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Introduction

The Bible book you are about to study is called the Gospel of John, or the Gospel according to John. It is one of four books at the beginning of the New Testament which are called "gospels," a word that means "good news." The good news that is explained in these four books is that although every person has sinned against God, and therefore every person deserves the everlasting punishment of God, the Son of God came to earth to take our punishment for us by dying on the cross. By receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can avoid the punishment we *do* deserve and enjoy a wonderful, eternal life in heaven that we *don't* deserve. That's the good news. This will be explained more thoroughly as you study the Gospel of John.

Each of the four gospels appears to have been written to a particular kind of people. The Gospel of Matthew was first written to Jewish people, and included many references from the Old Testament to show that Jesus was the Messiah that was predicted to come, and for whom the Jews had been waiting.

The Gospel of Mark appears to have been written mainly for people living outside of Palestine, perhaps the Romans in particular. Mark tries to convince his readers of the *divinity* of Jesus (the fact that he was God in the form of a man) by describing many of his miracles.

Luke, who was a doctor, addressed his gospel (and the book of Acts, which he also wrote) to a person named Theophilus, about whom little is known. Luke was apparently a gentile (a person who wasn't a Jew) writing in such a way as to convince other gentiles to follow Jesus.

The Gospel of John was written to appeal to a broad general audience, with hopes that readers from either a Jewish or gentile background would understand who Jesus was and wish to follow him.

The Gospel of John is somewhat different from the other three Gospels. The books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called *synoptic* gospels because they tell many of the same true stories from the life of Jesus, mostly in the order they happened. John writes more about what Jesus said than the things he did, including many things left out by the other three, and leaving out many things included by the other three.

Because "John" was a common name, it is easy to get confused about who wrote the Gospel of John. In fact, early and often in this gospel, we read about a man named John. He is John the Baptist, and he wasn't the book's author. Rather, the author of this gospel was John the apostle, one of the twelve men chosen by Jesus to follow him. He sometimes writes about himself in his own book, but he doesn't use his own name when doing so. Instead, he uses phrases like, "the apostle whom Jesus loved."

(John 13:23) When we come across the name John, it usually refers to John the Baptist. When it refers to someone else, the author tells us (for example, the father of Peter in **John 1:42**).

Before the apostle John was chosen by Jesus to follow him, he was a fisherman. What probably helped convince John to follow Jesus was an occasion in which Jesus brought to pass a miraculous catch of fish (**Luke 5:1-11**).

Like many other disciples of Jesus, John was a common, uneducated man (**Acts 4:13**). God doesn't always use the most educated, important, or famous people to get his work done on earth. Jesus himself was not born on earth to a rich couple living in a palace, but instead was born in a stable to a couple who were simple and poor, but faithful (**Luke 2:7**).

John had a brother named James who was also a disciple of Jesus. Jesus called them the "Sons of Thunder," probably because they often had wrong attitudes which they expressed with a lot of energy. On one occasion, some disciples including John tried (maybe with physical force) to stop some people from casting out demons because they weren't among Jesus' chosen disciples (**Mark 9:38**). Another time James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village that didn't want Jesus and His disciples staying there because they were on their way to Jerusalem (**Luke 9:51-55**). And James and John once begged Jesus to give them the honor of sitting on each side of Him when He came into His glory (**Mark 10:35-37**). All this shows us that Jesus didn't choose men who were near perfect to be his disciples, but rather men who had a lot of work to do in their own personal lives.

Despite his shortcomings, John was a true qualified apostle of Jesus. The two qualifications we find in Scripture for being an apostle are: [1] being chosen by God for such an office (**Acts 1:24; 1 Corinthians 1:1**); and [2] being an eyewitness of the resurrected Jesus (**Acts 1:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 9:1**). Based on these two qualifications, we could safely doubt someone who claimed to be an apostle today. How could a person of today have been an eyewitness to Jesus' resurrection? But we see that John was indeed qualified. He was directly chosen by Jesus (**Matthew 4:21, 22**) and he was an eyewitness to Jesus being resurrected (**Mark 16:14**).

It should be noted here that the word "disciple" is used in two different ways in Scripture. Sometimes it describes the twelve men who were specifically chosen by Jesus to be part of his ministry (**Matthew 10:1; 11:1**). At other times the word describes anyone in general who is following Jesus (**Acts 6:1, 2, 7; 9:36**). When you come across the word *disciple* in this commentary, it will refer to the twelve apostles unless otherwise noted.

The apostle John was one of the three disciples

closest to Jesus, the other two being Peter and James (John's brother). Only these three were taken by Jesus up a high mountain to witness his miraculous transfiguration (**Matthew 17:1**). When Jesus entered the house of Jairus to raise his daughter from the dead, he allowed only these three disciples to go with him and her parents (**Luke 8:51**). When Jesus arrived with his disciples in a place called Gethsemane, he told all but Peter, James, and John to sit and wait while he took those three with him near to the place where he prayed (**Mark 14:32, 33**).

Even among these three disciples, John may well have been the closest to Jesus. During the Passover supper that Jesus had with his disciples on the eve of his crucifixion, John was reclining closest to Jesus, in a manner described by the Greek text as being "in the bosom of Jesus" (**John 13:23-25**). And as he was dying on the cross, Jesus assigned the care of his mother to John (**John 19:26, 27**).

After the earthly ministry of Jesus ended and he ascended into heaven, John continued in his role as a prominent apostle. He was present when Peter, by the power of God, healed the lame man they met on their way into the temple (**Acts 3:1-10**). He and Peter testified boldly before the Sanhedrin of their faith in Jesus, and were arrested (**Acts 3, 4**). He was sent with Peter by the Jerusalem apostles to Samaria, to see whether the conversions reported there were genuine (**Acts 8:14-25**). And besides his gospel, John wrote four other books of the New Testament: 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation.

Studying the gospels is of great value to the new Christian as well as the long-time member of the church. The more we study the life of Jesus, who was God in the form of a man, the more we have a true picture of what God is like, and the less we need to rely on our imaginations. The more we study the life of Jesus, the better we are able to follow his holy example.

Chapter One

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In this verse, Jesus Christ is referred to as "the Word." Some translations say, "the Verb," but the better translation of the original Greek text is "the Word." We know that "the Word" refers to Jesus because verse 14 tells us "**the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,**" and that He was "**the only Son from the Father,**" two statements which obviously describe Jesus.

The intended meaning of "the Word" appears to be this: just as we use words to communicate our thoughts and desires to one another, God used his Son Jesus to communicate his love and will to us. God had communicated some of his will to mankind through the prophets of the Old Testament, but many things remained mysterious until Jesus came and revealed much more specifically the thoughts of God (**Hebrews 1:1, 2**).

John begins his book about Jesus by stating three very important truths about him that he will explain further as he writes more: [1] Jesus is the living Word of God. [2] Jesus existed in the beginning before the world was made. [3] Jesus was God in the form of a man.

² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Jesus, as the Son of God, was with the Father in the beginning when all physical things were created. The rest of us human beings only began to exist when we were conceived in our mothers' wombs, but Jesus was different. He never *began to exist* because he *has always existed*. When he was conceived in the womb of Mary, it wasn't the beginning of his whole existence, just the beginning of his being in the form of a human.

Jesus was not only present with the Father in the beginning when all things were created, he also participated in creating everything.

**⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

The Son of God came to earth as a man to bring eternal life to mankind. When he died on the cross, Jesus suffered the punishment of God that mankind deserved to suffer because of mankind's sinfulness. Those who

receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior will have eternal life rather than punishment because their punishment has already been suffered by Jesus. John will explain more about this as he continues to write.

Just as Jesus was referred to earlier as being "the Word," he is also referred to often as being or giving *light*. To understand what is meant by this, it is helpful to remember that the opposite of light is darkness. When people try to move around in darkness, there is danger of being hurt and great difficulty in finding the right way to where they need to go. People living in sinfulness are often described in the Bible as being in darkness. As the light, Jesus made it possible to see the way they need to go to have eternal life, helping them to avoid the danger of remaining in darkness.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The name "John" here refers to John the Baptist, who was the *forerunner* of Jesus (**Luke 1:17**). This means he came ahead of Jesus to prepare the hearts of the people for Jesus' arrival. He did this through preaching, telling the people they needed to repent (turn away from their sinful ways). The people who believed what John the Baptist preached were then baptized in water, a symbol of being washed clean and a sign of their dedication to repentance. Some time later, after Jesus had died, risen again, and ascended into heaven, many of the same people who received John's baptism of repentance were also baptized into Christ through Christian baptism.

Many people wondered whether John the Baptist himself was the Christ, maybe because of the way he spoke with such authority. He insisted he was not, and John the apostle makes clear in his writing that John the Baptist was not the Christ himself, but only a witness to the coming Christ. Even before John the Baptist was born, God had planned this ministry for him (see **Luke 1:5-17**).

⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Jesus Christ was the true light. No one who had been sent by God before, even the prophets of the Old Testament, had offered any more than just a faint glimmer of the light of truth in comparison to Jesus.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

When Jesus walked the earth, the Creator of all things was surrounded by his own creation. Every person he met was a person he had made. Even the cross to which he was nailed at the end of his life on earth was made from a tree he caused to grow. But even though their own Creator was walking among them in the form of a man, most of the people did not recognize Jesus as God or appreciate what he had done and was doing for them.

¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

Jesus was the *Messiah* whose coming was foretold by God's prophets in the Old Testament. The Messiah was the person appointed by God to deliver the people of Israel and establish his kingdom. He would deliver the people by saving them from the everlasting fire of hell, taking on himself the punishment they deserved for their sins.

The kingdom he would establish was to be a spiritual one, made up of all the people who acknowledged him as the Son of God and submitted to his ruling authority in their lives. This kind of kingdom has no boundary of time or land. It includes people from the time of the Bible all the way up until today, and it includes people from all parts of the world.

Sadly, most of the people of Israel (also called the Jews) did not understand what the prophets really meant when they said the Messiah would deliver the people and establish his kingdom. They expected the Messiah to overthrow whatever government was in charge of the Jews when he came. They expected his kingdom to be a political one in which the Jews would reign with him over the rest of the world, especially the people who had enslaved them prior to his coming.

Since most of the Jews were not expecting the kind of deliverance and kingdom Jesus came to offer, they did not believe he was really the Messiah and they rejected him.

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

The Jews were the first people offered the opportunity to be delivered from the everlasting fire and be part of Jesus' kingdom. They were the original people God chose to favor during Old Testament times because they were descendants of a man named Abraham, who had great faith. Even though Jesus was not the kind of Messiah they were expecting, a small number of Jews still believed in him

because of the way that he spoke and the miracles he performed.

Most of the Jews, however, did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, and they rejected him. Because of this, God offered the opportunity of deliverance and a place in his kingdom to people who were not Jews. They were called Gentiles. Some of them believed and some did not. The Jews and Gentiles who did believe Jesus was the Messiah were given the right to be called children of God.

This verse denies the common belief that every person in the world is a child of God. God is the Creator of every person, so everyone is a *creature* of God. But God is only the Father of those who are adopted into his family by receiving Jesus. The Bible refers to the devil being the father of those who have not received Jesus (**John 8:44**).

¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

A person who is a child of God is not so because of their physical birth, but because of a spiritual rebirth. Many Jews believed they would go to heaven just because they were descendants of Abraham, born into his family line (**John 8:33, 39; Luke 3:8**). This may be due to a misunderstanding of a number of Old Testament Scriptures in which God promises good things for the children of Abraham. But this verse teaches us that one's birth into God's family, which allows that person to go to heaven, is a spiritual birth. This will be explained further in John 3, where Jesus has a conversation with Nicodemus about these things.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus Christ was God himself in the form of man. Many false religions teach that Jesus was not god himself in the form of a man.

Islam teaches that believing Jesus is God in the form of a man is blasphemy.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (whose members are called "Mormons") teaches that Jesus was God in the form of man only in the way that all men can potentially be. They teach that all men can become gods of their own planets in the same way that God is over the earth. This is different than believing the Biblical truth that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and God himself in the form of man.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was created

by God, and existed as Michael the Archangel before coming to earth to live.

The "glory" that John writes about having seen probably refers to the attributes of being God that were visible in the life of Jesus. These attributes could be seen in the miracles Jesus performed, showing his divine power over nature (**John 2:11**). John was also a witness to the glory of Jesus at the Transfiguration (**Luke 9:32**).

¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

When John the Baptist said "He who comes after me," he meant that Jesus was born six months after he was. When John said "he was before me," he meant that Jesus existed before coming to earth in the form of a man. John himself did not begin to exist until he was conceived in his mother's womb.

¹⁶ And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The word "grace" is a very important word in the New Testament, and every preacher and church leader should be able to explain well its meaning to the people of the church so they can explain it to those who are still lost. It means kindness shown to those who don't deserve it. For example, if one man hits another man, we might expect the one who was hit to hit back. If, instead of hitting back, he invites the man who hit him to his house to enjoy a delicious dinner, that is an example of grace. The man who did the hitting was treated to kindness he didn't deserve.

From the Old Testament, we learn that God gave the law to man through Moses with the understanding that everyone who kept the law perfectly would deserve to go to heaven, while anyone who violated the law would deserve the punishment of hell. Since no one could keep the law perfectly except Jesus, no one but him deserved to go to heaven. All but him deserved the punishment of hell. Even though he was perfect and innocent, Jesus allowed himself to be put to death on the cross, taking on himself the punishment for our sins in a way that was acceptable to the justice of our holy God.

For anyone who receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior, God declares that their punishment has already been served by Jesus on the cross. Therefore, they are allowed to avoid what they *do* deserve (hell), and receive the eternal life in heaven which they *don't* deserve (**John**

3:16). This is why Christians are said to be "saved by grace" (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**). They are allowed to enjoy eternal life in heaven that they don't deserve because of the kindness and mercy of God. No one should claim they are going to heaven because they deserve to. We all deserve the punishment of hell.

For those who do not receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, on the Day of Judgment, God will declare that the punishment for their sins has not yet taken place. They will have to serve this punishment themselves in hell (**Revelation 20:15**).

18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

The phrase, "**the only God, who is at the Father's side,**" refers to Jesus. Some translations say, "**the only begotten God**" or "**the only Son.**"

Studying the life of Jesus (God the Son), who was visible, is a great help to us in understanding the ways of God the Father, who is invisible. Jesus has revealed God the Father and made him known in ways far beyond any other prophet or author in the Bible.

19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

Since John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing people, mostly Jews, without having informed the Jewish leaders or gaining their approval, they sent an official delegation to find out who he was and by what authority he was doing what he was doing.

Because of his manner and sudden popularity, many wondered whether John was the Christ. ("The Christ" means the same thing as "the Messiah." See the notes on verse 11.) John emphasized that he was not the Christ, but the one sent by God to prepare people for the coming of the Christ.

21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

The Jews were expecting Elijah to come based on the prophecy of **Malachi 4:5**. They thought that either Elijah

would come back to earth from heaven, or that his spirit would inhabit the body of someone living on earth. They didn't understand that the prophecy was using a *metaphor*, a figure of speech in which someone is called by a different name because they're so much like what they're being called. The meaning of the prophecy was that someone would come someday who would be very much like Elijah.

John the Baptist really was the "Elijah" that was predicted in the prophecy. Jesus confirmed this in **Matthew 17:10-13**. John the Baptist was like Elijah in the way he boldly spoke out against unrighteousness, even when doing so put his own life in danger. You can read about Elijah starting in **1 Kings 17**.

When John the Baptist was asked by the Jewish delegation whether he was Elijah, rather than explaining that he had come in the spirit and power of Elijah as a fulfillment of prophecy, he simply said no. Some have been puzzled by this. John the Baptist probably was well aware that he was the Elijah predicted in the prophecy. He may have just been withholding information from Jewish leaders with hardened hearts (as Jesus often did).

The Jews were also expecting a prophet to come, based on **Deuteronomy 18:18**. This prophecy was referring to Jesus (**John 5:46; Acts 3:22-26**).

²³ He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

John's role as the messenger who came before Jesus was similar to the role messengers of kings had in ancient times. The king's messenger would warn the inhabitants of a town when the king was going to visit. This was to give them time to fix, straighten, and level out roads, making them ready for the king's arrival. In the same way, John the Baptist warned the people to prepare their hearts, through repentance, for the arrival of the King of Kings.

²⁴ (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵ They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

The Pharisees (the leaders of the Jews) were very strict and considered themselves the foremost authorities on the instruction, interpretation, and application of the law of Moses. The delegation they sent no doubt feared returning without having thoroughly investigated the ministry of John the Baptist.

The Pharisees would strongly oppose anyone who dared

to engage in preaching, baptism, instruction in the law, or other forms of ministry without their prior approval. However, if someone showed up whom they believed to be the Christ, Elijah, or the anticipated prophet, they would consider that person's authority to be superior to their own. Most of them ended up never acknowledging Jesus' authority during his ministry because they didn't believe he was really the Christ.

²⁶ John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

²⁸ These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

A fuller account of what John said here can be found in **Matthew 3:11, 12** and **Luke 3:16, 17**. John points out here that while his ministry of baptizing people in water as a testimony of repentance is important, it pales in comparison to the greater ministry of the coming Christ, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

The baptism with (or "in") the Holy Spirit took place on two occasions. The first was on the Day of Pentecost, when the disciples of Jesus heard the sound of a mighty rushing wind, saw the appearance of tongues which seemed to be made of fire, and were given power from on high to speak miraculously in languages they had never learned or studied (**Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5; 2:1-4**).

The second occasion was ten years later, when Peter took some Jewish friends with him to the house of Cornelius, where Peter preached a message of salvation to this gentile and his household. The Holy Spirit was poured out among them, and they began to speak miraculously in languages they had never learned or studied (**Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17**).

While the Holy Spirit was involved with many other signs and works in the first century, and is actively involved today in bringing sinners to repentance and helping believers become more holy, only the two occurrences above are specifically described in the Bible by the phrase "baptism with (or 'in') the Holy Spirit."

The baptism with fire likely refers to the judgment and punishment assigned by the Christ to all who reject the salvation he brings (**Matthew 3:11, 12**).

By humbly claiming to be unworthy even to untie the straps of the Christ's sandals, John the Baptist further emphasizes that he himself is not the Christ, and that the Christ is far superior to him.

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the

world!

John the Baptist spoke these words a short time before the Passover feast of the Jews (**John 2:13**). During this feast, the Jews were reminded of how their Israelite ancestors who were slaves in Egypt were set free in the time of Moses. Those Israelites were told that on a particular day each household must kill a lamb and apply its blood to the door of the house. That night, the Lord would pass through the land of Egypt and kill the firstborn in every household that did not have the lamb's blood on the door. When lamb's blood was found on the door, the Lord would pass over that house, not killing its firstborn. The lamb died in place of the firstborn, and its blood saved them from death (read **Exodus 12**). Likewise, Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to die in place of sinners, so that those who would receive him as Lord and Savior would be saved by his blood from eternal death (separation from God and everlasting torment).

Every day in the Jewish temple, one lamb was killed in the morning and one at night as a sacrifice for the sins of the people (**Exodus 29:38-42**). The death of those lambs did not really satisfy God as being a suitable punishment for sins. Instead, it was a symbolic picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would come one day and pay the true price for the sins of mankind by dying on the cross.

³⁰ This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'

See the notes on **John 1:15**.

³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³² And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Although Jesus and John the Baptist were related (**Luke 1:36**), John did not know Jesus was the Messiah until the Holy Spirit descended on him at his baptism (**Mark 1:9-11**).

For an explanation of baptism with the Holy Spirit, see the notes on **John 1:26-28**.

³⁵ The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

The whole of John the Baptist's ministry was to persuade others to follow Jesus. Now he persuades two men who until this point had been his own disciples. One of them was Andrew (v. 40), and the other may very well have been John, the author of this gospel.

We see here the greatness of John the Baptist, not being jealous knowing his own disciples were about to leave him to follow someone else. He was not concerned with his own fame or power, but only that Jesus be glorified. This is how it should be even today. We, like John the Baptist, ought to discover who Jesus is and lead others to him.

³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"

Apparently these two disciples began to walk behind Jesus without saying anything, perhaps out of respect or shyness. Jesus turns to them and asks a question, not harshly, that opens the door to a deep spiritual conversation. Their question, "Where are you staying?", implies that they don't want a quick conversation by the road, but would prefer to spend a lot of time with him.

³⁹ He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.

Jesus sets the example for us today, that we should always be kind and ready to welcome those who come to us with questions about how to have eternal life.

The Jews and Romans had different ways of marking the time of day. If John the gospel writer used the Roman way, then the tenth hour refers to 10:00 a.m. If he used the Jewish way, it would be about 4:00 p.m. The fact that the time of day was mentioned at all in this verse is evidence that John was one of the two disciples involved.

⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

The fact that John mentions only the name of Andrew

here, and not the other disciple, is also evidence that it was he himself who went with Andrew to the house of Jesus that day.

⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).

Andrew as well gives us an example to follow. Our relationship with Christ should be something we want to tell others about. When someone discovers a cure for a terrible disease, he is not likely to keep such a find a secret. He will want to tell others, and see that the cure makes its way to anyone who needs it. Likewise, in finding Jesus, we have found the cure to our problem of sin, and the way to eternal life. We should not keep it a secret, but share it with other sinners who otherwise will end up in hell.

Many had come in that day claiming to be the Messiah. But there was something about Jesus that made Andrew sure that he had met the true Messiah, and all others were fake.

⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

The name Peter means "rock" or "stone," and it is used to describe someone who is firm and steady. We will see that this is not a very good description of Peter during the earthly ministry of Jesus. Peter was often the first to speak or act in a situation, and as a result, what he said or did was often unwise. He is also well-known for denying Jesus when things got tough (**Luke 22:54-62**).

But after the resurrected Jesus left his disciples behind and went to heaven, Peter grew and matured into the name Jesus had given him, preaching boldly, suffering persecution, and writing two books of the New Testament.

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Jesus had come to Judea to be baptized, and was now on his way back to his home area. On the way, he had this encounter with Philip. When Jesus said, "follow me," he apparently wasn't yet calling on Philip to become a chosen apostle, but simply for him to believe that he was the Christ and follow his teachings. On another occasion (**Matthew 4:19**), Jesus' words "follow me" were a call for those involved to become his chosen apostles, at which time they left everything to follow Jesus.

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Just like Andrew, Philip had been confronted by Jesus and it made him a changed man. He could not help but go find someone else now to proclaim that the Messiah had come.

46 Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

It isn't clear why Nathanael had so much difficulty believing that the Messiah came from Nazareth. Perhaps it was because the residents of Nazareth were known in general for being immoral. Or maybe Nazareth was just such an ordinary town like dozens of others around it that Nathanael believed it was unworthy of something so important as bringing forth the Messiah.

Whatever the reason for Nathanael's unbelief, Philip was wise in not trying to argue about Nazareth's worthiness as a town. Instead, he invited Nathanael to come and see the evidence which was most convincing: Jesus himself.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

Jesus speaks very favorably of Nathanael here, saying he wasn't just an Israelite because of the family he was born into, but an Israelite in the true sense of fearing God and walking uprightly. He wasn't a perfect man, but neither was he a hypocrite.

48 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

We can only guess what Jesus was talking about here. The situation in which Nathanael was seen by Jesus under the fig tree is not described for us. A reasonable guess is that Nathanael had sat under a tree for a time of devotion and meditation with God. This was a common practice among the truly faithful Jews.

49 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God!"

You are the King of Israel!"

Somehow the manner of this conversation convinced Nathanael that Jesus was able to see into his very heart. The town from which Jesus came was no longer an issue to Nathanael. He knew he was in the presence of the Christ.

⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Here, Jesus refers to what we find in **Genesis 28:12**. Jacob (Abraham's grandson) had angered his older twin brother Esau (**Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-41**) and had fled his homeland in fear of Esau's revenge. One night, when the lonely fugitive Jacob lay down to sleep, he dreamed about a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, on which angels were ascending and descending. What followed was God's comforting promise that he would be with Jacob, and that the families of the earth would be blessed through Jacob's offspring.

Now, in his conversation with Nathanael, Jesus reveals to us more of the meaning of the dream Jacob had centuries before. The ladder was a symbol of the coming Jesus, the Son of God born from the family line of Jacob, who would come to earth to restore the broken relationship between the perfect God of heaven and the sinful people of earth. In his holiness, God insisted that the sins of man be punished by death. Jesus would suffer this death himself on the cross, though he was perfect and deserved no such punishment, so that the relationship between God and man could be restored.

While there are many possible explanations of what is meant by the angels in the dream (God's messengers), it is reasonable to believe they symbolize the communication between heaven and earth in the form of God's revelation to man and man's prayers to God, both of which take place through Jesus.

In short, Jesus was beginning his ministry of restoring peace between God and man, and Nathanael, as a chosen apostle, would be a firsthand witness.

Chapter Two

¹ On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

By this time, Jesus had five disciples who are following him: Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciple (probably John) who was with Andrew in **John 1:37-40**. The fact that there is no mention of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, probably means he had died by this time.

³ When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

In that time, wedding ceremonies were often followed by seven or eight days of feasting, and many guests would have come a long distance at great expense to stay for the entire feast. To run out of food or drink for these guests would bring great shame and humiliation upon the hosting family, and on some occasions they could be held legally responsible. Mary, wanting to help the family avoid such embarrassment (they may have been her relatives), went to Jesus for help.

For comments about the nature of the wine, see the notes for **John 2:9, 10**.

⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

Some have wondered whether this was a disrespectful reply from Jesus to his mother. In many languages, the word *woman* is not used to address someone with love and respect. But in the language Jesus spoke, it was. He used the same term in such a way on other occasions (**Matthew 15:28; John 19:26; 20:13, 15**).

To this point, Jesus had not yet performed any miracles (**John 2:11**). Eventually, he would use his power in a very public way to demonstrate that he was who he claimed to be, but he doesn't want to be pressed into such a public display before the proper time. So, his reply to Mary, while respectful and loving, shows a bit of protest.

⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Based on Jesus' reply to his mother, it would seem

that he was unwilling to help, yet in this verse she appears to expect that he will do something. Maybe there was something about the way he gave his reply, or maybe he spoke words that John did not record, but she believed help was on the way from Jesus and told the servants to do whatever he commanded.

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Plenty of water was on hand for the ceremonial washings in which the Jews participated at such feasts. An explanation of these washings can be found in **Mark 7:1-4**.

⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.

By making sure the pots were filled to the top, it would be clear that wine was not added to form some kind of mixture. On the contrary, what was purely water was miraculously turned into what was purely wine.

⁸ And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

As soon as the pots were filled, the servants were told to draw some out for the one in charge of the feast. This would show that the water was turned into wine immediately, and would allow the feast master to announce the availability of the wine.

⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

The wine Jesus provided was the best that had been tasted at the feast. The question most people have is, was it alcoholic? The short answer is: we don't know.

It very well may not have been. In the verses we've been reading, the word *wine* is a translation of the Greek word *oinos* in the original language used by the Apostle John. *Oinos* can refer either to regular juice freshly

taken from the grape, or grape juice that has become alcoholic through the process of fermentation. So although the word *wine* means an alcoholic beverage to us today, regular grape juice was also called wine in the time of Jesus.

It is reasonable to believe the wine Jesus made was not alcoholic. There is no indication in these verses of any drunkenness at this feast, and it seems unlikely that Jesus would have provided such a great-tasting alcoholic wine that the guests would have been tempted to become drunk. Some say that the words of the master of the feast show that it was alcoholic, his point being that most hosts bring out the inferior wine after the guests are too drunk to notice. But he may have just meant that the inferior wine was brought out only after people had had all they wanted, just like inferior food would be brought out after the guests ate the better food when they were hungrier.

All this being said, we must at least consider the possibility that the wine was alcoholic. Drinking fermented wine was very common in those days because refrigeration wasn't an option to keep grape juice from turning alcoholic naturally. Even so, the wine was not as alcoholic as what is produced in modern times (where beverages are intentionally made stronger by the addition of alcohol), and it was often diluted with two or three parts water, such that an enormous amount would have to be consumed to make a person drunk. If the wine Jesus made was alcoholic, it certainly was not nearly as powerful as the intoxicating drinks available today.

There is not found in the Bible a clear prohibition against drinking wine. This may be because, at times, wine was more available to people than safe drinking water. It also would be a waste to regularly throw away fruit juice because of natural fermentation. To say the Bible absolutely forbids the drinking of alcoholic beverages is to speak where the Bible does not.

However, the Bible clearly teaches that it is sinful to become drunk (**Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Ephesians 5:18**), and the one who becomes drunk behaves foolishly (**Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:29, 30; Isaiah 5:11**). The safest course today is to avoid alcoholic beverages altogether, especially where safe drinking water and other alternatives are available. If one does choose to drink, self-control is a must, and there undoubtedly was an expectation of such self-control at the wedding feast if the wine made by Jesus contained alcohol.

¹¹ **This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.**

This was the first use Jesus made of his power over nature. Some teach, based on traditions or books written that were not inspired by God, that Jesus did some miracles as a child. This verse denies such teachings.

His disciples had already believed in Jesus based on John's testimony and the time they'd spent with him. Now, having seen him perform a miracle, their faith is strengthened.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

The word *brothers* in this verse is translated from the Greek word *adelphoi*, which means "brothers" or "brothers and sisters" and refers to the siblings in a family. This verse and others (**Matthew 12:46; 13:55; Mark 3:31; John 7:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19**) teach that Jesus had brothers. That they were born of the same mother appears to be confirmed as well by the prophecy of **Psalm 69:8**. This denies the Catholic teaching that Mary remained a virgin all her life, an idea that is not found anywhere in God's Word.

13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

For an explanation of the Passover, see the notes on **John 1:29**.

14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.

For all the Jews attending the Passover feast, there were two requirements: making an animal sacrifice, and paying a tax to help maintain the temple. Many of the people who had come to Jerusalem for the feast had traveled long distances over many days. They could not bring along with them from home the animals for the sacrifice. They needed to buy the animals in Jerusalem. As well, the money from their different areas was not accepted for the temple tax. It had to be traded for Jewish money.

Naturally, sellers of animals and traders of money moved in to take advantage of the situation, likely working together with the priests, who got their share of the profits.

15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of

the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.

Rather than doing business in a nearby marketplace, these sellers of animals and changers of money were inside the temple walls, in a place called the Court of the Gentiles. They had turned a place of holiness into a place of noise and greed. This was more than Jesus would tolerate, so he drove them out.

Some have suggested that Jesus was sinful in the way he displayed his anger in this account. Such thoughts are ridiculous. Jesus was God in the flesh. He had as much right to crack a whip and overturn tables as the Lord God had to destroy mankind with a flood in the days of Noah.

¹⁶ And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."

We see mercy in Jesus in the way that he dealt with the sellers and money changers. When he drove out the animals, no doubt their owners were able to apprehend them and take them elsewhere. When he turned over the tables full of money, the changers likely were able to gather up the coins that belonged to them. Likewise here, Jesus did not release the pigeons, but allowed the owners to take them away.

The temple was a place for worship and drawing near to God, and Jesus' words here remind us of the impossibility of directing our attention toward God while we are preoccupied with money.

¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

What is quoted here comes from **Psalm 69:9**, an Old Testament prophecy describing Jesus' dedication to the purity of his Father's house. While we don't find the name *Jesus* in the Old Testament, much of it was still written about him, predicting details about his life, ministry, and purpose.

Preachers and church leaders today would do well to have the same passion that Jesus did with regard to the purity of the house of God, preaching courageously against attitudes and practices that are offensive to him.

¹⁸ So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for

doing these things?"

Since Jesus was not well known to them, and he was behaving as one with authority, their question was a reasonable one. What evidence could he offer that he had the authority to act in such a way?

¹⁹ Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

John 2:21 tells us that Jesus was referring to his own body, not the temple from which he drove the sellers and money-changers. He meant that after being destroyed by crucifixion, he would rise from the dead after three days, the temple of his body being restored to life. It is likely that Jesus pointed to himself when he made this claim.

²⁰ The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"

Not understanding Jesus' meaning, the Jews argued that it had been 46 years since Herod the Great began the reconstruction of the temple in which they stood, and it still wasn't complete.

²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body.

Throughout Jewish history, the temple symbolized the place where God himself was dwelling. Now all the fullness of God was dwelling in the person of Jesus (**Colossians 2:9**).

²² When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The question is sometimes asked, why did Jesus rise from the dead? Why didn't he just go on to heaven after dying on the cross? Then we could still say he died for our sins. One important reason why he rose from the dead was to prove that he was who he said he was. Anyone can claim anything about themselves, but Jesus showed by his resurrection that he was indeed God in the flesh.

Like many things Jesus said, this wasn't understood until after he arose from the dead.

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Pasover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

We are not told what signs he did, only that they convinced people that he was from God (**John 3:2**).

²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Because Jesus was performing many miracles, many claimed to believe in him. But Jesus could know the heart of every person better than they themselves knew, and he knew that many were amazed at his power but not committed to submitting to him as Lord. He only revealed himself intimately to his disciples, and not yet to the general public.

Chapter Three

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

The Pharisees are a group of men we encounter often in the Gospels. They were Jewish leaders who placed great emphasis on keeping the Law. In itself, wanting to obey the Law of God is a very good thing, but often the motive of the Pharisees was not to please God. Instead, it was so others would be impressed by their dedication. They loved this kind of attention. The Pharisees even added their own traditions to the Law of God, and emphasized their man-made rules as if they were equal to Scripture. They believed themselves to be more righteous than anyone who didn't obey their traditions. Much to their disliking, Jesus was very critical of the proud Pharisees.

² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

There are a few reasons why Nicodemus may have come to Jesus at night. He probably was afraid to be seen by the other Pharisees, who would still have been angry over the way Jesus cleared out the temple. He may have been embarrassed, as a teacher of the law, seeking instruction from someone like Jesus who hadn't gone to any of the well-known schools of doctrine. He may have just wanted a chance to speak to Jesus alone, more easily done at night than during the day when crowds were present.

³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The Pharisees, including Nicodemus, believed they were such good people that they would enter heaven someday because of their goodness. They were sure that God was so impressed with their dedication to obeying the law that he would gladly allow them into heaven. What they didn't understand is that NO ONE has lived a good enough life to deserve to go to heaven except Jesus himself (**Romans 3:23**).

Even many Christians today do not understand this truth. None of us deserve to go to heaven. All of us, because of our sinfulness, deserve to go to hell (**Romans 6:23**). Many of us will go to heaven, but it isn't because we *deserve* to. It is because of the grace (undeserved kindness) of God, who sent Jesus to die on

the cross. Jesus took the punishment we deserve so that we can enter the eternal life that we do not deserve.

Nicodemus the Pharisee had been spending his whole life trying to obey the law well enough to deserve to enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus is explaining to him that he cannot be good enough. The presence of sin in his life has made all of his good works meaningless in trying to earn his way into heaven. Instead, he must be born again, as Jesus will go on to explain.

⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

The phrase "born again" was common in that day, and referred to a Gentile becoming a Jew through baptism, being symbolically reborn as one of God's people. But Nicodemus, being a Jew from birth, never thought the phrase would apply to him, and it doesn't occur to him that Jesus is telling him he needs to be spiritually reborn as a new person. He thinks Jesus is telling an old man that he needs to be born physically for a second time.

⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus mentions two things here which are necessary for entering the kingdom of God: being born of water, and being born of the Spirit.

There is little doubt that the phrase "born of water" refers to baptism, yet many who admit this still reject the idea that baptism is necessary to see the kingdom of God (isn't that what Jesus plainly says here?). They say that if a person is baptized to be saved, that means he is being saved by his works, and the Bible teaches we are not saved by our works (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**).

But baptism is not really a work that someone does himself; it is a work they have done to them by someone else. And those who believe in the necessity of baptism are not claiming that a person *deserves* to go to heaven because they were baptized.

Perhaps this can be better explained with a story. Suppose a rich friend sends you a message saying they want to give you ten million meticaís. All you have to do is go to their house nearby and receive it. Would you say later that it wasn't really a gift, that you *earned* the money by going to the person's house? No. By going to their house, you didn't earn the money, you simply put yourself in the right place to receive it. In the same

way, a person does not earn his salvation by being baptized. He simply puts himself in a position to receive the gift.

In the New Testament, we find four actions that are mentioned in relation to receiving the gift of Salvation from God. They are listed here, followed by some Scriptures in which they appear.

Believing - **Mark 1:15; 16:16; Luke 8:12, 13; John 1:7, 12; 3:15, 16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 8:24; Acts 8:12, 13; 10:43; 13:48; 16:31; 18:8; Romans 1:16; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Galatians 2:16; 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:16; 1 John 5:1.**

Confessing - **Romans 10:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 9:13; Philippians 2:11; 1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 1 John 1:9; 2:23; 4:15.**

Repenting - **Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 5:32; 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9.**

Being baptized - **Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 13; 8:35, 36; 16:31-33; 18:8; 22:16; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21.**

We find each of these four things mentioned in several verses, but we don't find one verse or passage in which all four are mentioned. For instance, **Romans 10:9** says, **"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** There is no mention of repentance in this verse, but we know repentance is required for salvation because we read about it in many other verses. Likewise, many verses about salvation don't mention baptism, but we know of its importance because of the many verses in which it does appear.

What shall we say, then, about those who believe for a lifetime without being baptized? Or what about the man who collapses and dies on his way down to the river to be baptized? Thankfully, it is not our position to say anything about where they will spend eternity. It is up to the Lord to decide whether the unbaptized believer will enter heaven (as one enters a house through a window rather than a door) or not. We know that his judgment will be the right one. It is our responsibility only to teach the utter foolishness and unreasonableness of resisting baptism, based the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: **"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."**

There will always be disagreements among churches and denominations that do practice baptism about whether salvation begins on the occasion of the baptism, or whether it begins in the first moment of belief, making baptism just an expression that takes place afterward. While this is an interesting discussion, it should not be as divisive as it has become. Some, on the basis of this

issue, have refused fellowship to those who disagree, not even acknowledging the possibility that those with a different view are brothers and sisters within the same kingdom. This is inexcusable. Let us use the Word of God to sharpen one another in love, and consider the baptized believer a brother or sister in the Lord.

Also mentioned by Jesus here is the idea of being born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit plays an important role in one's being born again, both before and after. Before, the Holy Spirit convicts the unbeliever of sin (**John 16:8**). This means he works on a person's heart to convince him that he is sinful, and that there is a danger of judgment and condemnation. When a person is baptized, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). This means the Holy Spirit begins to live within them, helping them to grow in their faith, and producing characteristics of holiness called "spiritual fruit" (**Galatians 5:22, 23**). If the Holy Spirit is not doing this within a person's life, it is evidence that his faith and salvation may have been lost, or were not real in the first place.

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

Nicodemus, in his misunderstanding, asked how it was possible for an old man to enter his mother's womb a second time to be born. Jesus' point here is that even if that were possible, it wouldn't do any good. The natural tendency of man is to do whatever he can to satisfy the desires of his own body. This is called our "fleshly nature" or "nature of the flesh." Another physical birth would simply produce a person who lives according to his fleshly nature. What one needs is a spiritual rebirth, which takes place when he receives salvation, producing a person with the desire to do that which pleases God.

⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

We cannot see the wind because it is invisible. But we know it is there because we can see the effects of it, such as leaves moving and trees swaying. In the same way, we cannot see the Holy Spirit because he is invisible. But we can believe he is there because we see the effects of his work in the lives he has changed. When the wicked become godly, that is evidence that they have been spiritually reborn.

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰
Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and
yet you do not understand these things?"

Nicodemus was in a position of authority among the Jews, regularly offering them instruction from the Scriptures, yet he was unaware of the plain truths Jesus was describing. The idea of a spiritual rebirth bringing about a change in one's heart is taught in **Psalm 51:10** and **Ezekiel 11:19** among other places. Even today, some who are motivated by pride seek positions of authority in the church, and acquire them without knowing some of the most basic truths of the Bible.

¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony.

When Jesus said "we speak" of what "we know," he was probably referring to himself and John the Baptist, as they were the two who were actively preaching this message of repentance and new birth to the Jews. Jesus makes a comparison to the Pharisees, including Nicodemus, who were actively teaching many things to the Jews without a good understanding of what they should have been teaching. "You do not receive our testimony" refers to the Pharisees in general, who would continue to lack understanding and continue to reject Jesus, though it appears that Nicodemus did go on to receive salvation (**John 19:39**).

¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

If Nicodemus has heard about the work of the Holy Spirit on earth in the visible new birth of people repenting, and doesn't understand, how can he understand and accept the deep mysteries of what takes in heaven, which is unseen?

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

The meaning of this statement appears to be that no ordinary man has ascended into heaven to be able to see it and return to give testimony. The only one who could rightly testify about the things of heaven is the one who

came down from there, namely Jesus.

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

This is a reference to the story found in **Numbers 21:4-9**, in which the Israelites were bitten by deadly snakes, but could be healed by looking at the bronze serpent Moses made. In the same way, humans who are afflicted with sin can look to Jesus in faith for the cure, which is forgiveness from God the Father through the death of his Son.

The phrase "lifted up" was a polite term for crucifixion.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Here the whole Gospel (good news) is summed up in one verse. Because of his holiness, God will not allow sin to go unpunished. But because of his love, he did not want to see man suffer the deserved punishment. So in his love for man, he sent his Son to earth to suffer that punishment so that man, by receiving the offered gift of salvation, wouldn't have to.

We find only a mention of belief in this verse, with no clear mention of repentance, confession, or baptism. Yet from other Scriptures we learn that these are the natural actions of those who truly believe. We can therefore say that true belief includes them.

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

God did not send his Son to earth to declare the world guilty of sin and announce that the wrath of God was about to consume them. He had every right to do this, but instead he sent his Son on a mission of love to rescue mankind by suffering its punishment. But Jesus will come again some day, and when he comes the second time, it will be to condemn and destroy those who rejected the salvation offered through his death (**2 Thessalonians 1:7-10**).

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not

believed in the name of the only Son of God.

The difference between the man who will go to heaven and the man who will go to hell is not that the first man is good and the second one bad. We are all bad, and all of us have hearts that are full of sin.

The difference is that the first man believed on Jesus as the Son of God and received him as his Lord and Savior. In doing so, the death of Jesus on the cross counted for his punishment. By not believing, the second man does not allow the death of Jesus to count as his punishment, so he must therefore serve his own punishment in the everlasting fire of hell.

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

The phrase "**this is the judgment**" means this is the cause of condemnation. Jesus came to earth as the light of the world (see notes on **John 1:4, 5**), but men preferred to reject the light and remain in the darkness of their sin.

²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

People who love their sin do not want to go near the light of the Gospel. They do not want to hear that what they are doing is wrong for fear of a having a guilty conscience that would diminish the joy they get from their sin. This is why the ungodly hate to be in the presence of those who are Christ-like. It brings unwanted shame to them when they consider their own sinfulness.

The one who lives a holy life is not ashamed nor does he desire to hide what he does, like the one who hides his sin in the darkness.

²² After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing.

The city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had his conversation with Nicodemus, was in Judea. Now Jesus is leaving the city and heading out to the rural areas of Judea.

This verse probably does not mean that Jesus baptized

people himself, but simply oversaw this ministry of baptizing, based on what we read in **John 4:2**.

²³ John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized ²⁴ (for John had not yet been put in prison).

John the Baptist continued his work as long as he could, even after Jesus arrived and began his ministry. The story of John the Baptist's arrest and death can be found in **Mark 6:14-29**.

²⁵ Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification.

We can only guess what was the subject of this discussion. It was likely about baptism, and may have been about whether it was better to be baptized by John's group or Jesus' group.

²⁶And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him."

The remaining disciples of John the Baptist came to complain to him about the increasing popularity of Jesus. They were apparently envious, and did not want to see people begin to listen to Jesus instead of John. Even they did not fully understand that this was the whole purpose of John's ministry: to direct people to Jesus, the Son of God.

²⁷ John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven.

With this verse begins the response of a godly man. He points out that all his success in ministry until now had been granted by God. All the success in Jesus' ministry was being granted by God as well. It is not right for them to be envious, but to rejoice in the way God was working through both of them to change peoples' lives. In the same way, churches ought not to have a spirit of competition, and envy of the success of other churches. Rather, they should rejoice in how God is working through them.

²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not

the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'

John had always said he wasn't the Christ, but the one sent by God himself to prepare people for the coming of the Christ. It was to be expected that Jesus' ministry should be more powerful and successful than that of the ordinary man who arrived beforehand to prepare people for the coming of Jesus.

²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

Here, John the Baptist makes a comparison to help his disciples understand better what is happening. At a wedding, the most honored man is the bridegroom. It would be unacceptable if his best friend, who stands next to him in the ceremony, desired to be the most honored man there. Instead, the role of the friend is to support the bridegroom and direct others in honoring him. When the bridegroom speaks with joy on the occasion of being married to his bride, the friend rejoices as well. He is not envious.

The New Testament teaches that the church (all the people everywhere who receive the salvation of Jesus) is the bride of Christ (**Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7**). In fact, marriage itself was designed to symbolize the relationship between Christ and his church (**Ephesians 5:32**). It would be unacceptable for John the Baptist (or his disciples) to desire the honor and glory that rightly belonged to Jesus. John rejoiced that people were seeking Jesus, and he wanted his own disciples to rejoice as well.

³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

What John says here should be the attitude of every Christian, but especially of every preacher and church leader. So many problems could be avoided if all members of the church would seek ways to honor and glorify Jesus, rather than trying to impress others and gain praise for themselves.

³¹ He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.

There is disagreement about whose words are they which start in this verse and go until the end of the chapter.

They could have been the words of John the Baptist, continuing his address to his disciples. Or, they could have been the words of John the apostle, the author of this gospel, adding more explanation after having quoted John the Baptist. The original Greek text did not have quotation marks, which would have settled the question. The quotation marks you see in modern translations were put there by the translators, who had to make a guess where to put them. It is more likely that these are still the words of John the Baptist, based on what is said in verse 33.

Whichever John is the source of these profound words, the meaning is the same: Jesus came from above and is above all. The words he says are true without doubt because he is God himself in the form of a man. The knowledge of all other men is very limited, because they can only speak of what they know from living on earth.

³² He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony.

Again he emphasizes that the claims of Jesus were based on what he saw and heard, being God himself and having existed for all time. Yet most people, in their pride, refused to believe what he said.

³³ Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true.

The phrase "**sets his seal**" is a figure of speech based on the common practice of stamping or placing a seal on a document to affirm or testify that it is true. The first word of this verse could be translated "the one who," making it "the one who receives his testimony." It is likely that John the Baptist was speaking these words, and was referring to himself as the one who sets his seal to the truth which God revealed to him, that Jesus was the Messiah. This interpretation makes sense in light of John's attempts to convince his own disciples to rejoice that others have begun to follow Jesus.

³⁴ For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure.

It was noted above that Jesus can testify about what he has seen and heard in heaven, because he is God himself and he has been there. Here we see another difference between Jesus and all human teachers who have come before: Jesus, as a man, has the powerful help of the Holy Spirit without limit. The prophets before him

were influenced to a degree by the Spirit, by whom they spoke. But Jesus has the Holy Spirit without limit.

³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.

