composite corpus of teaching. It is one in authority, trustworthiness, and saving efficacy. It is the open word delivered by God to Christ, by Christ to the apostles, and by the apostles to all mankind by means of their book, the New Testament.

It is one word in the sense that no human teaching may be mixed with it or added to it. It is one word in the sense that “every word” of it is a necessary part of the whole making it imperative that nothing be added to or taken from the teaching of God. (Revelation 22:18-19)

“The world has hated them . . .” Jesus’ heart was moved by the bitter trials He foresees falling upon the beloved apostles. Their task will not be easy. “The world hated them” is prophetic.

“The world has hated them because they are not of the world . . .” Jesus added the words “even as” He was not of the world in the sense of His having been before the world was. The disciples were not of the world in the sense of their having accepted Christ’s teachings which required the rejection of the world’s value-judgments, the repudiations of its standards, and the denial of lordship to the world’s prince, Satan. This was more than enough to justify Jesus’ statement that the apostles were not of this world.

Verse 15

“From . . .” is from the Greek term meaning “out of,” and the obvious reason Jesus did not wish the disciples to be taken out of the world was that such a thing would have made impossible the conversion of the world. That the disciples should be kept “out of” the devil was the important thing.

It was Christ’s desire that the apostles should remain in the world, in contact with its populations, exposed to its culture, and indirect confrontation with its evil. Only this could enable them to convert the world.

Verses 16-17

H. R. Reynolds The Pulpit Commentary II, p. 349, noted, “A long controversy has prevailed in the church as to whether the Spirit’s gracious operations are or are not limited by the operation of truth on the mind. Numerous assurances of the New Testament seem thus to limit the grace of God or to measure it by the ordinary effect produced on the understanding by Divine truth.”

Reynolds disagreed that such a “limitation” exists, but he was correct in his mention of “numerous assurances” of the New Testament which prove that it does exist. The proximity of this teaching of Jesus to His promise of the Holy Spirit who would guide them into all truth, together with the specific mention here of the truth as the instrument, or means, of their sanctification positively shows that whatever the Spirit accomplishes the means of it is sacred truth itself.

Regarding alien sinners, it is certain that the only power capable of producing faith in them is the word of God.

J. D. Thomas, *The Spirit and Spirituality*, p. 10, said, “We insist that the only power used to produce faith in the alien sinner is the word of God.

Although denominationalists are slow to see this (perhaps due to inherited Calvinism), the teaching of the New Testament is very clear about the grace of the gospel in producing faith. “The gospel is the power unto salvation” (Romans 1:16), and “faith comes by hearing the word.” (Romans 10:17)

Regarding the work of the Spirit in the hearts of Christians, J. D. Thomas, *Ibid*, p. 15, said. “The Spirit is not the word and it is not limited to the use of the written word in all that He does (for instance, help our weaknesses, or intercedes). “The Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we know not how to pray as we should. but “the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” (Romans 8:26)

Despite the exceptions cited by Thomas, Jesus here clearly indicated that the Divine truth would sanctify the apostles themselves, and this is grounds enough for denying that the Holy Spirit sanctifies Christians in some manner different from that. Perhaps a part of the difficulty lies in the failure to recognize the word itself as a living and abiding entity in the soul of the believer. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16) is exactly the equivalent of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling; and many of the things said to be done by the Spirit are also said to be done by the word of God.

The Holy Spirit never performs any kind of word in the human soul that is contrary to, or out of harmony with, the Scriptures. The Spirit's entering the soul and making it independent of the word of God, is not found in the Scriptures.

"Thy word is truth . . ." is but another way of saying the Bible is truth. It is uniquely the word of God.

Verse 18

Just as Christ delivered God's word, the apostles were instructed to deliver, not their word, but Christ's. This respect to the pattern of teaching illuminates the promise of Jesus that whatever the apostles bound on earth would be bound in heaven. (Mathew 18:18) Not even the apostles had authority to set up an organization and teach whatever they might have conceived to be expedient or appropriate. They were to use the same fidelity in teaching what Christ commanded that Christ had used in declaring what God had said.

"I also have sent them . . ." This is prophetic tense, viewing the future sending of the apostles as already accomplished.

Verse 19

"Sanctify . . ." here does not refer to being made more holy, because such a meaning could not have pertained to Jesus. Thus, another meaning of "sanctify," which is "to consecrate," is intended. Jesus was in the act of consecrating Himself as the one great sacrifice for sin. "The truth" (the evident means of Jesus' consecration) was the word of God, which was the source of motivation and power for Jesus as He moved toward the cross. By opening up, through His death, the way of salvation for all, Jesus made it possible for the apostles also to be sanctified in truth, that is, by the same word of God.

Verse 20

Here the prayer reached out toward the saved of all generations. Significantly, all who would believe on Jesus would do so "through their word,"

that is, through the word of the apostle, there being no other way that faith can be produced.

“Through their word . . .” is not a merely incidental thought. Peter wrote, “Remember the words spoken before-hand by holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.” (2 Peter 3:2) These words are equivalent to saying that there is no other way of bringing men to God except through the word of the apostles.

Verse 21

“That they may all be one . . .” is a prayer for Christian unity, the great reason for Christ’s desire for such unity being immediately stated, “That the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.”

In answering the question of how the believer’s unity could affect the conversion of the world, Robert Milligan, *Analysis of the New Testament*, p. 268, said, “This would be to all thoughtful persons a moral demonstration that the Christian religion is not of men, but of God.”

It is in disunity that God’s church is most helpless in the present times. Nothing is more productive of infidelity and unrighteousness than the conflicting doctrines of professed followers of Christ. By multiplying divisions, Satan has hindered numberless millions from obeying the gospel. No greater need could be imagined than that of the unity of the church of the living God; but, alas, only a certain kind of unity will avail anything; and that is the kind of unity Jesus identified in this prayer, a unity like that between the Father and the Son.

Satan has ever been busy advocating his own kind of unity, such as:

1. the unity of authoritarianism, in which all blindly obey the ecclesiastics elevated above them;
2. the kind of unity proposed by the snake to the frog, in which one entity is swallowed up in another;

3. the unity in which each group of believers accepts his status under some system of allocation, and in which, like in the cemetery, everyone lies as complacently as possible and does not infringe on his neighbors;
4. the unity in which many groups are submerged in a super-organization, thus containing every degree of contradiction and aberration under one pretentious banner, such unity being very similar to that exhibited by a barrel of scorpions.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 365, wrote, "Believers should always yearn for peace, but never for peace at the expense of truth; for "unity" which has been gained by means of such a sacrifice is not worthy of the name."

"Thou Father art in me, and I in Thee . . . and they in us . . ." This threefold unity is the only kind of unity that can avail. To be "in Christ" is also to be "in God."

Verse 22

Not the apostles only, but all Christians, partake of the glory of God from Christ. They are partakers of His holiness, (Hebrews 12:10), "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and have received the reconciliation. (Romans 5:11)

Verse 23

"I in them, and Thou in Me . . ." The perfect unity flows out of perfect submission to the total will of God in Christ, resulting in "one Lord, one faith, one baptism. (Ephesians 4:4f) God's love of Christ means God's love of Christ's body, which is His church.

Verse 24

"Where I am . . ." Prophetically, Jesus was already at home with the Father when this prayer was uttered.

“Before the foundation of the world . . .” The eternal existence of Christ , His deity, incarnation, and visit to humanity as “the Dayspring from on high” (Luke 1:78—these are all in view here.

Verse 25

Really to know the origin of Christ in God is to find salvation possible. This is not, actually, such a knowledge as can be objectively proved and demonstrated; but it is the kind of knowledge that follows obedient faith in Christ, as when Peter said, “We believe and know.” (6:69)

Verse 26

“Made Thy name known to them. . .” The threefold employment of this clause, here and in verses 11-12, raises the question of what, exactly, is that name. “Jesus Christ” is the great compound name of the Lord, used here for the first time on earth; and it is impossible to separate repeated references to “the name which Thou hast given Me” for that very compound title of the world’s only Savior.

“Love . . . in them, and I in them . . .” There persists to the very end of this sacred prayer the concept of all spiritual blessings being “in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

John Mackey, *God’s Order*, p. 67, said that, “Paul used the expression “in Christ,” or its equivalent (in Him, in Whom) no less than 169 times in his epistles.” To be “in Christ” is everything with regard to salvation.

Stanley F. Anderson, *Our Dependable Bible*, p. 157, said, “This great prayer of Christ is similar to a final report of work accomplished, the most important of which was to reveal the Father’s love and His plan of salvation for all men. That Christ’s work was successful is indicated in verse 8.”

It was the accurate memory of the apostle John, aided by the Holy Spirit, that produced the record of this amazing prayer, and not his philosophical imagination that did it. It is a passage which “surpasses all literature in its

setting forth the identity of being, power, and love, in the twofold personality of the God-Man.”

H. R. Reynolds, *loc. cit.*, II, p. 340, said, “The supposition that some unknown writer of the second excogitated such a prayer out of the synoptic narratives, the Pauline epistles, and the Alexandrian philosophy, refutes itself.”

The conviction of every devoted Christian who studies this prayer resolves into this: that none but Jesus Christ our Lord could have prayed it, and even He, only in the torture of those pressure-events leading up to the cross.

Having followed our Lord’s thoughts through this sublime prayer, we may exclaim with Peter who, upon another occasion, said, “Lord . . . we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God.”

CHAPTER 18

This chapter records the betrayal and seizure of Jesus (verses 1-11), the arraignment before Annas (verse 12-14) Peter’s first denial (verse 15-18, questioning of Annas (verses 19-24), Peter’s second and third denials (verses 25-27, Jesus’ appearance before Caiaphas and before Pilate (verses 28-32), Pilate’s questioning of Jesus (verses 33-37), and vain efforts of Pilate to release Jesus (verses 38-49).

Another alleged difficulty derives from Peter’s denial having occurred before Annas in John, and in, the palace of Caiaphas in the synoptics. This is fully resolved by the fact that Annas and Caiaphas occupied the same palace, and the courtyard where Peter denied the Lord was in front of both apartments, that of Annas and that of his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

H. R. Reynolds, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 17, II, p. 385, wrote, That Annas and Caiaphas occupied the same palace, or different portions of the same edifice, solves the chief difficulty. Annas held his preliminary unofficial inquiry in his department of the building.