The beloved Son of God came to earth with the mission of saving mankind from the punishment of its sins. He has been given all authority from the Father to act as the *mediator*, the go-between for God and man to restore peace between them (**Romans 5:1**). During his ministry, Jesus will explain to man how to restore his peaceful relationship with God by receiving the salvation made possible through Jesus' death.

³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

One's broken relationship with God can be restored, and peace with God renewed, when one believes in Jesus as the Son of God (see notes on **John 3:16**). Because of one's belief, the punishment for his sin is counted as already having taken place in the death of Jesus. For those who do not believe in Jesus, and do not obey his command to repent and receive salvation, the death of Jesus does nothing for him. He will have to serve the punishment of his own sin in the everlasting torment of hell.

Chapter Four

¹ Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again for Galilee.

The Pharisees considered themselves the authorities of the Law of Moses, and the leaders of the Jews (see notes on **John 1:24**). They kept track of others who were out there trying to teach and influence the Jews, and they were staying informed about what Jesus was doing. His ministry was certain to anger them, so he left the area for awhile because the time had not yet come for him to confront them.

Why didn't Jesus baptize anyone himself? Probably because he didn't want anyone to be filled with pride, thinking their baptism was better than that of others, having been done by Jesus (see **1 Corinthians 1:11-15**).

⁴ And he had to pass through Samaria.

The country of Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee, and passing through it was the shortest way. Many Jews, however, often took the long way around instead of passing through because they hated the Samaritans, who were the descendants of Jews who had sinfully married non-Jews. So there was a well-worn path that Jesus could have taken around Samaria, but he "had" to pass through there because God had planned the conversion of a woman there.

⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Sychar was called Shechem in the time of the Old Testament. Jacob bought a field from the children of Hamor and built an altar there (**Genesis 33:19, 20**). Joseph's bones were buried there (**Joshua 24:32**).

⁶ Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

There isn't any mention of Jacob's well in the Old Testament. He is believed to have dug it based on tradition handed down, and the fact that it is close to

the land he bought and gave to Joseph.

The sixth hour was noon. Jesus, not only fully God but also fully human, was tired and thirsty. By noon, the sun would be hot and he would have traveled several hours. It was also time to eat, and verse 8 tells us the disciples had gone to buy food.

⁷ There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)

It appears that Jesus' request was made here not just because he was thirsty, but because he knew how the request would lead to a discussion of her need for a Savior.

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

It was odd enough to her that Jesus, an obvious Jew in appearance, had come into Samaria rather than going around it like the other Jews. But the fact that he, a Jew, requested water to drink from her, a Samaritan hated by Jews, was unheard of. She cannot help but ask about something so strange.

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

There are different pieces which make up the "gift of God." The first piece is *Jesus* himself. God gave his only Son as a gift to the world (**John 3:16**), to suffer the punishment of sinful people by dying on the cross.

When people receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, they are receiving *salvation*, another piece of the gift of God (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**). Salvation means being saved from something. In this case, it's being saved from the punishment of hell because Jesus already took the punishment on himself.

Another important part of the gift is the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**). He lives inside the Christian to help make him or her more like Jesus. The evidence of his work in our lives is called "fruit" of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22, 23**).

The last part of the gift is *eternal life* in heaven (**Romans 6:23**). It's considered a gift because it wasn't earned or deserved by the people who receive it.

The phrase "living water" was in common use at the time of Jesus' conversation with this woman. It described springs or other bodies of running water, as opposed to the stagnant water of ponds and puddles. Jesus was probably making a comparison between the dead, worthless religious teachings she had heard before and the life-giving truths he had to offer now, including the gift of the Holy Spirit who would later come to live inside those who believed (**John 7:38, 39**).

¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

She doesn't yet understand that he is talking about spiritual things. At this point, the questions in her mind are all about regular water: How can he provide water when he has come to a well without a container and a cord to lower down into it? Is there another source of water nearby of which he knows? Can he somehow provide a source of water even as Jacob did so long ago?

¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

He tells her at first something she and everyone else knew from experience, that regular water quenches one's thirst only temporarily, and it has to be sought again and again.

This comparison was made to show that things of earth may satisfy a person temporarily, but it always leaves them in want in the end. But Jesus was offering the gift of God (see notes on verse 10), and this gift brought everlasting satisfaction to the soul.

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

She still doesn't understand that he's talking about spiritual matters. She's excited about the possibility of not having to make the burdensome trip to the well every day to get water.

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

Here is a lesson for us in evangelism. Jesus is confronting this woman with his knowledge of her sin. Before he tells her the good news of how she can be saved from her sin, she must be convinced of the bad news that she is a sinner in danger of suffering the wrath of God. It is common these days for Christians to be timid in speaking to others about sin. We don't wish to offend, so we don't talk about it. But no one will accept a Savior until he is convinced he needs one, and this won't happen if he is not aware of his lost condition due to his sin. We must be willing, with love, to explain the existence and danger of sin to those who are lost.

¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."

It hasn't yet occurred to her that Jesus could be the Messiah, but it is obvious to her that he is from God. He, as a stranger, has shown himself to be very well acquainted with the details of her life and her heart.

Now, being in the presence of a real prophet, the woman decides to ask him a question, probably because she wants to change the subject away from her sinful life, and partly because she wanted an answer about this issue. It had been a controversy between the Samaritans and Jews for a long time. The Jews had built a temple in Jerusalem, the Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim (the Samaritan version of the books of Moses had the word "Gerizim" in place of "Ebal" in **Deuteronomy 27:4**). Since the temple of the Lord was supposed to be built in one place of God's choosing (**Deuteronomy 12:11**), she wanted to know which people had built the temple, and were worshipping, in the correct place.

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."

Here Jesus reveals the great truth that, very soon, true worship of God would not take place only in the temple. The time is arriving in which true worship will take place *in the hearts* of believers no matter where

they are.

²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Jesus settles the issue about which she asked: the Jews were right to have built the temple in Jerusalem. He also reprimands the Samaritans here for their corrupt worship practices. They had accepted the books of Moses, but rejected the prophets of God. They also worshiped false gods in addition to the true God (**2 Kings 17:33**). And, the temple they built on Mt. Gerizim was meaningless.

Salvation is from the Jews in that the Messiah was to come from out of the Jewish people, which Jesus had.

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

Jesus says the time has come for the rituals of the temple to be replaced by true worship. The kind of true worship God seeks contains two elements that weren't regularly found together up to this point: spirit and truth.

Worshiping in spirit means to worship sincerely and from the heart. It was very possible in the Jewish temple to go through the outward rituals of sacrifice, offering, prayer, reading of the law, etc., without one's heart being sincerely directed toward God. Likewise, it is possible today to be active in a church, speaking words, singing songs, giving offerings, etc., without a heart full of true desire to honor God. This is not real worship. Real worship is an expression of praise for who God is and what he's done for us. It is not something that happens just one day a week, but is a way of life, living in such a way that gives honor and glory to God.

Worshiping in truth means to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God, who came to earth to die on the cross as the sacrifice that would satisfy the justice of God. All the sacrifices that took place in the temple before this time were just symbols of the real sacrifice that was to come through Jesus. Some Jews would believe in Jesus as the Messiah, become Christians, and begin to worship God in truth through him. Most others would refuse to believe in him, and continue to worship in the old Jewish way that was a mere shadow of the truth.

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

That God is spirit means that he doesn't have the limitations that we who are physical do. We can only be in one place at a time. He is everywhere all at once. When we jump in the air, gravity makes us come back down to the ground. Gravity does not affect God, though. He invented it. Our little minds can only know so much. God knows everything. Such a great spiritual being as God deserves the best worship, that which is done in spirit and in truth.

Still, there are those who worship in spirit only, lacking truth. They can be very emotional about God, but they have false ideas about him because they haven't studied enough to know the truth.

There are also those who know much truth about God, but worship with very little spirit. They've been performing the same religious rituals for so long that they can sing the words of songs or recite the words of prayers without even thinking about what they're doing. They're doing actions, but their hearts are not very involved, and there is very little true emotion or love directed toward God.

Our goal should be to worship with the spirit of genuine emotion based on a true understanding of God, based on his Word.

²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.

Although the Samaritans rejected the writings of the prophets, they still had prophecies of the Messiah in their books of Moses, and they were waiting for his coming.

²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

This is the first time Jesus clearly declared himself to be the Messiah, and it was to someone who wasn't a Jew. Had he made this claim to the Jews at this point, some would have been stirred by envy and anger to put him to death right away, while others would have armed themselves in anticipation of his overthrow of the Roman government, neither of which was according to God's plan. Jesus apparently saw no danger in revealing who he was to this Samaritan woman.

²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"

The disciples had two reasons to marvel: that Jesus was speaking to a woman, and that she was a Samaritan at that. It was considered undignified in Jewish culture to speak to a woman in public, even one's own wife. To speak to a woman from such an inferior race (in their thinking) as the Samaritans was even worse. They likely thought it improper even to evangelize them.

²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

In her excitement, she left behind an important possession, her water jar, and went to tell others. The best testimonies are often given by those who have just met the Lord Jesus. The reaction of the crowd was natural--they wanted to go and see for themselves whether this man was the Messiah.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."

Jesus took such great delight in sharing the way of salvation with others, that it was like food to him. To eat ordinary food for the sake of his physical body was not as satisfying to him, as he will explain to them in verse 34.

³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?"

It was understandable that the Samaritan woman was slow to realize Jesus was talking about spiritual things when he spoke of water. Here, even his own disciples are slow to see that Jesus is not talking about regular food, but that which satisfies him spiritually.

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work,

Again, like food refreshes the body, so doing the will of God obediently refreshes and strengthens Jesus.

³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.

It could be that when Jesus said this, the harvest for crops was four months away. Since the harvest took place around April, that would mean this conversation took place around December. Or it could be that Jesus was speaking in general about how a farmer waits for four months to see the harvest after he has planted his seeds. In either case, his point seems to be that while there is a time in which one cannot yet harvest his crops, the time is always right to gather the fruit of the gospel. The seed of God's Word is planted, and the fruit are people becoming saved. Jesus told them to look up and see the Samaritans coming, who had heard the woman's testimony and were interested in the Kingdom of God.

³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'

There are those who "sow" by first introducing others to the Word of God. Those who "reap" are the ones who finally bring the lost to the point of salvation. There is a reward of joy for both. Sometimes the one who sows and the one who reaps are the same person, when the object of their evangelism is convinced and saved right away. More often, a lost person will be introduced to the Word of God by one person (the sower), spend time in understanding and making decisions, and then becoming saved with the help of another (the reaper).

³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

The Old Testament prophets, the Jewish teachers, and John the Baptist had already sowed the seed of God's Word in places where the disciples went and baptized. Likewise today, we work together in sowing and reaping, sharing the Good News unconcerned about who gets the credit, so that as many as possible may be saved.

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

It is amazing that so many were converted in a place such as Samaria, based on the testimony of a woman known for her sinfulness. This teaches us that we should be ready and willing to carry the Gospel into places where

the likelihood of success seems small.

⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word.

It was unusual for the Samaritans to offer such an invitation to a Jew. It was just as unusual for a Jew to agree to stay among Samaritans. But Jesus, unlike other Jews, was full of love for them and the desire that they should be saved from their sins.

⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

They had believed in Jesus based upon the testimony of the woman. Now their belief is deeper, having seen and heard him for themselves.

The Samaritans recognized long before the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah and Savior of the *whole* world, including Samaritans and Gentiles (rather than Jews only).

⁴³ After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴ (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.)

These verses are a bit confusing because Jesus was indeed from Galilee. This appears to say that he's going to where he knows he will not be well received. But verse 46 shows us he arrived in Cana, an area of Galilee away from his hometown of Nazareth.

⁴⁵ So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

Those from Galilee who had gone to Jerusalem and seen his miracles (**John 2:23**) were excited he was coming to their area. They believed on him as the Messiah.

⁴⁶ So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill.

The story of Jesus turning the water into wine is told

in **John 2:1-11**.

The official mentioned here was somehow connected to the king's family (Herod Antipas), either a blood relative or just an officer of the king's court.

47 When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

Word about Jesus had spread, and people all over the area knew of his power. The official was desperate enough to go to Jesus in person, rather than sending a servant, which would have been common for someone in his high position. The man is right to believe that Jesus can heal his son, but mistaken to think that Jesus must come in person to do so, and that he must come before the boy dies or it will be too late (see verse 49).

48 So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

Jesus uses the plural form in the phrase "you see," which means he's not talking to the man only, but to the Galilean Jews in general. Unlike the Samaritans, who believed in Jesus based on the testimony of a woman, the Galileans relied on signs and wonders for their belief.

49 The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." 50 Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.

Had Jesus gone with the man, many might still wonder if Jesus had the power to heal from far away. The confident, doubtless manner in which Jesus said "your son will live" was enough to assure the man that Jesus would heal the boy, and that going in person wasn't necessary.

51 As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. 52 So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." 53 The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household.

The boy recovered so suddenly and drastically that the servants left to find the father and give him the good news. When Jesus healed someone, it was always complete

and immediate (with the exception of **Mark 8:22-25**),
testifying of his great power.

⁵⁴ **This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had
come from Judea to Galilee.**

Jesus had done many miracles in Jerusalem and Judea,
but this was only the second one he did in Cana. The
first was turning the water into wine at the wedding
(**John 2:1-11**).

Chapter Five

¹ After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades.

The Sheep Gate was likely a place through which sheep were led on their way to being used in Jewish sacrifices. Next to this area there was built a pool used for bathing. Five colonnades, or covered areas, were next to the pool, where the sick could lie and wait before entering the pool. These shelters provided shade from the sun and protection from the rain.

³ In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed [waiting for the moving of the water; ⁴ for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had].

The most reliable ancient copies of John's gospel in its original language (Greek) do not contain the last part of verse three nor any of verse four (that which appears above inside []). Still, we find these words in some translations of the Bible. In other translations, the words are not included in the regular text, but are shown in the notes of explanation at the bottom of the page.

Where did the words come from if they weren't part of the original book John wrote? It could be that a scribe (one whose job was to make copies of God's Word by hand) wrote the words along the side of the page to explain to the reader what the people believed: that the waters of the pool were stirred by an angel of the Lord, and the first person into the pool when it was stirred would be healed. Apparently, these words of explanation were later copied by mistake into the main part of the text written by John himself.

Some argue that the words are part of John's original gospel and should be included in translations of the Bible. They believe it was true that an angel of the Lord regularly stirred the waters of the pool and healed the first person to enter. But this idea doesn't fit the pattern of other miracles in the Bible. A key purpose of miracles was to prove that a messenger had come from God, but in the case of the pool, no message was even given. And it also doesn't seem likely that God would reward those who selfishly competed to get into the pool ahead of others.

In short, we should understand the last part of verse three and all of verse four to be an explanation of what people commonly believed at the time about the pool, but that wasn't really true.

⁵ One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"

The man had been a prisoner of his own useless body longer than many others have been alive. It is likely that he had suffered longer than anyone else who had come to the pool for healing, and this may be why Jesus chose this one to heal among the many others. We cannot know for sure.

It wasn't that Jesus didn't know whether the man wanted to be healed that led him to ask the question. Of course he wanted to be healed. That's why he was there hoping to be the first one into the pool. Two likely reasons for Jesus' asking were to open the conversation with concern and to stir within the man some faith and hope of being healed.

⁷ The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me."

It does not occur to this man that Jesus may be able to heal him. He believes his only chance for a cure is to be the first one into the water when it starts moving. At this point, the only help he imagines getting from Jesus is that Jesus might help him down into the water before anyone else gets in.

**⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk."
⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.**

In a voice of authority, Jesus gives the man a command to get up, and when the man moves in obedience he is healed immediately. Not only was he told to get up, but also to carry his bed, a clear sign to all who had known this man for nearly 40 years that he was healed.

This took place on the Sabbath, or Saturday, the one day a week in which Jews were forbidden by the Old Testament law to do work, including carrying things (**Exodus 20:8-10; Jeremiah 17:21**). As we'll see in the next verse, the Jews would complain about both the healing and the carrying of the bed because they were

done on the Sabbath. See the notes on verse 16 for an explanation of whether it was right for Jesus first to heal on the Sabbath, then to command the man to carry his bed.

¹⁰ So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

When John writes "**the Jews**," he often refers to the leaders of the Jews, not the ordinary people. Apparently the healed man was officially stopped by the Jewish rulers and questioned.

¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'"

The man now healed defends himself with a reasonable argument. Someone had healed him miraculously, and if he had the power to do that, then he had the authority to tell him to carry his bed, even if it was the Sabbath. The man was right.

¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, "Take up your bed and walk'?" ¹³ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

We can see the pride and hardness of heart in the Jewish leaders at this point. Their question should have been, "Who is it that healed you with such power, that we may find him and give him glory?" Instead, they asked who it was who had, in their minds, violated the Sabbath and encouraged another to do so as well.

Before being healed, the man likely had heard of Jesus but had never seen him. Jesus didn't tell the man his name when he healed them. Instead, he did the miracle and slipped away unnoticed.

¹⁴ Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."

One of the first things the healed man did, probably on the same day, was go to the temple. He probably did not make it to the temple much during the years of his sickness, and he probably felt a great need to give thanks to God for his healing.

From Jesus' words, it appears that the man's sickness

was a result of sinfulness long before. We shouldn't think that someone's illness or condition is always caused by some particular sin. Sometimes it is, as in this case, and sometimes it isn't (**John 9:1-3**). We live in a world where bad or difficult things happen as a result of the curse God put on his creation after Adam sinned (**Genesis 3:14-19**), but that doesn't mean every bad thing happens because of a particular sin.

Jesus warns the man to avoid sin now or something worse could happen. There are sins he probably could not commit while sick, but which would be possible now that he was well. He must avoid them. And he must avoid the kind of sin for which he was made ill in the first place. Ultimately, sinfulness without repentance would lead to hell, which would be much worse than his 38 years of sickness.

¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

This man was probably not trying to cause trouble for Jesus by reporting him to the Jewish leaders. He was probably trying to save his own life. The law stated that if anyone carried anything to their home from a public place on the Sabbath, they could be stoned to death. The man was making his case that he was commanded by Jesus to carry his bed, and he believed Jesus had the authority (which is correct) to give such a command.

¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

Here we must ask two questions: (1) Was Jesus right or wrong to heal on the Sabbath and tell the man to carry his bed? (2) Were the Jewish leaders right or wrong, according to the Old Testament law, to oppose Jesus?

The first question is important because if Jesus ever violated the law of the Old Testament, he would be guilty of sin, and would not be able to offer himself up as a perfect sacrifice on the cross for the sins of everyone else. If he sinned, then he could only die for his own sins, and not yours or mine.

The answer to the first question should be obvious: Jesus never sinned, including by healing this man or telling him to carry his bed. The intent of God's law regarding the Sabbath was that one day a week was to be different, and that people would not do their ordinary work on that day, but would use the day to rest and worship God. The passages of the Old Testament which forbade the carrying of burdens apparently referred to those who were going about their work as though it were

an ordinary day. The Sabbath was a gift from God to man, giving him one day a week to rest from his labor.

But over the centuries, Jewish leaders offered their own opinions about what it meant not to work on the Sabbath. Some believed that to carry anything at all, no matter how small, was a violation of the command not to carry burdens. Even wearing false teeth or having a button in one's pocket was wrong, they believed! The leaders would write down their opinions about the Sabbath law, such as how far they believed someone could walk before it was considered work. These opinions soon became the rules that the Jewish people were required to follow. The Sabbath, God's gift of rest for man, was turned into an occasion of strict obedience to man-made rules. It was these rules that Jesus violated, not the Sabbath of God.

This leads us to the answer to the second question. The Jews were not right, according to the Old Testament, to oppose Jesus. He was not violating God's laws, but rather man's interpretation of the law. There is a big difference.

Even in our churches today, we must take great care not to make our opinions of right and wrong equal to the Scriptures. Someone who acts in violation of man-made traditions is not necessarily sinning against God. But someone who condemns another over matters of tradition is sinning. Where the Bible speaks, we should speak. Where the Bible is silent, we should not claim that it speaks. When there is a disagreement within a church about how something should be done, ask this question: is this a matter of clear Biblical teaching, or is it a matter of the traditions of man?

¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

When God rested on the seventh day (**Genesis 2:1-3**), he rested from the work he had been doing for the last six days: creating everything. The intent of the Sabbath was for man to follow God's example by resting one day a week from doing the kind of work he'd been doing the other six days. But the Bible doesn't say that on the seventh day God rested from doing works of mercy and love. From these things he never rests. Following the Father's example, Jesus did works of love and mercy on the Sabbath, and broke no law in doing so.

¹⁸ This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Although the way this verse is written is a little confusing, it does not mean to say that Jesus broke the Sabbath. Instead, it refers to the Jews' *belief* that he was breaking the Sabbath.

Some false religious groups (the Jehovah's Witnesses, for example) teach that Jesus never claimed to be God. But it is obvious from this verse and the one before that he did. In verse 17, Jesus used the words "**my Father**" instead of "**our Father**," to describe a special relationship that he had with God that the Jews didn't: he was the very Son of God. The Jews understood very well that he was calling himself God. They thought this was blasphemy (falsely claiming to be God), and for this they wanted to kill him.

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

What Jesus is explaining here is very difficult for human beings to understand, but is so important that Jesus uses the phrase "truly, truly" to emphasize it. The Bible teaches here and elsewhere that Jesus the Son and God the Father are equal. The Holy Spirit is equal to them as well. They are three distinct persons, but they make up our one God. The Father can be called God, the Son (Jesus) can be called God, and the Holy Spirit can be called God. But it is not true to say we have three Gods, but rather that we have one God made up of three persons. We use the same kind of language when we say that two people who get married become "one." They are still two people, but together they become like one.

What Jesus is telling the Pharisees here is that he and the Father are so united together that Jesus only does what he sees and knows the Father to be doing. Therefore, to accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath is the same as accusing the Father of breaking the Sabbath. They would not dare make such an accusation.

²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

Before God the Son turned himself into the man on earth named Jesus, he existed with the Father and had all the same limitless qualities of the Father. For example, he was *omnipresent*, meaning he was in all places at once; he was *omniscient*, meaning he knew absolutely everything; and he was *omnipotent*, which means he had the power to do

anything at all that could be done.

But during the time he lived on earth as the man named Jesus, he laid aside these unlimited qualities of God and became a limited being. For example, Jesus was not in all places at all times. He was in one place at a time just like other humans. As a man, he apparently did not know all things (**Mark 13:32, Luke 8:44-46**). And it appears that as a man he was not all-powerful (**Matthew 26:53**). When he did miracles or read someone's heart (something a human being cannot naturally do), he likely received the same help from the Holy Spirit that the apostles got when they did the miracles recorded in the book of Acts.

All this explains why Jesus uses the words he uses in this verse. The Father shows the Son all that he's doing because the Son laid that knowledge aside when he became a man. Jesus goes on to say that the Father will show the Son and the Son will do much greater works than healing a man by a pool.

²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

In the section beginning with this verse, Jesus will continue to give evidence to the Jewish leaders that he is equal with God the Father by mentioning some works he will do, the kind of works one could only do by the power of God.

First he mentions raising the dead. The Jews knew of God's power to raise the dead because both Elijah and Elisha had done it by God's power in the Old Testament. Jesus, as well, would raise people from the dead in a way that would show that God's power was his power as well. He would also raise people from the dead spiritually. This is a way of describing how a person changes when he becomes saved. Symbolically, the old life is put to death, and the new life with Christ begins. This is symbolized in baptism.

²² The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Judgment is also something to be done by God only, yet Jesus says he will judge. This is more evidence that Jesus is God. He has so far mentioned three reasons to believe he is God: [1] he does the same things that God the Father does (verses 19, 20); [2] he has the power to raise people from the dead (verse 21); and [3] he has the authority to judge the world. The only correct way for

the Jews to respond is to give honor to Jesus, and by not doing so they are dishonoring God.

The time of Jesus' ministry was a unique time for the Jews. Some Jews who had been faithful and were in the state of being saved because of their belief in God actually lost their salvation by not believing in Jesus the Son upon hearing from him or about him.

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Jesus said in verse 21 that he "**gives life to whom he will.**" Now we see who the people are to whom he gives life: those who hear his word and believe that he was sent by the father.

We find only a mention of belief in this verse, with no clear mention of repentance, confession, or baptism. Yet from other Scriptures we learn that these are the natural actions of those who truly believe. We can therefore say that true belief includes them.

²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

The "**hour**" which "**is coming, and is now here**" refers to the period of history, starting with Jesus' ministry, in which people can be saved by believing on Jesus as the Son of God, Savior, and Lord. This time was "**coming**" because Jesus had not yet finished his work by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. But the time was "**now here**" because Jesus had begun, and already people were learning what they needed to learn to receive him as Savior and Lord.

The word *death* always means separation. When a person dies, it is because his spirit separates from his body, leaving the body lifeless. The spirit, however, goes on to live elsewhere.

When Jesus speaks of "**the dead**," he refers to those who are unsaved, and therefore are separated from God. They can be saved by hearing the voice of the Son, which for us today would mean hearing the Word of God as recorded in Scripture.

To hear doesn't just mean to allow the words to enter the ears. A person can hear a sermon, and yet if their life stays unchanged, they didn't really hear at all in the way Jesus is talking about. To truly hear means to allow the words to go not just into the ears, but into the heart, so that a change takes place.

26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

God is the only Being who exists by himself. All other living beings came from those who lived before them, but God has always existed, and did not come from any other living being. He is the One who gave life to everyone else. No creature is alive who didn't get his life from God the Father.

The Son of God, having been sent by the Father, is the one who gives spiritual life to all who believe in him. No person has eternal life who didn't get that life from Jesus. By dying on the cross, Jesus took the punishment that sinful man deserved, allowing man to have eternal life that he doesn't deserve.

27 And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

Just as Jesus is able to give eternal life to those who believe in him, he is also the one who will deliver judgment on those who refuse to believe. While God the Father and God the Son (Jesus) are equal, God the Son took the form of a servant (**Philippians 2:7**) and as a man was given authority by God the Father to judge the rest of mankind. Unbelievers will be judged guilty of their sins by the One who was a man like them, but never sinned (**Hebrews 4:15**).

28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Here Jesus gives the Jews a warning that is good for us as well. At the end of time, all those who have died will be resurrected, and they and all those who are still alive will be taken from the earth to the final judgment.

We cannot earn our way into eternal life by doing good works (**Ephesians 2:8, 9**). We can never do enough good things to deserve to go to heaven, because we have all sinned (**Romans 3:23**), and therefore, we all deserve hell (**Romans 6:23**). When Jesus speaks here of those who have done good, he means those who have shown by their good works that they have been saved and changed by the mercy of God, their Savior (**James 2:14-18**).

Those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior will be left to serve their own punishment for sinfulness in the everlasting lake of fire.

³⁰ I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Jesus continues to describe for the Jewish leaders his very close union with God the Father. Jesus does nothing on his own, but everything he does is what both the Father and he want to be done, and they always agree. Even the judgments Jesus brings against the guilty are just, and come not from himself, but from the Father who is showing him all things.

³¹ If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not deemed true. ³² There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true.

According to the law, it was not permitted for a man to testify alone on his own behalf in the courts. At least two witnesses were required. This makes sense, because anyone can say anything about themselves, but it's harder to get someone to testify about something unless they believe it to be true. What Jesus is saying here is, if he were the only one to testify about himself, it would be reasonable not to believe his claims.

However, Jesus has more than just himself to give testimony. As he is about to explain to them, he has the testimony of John the Baptist, who came before him to prepare people through repentance for the ministry of Jesus. And, even greater than the testimony of John, he has the testimony of God the Father himself, who testifies about Jesus through the great works he has sent Jesus to perform in their presence.

³³ You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth.

The Jewish leaders had sent a group of priests and Levites to John the Baptist to find out who he was, and he testified to them about the coming Jesus (**John 1:19-27**).

³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

Jesus doesn't depend on the testimony of human beings. He is the Messiah whether men testify of him or not. Nevertheless, since the Jewish leaders believed that John

the Baptist was a prophet, Jesus mentions him in order to help convince them of who he is.

³⁵ He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

It was common in that time to refer to those who taught as "lamps" because they helped light the way of understanding for those who learned from them. John the Baptist was such a lamp during his ministry (which likely ended about four months before this conversation because of his arrest and imprisonment).

Some of these Jewish leaders must have been among those who came to listen to John, and even admitted he was a prophet during the time of his highest popularity. But the more he testified about Jesus, the less they liked him, and they eventually turned away from him.

³⁶ But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.

Healing the sick, raising the dead, and doing so many other miracles that they could not be recorded (**John 21:24, 25**) gave far greater testimony about who Jesus was than even the words of the great John the Baptist.

³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.

God had spoken through the prophets of the Old Testament about the coming Messiah (Jesus). He had also spoken audibly when Jesus was baptized, saying, "**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased**" (**Matthew 3:17**). God also appeared in visible forms (shapes) at times in the Old Testament. He also inspired Scripture for them to read, which if understood correctly, would point to the appearance and ministry of Jesus.

To say the Jews had not heard or seen God on these occasions, and that they didn't have his word abiding in them, was a way of saying they had disregarded plain evidence that has been in front of them all along.

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me that you

may have life.

The Jewish leaders were known for their in-depth study of the Old Testament Scriptures (the New Testament had not yet been written). They thought that by studying the Scriptures they could learn to obey them to the point of earning eternal life. But they didn't understand two very important things: [1] They could not obey the law well enough to earn eternal life. They could only receive eternal life through the death of the Messiah, who would obey the law perfectly, then lay down his life for them. [2] Jesus is the one who fits the description of all the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah.

⁴¹ I do not receive glory from people.

Here, Jesus compares his own attitude with that of the Jewish leaders. They loved to receive praise from other men. It was often for this praise that they worked so hard to become religious leaders.

Jesus, on the other hand, sets the example for us in the way he directs the attention of others toward God the Father. While the Jewish leaders were not worthy of praise, they sought it. Yet Jesus, worthy of praise, preferred to see others honoring God the father.

⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

The reason the Jewish leaders did not try to direct the attention and praise of men toward God is that they didn't love him as much they loved themselves. They were involved in their religious practices not to show love to God, but to gain the attention and praise of men for themselves.

⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.

Jesus was the true Messiah whose coming was predicted and described in the Old Testament. Indeed he was the One who came in the name of God the Father. Yet, because he was different than the kind of Messiah they were expecting, they rejected him. Jesus predicts here that they will be deceived by others later on who claim to be the Christ. Historical writings show us that this was true. Many false Christs came with great promotion of themselves, and many deceived Jews followed them.

⁴⁴ How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

The main desire of the Jewish leaders was to impress one another, and to receive the praise of one another. They cared little about what God thought of them, so they didn't try to please him, only each other. This pride and love of worldly position kept them from believing in or following Jesus.

⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

Jesus had been accused of breaking the Sabbath. He could have responded by accusing the Jews of breaking the whole law. But, he says, it was not necessary for him to bring such an accusation, because they already stand accused by Moses himself, whom they claimed to love and respect and follow.

How does Moses accuse them? Because in his Old Testament writings, he wrote about the Messiah coming, and of the Jews' need to follow him when he came. Now the Messiah had come, and they were rejecting him in direct disobedience to the writings of Moses.

Chapter Six

¹ After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

The events of chapter six likely took place about two years after the events of chapter five.

² And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick.

The story we're about to read, the miraculous feeding of the multitude, is the only miracle recorded in all four of the Gospels (besides Jesus rising from the dead). The other three accounts are found in **Matthew 14:13-21**, **Mark 6:30-44**, and **Luke 9:10-17**.

John the author doesn't tell us much about the signs Jesus did that made the people want to follow him. Matthew records much of this in **Matthew 12:2-14:13**.

³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples.

The crowds were pressing against and following Jesus much of the time, and it was difficult to get away from them for a short while to rest. Even as Jesus had crossed the sea in a boat to go up this mountain, the people were crossing a bridge on foot to continue following him.

⁴ Now the Passover, the fast of the Jews, was at hand.

For an explanation of the Passover, see the notes on **John 1:29**.

⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" ⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

Jesus had managed to spend at least a brief time with his disciples, and being engaged in conversation with them, he did not notice until he lifted his eyes that the crowd had found him and the people were making their way toward him.

Jesus knew of his own ability to provide food for such a large crowd miraculously. But it was time to test

Philip, to see if the things he had seen, heard, and been taught had led him to trust Jesus in all situations.

⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

One denarius was about a day's wage for a soldier or day laborer. The disciples may have had about 200 denarii with them (**Mark 6:37**), but to spend it on food for this crowd would bankrupt them, and it would still not buy enough bread to give everyone in the large crowd even a small bit. Although Philip has been with Jesus long enough to see extraordinary power, he is still only thinking about the ordinary options available through which the people might be fed.

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, ⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"

Andrew shows the same lack of faith as Philip, pointing out that while some food is present, it is so very little for such a large crowd.

The loaves were likely small, as they were carried by one boy who probably intended to eat them all. They were made of barley, which normally was grown to feed the animals of the day, but also from which bread was made for the poorest to eat. The fish were likely quite small as well.

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number.

Mark 6:40 shows us that they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties, as if they were about to receive a meal. It may have given the disciples anxiety to have them sit in such a way, knowing there was no food available for them to eat.

The estimate of five thousand men does not include women and children (**Matthew 14:21**), so it is safe to say there were well more than five thousand people there needing to be fed.

¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.

Jesus sets a good example for us in giving thanks to

God for the provided food. The food we receive is a mercy from God, and we should always receive it with thanks, and acknowledge that it is God who provides every blessing we have.

There was no shortage in this miracle. No one had to take only a little bit for there to be enough. Everyone had as much as they wanted, and all were satisfied.

¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." ¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten.

John is the only Gospel writer who includes this command from Jesus. It shows us that even though God can provide for us abundantly and without end, we should not be wasteful, especially when others in need might be helped out of what we have that is extra.

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

The Jews were expecting a prophet to come based on **Deuteronomy 18:15-18**. This is the same prophet about whom the Jewish delegation questioned John the Baptist, whether he was himself the prophet (**John 1:21**). The prophecy was indeed referring to Jesus, the Messiah, and he gave evidence of his being the one by performing this miracle.

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

For a long time the Jews had suffered under the reigns of kings who were unfriendly to them, and they often suffered hunger as well. Since they were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, they were ready for him to become their king, and they were confident that he would be good to them and they would not worry about hunger anymore.

But they didn't understand that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world. He didn't come to overthrow Herod and take over as their political king. His kingdom is made up of all people in all places and all times whose hearts are open to his rule. All saved Christians make up the kingdom of which Jesus is the King.

So, knowing the people's misunderstanding and intent to force him to be their earthly king right away, Jesus

dismissed the crowds (**Matthew 14:23**), escaped to the mountain alone, and resisted their plans.

**16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,
17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.**

It was time to leave for home, so they boarded a boat to head toward Capernaum. Jesus probably wanted his disciples to get away from the people so his disciples wouldn't be tempted as well by the idea of Jesus overthrowing Herod to become the Jews' earthly king.

**18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.
19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened.**

Apparently the wind and sea were calm when the disciples started off, and became rough as they were quite far out. Mark's version tells us they were struggling to proceed because the wind was against them (**Mark 6:48**). It is no surprise that they became frightened when, in the darkness, they saw Jesus walking on the water toward them. Mark's account tells us they thought he was a ghost!

**20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."
21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.**

Their fear immediately turns into joy as they recognize that it is Jesus coming toward them. In this short account we find two miracles: Jesus walking on the water, and their immediate arrival at their destination once Jesus entered the boat.

**22 On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.
23 Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.
24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.**

The crowd had seen only one boat at shore, the one which his disciples boarded when they left for Capernaum. Since Jesus did not leave with his disciples, the people believed he was still somewhere among them. They didn't know he had walked out on the water to enter the disciples' boat. They searched for him, still wanting to make him their king, and when they didn't find him they boarded some of the boats that passed by during the day, bound for Capernaum. They intended to wait there for him, assuming that since his disciples were there, he would soon join them.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

What a mystery this must have been to the crowd. They had no idea how he arrived in Capernaum before they did, being that he didn't cross the night before with his disciples (so they thought), and he did not go with them on one of the boats that passed in the day. Even if he had walked all night around the shore of the sea, he should not have arrived ahead of them. The idea that he walked on the water and entered the disciples' boat did not occur to them.

26 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

The people following Jesus were doing so not because they had seen his signs and wished to give him honor and glory as the Son of God, but because he fed them and they wanted more food. They wanted him to be their king not only because they were tired of the difficult reign of Herod, but because they believed his ability to provide food would keep them from ever going hungry.

We learn from verse 59 of this chapter that the discussion beginning here took place in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus is about to lay out before the people the hard truth of what it really means to follow him sincerely, in a way that truly pleases God.

27 Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

Jesus isn't saying that we shouldn't work to provide the things we need for our physical survival. The

scripture teaches elsewhere the value of working to earn a living (see **Ephesians 4:28** and **2 Thessalonians 3:7-13**). Rather, Jesus is making a comparison between our concern for physical things and our concern for spiritual things.

Our purpose in living is not to do work so we can eat. Our purpose is to serve God and make disciples. That is the most important thing we do, even though it is necessary as well to work to provide food for ourselves. It is better for someone to say, "I am a servant of God, who also happens to be a farmer" than to say, "I am a farmer who also happens to be a servant of God."

The "**food that endures to eternal life**" are the teachings of Scripture, particularly the Gospel. Feeding upon the truths of God's Word will help us to grow spiritually, with benefits that last forever. When Jesus was tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread (**Matthew 4:1-4**), his reply was "**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.**" It is important that we read and study God's Word faithfully, as well as to read and teach God's word regularly to those cannot read it for themselves.

As we have already seen in **John 1**, Jesus is the Word of God made into flesh. While he came to earth to give his life as a sacrifice, he spent the three years before his death explaining the truths of God. This is why he speaks here of the spiritual food "**which the Son of Man will give to you.**"

In ancient times, a king or official would prove that a document came from him by sealing it with soft wax and pressing his ring into it, so the wax would harden with his unique design in it. This was called "setting his seal" to it. God "**set his seal**" on the Son, proving through the holiness and miracles of the Son that the Father had sent him.

28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

This is a reasonable question being asked by people who wish to please God and be saved. They were interested to know whether he was really the Messiah, they had gone a great distance to follow and find him, and now they wish to hear what he says about eternal life.

29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

The most important work of God a person can do, without which all other good works are useless, is to believe that Jesus is God the Son. No one can please God

the Father without believing in Jesus the Son (**John 14:6, Acts 4:12**).

³⁰ So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"

Having been told that the greatest work they can do is to believe in Jesus, it is not unreasonable to ask for a sign that he is worthy of such belief. Many had seen the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 and had crossed the sea to find him, already believing or close to believing he is the Christ. It probably was not they who are asking for a sign in this verse. It was likely other Jews, probably leaders, who were present in the synagogue now, but had not seen the miracle Jesus did across the sea.

³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

When the Jews' ancestors, the people of Israel, were wandering in the wilderness after being set free from being slaves in Egypt, God fed them for forty years by dropping manna (a special kind of bread) onto the ground for them to gather and eat (**Exodus 16:14-16**). As the years went by, people forgot that it was God who gave them the manna, and they gave credit to Moses, calling him a great leader because the people ate the manna during that time.

And so it seems that the Jews are now saying to Jesus, we have a sign that Moses was a great leader sent from God because our ancestors had manna to eat while he led them. What kind of sign can you do to show us you are sent from God as well?

³² Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Jesus reminds the Jews that, while Moses was a great leader, he did not provide the bread from heaven. God provided the bread. Now, God the Father has sent the true bread from heaven, and that is Jesus.

We have already seen other metaphors (see notes on **John 1:21**) used to describe Jesus in the book of John. He has been called the Word, because he communicates the thoughts of God to man. He has been called light, because he helps people find their way to the Father.

Now he is being called the true bread from heaven, even greater bread than that which fell in the time of Moses.

The meaning of this metaphor appears to be this: while normal bread keeps a person alive who feeds on it, so they can avoid death by starvation, Jesus is the spiritual bread that can help us stay alive spiritually (when we're fed by his teachings) and will keep us from dying spiritually (going to hell).

Many people believe that we only find Jesus in the Bible by reading the New Testament. The truth is we can read a lot about him in the Old Testament, even though the name "Jesus" does not appear there. The story of God sending manna down from heaven to feed the Jews while they were on their way to the Promised Land is really a symbolic picture of God sending Jesus to earth from heaven. God's children are fed by the teachings of Jesus while they're making their way to the true Promised Land, heaven.

³⁴ They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always."

As we've seen happen before, the people to whom Jesus is speaking understand him to be talking about physical things. They want regular bread for the body, and an endless supply of it.

³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

Whoever comes and believes in Jesus will not hunger and will never thirst. When Jesus says this, he still isn't talking about physical hunger and thirst. At times even the Christian must eat food and drink liquid because he hungers and thirsts for these things. Instead, Jesus is talking about a spiritual satisfaction that only comes to the Christian, and is completely unknown to the person separated from God. The person separated from God always lives with an unsatisfied hunger and thirst for true contentment in life, a feeling that something is missing (this is well described in the book of **Ecclesiastes**). The person who maintains a relationship with God and His Son has a kind of satisfaction that keeps him supplied with joy and peace, even when bad things are happening to him.

³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

Jesus tells them here that the reason some of them are

not enjoying this spiritual bread is that they don't truly believe in him. Like he said in verse 26, some were not interested in believing and following him, only in receiving regular bread to eat. Those who truly believe in Jesus will receive him as their Lord and Savior.

Some at that time believed Jesus was a great and powerful man, but they had no interest in following him, learning his teachings, or obeying him. Their kind of belief in him was not enough to save them from hell. In the same way today, there are those who believe Jesus was a great man in history who influenced others with his moral teachings, but that he wasn't really the perfect Son of God, or God himself in the form of a man. This type of belief also does not help a person escape the punishment of hell, or enjoy the life of peace and contentment on earth that he promised to those who "ate the bread of life."

³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

This verse has been used by some to teach that God chooses the people of the world he wants to save, and sends them to Jesus. The rest of the people, according to these false teachers, remain unbelievers because God did not want to save them and did not allow them to believe. But the Bible plainly teaches that God loves everyone in the world and offers salvation to everyone in the world (**John 3:16**). Whether a person is saved or not is based on his or her own decision to receive the salvation offered by God to all.

So who are those whom the Father gives to Jesus? According to verse 40, they are those who look on the Son and believe on him to receive eternal life. According to verse 45, they are those who have heard and learned from the Father, believing the truths about him rather than rejecting them.

This verse has also been used by some to teach that once a person is saved, he will always be saved. After all, they teach, Jesus said he would never cast out someone who has come to him. But this verse does not say that those who come to him will never choose on their own to abandon their faith. Other scriptures show that this is possible. Sometimes people come to Jesus and receive salvation, then abandon their faith, and therefore their salvation, later on (see **Hebrews 6:4-6**). Jesus will not cast out those who come to him and stay with him. Nor will he force someone to remain with him who would prefer to abandon him.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

Jesus will not cast out those who come to him because it is the will of the Father that he should receive those who have believed, and raise them up on the last day.

⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

When a believer dies, his soul goes to a place of waiting in the presence of the Lord (**Luke 16:22; 23:42, 43**). When Jesus returns, the believers who are still alive will have their earthly bodies changed to glorified, eternal bodies for eternal living in heaven. The souls of the believers who had died will come out of their place of waiting and receive glorified bodies for eternal living in heaven (**1 Corinthians 15:50-53**). This is their resurrection, or being raised up on the last day.

When an unbeliever dies, his soul goes to a place of waiting and torment (**Luke 16:22, 23**). He will not receive a glorified body. When Jesus returns, the unbeliever will face judgment before the throne of God and be cast into the eternal lake of fire (**Revelation 20:11-15**).

⁴¹ So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." ⁴² They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

These Jews were hoping they'd found a man who would continue to provide them bread to eat. In their unbelief they rejected the spiritual bread he had to offer, which would have satisfied better and longer. It is a natural tendency of the flesh to seek things of the world while neglecting spiritual things that would be much better.

⁴³ Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

Jesus means here that no one can come to him *by faith* unless God first draws him. Certainly anyone could come

as these Jews had seeking food. God's drawing of people to Jesus takes place through the teaching of the gospel (as he explains in the next verse). This teaching is only effective when the person receiving it believes and accepts it. In this way, they are drawn and come to Jesus.

⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me--

Here, Jesus quotes **Isaiah 54:13**. Even as far back as the time of the Old Testament, it had been prophesied that God would draw people to himself through his Son, the Word made flesh.

⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father.

Jesus has just said that everyone who learns from the Father comes to Jesus. He doesn't want anyone to misunderstand him, thinking one had to have personally seen God as a student normally sees his teacher. One merely had to have *heard* God's word and accepted it to be taught by him.

With this clarification, Jesus also reminds us of the difference between himself and any other man: he has seen God because he is God in the form of a man. No other man has yet seen God, though he has had opportunity to hear his word and believe.

⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

Just as in **John 3:16**, we find only a mention of belief in this verse, with no clear mention of repentance, confession, or baptism. Yet from other Scriptures we learn that these are the natural actions of those who truly believe. We can therefore say that true belief includes them.

⁴⁸ I am the bread of life.

Just as bread keeps the body alive, Jesus and his teachings keep us alive spiritually.

⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven,

so that one may eat of it and not die.

Even those who eat plenty of bread will someday die. It can keep a person alive for a long time, but not forever. But the spiritual bread offered by Jesus gives eternal life.

When one receives Jesus, the death of Jesus on the cross takes the place of the punishment the person himself deserves. He therefore may enter into eternal life rather than receiving punishment in the fire of hell.

⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

Jesus tells of how he would offer his body of flesh to be tortured and broken as he suffered the punishment for the sins of all who would come to be saved by faith in him. He would refer to this later while establishing the Lord's supper in the upper room by breaking a loaf of bread and saying, "This is my body, which is given for you" (**Luke 22:19**).

⁵² The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Like we have seen before in Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus is speaking spiritual truths, and those hearing him misunderstand because they are thinking in terms of this world. The idea of eating a man's flesh must have been especially offensive to the Jews, who were forbidden to eat the flesh of any living creature.

⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." ⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.

Jesus is not telling them literally to eat his flesh and drink his blood. He is speaking symbolically, telling them they need to receive him and partake of him. If a person is hungry, it does him no good to go into a room with tables full of food, look at all of it, and leave. The person must take the food in hand and partake of it, at which time the food becomes part of him as it is used to sustain the body.

In the same way, Jesus is inviting his hearers to partake of him. This means receiving him as Lord and consuming his teachings as spiritual food, allowing the truths to become a part of them.

⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

While this verse and the ones before are often read before the sharing of the Lord's supper in churches, Jesus probably was not referring directly the Lord's supper here, although some of the symbols are the same. After all, it is possible for one to partake of the Lord's supper without really abiding in Christ or Christ abiding in him.

The meaning of these verses is deeper than that. We must partake of Jesus himself, living in him and allowing him to live through us by obeying his teachings, which we have consumed and made a part of us.

⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.

Here Jesus tells us that as he lived by maintaining a close loving relationship with the Father, so will we live and thrive spiritually by maintaining a close relationship with the Son.

⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

Jesus repeats his point from **John 6:32**, that he is the bread that came down from heaven. In partaking of him, people would live forever, not on earth, but in heaven.