The other difficulty, not the “chief “ difficulty mentioned by Reynolds, regards the use of the title “High Priest” for Annas (verse 19); but this is not a difficulty in view of the prevailing prejudice of the Jews who still regarded Annas as the real High Priest.

John’s acquaintance with the High Priest (Annas) which surfaces in this chapter would certainly have inclined him to use this title in speaking of him; and this also explains the somewhat derogatory designation of Caiaphas as “High Priest that year. (verse 13)

The officer who struck Jesus, being one of Annas’ retainers, would certainly not have referred to his boss otherwise than as “High Priest.”

Verse 1

“These words . . . “ refer to the entire farewell discourse just concluded.

“The ravine of the Kidron . . .” This was a “winter torrent” meaning that it was dry most of the year. It flowed by the southeast wall of the city, and between it and the Mount of Olives.

It was down this little valley that David fled from the rebellion of his son Absalom. (2 Samuel 15:23) It was here Asa burned the abominable image. (1 Kings 15:3) Near here, Josiah caused the idolatrous vessels to be burned. (2 Kings 23:4) In the reign of Hezekiah, the Levites carried the unclean things to this valley. (2 Chronicles 29:16); and Jeremiah called it “the valley of the dead bones and of the ashes (Jeremiah 31:40), adding that this valley should be “holy unto the Lord.”

“Where there was a garden . . .” It was in the garden of Eden that Paradise was lost, and now it would be recovered in another garden where Jesus was strengthened through tears and blood to pay the price of human redemption. There an angel helped Him to prepare for the ordeal of Calvary. (Luke 22:43)

Verse 2

There were doubtless several places to which Jesus might have gone that night if He had wished to hide; but this choice of a place Judas knew well showed His willingness to suffer.

Verse 3

“The Roman cohort . . .” The word “cohort” indicates a contingent of several hundred men. The soldiers were a part of the garrison of the tower of Antonio, headquarters of the Roman military presence in the city.

“Officers from the chief priests and Pharisees . . .” The soldiers were accompanied by a detachment of the temple guard. This marshaling of a military expedition against Jesus for the purpose of arresting Him was as ridiculous as it was unnecessary.

“Lanterns and torches and weapons . . .” Matthew and Mark mention the weapons but not the lanterns and torches. Despite the moon’s being full (it was the Passover), the arresting party came prepared to search the dark recesses of the garden with its olive trees.

Verse 4

Large as that company of His apprehenders was, Jesus and not they, had complete control of the sequence of events; and Jesus at once moved effectively to prevent the arrest of any of His disciples. If He had not done so, it seems certain that the apostles also would have been arrested.

Verse 5

John did not bring himself to mention the dastardly kiss, but his placement of Judas on the side of the Lord’s enemies corroborates the synoptics.

“Was standing with them . . .” suggests that John could still remember, over the gulf of years, the traitor, standing there in the flickering torchlight, his very presence with the Lord’s enemies stabbing the hearts of them who had been his friends.

“Jesus the Nazarene . . .” was the designation promoted by the Pharisees who ignorantly thought no prophet came out of Galilee. What His enemies intended was a slander, however, the Lord accepted as a crown of glory, identifying Himself from heaven as “Jesus of Nazareth.” (Acts 22:8)

“I am He . . .” It will be noted that “He” is not in the Greek. Therefore, what Jesus said here was “I Am,” thus making it another assertion of His godhead.

Verse 6

This remarkable out flashing of Jesus' power explains why the arresting party so readily consented to permit the apostles to leave with being arrested. It was perfectly clear to that entire company that Jesus could do anything, and therefore they allowed His arrest upon His own terms, not theirs.

Can there be any other possible explanation of why the whole group was not arrested? It will be further noted that Jesus referred to His prevention of their arrest as a fulfillment of His prophetic words in the great prayer (17:12); and from this the deduction stands that if the apostles had been arrested they might have been killed also.

Verses 7-9

If the arrest had not been prevented, some, perhaps all of them would have been lost.

"Whom do you seek . . ." The shock of what had just happened was still upon them all; and under the circumstances, they readily agreed to Jesus' request of exemption from arrest for His apostles.

Verse 10

This rash action by Peter required another miracle to prevent His arrest and possible execution. Peter never knew till long afterward how thin the ice was upon which he skated that night.

Peter was intent on making his boast of being willing to follow the Lord to prison and to death. This was the only blow struck in Jesus' defense, and one cannot help but admire Peter, wrong as he was, for striking it.

"His right ear . . ." is another inadvertent touch of the eyewitness writer.

"The slaves' name was Malchus . . ." Both Peter and Malchus are named by John, but not in the synoptics. Fear of reprisal by the authorities probably led to the omission of Peter's name in early gospels.

Can the fact of Peter's not being named even after his assault with a sword upon the arresting officers be explained in any way, except in the light of the miracles wrought during the progress of the seizure?

Verse 11

"Put the sword into the sheath . . ." There are two swords in this narrative: Peter's, and that of the civil authority. Jesus submitted to the latter, even when that authority was being abused by lawless and sinful men.

"The cup which the Father has given Me . . ." is a clear reference to the cup of agony. (Matthew 26:39)

The synoptics dwell upon the agony; and, from this, some critics allege that Jesus approached the arrest as a whimpering, cowering individual, completely crushed by the onset of events. Such a view is totally wrong. To be sure, there was agony; but Luke explained that an angel from heaven came and strengthened Jesus (22:43); and in John, the God-Man appears in His true strength, far more than able to cope with every situation.

Verse 12

"The commander . . ." The Greek word here is "*chiliarch*," meaning the commander of a thousand men; but this does not necessarily mean that a full cohort of a thousand men was present, but that an officer of that rank was present. The importance the Pharisees attached to this arrest is seen in the employment of such a ranking military figure in the achievement of it. The mention of the "*chiliarch*" shows that the Gentiles were represented in the sufferings of Jesus, a fact, He had prophesied. (Matthew 20:19)

"And bound Him . . ." This was part of the unmerited sufferings of Jesus, there having been no need at all to bind Him, as if he should have tried to escape! He had voluntarily identified Himself, commanded His apostles not to resist, and had willingly accompanied the cohort; but satanic instigation in wicked hearts made sure that every possible humiliation would be executed upon the Savior.

Verse 13

Annas had been deposed from the office of high priest by the Romans for putting a young Sabbath-breaker to death, contrary to Roman law; but the Jews continued to recognize Annas as the true high priest. That accounts for the arraignment here before Annas.

“Who was high priest that year . . .” That year—that awful year of our Lord’s crucifixion, was the thought in John’s mind as he named the man who was legally High Priest that year. F. N. Peloubet, *Peloubet’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 35, said, “Caiaphas was only one of six sons and sons-in-law of Annas who held the office throughout Annas’ long life after his deposition by Tiberius.”

Verse 14

John’s mention of this was to show what a biased and unprincipled judge would preside over the Lord’s trial in the Sanhedrin.

Verse 15

“Simon Peter was following . . .” The synoptic version is that he did so “afar off” (Mark 14:54), still smarting, perhaps from Jesus’ command to put up his sword.

“And so was another disciple . . .” This refers to John, the author of this gospel. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, p. 362, wrote, “John mentions this circumstance of his being known to them, to show why he was not questioned as Peter was . . . The questions asked Peter were not asked by those in authority, and his apprehensions which led to his denial were groundless.”

“The court of the High Priest . . .” was an imposing structure with apartments, a courtyard, stalls for guards, and the usual accouterments of a palace. It is likely that both Annas and Caiaphas lived here. The sending of Jesus bound to Caiaphas involved nothing more than leading Him across the courtyard.

Verse 16

The circumstance of John’s being favorably known to the high priest was that which provided this eyewitness account and also resulted in Peter’s admittance

to the theater of his triple denial. Thus the question left dangling in the synoptics as to how Peter happened to be at the trial, or near it, is cleared up by this circumstance, as is the status of the “slave-girl” who questioned Peter.

Verses 17-18

“You are not also . . .” indicates that John was openly known as a disciple of Jesus, and here is no evidence that Peter would have suffered any inconvenience by an open admission of his discipleship. However, it should be remembered that Peter had cut off Malchus’ ear a little earlier; and, if his identity as the perpetrator of that act had been known, there would have been solid grounds for his arrest.

“Warming himself . . .” at the devil’s fire was another circumstance in the chain of events leading to the denial.

Verse 19

“The high priest . . .” It is a moot question if this was Annas or Caiaphas for it might have been either. There is hardly any doubt that Caiaphas was in his father-in-laws house, or apartment in the palace, when Jesus was arraigned there; but the view maintained in this commentary is that Annas is referred to here.

Annas was deposed in 14 A. D. by Tiberius, but the Jews still honored him as the rightful “high priest;” and, if Annas was the one who knew John, it would have been perfectly natural for the apostle to have called him High Priest.” Annas, in this verse is represented as engaging in what lawyers call a “fishing expedition.” Jesus did not cooperate with him.

Verse 20

Jesus well knew that the wily old hypocrite, Annas, was merely on a fishing expedition and quite properly refused to tell him anything. Besides that, Annas was not the legal high priest; and Jesus had already decided to make His formal testimony concerning His Messiahship before the Sanhedrin in formal assembly. In addition, the Pharisees’ spies had been following Jesus diligently for months;

and everything that Jesus had publicly stated was, in all probability, already known to Annas, as was also Caiaphas' determination to put Jesus to death.

Verse 21

In the circumstances, Jesus' reply was the equivalent of "Look, if you wish a report on My disciples and teaching, just read the report of your own spies! Jesus was the rightful Lord of the Temple and head of the theocracy, being none other than the Divine Son of God; and, in this view of the unmitigated evil that was resident in the soul of Annas, the Lord's words were here remarkably mild. Yet even this mild rejection of Annas' demand was resented by his retainers, one of whom lifted his hand against the Prince of Life and struck the Lord in the face.