⁵⁹ Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

Jesus taught these important truths openly and publicly. He would later remind the high priests who were accusing him of false teaching in secret that the things he taught were said out in the open for all to hear (**John 18:19-21**).

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

Sometimes the word "disciples" refers only to the twelve men Jesus chose to be his apostles. Other times it refers more generally to those who were following him and listening to him. In this verse, it probably referred to many more people than just the twelve apostles.

Many of them found Jesus' words to be difficult to believe. They weren't as hard to understand as they were to accept, this being because Jesus was unlike what they were expecting the Messiah to be like.

⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?"

While his followers were still trying to accept Jesus' claim that he came down from heaven itself, he gives them another difficult truth to consider. Some day he will lift off the ground and ascend into heaven. Ultimately, only the apostles would be there to see it (**Acts 1:6-9**), but Jesus didn't hesitate to describe it for the people before him now. And since he was to leave the earth in this way, obviously his flesh would not be eaten physically, a clue for them that he was speaking spiritually.

⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Now he gives them another indication that they aren't to physically eat his flesh and blood. The flesh is worth nothing, he tells them. It is the Holy Spirit who gives life. They are to feed on Jesus spiritually by believing in him, and after he ascends into heaven, the Holy Spirit will come to live in them, helping them to grow to be more like Jesus.

⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.)

Being God's Son, Jesus had the special ability to know what was in the hearts of people. He knew which ones wanted to be his true disciples, and which ones were following him with wrong motives.

⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Already Jesus has spoken of the Father giving people to him, drawing people to him, and now he speaks of the Father granting that people come to him. As we have seen (see notes on verse 44), the Father gives people to Jesus, draws people to Jesus, and grants the ability to come to Jesus through the teaching of the gospel.

But those who, in the end, are not among the followers of Jesus and wind up suffering their punishment for sin in the lake of fire, can only blame themselves for resisting God's drawing by refusing to believe the gospel.

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"

Many had followed him because it was popular and exciting. Some thought they'd get something out of it like regular food or healing. But when he explained that to follow him was about feeding on his truths, and laying aside themselves to help build his kingdom, they lost interest. Many have left our modern churches for the same reason. Many stay in some churches because the truth about what it means to follow Jesus hasn't been explained well to them.

Now comes the moment of truth for the twelve. Jesus asks them directly whether they want to stay or go, whether they're in it for him or just for themselves.

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

Simon Peter was usually the first of the disciples to speak or answer a question, and sometimes what he had to say wasn't very wise. But here he makes a confession on behalf of the group that is full of wisdom. They recognize Jesus as God in the form of a man, and they don't want to be so foolish as to abandon him.

⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." ⁷¹ He spoke of Judas the Son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.

After Peter's statement, Jesus declares that he chose

them because he knew they would be faithful and help fulfill the spreading of his kingdom. Yet, he does know that one of the twelve will not remain faithful, and will betray him later on, leading to the crucifixion of Jesus. It is reasonable to think that Jesus mentions this here so no one would think he made a mistake or chose Judas unwisely. He chose eleven of his disciples knowing their faithfulness, and he chose Judas knowing his betrayal would lead to Jesus' death on the cross. All this was part of God's plan.

Chapter Seven

¹ After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

The Jews in Judea were still angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath (**John 5:16**), and they wanted to put him to death for it. Rather than stay there and put himself in danger before the time had come for his death, he spent his time ministering in Galilee.

² Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand.

This feast was also known as the Feast of Tents, or the Feast of Tabernacles, and was one of three feasts that all Jewish males were required to observe. It lasted eight days, during which the people put up tents and lived in them as a reminder of the time their ancestors wandered in the wilderness living in tents after the Lord brought them out of Egypt (**Leviticus 23:42, 43**).

³ So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.

Because Jesus was very different than what the Jews were expecting their Messiah to be, even his own brothers had difficulty believing he was the one. There is no evidence that they were present for any of his miracles, or they might have believed by now. Many of them would become believers later on, including James, the author of the New Testament letter by the same name.

They suggested Jesus go to Jerusalem to perform miracles for the Jews gathered there for the festival. The suggestion was probably made more in ridicule than sincerity.

⁶ Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

Some think Jesus meant here that the time for his death had not come yet, so he must not go to Judea where he would be in danger. But as we will see in verse 10, Jesus did go. What he probably meant here was that he

should wait and go a little bit late. If he traveled there along with many other Jews, it might turn into a parade, drawing a lot of attention to him as he arrived and putting him in more danger. His brothers, on the other hand, were free to go at any time without such danger.

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

The world could not hate them because they were of the world. They had the same practices and behavior, and they never said or did anything in opposition to the world. But the world hates those who both live and preach in opposition to it.

⁸ You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." ⁹ After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

Some of the manuscripts from which the Bible was translated include the word "yet" in what Jesus said, making it "I am not going yet." What he said in the original language meant that he was not going at the time he said the words. He did not say he would not go at all, which would have been a lie.

¹⁰ But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.

As noted above, going late and by himself allowed him to arrive without attracting attention.

¹¹ The Jews were looking for him at the feast and saying, "Where is he?"

When John uses the phrase, "the Jews," he is almost always talking about the Jewish leaders. This verse probably refers to those who wished to find Jesus so they could bring him harm.

¹² And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," other said, "No, he is leading the people astray."

"The people" refers to the ordinary Jews, who were divided about whether Jesus was worthy of following or not. Those who said he was a good man had probably spent

some time already following and listening to him. Many of those who said he was leading people astray probably didn't spend much time listening to him, but rather were repeating what they'd heard their leaders saying.

13 Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

That is, the ordinary Jews did not speak openly for fear of offending the leaders and being disciplined. The leaders had declared that whoever confessed him would be cast out of the synagogue.

14 About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching.

He did this around the fourth day, as it was an eight-day feast. Jesus taught from the Scriptures as no man could do, because he was the one who wrote them.

15 The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?"

Jesus showed such a deep knowledge of the Old Testament, and was able to explain the meaning so well, showing how passages had been fulfilled, that they were amazed. How, they wondered, could someone have such knowledge who never studied in any of the famous Jewish schools? As we learned from chapter one, Jesus himself is the Word of God made flesh (see notes on **John 1:1**). He knows the word because he is the Word.

16 So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.

The teachings of Jesus were not learned in the famous Jewish schools, but are from God himself. Jesus is the Word of God, sent to communicate the thoughts of God directly to man.

17 If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

What kept the Jewish leaders from believing in Jesus were their own disobedient hearts, and a lack of true desire to please God. It wasn't that Jesus was unconvincing. His words and miracles were powerful, and his truths were full of reason. But because the Jewish

leaders were full of pride, and a desire to glorify themselves, there was no room in their hearts to glorify God nor recognize his Son.

18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

Jesus gives them another test by which the leaders can tell whether Jesus really is the Son of God. Does he promote himself and try to get others to glorify him? Or does he glorify God and try to lead others in glorifying God? The Jewish leaders were known for promoting themselves, trying to impress people and win the praise of man. But Jesus spent his ministry trying to direct the love and praise of people toward God the Father.

19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"

The Jewish leaders took great pride in their knowledge and keeping of the law. They were so angry with Jesus because they believed he had violated the law by healing on the Sabbath. Because of this, they sought to kill him, and Jesus points out that to do so would itself be a violation of the law.

20 The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"

Most of the common Jewish people, especially those who were visiting Jerusalem for the festival (see notes on verses 25 through 27), were unaware that their leaders were wanting to kill Jesus. They thought he must be possessed by a demon to even think such a thing. Jesus knew the thoughts and motives of the leaders much better than the people did.

21 Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel at it.

He refers to healing the man at the pool of Bethesda (**John 5:1-16**). Some marveled at the display of Jesus' power in performing the miracle. Others marveled that he would do such a thing on the Sabbath in violation, they believed, of the law (see notes on **John 5:16**).

22 Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses,

but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?

The law of God required all Jewish boys to be circumcised eight days after being born. The law began in the time of Abraham (**Genesis 17:10**), but Moses confirmed its importance as well in his law (**Leviticus 12:3**). Sometimes the eighth day fell on the Sabbath. The Jews believed that since the law of circumcision came from Abraham before the law of the Sabbath came from Moses, the circumcision should take place on the eighth day even if it fell on the Sabbath.

Jesus' argument here is that if such a wound as circumcision can be made upon a person, as well as a bandage applied to help it heal, on the Sabbath, what is wrong with healing someone whose whole body is sick? As well, the law of love and mercy came before the law of the Sabbath, and Jesus showed love and mercy to the one he healed.

²⁴ Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Jesus tells them to give careful thought to these issues so they can do what's right. It may appear at first that to circumcise a boy on the Sabbath would be wrong, but they had given thought to the issues involved and decided it was permissible. If they would give the same thought to whether it was appropriate to heal on the Sabbath, they would understand that the love and mercy being shown make it permissible as well.

²⁵ Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? ²⁶ And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷ But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."

While many of the visitors to Jerusalem were unaware that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus (see notes on verse 20), many of those who lived in the city were aware of the attempts to find him and kill him. Now here he was speaking openly and boldly in the temple, and they made no attempt to arrest him, or even interrupt him! From this, the people concluded that the Jewish leaders now believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

But the people were also reasoning that when the

Messiah appeared, no one would know where he came from. It was commonly known among the Jews that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but it was also commonly believed that after his birth he would be hidden away for a long time before revealing himself. Since they knew Jesus was from Galilee, many believed he couldn't be the Messiah.

28 So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. 29 I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."

Some translations of John's original writing show Jesus' first words in this verse as a statement: "You know me, and you know where I come from." Other versions, like the one used for this commentary, translate it as a question: "You know me, and you know where I come from?" The second option is more likely. Jesus is questioning what they said in verse 27 because they don't really know where he came from. They think he simply came from Joseph and Mary.

He explains to them that he was sent by God the Father himself, that God is true, and that they don't know God like they know Joseph and Mary. But Jesus knows him because he came from him. Jesus is clearly, directly claiming before them that he is the Messiah.

30 So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

These Jews, having been told by Jesus both that he has come from God and that they don't know God, become angry. They wanted to take him before the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews, but no one wanted to be the first to lay their hands on him. Perhaps they also feared that a good number of people would come to his defense (see verse 31). Ultimately, it was the hand of God that protected him because it wasn't yet time for him to die.

31 Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

Many miracles of Jesus have been recorded for us to read in the gospels. But he did a great many more that were not recorded (**John 21:25**). Since the Jews had come to expect that the Messiah would do many miracles (based on such passages as **Isaiah 35:5, 6**), many believed he was the one.

While the Jews from Jerusalem mostly shared their leaders' dislike for Jesus, many of the more common Jews from other areas believed in him. They have a good point: Jesus has done so many miracles; should we expect someone else to come who will do even more?

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

As the Jews kept talking among themselves, debating with excitement about whether or not Jesus was the Messiah, the chief priests and Jewish leaders (Pharisees) decided they needed to put an end to this. The more who followed Jesus, the less who would listen to the Jewish leaders, and their power was threatened. Many times before they had wanted to arrest him, but this was the first official attempt to do so.

³³ Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.

Many scholars believe this was about six months before Jesus would die. After rising from the dead, Jesus would make appearances on the earth during a 40-day period, then ascend with his physical body into heaven.

³⁴ You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."

Jesus speaks here to those who don't believe in him. Terrible trials were coming to the Jewish people and they would look for the Messiah to save them, but they would not find him. Where he is when that time comes, in heaven, they will not be able to go because of their unbelief.

³⁵ The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and 'Where I am you cannot come'?"

The Jews referred to all gentiles (people who weren't Jews) as Greeks at this time, because they were associated with the pagans, most all of whom spoke Greek. Here the Jews are wondering if Jesus means he's going to leave them to go out and teach the Jews who are scattered

in various places among the Greeks (gentiles).

³⁷ On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

The feast lasted eight days (see notes on **John 7:2**), and this was the eighth day. During the first seven days, sacrifices were made on behalf of the pagan Gentile nations. On the eighth day, sacrifices were made only on behalf of Israel. It was a day of thoughtful devotion to the Lord, on which no regular work was to be done.

Jesus gives an invitation to those who thirst, meaning those who have a desire for salvation. They may come to him and take it freely, and be satisfied.

³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' " ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

In the previous verse, Jesus spoke of the ones who come to him. Here in verse 38, he speaks of those who believe in him. This shows that those who come and those who believe are one and the same.

The promised Holy Spirit would come later, after Jesus left the earth for heaven. His role with respect to believers would be to live inside of them and help them to become holier day by day. When the Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer, and the believer doesn't resist but submits to him by obeying God's Word, peace and satisfaction in the Lord will flow like a river, even in difficult circumstances. As well, the believer will display the fruits of the Spirit working in him (listed in **Galatians 5:22, 23**).

⁴⁰ When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet."

They were expecting the Prophet based on **Deuteronomy 18:15**. That verse does describe Jesus, the Messiah, but they incorrectly thought the Prophet and the Messiah were not the same.

This is the same Prophet some thought John the Baptist was. See notes on **John 1:21**.

⁴¹ Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is

the Christ to come from Galilee? ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

Since Jesus grew up in Nazareth and the headquarters of his ministry was Capernaum, they assumed he was born there. Had they taken the time to investigate, they would have known he was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling the Scriptures.

⁴³ So there was division among the people over him.

⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

While some believed him to be the Messiah, others didn't go that far, thinking him only to be a prophet. Others rejected him altogether. Some of the officers sent by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem would have liked to arrest him, but there were too many who would have defended him to consider doing so. Others of the officers were impressed by Jesus, as shown in the next verses.

⁴⁵ The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?"

⁴⁶ The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" ⁴⁷ The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? ⁴⁸ Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

Many of the chief priests and Jewish leaders (Pharisees) had not bothered to listen much themselves to the words of Jesus. They just assumed that since he opposed them, he was in the wrong and was a threat to deceive the people. These leaders ridiculed both the officers who were impressed by Jesus, as well as the common people who believed in him, not realizing that they were right and the leaders themselves were wrong.

The question is raised here: "Have any of the authorities or Pharisees believed in him?" It appears that at this point that they don't know Nicodemus had become a believer after having his conversation with Jesus in chapter three. He almost gives himself away in the next verses.

⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹ "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" ⁵² They replied, "Are you from Galilee too?"

Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

⁵³ **[They went each to his own house,**

Nicodemus was right. They were rejecting Jesus without listening to what he had to say because they thought he was from Galilee. The only response the Pharisees could give was to ridicule Nicodemus by asking if he was a Galilean. To call someone a Galilean was to say they weren't very smart and would follow anyone.

Then these Jewish leaders show they weren't so smart themselves. **"Look in the Scriptures and you'll see that no prophet comes from Galilee!"** they said. Had they known the Scriptures themselves, they would have known that Jonah, Elijah, and Nahum were all prophets from Galilee.

Chapter Eight

¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.

Jesus did not stay and spend the night on the last day of the feast, as many did before beginning their travels the next day. He avoided danger by moving on, and when he arrived at the Mount of Olives, he continued his diligent work of ministry.

³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

The Jewish leaders, becoming more desperate by the growing popularity of Jesus, try to find a reason to accuse him. They bring to him a woman who was caught in the act of adultery so they can question him about what to do with her. They hope his answer will be offensive to the Jews. They mock him by addressing him as "teacher."

It is interesting that they brought only the woman to him. If she was caught in the act of adultery (sinful sexual relations), there must have been a man with her at the time who was guilty as well. Why did they not bring him?

⁵ Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

The trap they tried to lay for him is this: if he said she should be put to death, he would no longer be called the friend of sinners. One of the reasons so many sinners had come to him and eaten with him is because he spoke to them of the love of God, and his grace and mercy through which they could be saved. This was opposite of the constant condemnation and harsh judgment they received from the arrogant Jewish leaders.

As well, if Jesus said she should be put to death, the Jews would accuse him before the Roman government of trying to exercise legal authority that only they had. The Romans had forbidden the Jews to put anyone to death, and if Jesus ordered the death of this woman, he could be arrested, and the problem of the Jewish leaders solved.

If Jesus said she should not be put to death, then the Jewish leaders would accuse him of not respecting the

authority of the Old Testament Law. They would say, "First he broke the Sabbath, and now he wants to deny what Moses said to do about adultery!"

We are not told what Jesus wrote on the ground, and we can only guess. If it had been important for us to know, the Scriptures would tell us.

⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."

By answering the way he did, Jesus brilliantly avoids the trap they laid. He does not deny the law of Moses, and shows that he knows the lives of those who were accusing her. Adultery was very common in that day, and the Jewish leaders themselves were likely guilty of it. There was no one present who qualified to throw the first stone by being without sin.

⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

The way in which these men left one by one has led some to believe that what Jesus wrote on the ground showed he knew they were guilty of adultery. Perhaps he wrote the names of the girlfriends of these married men. We can only guess, but it is apparent that there was great discomfort among these accusers.

¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

By saying, "neither do I condemn you," Jesus likely meant that he had no civil authority to bring a judgment against her. He is not saying that she was not sinful, for she was. He acknowledges her sinfulness when he tells her, "from now on sin no more."

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

People living in sin are often described in the Bible as being in darkness. Jesus came as the light to show people the way to get to the Father. See the notes on

John 1:4.

¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."

These leaders are trying to argue that since in a court, there must be at least two witnesses for testimony to be accepted, why should they accept what Jesus as a lone man says of himself? But they should believe in him because of the miracles he has performed. Because of their hardness of heart, they do not.

¹⁴ Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going."

Jesus' claims about himself are more trustworthy than the Jewish leaders' denials about him because Jesus knows where he himself came from and where he is going, and the Pharisees know neither. As well, the Father himself is testifying of Jesus, as he will tell them in verse 18.

¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.

Since they don't know where he came from or where he's going, they can only judge him according to his physical appearance, and their own worldly way of thinking. He doesn't satisfy their fleshly expectations of the Messiah, so they reject him wrongly.

Jesus himself does not judge in this way, harshly condemning others based on appearances. And the purpose of this visit by him to earth is more to save than to judge (**John 3:17; 12:47**). In his second coming, he will come primarily as the Judge (**2 Timothy 4:1**).

¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.

Even if Jesus were to judge now in his first coming, his judgments would be right. Just as they would accept the judgments of the Father, they should accept the judgments of the Son, which would always agree.

¹⁷ In your Law it is written that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me."

According to the Old Testament law, two witnesses were required to testify in order for the accused to be found guilty. Jesus argues here that if two witnesses are enough in such cases, they ought to be enough to affirm who Jesus is. The two witnesses are Jesus and the Father.

Even the testimony of the Father alone should be sufficient, and he has testified in at least three ways: speaking in an audible voice at the time Jesus was baptized (**Matthew 3:17**); displaying miracles through Jesus on earth; and through the prophecies of the Old Testament which Jesus was fulfilling.

19 They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

Misunderstanding him (see verse 27), they tell Jesus to bring forward his Father as a witness. If they had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, they would be well acquainted with God the Father. One of the benefits of Jesus coming to the earth is that he shows us the Father in himself. In undertaking this very study of the life of Jesus through the Gospel of John, we will better know God himself.

20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

The treasury was a part of the temple in which thirteen chests were available in which to place offerings and sacrifices. Apparently Jesus went to this place often and spoke publicly to the Jews who passed through there.

21 So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come."

Just as Jesus said in **John 7:33**, he is going soon to be with the Father. Those to whom he speaks now would seek for the Messiah at that time and not find him, because he had already come and left. Without coming to Jesus as the Messiah, they would die in their sins and have to suffer their own punishment for their sins. Those who recieved Jesus before dying would be allowed into heaven, even though as sinners they don't deserve it, because their punishment will already have been paid by Jesus on the cross.

²² So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

When Jesus said something like this before, they thought he meant he was going to preach to the Jews living in gentile territories. Now they seem to understand that he is talking about his death. Since he mentions his coming death with such certainty, they wonder if he will take his own life, and they'd be perfectly satisfied if he did.

²³ He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

While Jesus had come to earth from heaven because he is God, they have their origin on earth. They did not exist before being born in this world, and they have not escaped the ordinary way of thinking of people who belong to this world, of which the devil is the prince.

²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

²⁵ So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning.

These leaders would have no excuse on the Day of Judgment for rejecting Jesus as their Savior. He has now told them plainly at least twice that he is their only hope of not having to suffer for their own sins.

²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him."

Jesus could offer many examples if he wanted to of the failings of the Pharisees, but his more urgent task is to declare the Kingdom of God and the message of salvation.

²⁷ They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.

As Jesus kept talking to them, they were unaware that he was speaking about God the Father. Jesus' claim in verse 26 was that his every word was a word from God himself. Their hardened hearts prevented them from understanding this even as Jesus tried to explain it to them.

²⁸So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

"When you have lifted up the Son of Man" means when you have crucified him. Jesus would soon after rise from the dead, proving without doubt everything he had claimed about himself. It would be after this that many would believe that he was indeed the Messiah. Within fifty days of the crucifixion, three thousand Jews would become believers in Jesus in just one day (**Acts 2:41**).

³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

As Jesus spoke to the leaders, and their own hearts grew harder, many of the common Jewish people believed what he said. He describes for them what it means truly to be a disciple of his: to obey his Word. The Jewish leaders thought themselves to be disciples of the God of Abraham, but they continually dishonored him with their pride. Now they were dishonoring him by rejecting his Son. They were not abiding in the words of the Old Testament, which clearly pointed to Jesus.

The truth of the Gospel sets free those who trust in it. The Jews, trying to earn their way to eternal life by strictly obeying all of the law of Moses, were like slaves. Such obedience was impossible, but they labored on in trying. The purpose of the Law was to show them they were incapable of ever obeying well enough to deserve to enter into heaven.

Then Jesus came to the earth offering a different way. Those who would receive him as Lord and Savior would enter into heaven having his perfection credited to them, rather than going to hell on the basis of their own sinfulness. They would no longer work like slaves at trying to be obedient so they could avoid eternal punishment. Now they were free to be obedient out of a simple desire to please the God who saved them through the death of his Son.

³³ They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

This question was apparently asked not by those who had just come to believe in Jesus, but the Jewish leaders who were still present, listening, and opposed to Jesus.

The Jews were indeed descendants of Abraham, who was not a slave. Still, it was ridiculous and untrue to say that they had "never been enslaved to anyone." Throughout their history they had been enslaved by all of the following: Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Macedon, and Syria. At the time they made the statement, they were oppressed by the government of Rome, awaiting liberation from the Messiah, and rejecting him while he stood in front of them.

³⁴ **Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.**

Despite their angry protest in the preceding verse, Jesus was not even talking about them being political slaves, but being slaves to sin.

The word Jesus used here which is translated "commits" is a verb that shows ongoing action. It is as if he says everyone who "goes on sinning" or "keeps practicing sin" is a slave to sin. He is not describing those who commit individual sins, which we all do, but those who give their lives in service to whatever satisfies them, without concern for the consequences.

Believers are given a new spiritual nature when they become born again, but the old nature of the flesh remains and the two natures fight against each other throughout the believer's life on this earth. Paul wrote about this struggle in **Romans 7:9-25**. The believer has repented, which means his whole heart and mind have been changed with regard to sin. He will still stumble at times, but he will also regret it, confess it before the Lord, and pray for help in becoming more obedient in the future.

But the unbeliever has no such regret. The fact that he sins does not bother him, and his desire is to continue to do whatever will satisfy the needs of his flesh. He usually doesn't even know he is a slave to sin.

Jesus came to set us free. Total freedom from sin will come to the believer when he receives a new, glorified body in preparation for eternal life. Until then, we have been given the Holy Spirit to help us fight against our sinful nature so we can be more obedient to God (**Acts 2:38; Galatians 5:16-24**). The sinner who never repents will never be set free, and will spend eternity in torment. This is Jesus' warning here to the Jewish leaders.

³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.