Verse 22

"Gave Jesus a blow . . ." The Greek word from which this is translated can mean either one of two things:

1. a stroke with a rod, or
2. a blow by the hand to the ear, or face, the latter "being the current punishment for a word supposed to be insolent." (H. R. Reynolds, *op. cit.*, II, p. 387)

This was the beginning of that vulgar and brutal mockery which was the lot of the Holy Savior on that dreadful night.

"The High Priest . . ." This proves that Annas enjoyed the title, even though he was no longer in possession of the office of High Priest.

Verse 23

The plain truth Jesus had spoken to Annas was the only defense such words needed; but the hour of darkness had arrived, and the Son of God was delivered into the hands of lawless men.

Verse 24

This does not imply any certain distance and was probably nothing more than moving Jesus from one side of the palace to the other, from the apartment of Annas to the more commodious chambers of the legal High Priest.

Verses 25-27

The additional element provided by John in this episode is that of the introduction of an eyewitness of Peter's association with the Lord in the garden. The synoptics mention the Galilean accent; but, in the circumstance of one of Malchus' kinsmen having actually seen him with Jesus, there was hardly any way Peter could deny it.

Verse 28

This and verse 24 are John's only reference to the formal trial in the Sanhedrin. He also omitted the all-night examination before Caiaphas, and the trial before Herod. Of the six trials before (1) Annas, (2) Caiaphas, (3) the Sanhedrin, (4) Pilate, (5) Herod, and (6) Pilate; John mentioned (1), (4), and (6).

"That they might not be defiled . . ." What a perverse in-consistency marks the behavior of men! They were willing to suborn testimony to effect the judicial murder of the Son of God, but were unwilling to put foot in a Gentile's house on the day of Preparation. This is the classical demonstration of the manner in which the strictest observance of religious ceremonies can exist in the behavior of wicked men at the very time when they are engaged in the blackest criminal activity.

"Might eat the Passover . . ." In the light of this, there is no way to make the last supper of the previous evening to have been the Passover.

Verses 29-30

The Sanhedrinists were strongly opposed to giving out the real charge on which they wished to execute Jesus, that is, that He had testified under oath to being the Divine Messiah. Their first ploy, therefore, was to avoid if possible naming any charge at all. Pilate understood the character of his petitioners far too well, however, to allow them any such presumption of fair-dealing, with the

charges kept secret. No, they would have go spit it all ought in open court before Pilate would yield; and even then, he would yield reluctantly.

Verse 31

“Take Him yourselves . . .” This was the first effort of Pilate to avoid sentencing Jesus. It was equivalent of his saying, “This case is not under my jurisdiction; handle it yourselves.”

“We are not permitted to put anyone to death . . .” According to Adam Clarke, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 5, p. 645, the Jews had the right of putting to death in matters of a wholly ecclesiastical nature. He wrote, “The power of life and death was taken from the Jews as far as it concerned matters of state. They only applied to Pilate to persuade him that they were proceeding against Christ as an enemy of the state, and not as a transgressor of their own laws.” Clark was surely wrong in this opinion. See chapter 19:7.

Verse 32

The duplicity of Jesus’ accusers is seen in the contrast of their real reason for condemning Jesus and the far different reason they alleged before Pilate. God so ordered the events of the day that their hypocrisy and deceit were fully inscribed upon the pages of sacred history.

The next six verses (33-38) give the conversation between Jesus and Pilate, which clears up several things which could never have been known without this paragraph.

Verses 33-35

From this, it is clear that the chief priests had charged Jesus with wanting to be a secular king over Israel, a charge they knew to be false, their motives being inspired by no other consideration than political expediency; for they fancied that Pilate would believe their false charges. Pilate did have the grace to ask Jesus plainly about it.

Verse 36

This persuasive answer concerning the spiritual and other-worldly nature of Jesus' kingdom convinced Pilate of the falsity of the Pharisee's charges; and, in the light of that knowledge, he made at least seven efforts to procure Jesus' release—only with the final reservation that He would not incur any political risk to release Him.

“My servants would be fighting . . .” The word of Jesus' non-resistance against the civil sword was already known to Pilate, and the disclaimer in Jesus' words was proof enough that Jesus was not any kind of threat to the secular throne of the Caesars.

However, Jesus' mention of a “kingdom” aroused Pilate's curiosity. Such a kingdom as Jesus meant had never been heard of by such a man as Pilate.

T. W. Manson, *On Paul and John*, p. 153, said of it, “He meant that it is not, as all the other world Empires are, the product of human skill, or courage, or ingenuity, or wickedness. It is not a human institution at all, but a Divine gift.”

Verse 37

Pilate did not understand what Jesus meant, but one thing was crystal clear: here was no seditionist.

“Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice . . .” This had its personal application to Pilate, who was not of the truth. His life-style, habits, political posture as Caesar's representative in that city, his willingness to sacrifice even the innocent to avoid any political damage to himself—all such things in Pilate prevented his acceptance of the Savior's words in their higher context or meaning. Despite this, his inherent cunning and political astuteness enabled him to see at a glance how crooked and groundless were the false charges of the Pharisees.

Verse 38a

Thus Pilate terminated the interview, not waiting for a reply. He needed no reply, because the truth was of no particular concern to him. He was far more interested in what was politically expedient.

Verse 38b

This was a verdict of innocence. At that moment Pilate should have dismissed the hearing and ordered the legions in the power of Antonio to disperse the mob; but he wilted before the venomous hatred of the mob demanding Jesus' death. The announcement of a verdict of innocence was another effort to release Jesus.

Verses 39-40

This was Pilate's third attempt to release Jesus, as more fully detailed in the synoptics; but it was thwarted by leaders who stirred up the people to demand Barabbas, who was a robber, instead of Jesus.

Their choice of a known revolutionary instead of Jesus was impossible of reconciliation with their avowed loyalty to Caesar. (Mark 15:7)

Chapter 19

This chapter continues the narrative of the trials and the ultimate triumph of the Jewish leaders over the stubborn will of Pilate, who under the duress of political blackmail and mob violence at last gave in to their will. It details the actual crucifixion, the affairs regarding the inscription, the disposition of the Lord's cloths, His provision for His mother, some of the last words, and the burial.

Verse 1

This was actually an effort by Pilate to substitute a lighter penalty for that of death (Luke 23:22), although there was nothing light about the type of scourging inflicted. Men were known to die under the lash; and one shudders to think of such punishment being inflicted on any human being, especially upon a man the governor had just declared to be innocent.

The horrible injustice of it was sickening. In post-apostolical times, there was a tendency to romanticize the role of Pilate in the crucifixion, viewing him as a helpless victim of circumstances imposed upon him by the Jews; but the glaring facts do not support any romantic view of this spineless procurator who ordered

the scourging of a man he knew to be innocent, and followed that by condemning Him to death.

The kind of man Pilate was, based solely upon what is in this chapter is enough to declare him worthy of the odium that fell upon his name. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 275, said, “Philo mentioned his corruption, outrage, robbery, insult, contumely, his indiscriminate and continuous murders, and his unceasing and vexatious cruelty.”

The synoptics leave an impression (but do not state it) that the scourging was part of the sentence of crucifixion; but John sets it in a different light, causing some to suppose there were two scourgings; but B. F. Westcott *Ibid.*, p. 268, said, “It is not to be supposed that the scourging was repeated . . . the passing references (in the synoptics) do not necessarily bear that meaning. There is no real discrepancy between the accounts.”

Pilate’s tactic failed. A taste of blood only intensified the sadistic hatred of Jesus’ enemies. Pilate had arbitrarily imposed the scourging of Jesus, supposing that such brutality might awaken a sense of humanity in his foes; but it failed.

Excavations in the old tower of Antonio, Pilate’s Praetorium have uncovered a truncated (short or cut off) column in a vaulted room, having no architectural connection with the building, and being exactly the kind of device to which criminals were tied for scourging.

Verse 2

It seems out of character that they could have been sufficiently motivated to perform the repulsive actions of this mockery. The crooked hand of Satan appears in these events, as in the equally repugnant mockery in the very palace of the high priest of Israel, they spat in His face, and beat Him, saying, “Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You.”

“Purple robe . . .” This was a three-color fabric of sufficient extravagance of design to suggest royalty, being, in all probability, red and blue on opposite edges, blended into purple in the middle, thus accounting for the variable descriptions of it as “crimson,” “scarlet,” or “purple.” These were the colors of

the veil of the temple and it was most appropriate that Christ should have borne the colors of it in His sufferings.

Verse 3

There is a spiritual mockery of Jesus more damnable even than this which appears in the text. We dare not judge our fellow mortals; but, time and again, we have discovered upon our own lips words of loyalty and devotion not fully consonant with our deeds.

Verse 4

The very fact of Pilate's again confronting the Jewish leaders exhibits his determination to release Jesus, his view apparently exhibits his determination to release Jesus, his view apparently having been that his brutal punishment of Jesus, if it could satisfy the leaders, was far better than crucifying Him; but he reckoned with consideration of the satanic hatred of Israel's leaders.

Verse 5

Albert Barnes, Notes on the New Testament, p. 368, ascribed the following meaning to Pilate's actions saying, "In all this suffering, He is meek and silent. Behold . . . this man that you accuse! He is brought forth that you may see that He is not guilty."

William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, II, p. 416, interpreted Pilate's meaning thus, "Look! The Man! Has He not suffered enough already? Is it really necessary to inflict any more punishment upon Him?"

Verse 6

This might be taken in two ways. It looks like a suggestion by Pilate that the Jews go ahead and crucify Jesus without a legal sentence, with the implied promise of the governor to look the other way. Had not Pilate himself just imposed a merciless scourging upon an innocent, and without any legal sentence? Perhaps he was saying, "Look, I have just shown you how I handle things like this. Why don't you do likewise? Why, all this bother trying to get a legal condemnation from me?"

However, Reynolds, Hendriksen, Hovey, and others view Pilate's remark differently. H. R. Reynolds, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 17, II, p. 418, wrote, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him; that is, if you dare. Go do your deed of blood by your own hands and take the responsibility for it; for I find no fault in Him. He thus derides their powerlessness and repeats His verdict of acquittal."

That Reynold's view is the better one seems proved by what immediately happened. Those evil men, so intent on Jesus' death had appeared; in fact, His innocence had been established; and, in that situation, those hypocrites had the choice of losing their quarry or producing a capital charge. They chose the latter and, in the next verse, gave the real reason why they condemned Him.

All kinds of excuses have been offered on behalf of those religious murderers to explain their so long concealment of their actual charge against Jesus; but the best explanation of it is that. In their hearts, they knew Christ's testimony under oath that He was "the Christ, the son of the Blessed" was the truth of God, and that they dreaded swearing in open court that it was false.

Verse 7

Well, there it was. All of Satan's efforts to get Jesus crucified for sedition, or as a trouble-maker, failed. Christ had, in this, at last accomplished the enlightenment of all men for all ages, who would thenceforth have His testimony under oath, and sealed with His blood, to the effect that He was the only begotten Son of God, the Divine Messiah, the Savior of the world and the world's only Redeemer. No wonder His enemies so stubbornly resisted letting the word out.

This verse gives the technical charge upon which Jesus was crucified. His sworn testimony was the truth, for He was indeed the Son of God; but the Jewish law to which the priests appealed made it a capital offense for one to claim to be the Divine Messiah, unless in truth He was so. (Leviticus 24:16) What Jesus swore was God's truth; their calling His testimony false was Satan's lie.

"Son of God . . ." as Jesus used this title, and as the Pharisees understood it, meant the same unique, Divine Son-ship believed in by Christians of all ages.

There is a lesser sense in which all believers are “sons of God,” but the meaning here is that of the unique, supernatural Son-ship of God’s only begotten. The action of the Jewish hierarchy in demanding the crucifixion of Jesus for claiming to be the Son of God shows that they fully understood all of the majestic overtones inherent in that precious title, SON OF GOD.

Thus, for the moment, and, ever afterward, men are confronted with the dilemma in Christ Jesus, there being no middle ground. He either was, or was not, what He claimed to be; and the way every soul answers that question determines the soul’s destiny.

Verse 8

Pilate had many fears, fearing for: his relations with Herod, his reputation with the emperor, the outbreak of violence in his city, the implications of his wife’s dream; and now, typical pagan that he was, this injection of Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God thoroughly moved him, but not toward any good conclusion.

H. R. Reynolds, *op. cit.*, II, p. 419, wrote that Pilate may have believed that, “The wondrous Being before him was enshrouded in a mystery of supernatural portent that he could not fathom, and before whom he trembled.”

Verse 9

Jesus did not reply because

1. He knew that Pilate would not stand against the hierarchy, and
2. His silence allowed the Pharisees’ testimony concerning His claim to be the Son of God to stand unchallenged.

David Lipscomb, *A commentary on the Gospel; of John*, p. 293, noted, “His silence was answer enough—that if He did not make that claim, He certainly would have denied it.”

Verse 10

Pilate was astounded at Jesus’ silence. His words indicate near belief that any man could so behave in his presence. His words show how unspiritual, selfish, proud, and arrogant was the heart within him. Such a misjudgment of His

“power” by Pilate deserved a reply from the Master; and Jesus promptly delivered it.

Verse 11

Jesus here pointed to that doctrine which was elaborated at a later time by Paul (Romans 13:iff), regarding the state and civil authority as God-ordained.

Pilate’s being the Procurator that year was not Pilate’s sole achievement, despite his arrogant assumption that it was; but God had raised him up, no less than Esther at another time, ”for such a time as this.”

“The greater sin . . .” The high priest of Israel was the person guilty of greater sin, a greater sin shared by all who had aided and abetted that crime of the centuries; but, in what way was their sin greater than Pilate’s?

B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 270, explained it, “Pilate was guilty of using wrongfully the civil power. The high priest was doubly guilty in using a higher (spiritual) power and in transgressing his legitimate rules of action. By appealing to a heathen power to execute an unjust sentence on Christ he had sinned against God by unfaithfulness and by unrighteousness.”

“Unless it had been given you from above . . .” Pilate’s power of continuation in office was directly from God and was exercised only under God’s permission.

The tiniest display of Jesus’ supernatural power could have turned Pilate into putty in Jesus’ hands. The procurator was already frightened, and the silence of Jesus recorded in the previous verse was probably for the purpose of permitting him to act in character, rather than as a judge frightened out of his wits. It was here that Satan played out his last tactic in the strategy of inducing Jesus to abandon the purpose of redemption by refusing to die on the cross. Pilate, in this scene, actually seemed to plead with Jesus to do something that would enable him to deny the religious leaders the sentence they wanted. The Lord was silent. He would not resort to any miracle to avoid crucifixion.

Verse 12

This was vicious political blackmail. If Pilate would not do their will, they would prefer charges against him before Caesar, charges which both Pilate and

they themselves knew to be false; but also known to both was the fact that such charges, whether true or false, could blast the procurator out of office. Pilate moved at once to crucify the Lord, caving in completely before the unscrupulous scoundrels before him.

Verse 13

The seat mentioned here was a stone platform in the courtyard of the Praetorians (bodyguards), or near the adjacent tower of Antonio. Upon that judgment-seat, Pilate, the all-powerful deputy of Caesar, seated himself and ordered the innocent Christ before him for sentencing.

Verse 14

“The Preparation . . .” This was the day before the Passover which began that night at sunset.

“The sixth hour . . .” Since this was an official Roman event, the time was Roman time, making this 6:00 A. M.

“Behold your King! . . .” Very well, Pilate seems to have concluded; if the Jews would blackmail Him as an enemy of Caesar, he would prove his loyalty by crucifying the Jews’ King! Pilate ordered the crucifixion.

Verse 15

Pilate here maneuvered the chief priests in a manner that enraged them and drove them to a blind fury. “Shall I crucify your King?” was his mocking taunt; but their blindness to the consequences of what they were doing was so complete that in their irrational rage they even renounced God Himself.

“We have no king but Caesar . . .” It was just as well that they said this, for in crucifying Christ they had indeed renounced the Father.

Where was all the professed devotion of those people for God as their only King? That they hated Caesar was known to all. That they claimed God as their true king was the major thesis of the whole history of Israel; but here they were shouting before the pagan governor: “We have no king but Caesar . . .”

Caesar would crucify 30,000 of their young men on the walls of ruined Jerusalem within a generation (at the siege in 70 A.D.). Caesar would expel them from Rome; Caesar would perpetrate countless in-justices and atrocities upon them; God had never done anything except love them, bear them, and protect them throughout their wretched history; but now hear them: “We have no king but Caesar . . .!” What an avalanche of woe this unhappy people loosed upon themselves by their rejection of the Lord!

Alvah Hovey, Commentary on John, p. 379, wrote, “We are thankful that it was not the whole multitude that made this profession, but only the chief priests They who glorified in the theocracy and boasted that “they were never in bondage to any man” (8:33)—they confess that Caesar is their only king.”

Verse 16

“Them . . .” has reference to the chief priests. Yes, Pilate provided the soldiers and a centurion to command the detail; but he put those evil priests squarely in charge of the crucifixion.

Pilate had vainly tried to avoid what he knew was an injustice; but there was no way that such a man as he could avoid doing what, in the last analysis, he held to be expedient to the maintenance of his political power. He hated the whole Jewish nation; and what matter to him was it, if an innocent was put to death? The chief priests too must have thought the whole business was finished. God was out of it, as far as they were concerned; they had shouted their allegiance to Caesar only; but history held some surprises for them also.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 422, said, “They forgot, however, that God as King of the universe was not through with them. In a certain sense, he was still their King. Indescribable punishments were not far away. In winning this battle, they had lost the war.”

There is no evidence that the chief priests actually supervised the crucifixion, but in a sense, it was their act. They demanded it and were present for the gory execution of the sentence, even adding insulting taunts of the Holy Savior on the cross itself!

Verse 17

This verse is all that John related of the Via Dolorosa. “Golgotha . . .” The place of the skull was near the city but outside the walls, but any certainty as to the exact location is precarious. The favored location for many is the hill which strikingly resembles a death’s-head, and which is always pointed out to visitors in the Holy City.

Verses 18-19

The full inscription actually had ten words, thus: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS, as indicated by a composite of all four gospel accounts.

Matthew recorded eight of the ten, omitting “of Nazareth.”

Mark gave the last five words, which appear in all four gospels.

Luke omitted “Jesus of Nazareth,” giving the other seven.

John gives us eight of the ten words, omitting only the words, “this is.”

Verse 20

The roads to the city were choked with thousands traveling to the Holy city for Passover; and it must have been a matter of widespread consternation when the entire city was filled with buzzing conversation about the “King of the Jews” being crucified just outside the city. Intended by Pilate as a sadistic joke and as a final slap in the face of the priests, the inscription was nevertheless the truth of God!

Verses 21-22

“The King of the Jews . . .” The diabolical murder of Jesus backfired upon the perpetrators of it. Events were not turning out at all as they had planned. Pilate’s inscription was being painted in blood upon every conscience; and the shocking truth of the inscription was a double-barreled blast against everything the priests wanted. The inscription shouted two overwhelming facts to the crowds entering the city:

- (1) Jesus of Nazareth was the King of the Jews, and
- (2) the Romans had crucified Him.

“The chief priests . . .” This indicates that the hierarchy attached a great deal of importance to the inscription, indicating also a much greater perception on their part in this matter than they had exhibited in so many other things. The great hour of their influence, however, had slipped away. No longer would a frightened and vacillating governor bend to their desires; the tables were turned.

From that hour, history hardened around the deeds of the day, and there could be no alteration of them.

“What I have written I have written . . .” What is done is done. The pagan palace of the procurator must have resounded that day with many a ribald laugh—for a while, that is; because the day was not over; and before it ended, the sun would stop shining; the veil of the temple would fall asunder; an explosive earthquake would occur; and a dreadful apprehension would fall upon the city of the great King. (Matthew 5:35)

Verses 23-24

“The soldiers . . .” There were four of them, a quaternion. A centurion was in charge. They did not wait for Jesus to die but went about dividing up His cloths as if He were already dead.

“The coat . . .” may be rendered “tunic”. This was the vesture, or undergarment, which formed a usual part of the clothing of that day.

This is one of the most astounding things in the Bible. The cloths of Jesus! Can anyone tell what Napoleon was wearing when he died, or what Franklin D. Roosevelt had on when he was stricken, and how the garments were made and what became of them?