A slave should not assume that he will spend all his life in one house. The master can kick the slave out at any time, or trade him away to someone else. Likewise, the slave has no right to any inheritance.

But a son is different. The son is part of the family, and has assurance of being able to stay in the home and enjoy the benefits of being a son.

Jesus uses this illustration to teach the Jewish leaders that as slaves to sin, they have no inheritance (eternal life) coming to them. They will be cast out of the house because of their disobedience. But those who believe on Jesus will become sons of God (**Galatians 4:4-7**) and will receive an inheritance.

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Jesus, as the Son of God, has the ability to free the sinner from his enslavement to sin, leading to his adoption as a son of God.

³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.

Jesus acknowledges that they are of the family line of Abraham, but that fact does them no good in light of the sin which is in their hearts. They are as far from God as the worst of sinners.

The apostle Paul taught in Romans that the true children of Abraham, who will receive the inheritance of eternal life, are those who have faith like Abraham had faith, not those who were simply born into his family line (**Romans 9:7**).

³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

Jesus is acting in the interests of his heavenly Father, and the Jewish leaders are acting in the interests of their father. By this, Jesus refers to the devil, as we will see in verse 44.

³⁹ They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

This is not what Abraham did.

The Jews boasted often of the fact that they were descendants of Abraham. They thought this fact guaranteed them a place in heaven. But many of the blessings promised in the Old Testament to the offspring of Abraham were actually promised to those who were his spiritual descendants: those throughout history who would have faith like he had faith.

Jesus' argument, then, is this: if the Jews were offspring of Abraham in the most important way (spiritually), they would have faith in him and not be seeking to kill him. They would love God in the way Abraham loved God.

⁴¹ You are doing what your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father--even God."

Jesus has not yet said directly that their father is the devil, only that Abraham is not their father because they are not his true spiritual descendants. Not yet understanding, they believe Jesus is accusing them of not being full-blooded Jews, having descended from an adulterous relationship had by someone other than Abraham.

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me."

This is a simple lesson: all who truly love God love his Son as well. He who claims to love God, but does not love the Son, is deceived.

⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.

What Jesus was saying was clear enough, but they refused on purpose to believe what he was saying. The truths of God are offensive to those who wish to preserve their pride, wickedness, and hypocrisy. They will actively avoid letting the truth penetrate their hearts.

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of

lies.

These Jews were claiming to be the children of Abraham. Had they been the children of Abraham in the most important way, spiritually, we would see the character of Abraham in them in their faith, humility, and devotion to God.

Instead, what we see in them is a desire to murder and a lack of truth, indicating they are children of the devil, in whom we also find these traits. The devil was a murderer from the beginning, deceiving the first humans into sinning and bringing death upon themselves. He opposes God and wants all people to remain dead spiritually and experience eternal separation from God. The manner of the Jewish leaders in rejecting Jesus was also in opposition to God, and very satisfying to the devil.

⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.

⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

Everything Jesus said was backed up by his perfect life. He challenges them to offer evidence of any sin in his life that would discredit him. They had made false allegations about him, but they never had any real evidence against him.

He asks the question, "Why do you not believe me?", and answers it in the next verse.

⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

They claimed to be of God, but had no real love for him or desire to please him. They were more concerned with promoting themselves. Nothing in their lives expressed the character of God. The devil, however, shined through them.

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

In order to convince the common Jews not to follow Jesus, they had been saying two things about him. First, they said that he was a Samaritan. A Samaritan was part Jew and part something else, a result of Jews sinfully marrying and having children with non-Jews. The Jews hated the Samaritans. Second, they said he had a demon. This would have been enough to keep some Jews from having anything to do with him.

49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.

Jesus doesn't respond to their charge that he is a Samaritan. But he explains clearly that he does not, and could not, have a demon. Jesus honors the Father, and shows the way to others to love and obey the Father. A demon would not do this.

50 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.

While Jesus did miracles in a great display of power, they were not done to glorify himself but to prove that he was who he said he was. He seeks the Father's glory.

The Father seeks the glory of the Son as well. He will raise him from the dead, proving all of Jesus' words were true.

Those who glorify themselves have no real glory. Those who humble themselves and glorify God will be honored by him. This is true glory.

51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.

Here the offer for salvation is made to all. If anyone, whether Jew or Gentile or male or female receives the salvation he is offering, he will never see death. This does not mean the body will not die, but that the soul will not be separated from God and cast into the lake of fire (eternal death). See notes on **John 5:25**.

52 The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'

53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"

They are correct that Abraham and all the prophets suffered physical death. Their bodies died, as this will happen to everyone, believers and unbelievers. But because of their faith, they avoided the eternal suffering and separation from God about which Jesus spoke. This is called "eternal death." He was not offering anyone life without end on earth, but eternal life.

⁵⁴ **Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'** ⁵⁵ **But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.**

They had just asked Jesus who he made himself out to be. His point is that he is making nothing of himself. He is glorifying the Father, and the Father will glorify him by raising him from the dead and exalting him. They claim that the Father is their God and that they know him, yet they dishonor him by not recognizing the Son.

⁵⁶ **Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."**

In Jesus' response to the Jewish leaders' accusation that he was glorifying himself, he first spoke of his relationship with God the Father. Now he speaks to them about his relationship with Abraham, whom the Jews recognized as their earthly father, in whose family line they were born.

In the book of Genesis, God promised Abraham that he would have a son in his old age. This son's name was Isaac. Abraham was also promised that offspring would be born in the family line of Isaac through whom all the nations would be blessed (**Genesis 22:18**). This was a prophecy about Jesus (**Galatians 3:16**), who would bless all nations by making salvation available to them through his death for their sins. Abraham rejoiced both because he wanted a son, and because he was very glad that the Messiah would be a descendant of his son. This promise and its fulfillment were so important that Jesus refers to it as "my day."

And so, Jesus' argument here is that since the Jews were giving such honor to Abraham, they ought as well to give honor to Jesus, the Messiah, because Abraham himself knew the Messiah would come through the family line of his son Isaac.

⁵⁷ **So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"**

Jesus did not say he was alive on the earth as a man during the time of Abraham, but that Abraham saw what Jesus called "my day," as described in the previous verse.

⁵⁸ **Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before**

Abraham was, I am."

Some people say Jesus never really claimed to be God, but he clearly does so here. He is saying he exists now and even did so before Abraham existed a couple thousand years before. No ordinary human could say that.

⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

The Jews apparently understood that Jesus was claiming to be God here, as shown by their desire to kill him for what they believed was blasphemy. Since the temple was still being restored, there likely were a lot of stones available on the ground nearby.

We don't know whether Jesus hid himself from them by a miracle, or simply escaped quickly. But since it was not yet his time to suffer and die, they were unable to bring harm to him at this point.

Chapter Nine

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"As he passed by" refers to Jesus making his escape from those who took up stones to kill him in the temple at the end of chapter eight. Even though his life is in danger, he will stop and show compassion on this man who has been blind since birth.

A common Jewish belief was that any problem, illness, or suffering a person had was a direct result of particular sins. It is true that all suffering exists because the sin of mankind has brought a curse on the world. However, it isn't true that all suffering and illness happen directly because of particular sins being committed (see notes on **John 5:14**). Jesus suffered and he was sinless. Job suffered because of his righteousness, as the devil tried to get him to curse God. Paul suffered in his ministry because of the good things he did.

Seeing this man who was blind from birth, and believing incorrectly as the other Jews did, the disciples wondered how this man might have sinned before birth, or whether he was being punished for the sins of his parents. Neither was true.

³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

The reason for this man to have suffered blindness from birth was simply so that God could display his power through Jesus healing him. This display of power would bring the man to saving faith, and others who saw would believe as well.

⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

Jesus compares his life to a day. A day ends when night comes, and Jesus' life would end when his death came. Therefore he must keep busy in doing good works, not wasting any time before his death.

This principle applies to us as well. While we are alive, it is day, and we should keep busy working for the Lord. Night is coming to each of us in the form of death. Let us do what we can while we can.

⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

We expect the sun to give off light and heat because that is its purpose. Likewise, Jesus' purpose was to show the way to the Father for those living in the darkness of sin. See notes on **John 1:4**.

⁶ Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

We don't really know why Jesus spat on the ground and made mud as a method of healing this man's eyes. We do know that Jesus healed others in different ways who were blind. It could be that Jesus used different methods with different people to show that it wasn't the method that did the healing, but the person Jesus.

Sending the man to the pool to wash required the man to show an act of faith. To walk through town, still not seeing, as people looked on him and wondered aloud about what he was doing, showed that this man believed he would be healed. His faith was an important part of the miracle.

⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."

He had probably sat in the same spot almost every day of his life, begging money. Most of the people in the community would have walked by him many times and been familiar with him. They recognized him after the miracle and were surprised to see that he could see.

Others would have recognized him as well, but would refuse to believe that after all this time he could suddenly see. It may also be that his appearance and manner were somewhat different now that he could see. He testified to all that it was he.

¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Here is another lesson for us in evangelism. Just as the life and appearance of the man once blind changed in a way everyone could see, so ought the life of a believer be so different from what it was before salvation that those around him would ask, "How did this change in you come about?"

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

A man blind from birth being cured was quite an amazing thing, and evidently God had something to do with it. To find out for sure what they should believe about all this, the people took the man to their religious leaders for their judgment on the matter.

¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

As we saw in chapter five, when Jesus healed the man by the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders objected to such acts of mercy being done on that day of the week. So rather than being in awe of Jesus' power and recognizing that he is God, they will use this occasion to make accusations against Jesus.

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

The Pharisees were wrong in saying Jesus wasn't keeping the Sabbath. He was not violating the law, but he was violating their traditions and interpretations of the law. See the notes on **John 5:16**.

¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

The man once blind did not have the years of experience in studying the Scriptures that the Jewish leaders had. But he did have the common sense to know that someone who could give sight to a man blind from birth must have been sent by God himself. This is a courageous statement for the man to make, knowing that these leaders were so opposed to Jesus.

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

The Jewish leaders would rather have not believed the truth than to believe it. And so, they convinced themselves that this man must not really have been blind in the first place. It was more likely, they believed, that he was working together with Jesus to fool people, pretending that he had been blind and that Jesus had healed him. So they called forth his parents to testify.

²⁰ His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.

The evidence just was not on the side of the Jewish leaders. The man's parents, who were intimidated by the Pharisees, still testified that he was blind from birth, and if necessary they could have brought the whole community who lived around them to testify the same.

²¹ But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." ²² (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³ Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

To be put out of the synagogue meant forever being forbidden from worshiping there. It was to be totally cut off from the Jewish faith. Even the Jewish friends of those who had been put out of the synagogue were not permitted to buy or sell with them. This was a terrible punishment, and the man's parents were in great fear of receiving it. They insisted their son was old enough to give his own testimony so they could avoid the risk of getting themselves in trouble with the Jewish leaders.

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

When the Pharisees were unable to get testimony from the parents that would be helpful in their accusations against Jesus, they decided to try again with the man who

was healed. The phrase "**give glory to God**" was a kind of oath given to him, meaning "don't dishonor God by speaking falsely."

²⁵ He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Because of the short time he spent with Jesus, there were many things about him the man once blind did not and could not know. But what he did know was most important: Jesus had given him his sight. He will proclaim and testify to this no matter how he is chastised or what pressure they apply to him. We should follow his example, remaining faithful to the Lord who saved us no matter what other men think of him or us.

²⁶ They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷ He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

They repeat the same questions to him because they're desperate for some bit of testimony they can use, and they hope he'll contradict himself. But he remains firm in his testimony and confounds them.

²⁸ And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

The Pharisees' argument here is that since this man is defending Jesus, he must be his disciple. But they are better than he, they think, because they are disciples of Moses, who brought forth God's laws regarding the Sabbath. They believed Jesus to be violating the Sabbath, though he was really only violating their man-made traditions related to the Sabbath.

³⁰ The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

Only a few hours before giving this speech to the Pharisees, this man was a blind beggar. Now he is speaking more truth about God and Jesus than these religious leaders who claim to be the professors of the Scriptures for all the people of Israel. They claimed to be the authorities on what is right or wrong, yet they denied the plain truth of the situation at hand: Jesus must be from God to be able to give sight to the blind.

³⁴ They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

The Pharisees also believed incorrectly that problems and suffering were the direct result of particular sins (see the notes on **John 9:1, 2**). Therefore, they concluded, his being born blind was an indication of "**utter sin**" either on his part or that of his parents.

They didn't have the ability to argue against his plain logic, but they did have the authority to cast him out of the synagogue, so they did.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

³⁶ He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." ³⁸ He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Jesus, with compassion that continued for this man, apparently searched for him and found him so he could reveal more fully to the man who he was. Up until now, the man knew little about Jesus except that he gave him his sight. From this, he concluded he must be a prophet. Now as Jesus reveals that he is the Messiah, the man believes this as well, and receives him.

³⁹ Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

In saying "**For judgment I came into this world,**" Jesus did not mean that he came to condemn the world to punishment. To say such would contradict what he had said elsewhere (**John 3:17; 12:47**). By his own words of explanation here, he appears to say that he came to the world to explain man's lost condition in the sight of God.

Those who do not see (meaning those who recognize their own state of being in spiritual darkness) would be

made to see as they seek a remedy from Jesus for their lost condition. Those who do see (those, like the Pharisees, who think nothing is wrong with their spiritual condition) would be made blind by missing the truths of salvation that Jesus came to proclaim.

⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

The Pharisees had plenty of opportunity to note the miracles of Jesus and believe in him as the Son of God. In doing so, they would also have to believe his message that they were sinful and in need of a Savior. But they acknowledged no such thing. Trusting their own knowledge of God and the Scriptures, they believed they could "see" fine, and they did not accept his offer of salvation. Had they recognized their own spiritual blindness and sinfulness, and received Jesus as their Savior, their guilt before God would have been taken away.

Chapter Ten

¹ "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

Jesus is continuing the conversation with the Pharisees from the end of chapter nine.

A sheepfold was a large area in a pasture surrounded by walls, usually made of reeds or stones, but uncovered. The sheep would stay inside the walls at night, which helped the shepherd offer protection from thieves, wolves, and other dangers.

Jesus uses the sheepfold here to illustrate the nature of his church. In a real sheepfold, the sheep enter the door where the shepherd stands, and the shepherd himself enters through the door. Believers come into the church through Jesus, who refers to himself in this illustration as the door. Those who pastor God's flock on earth must also enter through the door, Jesus. Since the Pharisees were trying to pastor the flock of God while rejecting Jesus himself, they are compared to thieves who enter the sheepfold through a way other than the door, bringing harm and destruction to the sheep.

² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

Jesus will later refer to himself as the Good Shepherd, but here he is using the term *shepherd* to describe those who would pastor the flock of God with God's favor. He is making a comparison between the Pharisees, who try to pastor the flock of God while rejecting Jesus, and those Christian ministers of the Gospel who have entered the church through their faith in Jesus, and lead others to do the same. Only those leaders who love Jesus will be good leaders for the flock.

³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

There is some disagreement about who the gatekeeper represents in this illustration. Because Jesus is comparing good shepherds of the flock who believe in Jesus with the false shepherds (Pharisees) who reject him, it is reasonable to say that the gatekeeper in this illustration is God himself, who looks with favor upon the true shepherds, and welcomes their work with the flock.

We also see in this verse the personal relationship of the people of God with those who lead them. They know the shepherds, and as they hear God's Word from them, they trust them. The shepherds care enough for the flock to know individuals by name. This likely could not be said of the Pharisees in general.

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

A leader in the flock of God's people "**goes before them,**" setting a good example for them to follow. They follow him because he has proven himself by his humble service in the Kingdom of God.

The false leader prefers to promote himself and acquire high positions in the church for his own gain. He may fool many people into following him, but he won't fool the true people of God, who know their Savior and can discern those who are serving him with sincerity.

⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷ So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

It is easier for us today to understand what Jesus was saying here because we can read the whole passage as many times as we want, and see how the different verses fit together. Hearing all this for the first time, the people to whom Jesus spoke had difficulty understanding. While Jesus was still challenging the Pharisees with these words, there were also disciples and other Jews present. For the benefit of all of them, Jesus clarifies that *he* is the door through which the sheep enter, symbolizing those who become part of God's people through Jesus.

⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

Jesus is not talking about God's prophets of the Old Testament, who came to deliver truth and prepare the world for the coming of Jesus. Rather, he speaks of the many who had come before, falsely claiming to be the Messiah and leading people astray. He speaks as well of anyone who had come and proclaimed a way into the Kingdom of God other than through Jesus himself. Some were led astray by them, but not the true people of God.

⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

Many people thought following the way of the Pharisees was the door into the Kingdom of God, but it wasn't. Their system of trying to earn eternal life by obeying all of the law of the Old Testament was a false door through which no one could enter. Many people were led away to destruction trying to enter this false door.

Today there is found a similar false door that does not lead to eternal life and the Kingdom of God. This is the teaching that we can be saved by going to church, reading the Scriptures, praying, and doing good to others. All of these are important things that we should do, but we cannot earn our way into the Kingdom of God by doing them. We can only enter into the Kingdom of God by accepting the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus (the Door), who died on the cross to suffer the punishment we deserved because of our sins. We should go to church, read the Scriptures, pray, and do good to others. But we don't do these things to try to enter the Kingdom; we do them because we already have entered into God's Kingdom through Jesus our Savior, the Door.

Jesus says the believer **"will go in and out and find pasture."** This is a way of saying he will be well cared for.

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Those who try to enter by a way other than the door, who try to lead the flock of God while rejecting Jesus, serve only to steal the truth away from those who would be disciples of Christ. They lead people away from saving faith and toward spiritual death and destruction.

It would have been more than we deserved if Jesus would have simply saved us from the destruction that we deserve because of our sinfulness. But he not only spared us from death, but he offers us life that overflows with blessings (**Ephesians 2:4-7**).

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

We come now to a place that has made interpreting this chapter a bit more difficult. Jesus continues to use the illustration of a shepherd and sheep, but with a change. Now he describes himself as the Good Shepherd rather than the Door to the sheepfold.

Until now, Jesus has been making a comparison between true leaders of God's flock who are ministers of the gospel of Jesus, and false leaders who reject him and lead the flock astray. Now he begins to make a comparison between *himself* and the false leaders, like the Pharisees, who care more for their personal pride and gain than for the people they lead. Jesus will show his love for the flock when he gives his life for them.

¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

We see more clearly now the change in the illustration Jesus is using. He is now the Good Shepherd, rather than the door. The false leaders, such as the Pharisees, are now hired workers, rather than thieves. By this comparison, Jesus shows that he leads the flock out of love and concern for them, to the point of giving up his life to save them. The false leaders, on the contrary, use the flock only to gain power, wealth, or high positions. They have no real love or concern for the flock.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Jesus loves and cares for his flock, knowing them better than a husband knows his wife, with deep affection and knowledge of each individual.

¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

At this point, salvation was only being preached to the Jews. But the day would come when salvation would be preached to the Gentiles as well, and they would be invited to enter the flock through Jesus, the Door. They would belong to the same flock as the Jewish Christians. While Jews and Gentiles did not get along through history up to this point, those who became believers in Jesus would be united into one spiritual family. The apostle Paul spent much of his ministry trying to help Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians bond in love and unity.

17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

We speak often of what a wonderful thing Jesus has done for us in laying down his life for us, dying in our place. But this was also a wonderful act done for the Father.

God the Father would not have been true to his absolute holiness if he had allowed mankind's offensive sinfulness to go unpunished. Yet in his great love for us, he did not want to subject us to this punishment, either. Jesus allowed God the Father to show his holiness and justice at the same time he showed his grace and mercy. Sin was punished as Jesus was crucified, and the holiness and justice of God was displayed. Man was spared as Jesus was crucified, and the mercy of God was displayed.

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

All of the events that unfolded as part of Jesus' crucifixion happened only because he allowed it to happen. He had the power and authority to stop it at any time, but we willingly chose to let them put him to death. Then he showed his power by rising from the dead. All of this was in obedience to the Father.

19 There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" ²¹ Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Quite a discussion arose as to whether Jesus was crazy, or telling the truth. It would be easy to think someone was crazy who claimed to have come from God, and that one day he would raise himself from the dead. It would be easy to disbelieve, except that Jesus gave sight to a man born blind. He healed a man who was lame for 38 years. His power was undeniable, making his claims undeniable except for those with the hardest of hearts.

22 At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.

The Feast of Dedication took place in December, two

months after the Feast of Tabernacles (see notes on **John 7:2**). This was not a feast commanded by God, but was started by Judas Maccabaeus in B.C. 164. Three years before, the temple had been taken over by the Syrians, who sacrificed a large pig on the altar of burnt offerings. A broth had been made from cooking this animal, unclean to the Jews, and was spread all over the temple, defiling it. Judas Maccabaeus took back the city and temple and the temple was cleansed. The Feast of Dedication was held to remember this cleansing.

Jesus was likely in the colonnade (covered area) of the temple because of the cold winter weather.

24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Most likely these were the Jewish leaders asking the question, and not the common people, many of whom already believed. The leaders wanted Jesus to say plainly that he was the Christ so that they could bring accusations against him.

25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.

While there is no record of Jesus having said the exact words, "I am the Christ," he had spoken to them in words they could understand if they chose to listen. He spoke of himself as the Son of Man, a phrase which the Jews knew meant the Messiah. Jesus had also said he was the bread which came down from heaven, and that he and the Father were one. His miracles were also a clear sign that he was the Christ. The problem was not Jesus' failure to testify, but the leaders' failure to believe.

They were not of his flock because they did not come to him with an attitude of wanting to be led by Jesus. Their pride and love of themselves kept them from believing.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

For the true believer, to hear the voice of Jesus means to hear and obey his commandments. Often when Jesus used the word "hear" he meant it as "receive." Certainly there were many who were present when Jesus spoke, and they heard the words he said, but didn't

receive them and practice them. They were described as not hearing.

Some use this verse to teach that we should listen today for the actual voice of God or Jesus to instruct us. While it is true that God spoke directly to Christians in the first century by means of apostles and prophets, that was necessary because the New Testament Scriptures were not yet written down, copied, and distributed throughout the places where Christians lived. Now that the New Testament is complete, the Scriptures are sufficient for communicating the words of God to us, and helping us in any situation (**2 Timothy 3:16, 17**).

There is no indication in the Bible that we should listen for God to speak directly to us today, outside of what we read in his Word. Someone who says that God has spoken to them directly should be regarded with suspicion. What they claim God said to them is either already found in the Bible, making the direct speaking unnecessary, or it is not found in the Bible, making it suspicious. It is a dangerous thing to say, "The Lord has said..." if the Lord did not really speak.

²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.

Some say these verses teach that once a person has received salvation from Jesus, they can never return to a state of not being saved. They call this doctrine, "eternal security." A Christian, they say, can never lose his salvation. But there are passages in the Bible which clearly and plainly teach that it is possible for a person to change from being saved to being lost (**Hebrews 6:4-6** and **2 Peter 2:18-22**). Since the Bible does not contradict itself, there must be a different way to understand the verses before us. (There are many passages which seem to contradict each other at first reading, but careful study always shows there is no contradiction.)

When Jesus says "**no one will snatch them out of my hand**" and "**no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand**," he is talking about those who are sheep in the flock of God. Who are the sheep? According to verse 27, those who hear and follow him. The original Greek words for "hear" and "follow" in verse 27 are in the ongoing present tense. It's like saying, "My sheep are hearing my voice" and "they are following me." As long as one is hearing the Shepherd, through the Scriptures, and following him, he cannot be snatched out of the Father's hand by the false leaders (who were

compared to wolves), or the devil himself. But if someone decides on his own to abandon his faith, he leaves the fold and gives up the protection Jesus promises here. The phrase "lose your salvation" is misleading. It certainly would not be possible to lose your salvation like one loses a coin or a key. But it is very possible for one to choose to abandon his salvation, and God does not force anyone to stay in the flock.