Concerning the seamless vesture, Earnest W. Saunders, *John Celebrates the Gospel*, p. 149, said, “It was the type of garment worn by the high priest. (Leviticus 16:4). Christ is the true high priest whose death is the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.”

“That the Scriptures might be fulfilled . . .” The soldiers did not consciously fulfill prophecy in their disposal of the clothing; but this was a case of the all-

powerful Providence accomplishing through evil or indifferent men the fulfillment of Divine prophecy.

Verse 25

“His mother’s sister. . .” was Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of James and John, according to B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 276, thus making James and John cousins of Jesus, he wrote, “This connection of St. John with the mother of the Lord helps explain the incident which follows. The omission of the name of Salome, on this supposition, falls in with John’s usage as to his brother and to himself.”

Verses 26-27

This is one of the seven utterances from the cross; and, the seven make an entire sequence in their own right and deserve treatment together.

“From that hour . . .” is not a statement that within sixty minutes John took Mary to his own home, but means rather that from the authority conveyed in that hour the future residence of the blessed Mary was with the beloved John.

Jesus did not here address his mother as “Mother of God,” a title which developed long afterward; and regardless of the intentions of the people using it, it is unscriptural, inappropriate, and, in a sense, even idolatrous.

Verse 28

This does not mean that Jesus said, “I thirst” in order to fulfill prophecy. As B. F. Westcott, *Ibid.*, p. 277, said, “The fulfillment of Scripture was the object which the Lord had in view, but there was a necessary correspondence between His acts and the Divine foreshowing of them.”

Verse 29

There is no way that any person, except an eyewitness, would have filled this account with so many specific details. The words before us are clearly the result of a vivid mental picture in the mind of the narrator of what he had seen. The vessel full of vinegar, the sponge, the very kind of stick used to lift it to the Lord’s mouth.

John here spontaneously described it as “hyssop,” identified with the caper plant, and usually some three to four feet long.

Verse 30

The vessel of vinegar was probably the property of the soldiers in charge of the crucifixion, something they had probably brought along for refreshment during the long watch. It was not the product marketed under that label today, but the thin sour wine provided by the Roman army as the soldier’s daily rations. (Luke 23:36)

It is reasonable to infer that one of the soldiers near the end, performed this act of mercy for our Lord. It is not necessary to infer that Jesus drank the proffered vinegar. He had promised not to drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when He would drink it new with them in the kingdom of God. (Matthew 26:29)

The sour wine offered by the soldier was not new; the kingdom had not begun; and it was not a disciple who offered it. (Matthew 27:34)

Verse 31

This verse, beyond all others in the New Testament, casts doubt on the widely accepted view that Christ was crucified on Friday. True, He was crucified on the day of Preparation, the day before the Sabbath; but John was careful to point out that the ordinary Sabbath was not meant, but rather the high day (also a Sabbath, whatever day of the week it was) which always initiated the Passover celebration.

“That their legs might be broken . . .” The hierarchy had hastily contrived the crucifixion without regard to the approaching high Sabbath, and they were suddenly embarrassed by the prospect of the victims remaining upon the crosses upon the holy day, which in their view would have desecrated it. The brutal *coup de grace* was given by smashing the leg bones with a massive hammer and had the effect of hastening death. (Psalm 34:20 declared flatly the Messiah’s bones would not be broken, and there is a possibility that it was their purpose to thwart the fulfillment of that Divine prophecy.)

If they could have succeeded, they might have urged, afterward, that Jesus could not have been the Messiah, because His legs had been broken.

Christ was the great antitype of the paschal lamb, fulfilling the type in every conceivable manner. He died at the very moment the lambs were being slain for the Passover; and no bones of Him were broken, despite the governor's specific orders, which were disobeyed.

Verses 32-34

Two prophecies regarding Jesus were fulfilled in this,

1. that no bone of Him should be broken (Psalm 34:20), and
2. that "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10).

The soldiers disobeyed one set of orders to fulfill the first, and instituted orders without any to fulfill the second. Soldiers in a disciplined army would not have followed such a pattern of behavior one in a million events. Who but God was commanding that detail of soldiers?

"There came out blood and water . . ." B. F. Westcott. *Ibid.*, p. 279, pointed out, "The separation of the blood into its constituent parts is a process of corruption."

The father did not permit the Holy One to see corruption. (Psalm 16:10)

John attached the greatest importance to this phenomenon, and also wrote, "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood." (1 John 5:6)

The Ante-Nicene writers elaborated all kinds of fanciful teachings based on this occurrence, most of them finding a suggestion of the two baptisms (as they viewed it) of blood for the martyrs and water for all Christians.

The most reasonable interpretations, as viewed here are those of Augustine and Leo as follows: B.F. Westcott, *Ibid.*, p. 286 wrote: "The sleep of the man (Adam) was the death of Christ; for when He hung lifeless on the cross, His side was pierced by the spear, and thence flowed forth the blood and water, which

we know to be the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper), by which the church, the antitype of Eve, is built up."

"When the side of the Crucified was opened by the soldier's spear, let the impugner of Christ's person understand whence flowed the blood and the water, that the church of God might be refreshed both by the laver (baptism) and the cup (the Lord's supper)"

"Sacraments . . ." The so-called seven sacraments exhibit only two with Greek names (baptism and the Lord's Supper), indicating that the other five are not mentioned in the Greek New Testament and are therefore excluded from apostolic Christianity.

"I am poured out like water . . ." from Psalm 22:14 was also fulfilled by the event mentioned in this verse.

The great ordinances of the faith, baptism and the Lord's Supper, typified by this issue from the side of Jesus, made it appropriate to observe that, in a sense, the church itself thus came from Jesus' side, as Eve, the type of the church, came from Adam's side; and, as the guilt (through the woman) came out of Adam's side, so salvation came out of the side of the Second Adam (Christ).

Verses 35-37

"And he who has seen has borne witness . . ." John here refers to himself. John's use of the perfect tense makes it certain that the reference is to himself.

Verse 38

John seems to have introduced Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, a moment later, to demonstrate that weak and timid faith on their part had come dramatically out into the open on this occasion. Also, there may have been a special reason for mentioning Joseph.

Alan Richardson, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 204, said, "The apostolic church saw in the action of Joseph the fulfillment of an Old Testament type. Joseph had begged permission of Pharaoh to bury the body of the old Israel (Jacob). (Genesis 50:4-6)

Verse 39

Alan Richardson, *Ibid.*, p. 205, also supposed that the purpose of citing the participation of Nicodemus was that of introducing “independent evidence—that, perhaps, of a Sanhedrin member—of the fact that Jesus really died, as against Gnostic theories of resuscitation and Jewish accusations of fraud on the part of the disciples.”

Verse 40

Throughout John, there appears the most exact and intimate knowledge of Jewish customs, proving that the author could have been none other than a Jew.

“Linen cloths . . .” The word “cloths” does not mean “cloths,” nor “a linen cloth,” such as was mentioned by all three synoptics. According to B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

CONCERNING THE CLOTHS

Westcott noted, “The exact word for cloths is the diminutive form which is used in Greek medical writings for bandages. This distinguishes these swathes in which the body was bound from the linen cloth mentioned by the other evangelists.”

Notice, the total record of all four gospels:

Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. (Matthew 27:59)

Joseph brought a linen cloth, and taking Him down, wound Him in the linen cloth. (Mark 15:46)

Joseph took the body down and wrapped it in a linen cloth. (Luke 23:53)

Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices. (John 19:40)

Joseph in the lead, and joined by Nicodemus a little later, after the latter had bought spices, received Pilate’s permission to take the body. Did they wrap, wind, or bind the body with that linen cloth? They did all three.

Did they keep that linen cloth in one place while that was done? Certainly not! They first cut it into swathes, as John said, making medical bandages of the

type one can still see on the body of the old Israel himself in the Cave of Machpelah!

The linen cloth was first reduced to medical type bandages used in winding up the bodies of the dead. Those who seek such a contradiction in God's word must seek it elsewhere.

Verse 41

Thus the Second Adam slept in a garden, associating the redemption of the race with a garden, even as the fall of the first Adam had occurred in a garden. Matthew identified the tomb as Joseph's, noted that it was new, hewn out of rock, and that it was closed by a great stone.

Luke recorded that it was hewn out of rock and that no man had ever lain in it.

John supplied the details that it was in a garden and that no one had ever lain in it.

TWO GRAVES OF JESUS

1. It was prophesied of Messiah that "they made His grave with the wicked (plural) and with the rich (singular) in His death." (Isaiah 53:9) Matthew's identification of Joseph as a rich man, together with the description of the garden tomb itself, makes it clear that the second clause of the prophecy was fulfilled by the burial in Joseph's tomb.

The soldiers who carried out the execution certainly provided the graves for all three men who were crucified, that being a part of their duty. Not knowing of the efforts and intentions of Joseph and Nicodemus, and having had all day in which to do it, they had without any doubt at all provided three graves for the condemned, including of course, a grave for Jesus. That grave was with the wicked (plural), fulfilling the prophecy exactly.

That Jesus never slept in the grave made by the soldiers did not keep it from being the one "they" made for Him.

2. "In which no one had yet been laid . . ." is important for two considerations:

- (A) Jesus' body never came in contact with corruption; and
- (B) it removed any possibility that His resurrection might have been attributed to His body's having come in contact with the bones of a prophet. The Old Testament records such a miracle. (2 Kings 13:21)

3. This detailed description of the grave where Jesus was buried is important also as a refutation of the satanically inspired slander of the priests to the effect that His disciples had stolen the body. The "great stone" was so large that several women freely admitted that all of them together would never have been able to roll it away. (Mark 16:3)

Also, the particular type of rock-hewn sepulcher described in the gospels facilitated the official sealing of the grave which was ordered by the governor. (Matthew 27:62)

Verse 42

"Preparation . . ." The Preparation had almost expired, and with sunset the high Sabbath would begin, leaving no time to bury the Lord in a distant tomb, which might have required travel after sunset; and such a description of the Sabbath would have precipitated ugly action by the hierarchy. God, however, had providentially arranged a tomb near at hand, the priceless sepulcher of Joseph who gave it to the Lord.