The main point Jesus is making here really isn't about eternal security. It's about him being one with the Father. He says **"no one will snatch them out of my hand."** Why? Because the Father is **"greater than all"** and **"no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."** Not only is he working very closely with the Father as they carefully guard the flock together, but he and the Father are one. This is quite an answer to those who were asking whether or not he was the Christ.

³¹ The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.

Because they believed he was guilty of blasphemy, they took up stones to stone him, as taught in **Leviticus 24:14-16**. Had anyone other than Jesus been making these claims, such a person would indeed be guilty of blasphemy. But Jesus was one with God, and was telling the truth.

³² Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"

This is a great question from Jesus, intended to force them to consider the truth of his miracles while they yet refuse to believe in him.

³³ The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

It is taught by the Jehovah's Witnesses and others that Jesus never claimed to be God. Here we see that the people to whom Jesus spoke understood very clearly that Jesus was claiming to be God.

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came--and Scripture cannot be broken-- ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I

am the Son of God'?

Jesus begins his response to them by quoting **Psalm 82:6**, in which judges are symbolically called gods because they have been set apart (consecrated) and given his Word and his authority to rule over the people. So Jesus' reasoning is this: if these men were called "gods" because of this, how much more should I be called the Son of God because of the way he has set me apart (consecrated me) to rule as the Word of God himself?

³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

Jesus did not expect anyone to believe in him based on his words only. Anyone may claim anything about himself. But his miraculous works were undeniable, and because of these they should have believed. Instead, they tried to find some explanation for them other than his being one with God.

³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

Moments earlier they were ready to stone him to death where he stood. But his arguments have confounded them, and they were unable to answer his question about which of his good works made them want to stone him. Now they seek only to arrest him. Perhaps, they think, the Sanhedrin (a group of Jewish leaders serving as the highest judges) could deal with him better.

⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained.

This marks the end of a three-month period in Jerusalem, during which several attempts were made to kill or arrest Jesus. The time for his death is still three months away at this point, so he returns the area where John the Baptist began his ministry. He will stay there for awhile saying and doing things, many of which were recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

⁴¹ And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." ⁴² And many believed in him there.

John the Baptist didn't perform any miracles, but it was enough that what he predicted about the Messiah came true in Jesus. How else could he have made such accurate predictions unless he was being used by the Lord himself?

Chapter Eleven

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

We find mention of Mary and Martha in the other Gospels, but not of Lazarus. Nevertheless, he was well-known to Jesus, as we'll see by the sisters' words in verse three.

² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill.

The story mentioned in this verse can be found in **Luke 7:36-50**.

³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

Jesus was close to this family, and visited them on different occasions. They sent word to him that Lazarus was sick, hoping Jesus would come and heal him so he wouldn't die.

⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

By these words Jesus means that this sickness will not cause the permanent death of Lazarus' body. However, Lazarus will be dead temporarily for the purpose of Jesus raising him from the dead, showing that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

It would have been odd for an ordinary person to wait two more days before leaving after hearing of the grave illness of a friend. But Jesus was ministering to people where he was, and the delay would ensure that Lazarus was dead and everyone knew it before Jesus arrived to bring him back to life, showing his love for him and his sisters.

⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"

It must have been very disturbing for the disciples to see the crowds try twice to stone to death their Lord just a few weeks before. No doubt they were relieved to be somewhat far away from there. Now Jesus suggests they go back.

⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

This is similar to the illustration Jesus used in **John 9:4, 5**. A traveler does well to travel during the day under the safety of the light that shows the way and protects him from danger. He travels during the day without wasting time so that he can get as far as he can. Likewise, the light represents the time in which Jesus is still on the earth. He must take advantage of his time to do his works without wasting time. Going back to where there is danger is disturbing to the disciples, but it would be more disturbing to Jesus not to use his short time on earth as effectively as possible.

¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."

By this Jesus meant that Lazarus had died. Dying was often described by the gentler phrase "falling asleep."

Some, including the Jehovah's Witnesses, use this verse to teach that when someone dies, they remain in a state of unconscious sleep and will be awakened at the resurrection. But it is more likely, based on **Luke 16:19-26, 23:39-43, and 2 Corinthians 5:8**, that even when the body is dead, the spirit is conscious elsewhere, awaiting the resurrection before the final judgment (**John 5:28, 29**).

Death is likely referred to as "sleep" because the body resembles a sleeping person to those who are still alive.

¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he meant taking rest in sleep.

While the word "sleep" was often used to describe death, it could, of course, just as easily have meant normal sleep, and that is how the disciples understood it here. Sleep was often a hopeful sign that a sick person was recovering. It was thought that if they had begun to sleep well, the sickness was no longer attacking as it had been, and they were getting better. Still wanting to avoid returning to the dangers of Judea, the disciples argue that since Lazarus is sleeping, there was no need to go there.

¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

If Jesus had gone earlier, while Lazarus was still alive, Mary and Martha probably would have begged him to heal Lazarus. If he had, it would still have been a miracle, but an even bigger miracle awaits now that Lazarus has died. The faith of all who see Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead will be strengthened much more than if they had only seen him bring Lazarus from sickness to good health.

¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

It is admirable that Thomas expresses this willingness to go back to Judea with Jesus knowing the people there would likely try to kill him, and possibly even his disciples.

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

Because Bethany was so close to Jerusalem, about thirty minutes of walking, many Jews came from there to be with Mary and Martha during at least part of their mourning period, which usually lasted thirty days. Another advantage of being so close to the city was that the Sanhedrin (the highest council of Jewish judges) would hear very soon about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house.

Of the two sisters, Martha appears often to be the more busy and active one. She may have been the older of the two, and therefore in charge of the affairs of the house (see **Luke 10:40**). When she heard Jesus was coming, she left the house in a hurry to meet him. It may be that she also wanted to warn him about the number of Jews at her house, who may have threatened his safety.

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

In Martha's words we find a common mix: great faith in Jesus but an incomplete understanding of him. She seems to believe incorrectly that Jesus had to be present in order to heal Lazarus (see notes on **John 4:49, 50**). But she also believes even now that Jesus can raise him from the dead (or at least ask the Father to do so).

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

Here is yet another example of what we've seen several times before. Jesus' words could have more than one meaning, and the listener chooses the meaning that requires less faith. He's telling her he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead there and now. She takes his words to mean that Lazarus will be raised with everyone else before the Day of Judgment.

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

As has been noted before, death means separation (see notes on **John 5:25**). As the resurrection and the life, Jesus brings back together that which was separated, both physically and spiritually. The spirit of Lazarus had been separated from his body, which is why his body was dead. Jesus was about to restore the spirit to the body and resurrect him.

Likewise, those who are unsaved are spiritually dead, being separated from God. Jesus came to restore the peace between God and man by satisfying the required punishment man deserved. Those who place their faith in Jesus and receive him as Lord and Savior will be brought back to life spiritually, and will live forever in heaven

even though the body itself would eventually die.

²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

This is the confession we are called upon to make. Many believe that Jesus was a great historical figure. Many believe he was a good moral teacher. Some believe he was simply the founder of the Christian religion. The true believer, like Martha (and Peter; see **Matthew 16:16**), will acknowledge that Jesus was God in the form of a man (**John 1:1, 14**).

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him.

It is likely that Jesus wanted to help increase Mary's faith as well before raising Lazarus from the dead. Martha spoke to her in private, and used the phrase "the Teacher," to keep any Jews at the house who might have been hostile toward Jesus from overhearing and knowing he had arrived.

³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Since they had not seen Martha privately calling Mary to come out, the Jews believed Mary left the house to spend some time mourning at the grave, which was common. Since they would be expected to stay in her presence and mourn with her, they followed her.

³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

She says the same thing Martha did in verse 21. No doubt this was said in conversations between the two since the time of Lazarus' death: "If only the Lord had been here."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit

and greatly troubled. ³⁴ **And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."**

The original Greek words translated here as **"he was deeply moved in his spirit"** indicate that groaned with anger or agitation. This was probably directed at many of the Jews who were showing hypocrisy while pretending to mourn with sorrow. Jesus was also **"greatly troubled"** with sympathy stirring inside him for the two sisters of Lazarus who were full of grief. He identifies and sympathizes with us in times of great sorrow.

³⁵ **Jesus wept.**

Why did Jesus weep here? Is it because he missed Lazarus? Probably not. He knew he was about to see Lazarus alive and walking toward him. Some suggest that Jesus wept because of his great sympathy for those who were grieving with sincerity. It could also be that Jesus, the holy God in the form of a man, was overwhelmed at seeing the results and consequences of sin, death and sorrow, all around him.

³⁶ **So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"** ³⁷ **But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"**

The Jews, observing the crying of Jesus, came to different conclusions about why it was so. Some marveled that he would express such sorrow over a man to whom he wasn't even related. Jesus and Lazarus were only friends, and friends that didn't see each other that often, since Jesus spent most of his time away from Bethany.

Others thought that Jesus was crying in remorse over his inability to prevent Lazarus from dying. They will see a few moments later that they were wrong.

³⁸ **Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.**

Here we again have the phrase, **"deeply moved,"** from the Greek meaning angry or indignant. This was likely in response to the words of the Jews in verses 36 and 37, and their continued pretending to mourn with sorrow.

It was common for tombs to be in natural caves, or caves carved out of rock. The stone acted as a heavy, protective door.

³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days."

Several people would have been required to move the heavy stone from the entrance. Martha probably thought Jesus only wanted a last look at her brother, so she reminds him that the body already had started to decompose and would be unpleasant. Jesus knows this, and the smell which came out of the tomb would serve to prove that Lazarus was indeed dead, and his resurrection a true miracle.

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"

Martha had expressed her belief in him in verse 27, and now she will see God's glory and power in the raising of her brother from the dead. All those who believe on Jesus will see the full glory and splendor of the Father in heaven for eternity.

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me."

Jesus was always communicating with the Father in an attitude of prayer. In this case he prays aloud a prayer of thanksgiving, so those around him will know that it is through the power of God the Father that Lazarus is about to be brought back to life.

⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

With the voice of authority, Jesus commands Lazarus body to awaken from death. In a similar way, at the return of Jesus, he will call out to all the dead, who will arise and be taken up from the earth to stand before the throne of judgment (**John 5:28, 29**).

⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

The dead were normally covered by tightly wound cloths. Another cloth was wrapped around the head of a

dead person, to hide the unpleasant expression of death. Lazarus had just enough freedom of movement to come forward. Jesus probably broke a period of stunned silence when he ordered the graveclothes to be cut off.

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Some had resisted in believing in Jesus up until this point. But seeing the dead brought back to life was too much for them to keep up their unbelief. What started for them as an acknowledgment of death ending up being the beginning of a new life of faith, as they began to trust in Jesus.

Still, as always, there were those whose hearts were so hardened by their own sin that, like Pharoah in the days of Moses, they refused to bow before God even after seeing such a clear display of his power. Instead, they chose to oppose him all the more. Not believing, they went to report the event to the Jewish leaders, in hopes that they would act against Jesus.

⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

The Jewish leaders had two fears. One is that the Jewish people in general would come to recognize Jesus as their leader, and therefore no longer recognize the authority of the Pharisees, Sanhedrin, and other leaders.

The other fear was that the Roman government would hear that the people were recognizing Jesus as their King, and would consider that a threat to the Roman ruler. In this case, the Romans would try to discourage such an uprising by closing down the temple, destroying Jerusalem, and refusing to allow the Jews to worship, taking away what little power they had in governing themselves.

⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."

Caiaphas says to the other leaders, **"You know nothing at all,"** meaning that it is foolish to argue back and

forth when the solution to the problem of Jesus is obvious: he should be killed. His reasoning is that it is better for this one man to die now than to keep on causing trouble that results in the ruin of the Jewish people.

⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

What Caiaphas didn't realize is that his words were a profound prophecy of what was really going to take place. Jesus, one man, would be put to death to satisfy the punishment required of sinful man in the eyes of God. He would die so that many would live, their sins having been taken away. This is not what Caiaphas meant to say, but it turned out to be a very accurate prophecy of what our loving Savior was about to do.

"The children of God who are scattered abroad" refers to all those who would eventually receive the salvation offered by Jesus, Jew and Gentile alike.

⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

Having heard the advice of such an authority as the high priest, almost all agreed that Jesus should be killed, and they began to plan for it. There would be no fair trial, no legal process, and no determination of whether Jesus was truly guilty or innocent. They made their decision, and they would see how they could do it without stirring up opposition from the people.

⁵⁴ Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

While the time of Jesus' death had been set by God long before, which no man could change, Jesus still did not put himself in a position where God would need to keep actively intervening to protect him from those trying to kill him. Instead, he went to a place about 16 miles (26 km) away and spent time teaching his disciples, rather than publicly preaching and healing.

⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went

up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.

For information on the Passover feast, see the notes on **John 1:29**.

While John doesn't specify a timeline, it is likely that about two months passed between verses 54 and 55, with Jesus and his disciples spending that time in Ephraim before the final Passover of Jesus, during which he himself would be offered up as the Lamb of God.

The Old Testament law taught that certain conditions or activities would make a person unclean. They were not to participate in the Passover until they had been purified. To learn more about this, read **Leviticus 22:1-6**.

⁵⁶ **They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?"** ⁵⁷ **Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.**

Word was getting around that Jesus would be in danger if he showed up, as the people knew an order was out for his arrest. This gave rise to discussions among them about whether or not he would come. By his going to Jerusalem knowing he would die, Jesus sets an example for us. At times our obedience to God may be dangerous. It is better to carry out our obedience and place ourselves in the hands of God, than to refuse to obey because of the harm that may come to us.

Chapter Twelve

¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

The other gospels show us that Jesus had left Ephraim and gone through Jericho, traveling with a large number of Galileans toward Jerusalem before stopping at Bethany. This would be the Saturday before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (described later in this chapter), and the last Saturday before he was crucified.

² So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at the table.

We see Lazarus here, apparently in good health and enjoying time with Jesus, about two months after being raised from the dead.

In that time, people normally did not dine by sitting in chairs at a table, as is common today. They reclined on the ground, sometimes on mattresses. They arranged themselves such that their heads met in the middle, and their legs extended outward.

³ Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

It was a common practice to wash the feet of a guest to show respect. By applying perfumed ointment to Jesus' feet and wiping them with her own hair, Mary shows great love and honor. Mary had probably bought this expensive ointment to use for herself, a little at a time over a long period. But, being overwhelmed with love and gratitude for the Man who brought her brother back from death, she gladly uses the ointment to honor her Lord.

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

The next verse tells us that Judas had no real concern for the poor. What he did have was greed. He was the keeper of the moneybag for the disciples, the money from which was used to buy food and other necessities as they traveled. The disciples trusted him, and apparently had no idea that at times he secretly took some of the groups

money out of the bag for himself. He would have been very pleased if Mary's ointment had been sold and the money given to him to keep for use in helping the poor. Then he could have helped himself to that as well.

⁶ He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

Here John provides his own bit of commentary on Judas, writing what he now knows to be true after the fact, but which he and the other disciples couldn't imagine back when it actually happened.

⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.

Perfumes and spices were often applied to the dead before burial. Jesus refers to his own death and burial, less than a week away, and the fact that Mary was preparing him for it, although she didn't know. She was just expressing her love to him.

Jesus always encouraged generosity toward the poor. But he points out here that there would always be opportunities for doing good to the poor, until the end of time. There would not be many more opportunities to show honor to the Lord in the way Mary was by anointing and wiping his feet.

⁹ When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.

Since Bethany was only about two miles (3 km) from Jerusalem, word arrived quickly there that Jesus was nearby. Many of the Jews left Jerusalem to see him, whether to marvel at him or to oppose him. They may have thought he would avoid Jerusalem, as he had been hiding for two months in Ephraim, and they thought a trip to Bethany would be their only chance to see him again. He was still the talk of the city.

Many as well wished to verify what they had heard about Lazarus, that he had been raised from the dead. Seeing a man once dead now living was enough to stir the curiosity of many.

¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews

were going away and believing in Jesus.

The living Lazarus was undeniable proof of the power of Jesus, and the Jewish leaders had no way to explain it away. Their only hope is to try to kill him as well, so that even more people don't trust in Jesus because of him.

We see here how people who are interested in promoting themselves can become so corrupt. The Jewish leaders had the responsibility which Moses had centuries before: teaching the people to obey the laws of God. Yet they themselves, in their pride and lust for power, were now plotting to murder two people. This was a clear violation of God's law.

¹² The next day, the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

These verses begin the account of what is called "The Triumphal Entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem. The other three gospel writers wrote about this event as well. You can read their accounts in **Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, and Luke 19:29-44.**

"**The next day**" refers to Sunday, the day after Jesus' meal in Bethany with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. It is celebrated by many today as Palm Sunday. It was the beginning of the week in which Jesus was crucified. So much happened during this week that about one-fourth of what we read in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John combined covers what took place during this week.

There were many times when Jesus had told his disciples, or those he had healed, not to reveal to anyone who he was. Not only was it too early to announce who he was, but those he warned did not yet have enough understanding of him to properly tell his story. But now, it was time to reveal everything and let people decide whether or not they would receive him. Jesus planned to enter Jerusalem exactly in this way, knowing in advance that this would bring about his death. In fact, the Jewish leaders were planning on killing him after the Passover, but God's plan was for Jesus to be killed during the Passover, as the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world. This entry into Jerusalem, with people singing, shouting, and proclaiming Jesus as King would encourage the Jewish leaders to act more quickly, leading to the death of Jesus on the day God had planned.

Because the Passover was among the most important feasts of the Jews, the city was flooded with outsiders,

Jews of other regions. Many of them knew of Jesus and were excited to know he was coming. They rushed out of the city to accompany his entrance, proclaiming him to be their King, the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. But many of these same people who were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!" would be shouting something very different within five days: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

We learn from the other gospel accounts that Jesus sent two of his disciples into the city to get the two donkeys. When these disciples were asked by the donkeys' owner why they were taking them, the disciples replied, "The Lord has need of them." Then the owner allowed them to be taken.

A leader riding on a donkey was a symbol of peace. Had Jesus rode in on a horse, it would have been a symbol of war. But Jesus did not come to make war on the Roman government, as the Jews had hoped. He came to bring peace between God and man, satisfying the punishment our holy God demanded for the sins of man.

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.

After Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, the apostles, with the help of the Holy Spirit, began to understand much more clearly many of the passages of the Old Testament which prophesied about Jesus, and how he fulfilled them. They used this understanding well to evangelize the Jews, persuading many of them that Jesus was the Messiah for whom they had been waiting.

¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.

Recall that many Jews went from Jerusalem to Bethany to be with Mary and Martha after the death of Lazarus, and many of them became believers of Jesus after he raised Lazarus from the dead. Now they were spreading the word about Jesus throughout Jerusalem, increasing the envy of the Jewish leaders who were trying to get rid of

him.

18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

Jesus had preached and healed in Jerusalem, and cast out crooked sellers and money changers from the temple. But bringing a dead man to life stirred the most fascination among the people.

19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

Just as Jesus had intended, the Jewish leaders begin to panic. His popularity is growing such that they cannot wait until after the Passover to get rid of him. They must act as soon as possible, bringing about his death during the Passover as God intended.

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks.

Most of the Gentiles (people who were not Jews) were called Greeks because nearly all of them lived in places where Greek was the spoken language. There were Jews scattered abroad in many of the lands of the Greeks, and Jewish synagogues (places of worship) could be found in many of these Gentile areas. These Greeks likely were acquainted with some Jews from their home area, and very easily could have heard of Jesus this way. It is likely that they accompanied their Jewish friends to Jerusalem in hopes of meeting Jesus.

21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Philip is a Greek name, as is *Andrew*. Philip may have been a Jew born among the Greeks, and one who spoke Greek. This may explain why they came to speak to him. We're not told why Philip went to Andrew before he went to Jesus. Andrew was from Bethsaida as well, and it could be that Philip wanted his opinion on whether he thought Jesus would be interested in speaking to some Gentiles at that point.

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Jesus doesn't answer the question directly about whether he'll receive the Greeks who've asked to see him. But his answer suggests he did receive them. The time has come for him to die, rise from the dead, ascend into heaven, and be seated upon the throne there. This will usher in the period in which the Gentiles, like the Greeks here, will be introduced to the Gospel, which for a long time had been preached primarily to the Jews.

24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

This illustration Jesus uses has two meanings. The first meaning describes where he came from and what he's about to do. A grain of wheat can be stored for years where it won't be of much use. But when it falls into the ground and dies as a seed, it is reborn as a plant that produces fruit. The fruit is the part of the plant that has more seeds which can produce even more fruit after that.

As a figure of speech, we can say Jesus "fell" to earth from heaven with the purpose of dying to produce fruit. In his death and resurrection, he would be saving all those who would come to a lasting faith in him. These believers who are gathered into the kingdom are the "fruits" that he will have produced. As they share the Gospel with others, they as well, will help the Lord gather in even more fruit.

The second meaning will be discussed with the next verse.

25 Whoever loves this life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

The second meaning of Jesus' illustration of the grain of wheat is that a Christian must learn to die to himself in order to bear fruit. **"Whoever loves this life"** describes the person who lives for the pleasures of this world. He invests himself in enjoying what this life has to offer, and when it's over, he loses it. And because this describes the person who lives unto himself without regard for the God who created him, he will suffer everlasting torment.

"Whoever hates his life in this world" describes those who, as believers, recognize that their purpose in this world is to serve God and make disciples, gathering fruit for the Kingdom. Such a person learns to die to himself

in this world, not living with the purpose of pleasing himself, but with the purpose of obeying God. This does not mean one should walk about saying, "I hate my life!" It does mean that his focus is on the life to come, and trying to persuade others to receive the salvation of Jesus so they can have eternal life as well.

²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Whoever wishes to serve Jesus must follow him in the way of suffering and self-sacrifice, as described earlier by the grain of wheat which dies and produces fruit. That person will eventually be where Jesus is, in heaven, being honored by the Father.

²⁷ Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

We should never think the crucifixion Jesus suffered was any easier for him because he was God in the form of man. He was still fully human, and thoughts of what he was about to suffer brought him great anguish. Shortly before his arrest, he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane about his desire that the suffering he was about to endure could be avoided. "Yet," he said to his Father, "**not what I will but what you will.**" (Mark 14:36) He recognized that this suffering is exactly the task for which he came to earth.

²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

Having spoken of his own anguish, Jesus ends with a small prayer, "**Father, glorify your name.**" This was to say that Jesus would do anything and endure anything in order to bring glory to the Father.

The Father responds to him with an audible voice. His voice had been heard on two other occasions: the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17), and the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-8). The Father has glorified his own name by the works he has done through Jesus, and will glorify it again by raising Jesus from the dead.

²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to

him." ³⁰ **Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine.**

The voice of God was perceived differently by different people. Those not in a position to hear it clearly thought it was thunder. Others distinctly heard a voice and believed it was angel, according to the common belief that if God spoke audibly he did it through angels.

The voice must have been understandable at least to some, for Jesus says it was for their sake that the voice spoke. The purpose likely was to strengthen the faith of those who would see Jesus put to death in the days to come.

³¹ **Now this is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.**

The time has arrived for the judgment and condemnation for the sins of the world to fall. They will fall on Jesus himself. He will take the sins of mankind on himself to the point of becoming sin itself (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). When God the Father looks at Jesus on the cross, he will see the sinfulness of the world, and let the judgment and punishment for sin fall upon his own Son.

"The ruler of this world" refers to the devil. He is called this because the souls of sinful mankind have belonged to him. Sinful man has been obeying the devil with every sin. Now, Jesus will satisfy the required punishment of sinful mankind, and give people the opportunity to receive his salvation. Therefore, many will become born again citizens of the Kingdom of God, and the devil will lose them from his rule. And one day he will be thrown into the lake of fire to suffer forever.