Speculation as to whether this was intended as a permanent burial place of Jesus is preempted by the fact that He needed it only three days and three nights. The thought recurs that no one ever gave anything to the Lord without receiving it again, multiplied and enriched.

When the time came to bury Joseph, the tomb was still his, enriched and made holy by the knowledge that from it the Christ had risen from the dead. Similarly, the little lad who gave his basket of loaves and fishes was certainly the legal owner of the twelve baskets of fragments left over. What is given to Christ is saved; all else is lost.

“They laid Jesus there . . .” B. W. Johnson, the *New Testament Commentary*, p. 291, said, “How much pathos in the words, “There they laid Jesus.” In the tomb of Jesus the Jews supposed His works to be buried forever . . . In it, had He not risen, would have been buried the gospel, Christian civilization, and the hope of the world. The future of the world was sleeping in the tomb.”

The wrapping of the body had been done after the manner associated with the burial of the most distinguished leaders of the Jews. “After the manner of the Jews to bury . . .” indicates that the sacred body was not mutilated, as in Egyptian burial customs.

Arno C. Gaebelin, *The Gospel of John*, p. 379, observed, “What true believer need fear the grave now? Solemn as is the thought of our last narrow bed, we must never forget that it is the place where the Lord lay.”

As Paul exclaimed, “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

CHAPTER 20

Here John outlined the evidence upon which he himself accepted the resurrection of Christ as a historical fact. He went back to the very moment when he himself first believed, and recounted in the most amazing detail exactly the evidences he had seen and which first overwhelmed his soul with the certainty that Jesus was risen from the dead. That dawn of belief in his heart is recorded in verses 1-10.

He next appealed to the testimony of Mary Magdalene (verses 11-18), out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils; and the allegation that any false writer would ever have ascribed such a choice of witness to him whom the Lord made the guardian of his mother transgresses the bounds of credibility.

Other testimonies offered in this chapter are the appearance of the eleven, Thomas absent (verses 19-25), and the appearance of the eleven, Thomas present (verses 26-29).

The last two verses give the statement of John's purpose in writing the gospel, and the added comment that the things recorded are but a fragment of the massive mountain of evidence that might have been presented but was omitted. If this gospel had ended with chapter 19, there would have been no gospel. Christ in the grave was not good news; and had He remained in the grave, there could have been no Christianity. Everything depended upon the physical resurrection of Christ. IF the resurrection did not occur:

The preaching of the apostles is vain;

The faith of all Christians is vain;

The apostles are false witnesses;

All men are still in their sins;

The dead in Christ have perished. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

Regarding the somber impact of the dead Savior, G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 306, wrote, "He was dead. His enemies thought they were done with Him, and they were glad. His friends thought he was done for, and they were sad. But heaven watching was preparing the music that should ring around the world declaring the defeat of evil, the mastery of sin, and the ransom of the race."

There is a repeated threefold motif in this chapter:

1. John's faith was inspired by three things: the stone's removal, the empty tomb, and the undisturbed grave cloths (verses 1-10).
2. The testimony of three individuals is given; that of John, of Mary Magdalene, and of Thomas.
3. Three appearances of Christ are noted: His appearances to Mary Magdalene, to the eleven (Thomas absent), and to the eleven (Thomas present).

Verse 1

"On the first day of the week . . ." The custom of Christian assemblies on Sunday received initiation and continuity from the events of this chapter.

“Mary Magdalene . . .” This was the woman out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons and should not be confused with the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears in the house of Simon the Pharisee.

“While it was still dark . . .” Mark’s mention of the coming of several women, including Mary Magdalene, to the tomb, “after the sun had risen” refers to another visit to the tomb, Mary Magdalene having made at least two trips to the sepulcher, and probably three as follows:

1. the first trip, as recorded here, while it was still dark,
2. the second when she followed Peter and John (whom she quickly notified) and who ran on ahead of her to the tomb, and
3. when she came with the other women bringing the spices after the sun was risen.

It is likely that hundreds, or even thousands, visited the empty tomb that day, as soon as it was discovered. Would not the hierarchy have investigated, especially after the report of the guard whom they bribed to lie about what happened?

These reflections bring us to consider the fact that our Lord’s resurrection is the central, pivotal fact of our holy religion. It occurred as the historical gospels affirm, or it did not; and, if it did not occur, there is no Christianity. So called Modernism is Christianity denied; and concerning this, Arno C. Gaebelin, *The gospel of John*, p. 379, said, “Modernists, like other infidels, charge the sacred records with being contradictory. While there are difficulties, they are not contradictions, such as the Modernists claim them to be. The different accounts can be harmonized; and, instead of being marks of error, or deception, these different accounts bear witness to their genuineness and trustworthiness.”

As soon as Mary Magdalene saw that the stone was removed, she correctly concluded that the body was not there, although her supposition that men had removed it was incorrect. She went at once and notified Peter and John. All this happened while it was still dark.

Verse 2

Several things of consequence come to light in this verse. First, John deferred to the leadership of Peter, mentioning him first, thus confounding the theory of the gospel's being anti-Petrine. Not only was Peter mentioned first here, "but the other disciples whom Jesus loved" makes it apparent that the same designation belonged to Peter.

Also, it is important to note that the apostles had come back together again after being scattered.

"We . . ." Mary Magdalene's use of the plural pronoun suggests that she had asked others where the body was but had received no information.

Verse 3

Even after John's outrunning Peter and reaching the scene first, it was Peter who first entered the grave.

Verse 4

John's outrunning Peter should have been expected, as Peter was much the older.

Verse 5

"He saw the linen wrappings . . ." Those linen wrappings remained in the exact position as if the Lord had still been wound therein. The impact on John was the same as if he had seen the linen wrappings walking!

The position of those medical bandages in which the body was wrapped absolutely demanded the conclusion that Jesus has risen through them, even as He had risen through the tomb, leaving them undisturbed, as if He had still been in them.

The miracle of those undisturbed wrappings was the clincher in John's mind, proving that Jesus had risen from the dead. They had not been ripped off; and, if any man had taken them off, it would have been impossible to have restored their position.

Even the napkin, to be mentioned later, still held the position it had when Jesus' head was in it. It had not even collapsed! It should be remembered that the angel who (presumably) rolled the stone away from the grave did so, not to let the Lord out, but to let witnesses in. He rose through the tomb exactly as He did through the bandages.

Verse 6

The certain implication of this astounding narration is that Jesus had risen through, the winding shroud of bandages, napkins and all, leaving behind the positive and undeniable evidence of His supernatural triumph over death.

Verse 7

A. T. Robertson, *Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 310, noted that the verb "rolled up" does not mean merely to compress into a roll, but to "wrap in." This supported the interpretation advocated here. The napkin around the head would not have connected with the winding shroud.

Verse 8

This is the climax of the whole paragraph regarding the cloths. It resulted in John's everlasting faith that Jesus had risen from the dead.

There were three elements of this convincing sign: the open grave, the absence of the body, and the undisturbed linen cloths. As for the reason why the stone was removed (supernaturally), it cannot be viewed as a means of letting the Lord out, but as a means of letting His disciples in for the purpose of beholding and being convinced of His resurrection.

Verses 9-10

Jesus had repeatedly prophesied His resurrection; but till that moment they had not comprehended that He would actually come out of the grave. Till that moment they did not really know it. The impact of this miracle was great enough to overcome all prior unbelief. They did not initiate a search for the body; they now knew He was alive!

Verse 11

Mary did not leave the tomb, as did Peter and John, but remained there to weep. It is not known if she was alone, or what time of day this occurred.

Verse 12

Mary Magdalene's seeing two angels and her conversation with those celestial beings were introduced by John as preliminary to the far greater wonder of the appearance of the Lord Himself to this grief-stricken woman who loved the Savior and had come to water His grave with her tears. No wonder, then, that God sent angels to question her grief, and whose attitude or movement directed her attention to the Lord Himself.

Verse 13

Mary Magdalene, like Peter and John earlier, despite all that Jesus had taught, was another who had never really believed in the resurrection.

The inclusion of such facts by John shows how impossible and preposterous was the falsehood that the Lord's disciples stole His body for purposes of pretending a resurrection had occurred. On the contrary, they hardly believed it after the fact, being singularly blind to it, until absolute and overwhelming proof of it enlightened them, Matthew recording the launching of the lie that the apostles stole the body (Matthew 28:-11-13); and it may be assumed that the falsehood was still being repeated in John's time.

"Woman, why are you weeping . . ." The victory has been won, Satan crushed, death vanquished, and salvation for humanity made possible; but Mary, as yet, did not know it. Her devotion was rewarded by the very first appearance of our Lord after the resurrection.

"Because they had taken away my Lord . . ." Stupefied by grief, Mary apparently took no note of the angels. No one who interpolates, forger, redactor, or falsifier could ever have come up with a thing like this. Two mighty angels from heaven opened up a conversation with weeping Mary; but she only made the necessary reply and turned away!

Verse 14

Why did not Mary inquire of the angels where the body lay? Was there something in their look, attitude, or actions which directed her attention to one whom she supposed to be the gardener?

“Did not know that it was Jesus . . .” What an insight is this into the fact of mankind’s inability to recognize that which is best and highest; nor is this exceptional.

And of men today, are we any more able than they to know Him? Concerning the reasons why men do not recognize the Lord:

1. some, like Mary, are blinded by grief;
2. some are blinded by prejudice and preconceived notions, as were the leaders in Jerusalem;
3. some are blinded by Satan, (2 Corinthians 4:4); and
4. some are blinded by the lowliness of our Savior’s birth and life, as was Nathaniel. (John 1:46)

Verse 15

Mary’s failure to recognize the Lord is not a problem, for her attention was focused inwardly upon her own grief, from which not even the angels of God could divert it.

“Whom are you seeking? . . .” Some power beyond herself was required to break her soul out of the power of the smothering grief that overwhelmed her; and that power Jesus at once provided.

Verse 16

The personal greeting of Jesus opened her eyes and thrilled her heart with recognition, and she at once exclaimed, “Rabboni,” (Teacher) using the term she had often used before His death.

“She turned . . .” indicates that until the Lord used her name, she had not actually been looking at Him.

Mary's response to the sudden knowledge that the Lord was indeed risen from the dead, standing before her, and calling her by name, was spontaneous and natural. She began at once either to embrace Him or to fall at His feet and clasp them to herself.

Verse 17

Although forbidden to touch the Lord, Mary nevertheless was granted the far more wonderful privilege of telling the good news of His resurrection and of announcing to them the forthcoming ascension.

“Stop clinging to Me . . .” The worship of Jesus does not seem to have been the purpose of Mary in that first spontaneous greeting. There was no inherent refusal of Jesus to be touched by mortals after the resurrection, because He specifically invited Thomas to do so (20:27); and He invited all the apostles to “touch” Him. (Luke 24:39)

The Lord's permission to touch Him, denied in one instance and granted in another, cannot logically be viewed as a “discrepancy. G. Campbell Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 314, seems to shed some further light on the question saying, “He did not say, “Touch Me not.” It is unfortunate how that rendition misses the true meaning. The Revised Version margin reads, “Take not hold of Me.”

Verse 18

It should not be overlooked that to Mary came the unique honor of being first told of the ascension to the Father. She also conveyed the glorious message of His resurrection, not merely of an empty grave, but of the living Savior!

“Announcing to the disciples . . .” these are significant words. Peter had denied Him, and all had fled during the crucifixion; but the Lord unhesitatingly addressed them as His “brethren.” They had then entered upon their new status, henceforth being Christ's brothers, joint heirs with Christ of eternal life and partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Verse 19

“The first day of the week . . .” This was already pin-pointed as the time of the events (verse 1), and therefore the repetition of this fact is emphatic. Chief

among the days of the week is Sunday, not Saturday; and this profound change began the day our Lord rose from the dead and met with His disciples.

“When therefore it was evening . . .” indicates that the old Jewish method of reckoning days is over with. There can be little doubt that this appearance behind closed doors took place after sundown. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel; According to St. John*, p. 294, noted, “The hour was evidently late, about 8:00 P. M. Time must be allowed for the return of the disciples from Emmaus, who were not likely to leave Jerusalem till after the evening prayer. (Acts 3:1)

Despite the lateness of the hour, it was still the first day of the week; and John, writing so long after the events, did not pause to explain a change which had been so long in effect.

This was the third, fourth, or even the fifth appearance of Jesus on this day. He had already appeared to Mary Magdalene (10:16), to a group of women (Matthew 28:9), to those on Emmaus Road (Luke 24:31) and especially to Simon Peter (Luke 24:34). The apostles had gathered together, perhaps in that same upper room where they had met before.

“The doors were shut . . . for fear of the Jews . . .” Their fears were natural. They had seen their enemies in action and knew that no mercy, restraint, caution, or even honesty could be counted upon to temper the hatred of the Sadducees and Pharisees if they decided to move against them as they had moved against the Lord.

Jesus appeared to the disciples without the necessity of the doors’ being opened. B. F. Westcott, *Ibid.* said, “The clause (when the doors were shut) can only have added to mark the miraculous appearance of our Lord.”

The Lord’s physical body, actual as it was, was not subject to ordinary mortal limitations. This appearance provided positive and infallible evidence of the resurrection; the identification of Jesus was complete and undeniable; He was the one and the same person they had been crucified and buried three days previously. This is the fact that crushed the head of Satan, set the apostles on fire with holy zeal, and sent them shouting down the ages, “He is risen! He is risen!”

“Peace be with you . . .” These were the last words Jesus had spoken, perhaps in that very room, when He went forth to endure the agony, arraignment, trials, mockery, and crucifixion. His greeting by the same words in this new context was a shout of victory, a declaration of confidence, and an outpouring of blessing upon the disciples.

Verse 20

Christ showed them also the wounds in His feet and ate a piece of broiled fish in their presence. (Luke 24:36-43) He asked them to handle His body and to be fully convinced of His reality, thus fortifying them forever against any thought that they had merely seen a vision of Him, or that His presence was just a spiritual manifestation.

“Rejoiced when they saw the Lord . . .” This appearance before twelve men (including the two from Emmaus) was authentic and convincing; and they who saw it never wavered or doubted afterward.

Verse 21

“Peace be with you . . .” By this repetition Jesus brought them back to their responsibilities, which they had tended to forget during the previous sorrowful days.

“I also send you . . .” This has all the force of the great commission. As God had sent Jesus, so He sent them (the disciples).

Verse 22

Jesus had promised the apostles that after He went away He would send the Holy Spirit, hence His action here. (16:7ff) God’s (and Christ’s) sending of the Holy Spirit is a continuous thing, being done constantly in all generations, and to benefit each new recipient of salvation.

Jesus’ appearance in this verse as conveyor of the Spirit is no contradiction of the fact that Jesus sends the Spirit from heaven, as on Pentecost.

Verse 23

Here (as in Matthew 18:18) this authority to forgive or withhold forgiveness of sins was not restricted to Peter but belonged to all of the apostles.

Verse 24

Thomas' absence was a tragic loss to him, and what was true of him is true of all Christians in a spiritual sense. He was absent from the assembly, and thus he failed to see the Lord and receive His blessing.

Absence from Christian worship quickly moves a believer into a posture of doubt and unbelief.

“Didymus” means “twin.”

Verse 25

Eight days (Sunday to Sunday) elapsed between the two appearances with Thomas absent and Thomas present; and during that period he found his way back to the group. He had once affirmed that he would die with the Lord (11:16); but, like the others, he had failed. However, he came back, and that is what counts.

He came back, and Jesus came back to meet him. Jesus came back to the man who came back; and therein is a promise of hope for all who will return to the Master.

Verse 26

To this point all was exactly the same as before; the disciples within, the doors shut, but with this difference: Thomas was present. Perhaps they were wondering if the Lord would return; and sure enough He did. Again, He appeared through closed doors that had not opened.

Verse 27

The overwhelming drama of this is worthy of the Son of God Himself and His blessed apostles; and one cannot but reflect upon the poverty of the church of all ages which would have been sustained had not John the apostle provided this record of what happened.

“Reach here your finger . . . My hands . . .” Neither Christ nor His religion has anything to hide, nothing to conceal or cover up, no issues to avoid or problems to evade.

To every unbeliever of all ages, the challenge of the risen Christ still thunders across centuries and millennia: investigate! Test the evidence; make your own examination of the facts; and be not faithless but believing.

This gives the lie to the satanic falsehood that knowledge leads to unbelief. It is the opposite. Ignorance leads to unbelief, as do prejudice, sin, and rebellion in the heart.

Thomas is often called “the doubter.” The Lord did not refer to Thomas as a doubter, but as an unbeliever.

Verse 28

Thomas’ confession ranks among the greatest ever made, being one of the ten New Testament passages which declare categorically that Christ is God. This pinnacle of the sustaining witness of that theme is inherent in the fact that even an apostle who at first would not believe came back to confess, “MY Lord and my God.”

Verse 29

It was absolutely necessary that Thomas’ unbelief be removed, and the dramatic and sensational manner in which Jesus removed it had the desired effect; but Jesus thought of the future millions whose faith would have to depend upon the very word of those apostles whose testimony Thomas had refused.

One’s own heart must speak to him as the sacred chapters of the New Testament are read. The glorious testimony is all there, but, in the last analysis, it is human testimony. In the word of God? Certainly, but conveyed in earthen vessels.

Verses 30-31

This is the statement of the purpose of John, every line in the gospel having been related to the purpose in view here. John never intended his gospels

merely another biography of Christ. He consciously omitted much material found in the synoptics and introduced a wealth of material found nowhere else, intimate, personal things which only he could relate and also material of another kind, such as that relating to the resurrection of Lazarus and the healing of the man born blind.

Can any truly thoughtful student of the word of God imagine that any of the holy gospels, or even all of them together, contained anything more than a brief resume of the entire four years of Jesus' world-shaking ministry? It requires a book ten times as large as the whole New Testament to record the history of a six-months campaign for the office of president; and to suppose that the gospels are any kind of exhaustive record of all that Jesus did is foolish.

All the gospels were actually designed by the Holy Spirit, and the omissions, as well as the inclusions, were purposeful, that purpose being the one announced here at the close of this principal section of the gospel of John.

This chapter concluded John's proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the whole gospel was the presentation and proof of Jesus as God come in human form.

No grave could hold the Lord of Life!

CHAPTER 21

Chapter 20:30-31 could have been used by John as a conclusion, but he did not so use them. Chapter 21 is a part of the genuine gospel. Based upon the material presented, this chapter had the following design.

1. It showed that Peter's denial was forgiven.
2. A tradition had developed in the first century to the effect that Jesus would appear in His second coming before John died.
3. He answered the question on why this or that particular event in Jesus life had not been recorded, by noting the impossibility of recording all that Christ did.

4. This chapter is also, in a sense, the sending forth of the apostles on their world-wide mission.

A. M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 191, remarked, "A Gospel as we know it does not end simply with an appearance or appearances of His disciples for their future work. John 21 is such a commission."

Verse 1

"After these things . . ." is a connective but does not indicate any definite length of time.

"Jesus manifested Himself . . ." It should be noted that Jesus' appearances were always on His own choosing, and not of His disciples.

Verse 2

"The sons of Zebedee . . ." were James and John, the author of this gospel, their names being omitted because of the reticence this author had for naming himself. It is not surprising that they were in Galilee, for there the Lord had promised to meet them. (Matthew 28:7, 10)

Verse 3

The apostles were not ready yet for their world-wide mission. The shock of events had been too great, and the events of this chapter form a part of the process of reorientation which they needed prior to Pentecost.

Peter did not say that he was again going into the fishing business, but that he was going fishing. Perhaps their attitude was that of one who might say, "Look, I'm going fishing and think this thing over."

Significantly, however, the old ways had lost their charm. It was a singularly frustrating night on the lake. They caught nothing. No doubt John intended that men should see the spiritual import of this. After one has followed the Lord, the old life-style loses all of its power to satisfy.

Verse 4

It was very early, still not full daylight; and the disciples were still a hundred yards offshore, and was reason enough why they had not at that point recognized the Lord.

Verse 5

“Children . . .” This shows the tender affection Jesus had for His disciples.

“You do not have any fish, do you . . . ?” Jesus was not asking them for food, He was rather emphasizing the fact that their return to their old tasks (however momentarily) had resulted in failure.

The Lord was not yet through with those men; and Jesus had no intention of permitting them to return to the fishing business, even if they had desired that. The whole sequence of events in this chapter shows conclusively that their long night of failing to catch anything was providential, in the same manner as their astounding catch a little later acting upon the Lords instructions.

Verse 6

One can never cease to be amazed at the type of mind which cannot find anything out of the ordinary in this episode. A. M. Hunter, *Ibid.*, p. 194 says, “There is no need to find anything miraculous or symbolic here. The Lake of Galilee swarmed with them, as it still does, with fish. Jesus had evidently noticed a large shoal!”

If as Hunter says, Jesus “noticed a large shoal of fishes” a hundred yards off shore in the semi-darkness of early morning, and against what light there was (they were on the western shore), it would not have removed the miraculous element from this incident; but it would have made Jesus’ vision, at such a time and distance one of the most notable miracles the Lord ever performed.

Can it be doubted that Jesus already knew exactly where to find the apostles, or that He knew of their fruitless night’s work, or that He had built a fire and prepared food at exactly the place where Peter would swim ashore, or that He already knew that they had nothing to eat?

Rationalization of Jesus' miracles is essentially dishonest. One may have a certain carnal respect of an avowed infidel; but so-called Christian scholars who attempt to rationalize the miracles are not entitled to either credence or respect. Dishonest handling of the sacred text is incapable of producing an honest argument.

Verse 7

Again, John's greater perceptiveness and Peter's greater impetuosity come to light in this event. John was the thinker; Peter was the man of action. John recognized the Lord here, through the use of his mind; it was still too far off to see Jesus sufficiently to identify Him visually. In the pull of that net with its mighty catch, John instantly recognized the Lord; and Peter believed it as soon as John announced it.

Those experienced Galilean fishermen knew a miracle when they saw one, even if some of the modern divines have trouble seeing it. "For he was stripped for work" means "he had on his undergarment only." "Threw himself into the sea." This was for the purpose of swimming the intervening distance of a hundred yards to go to Jesus.

Verse 8

"Two hundred cubits . . ." is a distance of one hundred yards. That this should have been called "not far," in the light of Peter's swimming it, affords an insight into the physical vigor of the apostles. The others preserved the catch by remaining with the boat and dragging the net shore.

Verse 9

B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, II, p. 483, discerned that, "The very manner in which the charcoal fire and fish and bread upon it are presented here suggests that they were provided supernaturally." In a moment, Jesus would instruct them to take care of the catch, not with a view to their helping provide breakfast, however, for He had already done that.

Verses 10-11

It is hard to have patience with scholars who make this event a Johanine adaptation of Luke's account of another event, (5:1-11) There are more differences between them than there are similarities.

JOHN'S RECORD

Christ was on the land.

There was one boat.

The catch was pulled ashore.

The net held.

Six men brought in the catch.

The number of fishes is given.

Christ was 100 yards distant.

LUKE'S RECORD

Christ was on the water.

There were two boats.

The catch was left on board.

The net broke.

Two ship-loads of men did it.

The fishes were not counted.

Christ was on board with them.

"Simon Peter went up . . ." meaning that he went up into the boat and unfastened the net prior to beaching the catch of fishes. Again, Peter took the lead in matters requiring action.

"A hundred and fifty-three . . ." It seems that there is no more significance to the number of fishes than there was to the six water-pots at Cana or the 200 cubits that Peter swam to meet the Lord.

Verse 12

The catch having been secured, Jesus invited them to breakfast. The impact of that meal must have been dramatic and profound.

That charcoal fire must have reminded Peter of that charcoal fire where he warmed himself the night he denied Jesus; their all eating from one fish and a bread-cake could not have failed to remind them of the 5,000 who ate of five small barley loaves and two little fishes out of a lad's basket.

Verse 13

Here, the Lord was the waiter, as well as the provider, on this occasion, whereas the apostles were the waiters on the other; but, in both cases, He gave to them.

Verse 14

“The third time . . .” refers to the third appearance to the apostles, as this was the seventh in the sequence of the ten epiphanies, (the appearance of Jesus).

THE TEN EPIPHANIES

To Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18)

To the women (Matthew 28:9-10)

To Cleopas and his companion (Luke 24:13-35)

To Simon Peter (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:15)

To the apostles, Thomas absent (John 20:19-23)

To the apostles, Thomas present (John 20:24-29)

To the apostles at the sea of Tiberius (John 2:1-14)

To about five hundred in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:6)

To James the Lord’s brother (1 Corinthians 15:7)

To the apostles on Olivet (Acts 1:4-11; Luke 24:50-51)

Verse 15

“Simon son of John . . .” This is the same as Matthew’s “Simon Bar-Jonah.” The very use of “Simon son of John” by Jesus here must have flooded Peter’s with emotion.

“Do you love Me more than these . . .?” Do you love Me more than the big catch of fishes? Do you love Me more than the fishing business, or more than the other apostles whom you had boasted that your love was greater? “You know that I love You . . .”

“Tend My lambs . . .” is a charge to teach Christ’s disciples.

Verse 16

“Shepherd My sheep . . .” The is one charge here, that of taking care of, teaching, and nurturing the spiritual body of Christ.

Verse 17

Grievous as this was for Peter, it wiped out all guilt of his denials; and the Savior’s total forgiveness is implicit in the threefold charge to care for the church Jesus came to establish. The external situation associated with this triple confession of love inevitably called to mind the denials. There were three of each; the charcoal fire was at both events; the day was breaking on both occasions; and there had to have been another cockcrow, although the latter is not mentioned.

The gospel is infinitely richer for this triple confession of Peter’s love for Jesus.

Verses 18-19

There seems to be more than a hint here that Peter’s younger life had been uninhibited. He was a very active man who seems to have done just about as he pleased. Such undisciplined behavior, if that is what was implied, was at an end for Peter. His future responsibilities would require his constant attendance upon spiritual things.

“You will stretch out your hands . . .” was often used by Greek writers and the early Christians to indicate crucifixion. In view of John’s here referring these words to Peter’s death, there can be no doubt of their being a prophecy of his crucifixion.

“Follow Me . . .” Jesus evidently meant this in a spiritual sense; but Peter, great literalist that he was, immediately walked after Jesus as the Lord departed, John following.

Concerning Peter’s death, tradition places it at Rome in the reign of Nero, with the detail that he was crucified head downward after his protest that he was unworthy to be crucified in an upright position like Jesus.

Lanctantius, *The Manner in Which the Persecutors Died*, Vol. VII, p. 302, wrote of Nero, “He it was who first persecuted the servants of God. He crucified Peter and slew Paul. St. Peter, as a Jew, could thus be dealt with; St. Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded. Nor did he (Nero) escape with impunity; for God looked on the affliction of His people; and therefore the tyrant, bereft of his authority, and precipitated from the height of empire, suddenly disappeared, and even the burial place of the noxious wild beast was nowhere to be seen.”

Verse 20

This verse identifies “the disciple whom Jesus loved” as the apostle John. The circumstance here is that of the Lord walking away, Peter following Jesus, and John following Peter.

Verse 21

Peter’s natural curiosity led to this question. The Lord had spoken of his becoming old, and of others girding him and stretching out his hands; and it is likely that Peter understood the dark implications of the Master’s words.

Verse 22

Jesus’ reply seemed to some brethren to be an implication that John would survive till the second coming of the Lord.

“Follow Me . . .” In this repetition of the command, Peter probably understood that the Lord meant the imperative spiritually.

Verse 23

Thus John laid to rest the tradition that had developed to the effect that the Lord would return in John’s lifetime. At the time he wrote John, the apostle was very old; and it was apparent to him and others that the days of his pilgrimage were drawing to a close; and, in view of the probable event of his death, he did not wish unbelievers to have an excuse for saying that the prophecy of the Lord had failed.

Verse 24

This is everything short of an absolute identification of the apostle John as the author of this gospel.

William Hendriksen, *op. cit.*, p. 493, commented on this verse saying, “This is the disciple, etc . This cannot refer to Jesus, for He was no disciple. It must indicate either Peter or John. But Peter was no longer bearing witness, being dead when this was written. Neither is it possible to introduce another person here, for “this” clearly means someone he just mentioned. Only John is left. That person must be John. Accordingly, the passage must mean, “This disciple, John, who is still bearing witness (the present participle is used) and he is the one who has written (aorist participle) these things.”

The person who appended this corroborative testimony did not identify themselves; but the most learned opinions of a thousand years have invariably ascribed them to the elders at Ephesus.

B. F. Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 306, said, “the words were probably added by the Ephesian elders, to whom the preceding narrative had been given both orally and in writing.”

Their testimony affixed at the close of this gospel is not diminished by the absence of their names; for, whatever their names, they were the ones who certified the gospel as absolute truth and circulated it among the churches of the first century.

Verse 25

“I suppose . . . “ identifies this verse as a separate addendum to the gospel, probably penned by John himself prior to its being sent to the churches.

What a marvelous testimony of Jesus Christ is the gospel of John! Standing near the close of the first century of this era, and after a long and vigorous life of preaching and teaching God’s word, the last eyewitness of the ministry of the Lord selected from the incredibly rich storehouse of his blessed memories of Jesus precisely those seven greatest signs of his power and godhead that he could recall, the same being the great signs he had been preaching for a lifetime;

and these he gathered into one final testimony of the Divine Christ, launching his gospel from the platform of a great congregation which attached the corroborative imprimatur of its presbytery. He leveled his witness squarely against the incipient gnostic heresies beginning, even then, to show themselves in Asia Minor. He designed it so as to refute the false rumors of Peter's unworthiness, due to his denials, and equally false rumor that the Lord had promised to return within his lifetime. The person of Jesus Christ as both God and perfect man was the theme throughout.

There can be no marvel that Satan is displeased with the gospel of John; but, despite all satanic opposition to its teachings, the saints of all ages have received it as it is indeed the truth of God, ever rejoicing in its Divine revelation of Jesus Christ our Lord.