³² **And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."**

While it would soon appear to many that Jesus had been defeated by those who wanted to kill him, and by the devil himself who was behind them, he gives us an assurance here. His crucifixion, described here as his being **"lifted up from the earth,"** would not be the end or defeat for him. It would be the key event in the Gospel which would thereafter be preached to the lost. An offer would be made to all people to receive eternal life, made possible because of Jesus having paid the sin penalty for man while on the cross.

³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

"Lifted up" was a commonly used phrase, a more polite way of speaking of crucifixion.

³⁴ So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"

The people had been taught by those who interpreted the Law that the Messiah would reign forever, based on such prophecies as **Psalm 110:4** and **Daniel 2:44**. However, they must not have given enough attention to such prophecies as **Isaiah 53:1-12**, which clearly predict the suffering of the Messiah. The Messiah will indeed reign forever, but in a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one.

³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

Jesus does not give the people a direct answer to their questions from verse 34. He has spoken often enough, clearly enough, and given them enough information. What still keeps them from believing is the hardness of their hearts. He gives an illustration in which he describes himself as a light that will be showing them the right way for only a little while longer. If they are wise, they will believe in him while he is still with them. It will be harder for them to choose the light once he has left them.

His departing and hiding himself from them likely refers to his nightly return to Mt. Olivet to be by himself and sleep (**Luke 21:37**).

³⁷ Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

These verses teach that the people didn't believe so

that the prophecy could be fulfilled, indicating that God himself had eventually kept them from believing. We normally think of God wanting everyone to believe, and he does. But there comes a time in which the stubborn unbelief of a people mocks God to the point where he judges them by hardening their hearts even further.

The prophecy in verse 38 had been a description of what took place in the time of Isaiah, whose warnings of judgment were despised by the nation of Israel, leading to his being put to death. Therefore we can say that the verse quoted here, **Isaiah 53:1**, serves two purposes. It described what happened with Isaiah, and predicted what would happen with Jesus.

"The arm of the Lord" represents the power of God which set the people of Israel free from Egypt in the Old Testament, and was putting miracles on display in the time of Jesus. Yet, seeing these things, the stubborn unbelief of the people involved persisted.

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, ⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."

These verses emphasize even more the truth described above, that God himself may eventually harden the hearts of those who have chosen to mock him with their stubborn unbelief. The prophesy quoted in verse 40 comes from **Isaiah 6:10**.

⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

Isaiah the prophet had a vision, well described in **Isaiah 6**, in which he saw the glory of Jehovah. Now John writes here that Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus. From this we conclude that Jehovah and Jesus are one and the same. Jesus the man was God himself in human flesh.

⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Seeing the miracles done by Jesus, and listening to his powerful words, even some of the Jewish leaders became convinced in their own minds that they were who he said he was. Two of the ones about which we know were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (**John 19:38, 39**). Even

they didn't speak up much at first, but developed more courage later on.

The Pharisees had the authority to put anyone out of the synagogue and not let them back in. This they threatened to do to anyone who confessed Jesus, so many who came to believe in him decided to keep quiet about it. It is nearly impossible to please God and men of the world at the same time. Those who kept quiet about their belief chose to please man, and as a result, their faith was unable to save them (**Mark 8:38, Romans 10:9**).

⁴⁴ And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

Though John doesn't tell us specifically, these words probably were spoken at the same time as those which left off in verse 36.

Belief in God the Father and belief in God the Son cannot be separated if a person is to enter into eternal life. Many of the Jews believed in God the Father but rejected Jesus. In truth, they were rejecting the Father as well.

The more we study the life of Jesus, the more we come to know God the Father. We should not rely on our imaginations as much as we do about what God is like. We can learn what he's like by studying Jesus, and we learn to please him by following Jesus' holy example.

⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Jesus calls himself a light, as John called him in **John 1**, teaching us that he came to show the way to eternal light, and save people from the dangers of remaining lost in their sins (which is described as being in darkness). See notes on **John 1:4, 5**.

⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.

Jesus came to the world the first time not to judge and condemn the sinful of the world, but to save them. When he returns the second time, it will be as the Judge who condemns those who, since his first coming, continued to reject him. The graves will be opened and all the living and dead will go to judgment before him. But as

for this first coming, his role is to offer his life for them, and plead with them to receive him.

⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment-- what to say and what to speak.

The teachings of Jesus cannot be dismissed as simply being the teachings of a man. His teachings are divine truths from the Father himself, and to reject them will bring upon oneself certain destruction.

⁵⁰ And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

What Jesus refers to as "**his commandment**" is to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Eternal life is the result for the one who believes and receives him as Lord and Savior.

Chapter Thirteen

¹ Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The events of this chapter took place on the night before Jesus was crucified. He has now spent three years with his twelve chosen disciples. They are common men with problems and weaknesses, and there are many things at this point which they still don't understand with respect to what's about to happen, and the nature of Jesus' kingdom. Jesus, knowing the torture and suffering that awaits him in the coming hours, still devotes precious time here to teaching his disciples because he loves them.

² During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

Judas Iscariot was tempted by the devil to betray Jesus, but not forced. The devil does not force us to do anything, but he knows what we are likely to do when faced with certain temptations. Using the greed already present in the heart of Judas, the devil convinced Jesus that the money he could make was worth more than loyalty to Jesus.

³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,

None of the things which were taking place, or that were about to, were a surprise to Jesus. All of this was part of God's plan. The Son of God, who had existed from all eternity, came down from heaven to live on earth as a man. After suffering the punishment for man's sin on the cross, he would soon be returning to heaven.

⁴ rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

The practice of foot washing was common in these days. People walked almost everywhere they went, using hot and

dusty roads. When entering someone's house, it was customary for a guest to have his feet washed so as not to spread dirt around the house. The actual washing was typically done by the lowest of the hired servants.

In this case, there were no hired servants present as the disciples borrowed this room. No one had offered to perform the lowly task of washing the others' feet, including the feet of Jesus. In fact, Luke tells us that the disciples had been arguing among themselves about who would be in the greatest positions of authority when Jesus established his Kingdom (**Luke 22:24-30**). Not only did they misunderstand that Jesus' Kingdom was a spiritual one, and not of earth, but they also misunderstood what was necessary to be considered great in that Kingdom. Jesus, assuming the role of lowly servant and washing their feet, shows them what true greatness really is.

⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"

Because Peter expresses such surprise that Jesus is setting out to wash his feet, it is likely that Jesus came to Peter first. The original Greek text indicates that Peter used emphatic words to question Jesus, as if he were saying, "YOU are going to WASH MY FEET?" This is similar to the unworthiness John the Baptist felt when approached by Jesus at the Jordan River. "You want ME to baptize YOU?" (**Matthew 3:13-15**)

⁷ Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."

Jesus' simple response should have been enough for Peter to quiet down and agree to have his feet washed. Jesus points out that while Peter doesn't understand the purpose of this yet, he should trust that it's right to do what Jesus wants him to do, and put his feet forward to be washed. A full understanding would come later.

⁸ Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."

If Peter persists here in his belief that it is better for him to deny the will of Jesus than submit to it, and if he cannot obey in this small task of allowing his feet to be washed, he cannot be expected to submit to the more difficult and dangerous things which would be required of him as an apostle of Jesus.

⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus' warning to Peter got his attention, and now he is willing to submit beyond what was asked of him. If a little washing is good, he thinks, then a washing of his whole self must be better.

¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."

¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

While Jesus was primarily giving his disciples a lesson in humility and service to one another, he offers another spiritual lesson for us that's easy to miss. We know he was teaching a spiritual lesson because he said, **"not all of you are clean"** referring to Judas.

When a person with faith is baptized, and his sins are washed away, he is forgiven of his sins. Past, present, future, all are forgiven. They will not be held against him in the Day of Judgment. He is clean with regard to where he will spend eternity. But the Christian is still walking in this sinful earth, and in the process he regularly gets his feet dirty with sin. The dirt doesn't cover him from head to toe, but it is there, and it is a problem.

The solution is not to return to the baptistry for the full washing of salvation. His salvation hasn't been canceled by the sin, but the sin is still there and needs to be treated. His steady relationship and communion with God is interrupted, and he needs a good foot washing so he can start walking again with clean feet. If he is wise he will confess before God and pray for forgiveness. Not the legal forgiveness of salvation, but the forgiveness that restores the relationship he's trying to maintain with his Father, and which cleans his feet to walk again.

¹² When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?"

It appears from this verse that he washed the feet of every disciple before taking his place to eat again. He asks them not whether they understand the act of foot washing, but whether they understood the lesson of servanthood from it. As he promised Peter that he would understand afterward, Jesus continues on with his

explanation.

¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

The most effective teachers are those who teach by example. What a powerful lesson it must have been when Jesus began to do what each of the disciples had been too proud to do.

The command Jesus gave here applies to us today as well, not necessarily that we should do the specific act of washing others' feet (which isn't common in most cultures today), but that we should find ways to serve one another and help meet each others' needs. Being willing to do the things no one else will do is a mark of a Christian servant following the example of Jesus.

¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Jesus didn't just issue commands for his followers to do things that he himself was unwilling to do. He himself was a humble servant who modeled perfectly the attitudes and acts he expects of us. If the Teacher himself did such things, then we, who are not as great as he, should not expect to be excused from doing them ourselves.

¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

The commandments of God are not burdensome, and we should not consider it a hardship that we must obey. Rather there is joy in obedience to Christ, and blessings await those who do his will.

¹⁸ I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

Jesus knows that Judas will not be blessed in the manner Jesus just described because Judas is serving himself and not the Lord. But Jesus points out here that he did not make any mistakes in choosing the twelve he chose. He knew ahead of time of Judas' betrayal, and it will fit into God's plan for Jesus to give his life for

all people.

The prophecy quoted comes from **Psalm 41:9**.

¹⁹ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

While it will soon be terribly disturbing to the disciples to realize that one from their own group had betrayed Jesus, they will be able to take comfort in the fact that Jesus knew all along what would happen and how. His foreknowledge and knowledge of the hearts of others will strengthen their faith that he was sent from God.

²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.

Jesus said the same thing to them in **Matthew 10:40** in a different setting. The disciples have important work to do in Jesus' absence coming up. Some would reject them, and some would receive them. Those who would receive them and heed their teachings would be receiving God himself, and would be blessed.

²¹ After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

The phrase "**in his spirit**" indicates that Jesus was troubled deep within. He had known from the beginning how Judas would betray him, yet it still hurt that someone who professed to be a close friend could so easily give him over to his enemies.

²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.

There was nothing about the manner of Judas that gave him away as being the betrayer. So much did they trust him that they put him in charge of the moneybag. In fact, the disciples trusted each other so much that when Jesus made the statement, each disciple quietly questioned whether he was the one who would betray Jesus (**Matthew 26:22**).

²³ One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at the table close to Jesus, ²⁴ so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.

Here we have an example of John the apostle writing about himself. As was mentioned in the introduction to this commentary, John didn't refer to himself by name. When he used the name John, he was referring to John the Baptist. He refers to himself here as the disciple **"whom Jesus loved."**

²⁵ So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

John, the disciple who had the closest relationship with Jesus, was leaning against his chest. From this position he was able to whisper the question about who the betrayer was. Rather than answer out loud, Jesus spoke quietly of a sign and then showed him. It would not have seemed odd for Jesus, considered the host here, to dip some bread and give it to someone, and it seems from what follows that when he did, no one else understood it to be a sign.

²⁷ Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

Judas had been listening for some time to the ideas and temptations of the devil, opening his heart wider and wider to the devil's lies. Here the devil came into him powerfully, stirring within him the courage he needed to carry out his sinful plan.

Jesus, with his words, is not commanding Judas to betray him. Rather, what he says means, "Since you have given yourself over to this evil, and there is no turning back, be on your way to do it. I am ready."

²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.

²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.

From this we see that no one but John was made aware of the sign Jesus gave about who the betrayer was. Since the feast lasted several days, some thought Jesus was sending him out to buy food needed in the coming days. As well, the money was commonly used to help out the poor. Even so soon after Jesus had declared that one of the disciples would betray him, still they do not suspect

that Judas is doing so even now.

³⁰ So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

There are at least three possible good reasons why Judas might have left when he did. (1) He knew exactly who Jesus was talking about when he spoke of a betrayer, and he was very uncomfortable. (2) He may have known that Jesus was revealing him to John when he gave him the bread, and didn't want to be stopped by the disciples if John informed them. (3) The devil was busy working him up with desire to go and do what he had been planning.

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

Judas, having left to make plans with the enemies of Jesus, has set in motion the events that will lead to Jesus' death the next day. In dying on the cross, Jesus will be giving honor and glory to God by his obedience. Jesus himself will be glorified by the Father after rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, where he will be seated at the right hand of the throne of God (**Hebrews 8:1; 12:2**).

³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'

Jesus uses the term "**little children**" to show his love and concern for them. John himself would later use this term no less than seven times to show his affection for the readers of his letter that we call **1 John**.

Just as he told the Jews in **John 7:34**, he is about to leave the earth and join the Father in heaven, and they cannot go with him when he goes. But while there will be a temporary separation, he will assure them in verse 36 that after a time, they will be able to join him there.

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

The commandment to love others was not new. This could be found as far back as **Leviticus 19:18**. But while that commandment was to love one's neighbor *as much as*

oneself, the new commandment was to love one's neighbor *more than* oneself. Jesus was going to give an example of such love by dying for others, loving them more than his own life.

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

The love and willingness to sacrifice that Christians are to show one another ought to be one of the greatest testimonies of the Lord's church in the world today. It was commonly said of the church in the first century, "See how they love one another!"

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

While it is time for the Lord to die, there is still much to be done by Peter and the other disciples on the earth. But in due time, they would die as well, many of them suffering death because of their work for Christ.

³⁷ Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times."

It is certainly much easier to boast of our dedication to the Lord than to show it. This famous prediction of Jesus, showing he knows the future and he knows the heart of man, was fulfilled in **Luke 22:54-62**.

While the Bible itself doesn't tell us, writers of history who lived at the time say that after many years, Peter himself was crucified because of his faith. He asked to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus, and so it was done that way.

Chapter Fourteen

¹ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

The heart of Jesus himself had been greatly troubled during this evening. While he was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, his sweat was like drops of blood and he was in agony as he thought about the things which were about to take place (**Luke 22:44**). But rather than focus on his own difficulties, Jesus offers comfort here to his disciples.

The advice he gives to them is good for us as well when a situation seems hopeless. The disciples were greatly troubled in knowing Jesus would soon be killed. What hope could they find in such a situation? Jesus reminds them that God is still in control, and they must trust him.

² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Here Jesus uses an illustration to show them that their separation will be temporary. He is going on to heaven to prepare a place for them where they will be together for eternity.

This verse is of great comfort for the believer when another believer dies. We do not grieve as those who have no hope (**1 Thessalonians 4:13**). We know the separation will be brief compared to eternity, and we will see each other again and remain together forever.

³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

When Jesus says, "**I will come again and will take you to myself,**" he refers to his second coming. Believers who have died before the return of Jesus will wait in paradise until this event takes place (**Luke 16:22**). They will be called forth from this place of paradise when Jesus comes again, and will meet in the sky those believers who were still alive on earth (**1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17**). Then all believers will be taken to stand before the throne of God, after which they will be permitted to enter heaven because of their faith in Jesus.

⁴ And you know the way to where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus had so often explained to his disciples that through their faith in him they would have salvation and enter into heaven, that they should have known what he was saying. But on this evening of distress they were in need of reminding.

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is the only way for man to have eternal life. Man cannot earn his way to heaven by doing good works because of the presence of sin. After sinning only one time, a person no longer deserves to go to heaven. He can only be allowed in by receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Even today many people believe in God and in heaven and hell. But they still think they can go to heaven by being a good person. We can never be good enough or do enough good works to deserve eternal life. We depend on Jesus, for his death on the cross counts as the punishment for our sins that we don't have to suffer ourselves.

⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.

This is such an important point that Jesus makes it several times: we can come to know God the Father better by knowing Jesus the Son. By studying his life in the Gospels, we will have a knowledge of God that is based more on truth than on our imaginations. Jesus will make this point yet again two verses later.

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

Philip must have know about times during the Old Testament in which God revealed himself personally to prophets and others. For example, the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush. Philip asks Jesus to arrange for such a revelation of God the Father, to help him to believe.

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and

you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

Philip gets some well deserved correction from Jesus here. With his own eyes, Philip had watched Jesus walk on water, heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, and perform many other miracles. Yet, he says, it would be enough for Jesus to provide some sort of visible sign of God the Father. Jesus himself has shown them the Father, but they are slow to realize it.

¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Philip's request was an expression of unbelief, especially in light of his having been with Jesus for three years. Jesus answers by saying Philip, and other disciples with the same lack of belief, should at least recall the works done by Jesus as evidence that he is God himself in the form of a human being.

¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

Jesus spoke these words to the apostles, and the words apply to the apostles. They would be given the ministry of establishing the New Testament church, and the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus when he went to the Father, would empower them to do wondrous works to show they had the authority of God in doing so.

¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

Whatever the apostles asked for in their ministry of establishing the church and spreading the Gospel would be granted by Jesus. Jesus is entrusting this great task to them and promises whatever help they need in doing it.

We should not make the mistake of thinking this promise applies to all believers. The context of these statements is that Jesus is comforting his disciples just before being taken away and crucified. God loves us and answers our prayers according to his will, but these

verses here do not teach that Jesus will always give all believers whatever they ask for.

¹⁵ If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

This is a general principle we find elsewhere in the New Testament. The best way for us to show our love for Jesus is through our obedience. We can say that we love him, and we can sing that we love him. But if we want to prove that we love him, we will be obedient.

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

When Jesus left them, he would not leave them alone and without help. He would ask the Father then to send the Holy Spirit to the earth to begin his ministry. As we will see in **John 16:7**, the Holy Spirit was to have such an active role in the lives and ministry of the apostles that Jesus tells them it will actually be good for the disciples that Jesus is leaving them so the Holy Spirit will come.

We read in the book of Acts (of the Apostles) of the great works the Holy Spirit did through the apostles. He gave them special powers to work miracles and prophesy, and he used them (including Paul) to write the books of the New Testament under his inspiration.

But the Holy Spirit was not just active in that special ministry of the apostles in the first century. He is also active today in two very important ways. First, he convicts the world of sin (see notes on **John 16:8**). Second, he lives inside believers to help them become more Godly (**Acts 2:38; Galatians 5:22-25**).

¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

This is another reference to them being like his children, as he addressed them in **John 13:33**. Like a parent arranges for the future well-being of his children in the event of his death, Jesus will see to it that they have all that they need spiritually.

¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

The world would see him no more because he was about

to die, but the disciples would see him after he rose from the dead. During a forty-day period after his resurrection, Jesus made appearances here and there mostly to people who had already believed in him.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead would be evidence for them to hope for their resurrection some day as well. Death would be the end of this earthly life, but the beginning of a far better life in heaven for all who believe.

²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

When they see the resurrected Jesus, all of the doubts that they had while Jesus was dead will be removed, and they will see that the Son and the Father are one. Jesus will speak more about what it means for him to be in them, and they in him, in **John 15:1-7**.

²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

Here is the same principle we saw in verse 15. The best way to show our love to Jesus is to obey him. He is not impressed by those who merely read or listen to the commandments, but those who take them to heart and obey them out of love and gratitude to the God who has saved them.

This verse does not teach that God does not love us until we love him. God loves all, and wishes for all to be saved. Rather, this teaches that God's love is shown even more by particular benefits to those who love God. Paul wrote about this in **Romans 8:28, 32**.

The way Jesus will manifest himself to believers is explained in the next two verses.

²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"

²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Here Jesus repeats what he said above and adds, "**we will come to him and make our home with him.**" This is a way of describing the deep relationship the believer has with God as he grows in his love for God's Word and obedience. This closeness with the Father is such a blessing, it is described figuratively as though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are living inside the very

heart of the believer.

24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

This principle refers not just to those who outright reject Jesus and claim to want nothing to do with him. It also describes those whose religion is just an outward show. They may regularly attend church services, but they have no real love for Jesus or his Word.

Once again Jesus reminds the disciples that they are not just receiving and believing the words of a man, but God in the form of a man, who speaks the words of God the Father himself.

25 These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Like other things Jesus has said in this discourse, the words of verse 26 are a promise to the apostles and should not be applied in general to all believers. The promise was that the Holy Spirit would guide them in their understanding of the truths of God, provide revelations and prophecies to them that would be necessary in establishing the New Testament church, and inspire them in writing the Scriptures of the New Testament.

27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

The first part of this verse was a common benediction (saying given by a person before departing). Jesus is wishing for them to be at peace in light of all he's told them.

Many people seek pleasure and peace from the things of this world, but they never get real peace this way. The pleasure and peace offered by the things of this world is only temporary, never lasting.

Jesus reminds them again not to be troubled, but to believe. Had their faith been strong, it would have helped them tremendously in the next couple of days. But, the things they saw with their eyes as Jesus was crucified outweighed what they were hearing now with their ears, and they were hopelessly afraid.

28 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

Jesus isn't saying that the disciples don't love him at all. They obviously do, and they are greatly distressed that he will be leaving them soon. But if their love for him was as developed and mature as it should be, they would rejoice, knowing that he will soon be back with the Father in heaven and will be glorified.

When one believer dies, another believer left behind usually has a mix of selfish and mature loves that is similar to what is displayed here in the disciples. The selfish love wishes the person had not died and gone away, but the mature love realizes that the one who has died has entered the presence of the Lord.

29 And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.

It was Jesus' hope that the disciples would recall all of these things while they were happening, and take comfort in Jesus' foreknowledge of it, and assurances that all would work out for good in the end.

30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here."

The devil was referred to as the "**ruler of this world**" because the world was largely obeying him in their sinfulness. He was working in the hearts of Judas and the Jewish leaders, and his plan to put Jesus to death was on its way to being completed. Calling the devil the ruler of this world shows the power that he had.

But Jesus points out here that the devil will not put Jesus to death because he has a right to, or even because he's more powerful. Jesus has all power and authority to destroy the devil at any time, but will allow himself to be put to death to satisfy the punishment for mankind's sin. Jesus does this to show his love for the Father.

Chapter Fifteen

¹ **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.**

It is not clear where Jesus said these words. At the end of chapter fourteen, he told his disciples to get up so they could leave the room where they had their last meal together. It is likely that Jesus was saying these things as he stood up with them, seeing grapes on the table before them. It might also be that they were on their way to the Mount of Olives, and they passed by some vines on which grapes are growing. The wording of **John 18:1** makes it likely they didn't actually leave the upper room until Jesus had finished saying all the words recorded through the end of chapter seventeen. Wherever they were, Jesus decided to use the illustration of the vine to teach a spiritual lesson to them.

In the plant which produces grapes, the vine is the main part which supplies nourishment to many branches, allowing them to bring forth good fruit. In the same way, Jesus is the one (the vine) who provides believers (the branches) with the spiritual wisdom and strength to bear the fruit of godly living. The Father's role as the vinedresser will be explained in the next verse.

² **Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

If a branch is not bringing forth fruit, it is of no use and must be removed for the benefit of the other branches. One immediate example of that would be Judas, the betrayer of Jesus. Not only was he not producing the fruit of godliness, his presence was harmful for the rest of the disciples, and he was to be removed shortly. The Jews who refused to believe in Jesus were another example of not producing fruit. They would be cut off from the God they had been serving because they rejected his Son. A believer who falls away, abandoning his faith and ceasing to produce the fruits of godliness, will also be cut off from Jesus the vine.

To prune was to cut away a part of the branch that was keeping the branch from being fruitful. This symbolizes the way God deals with us in different ways to help us be more faithful. It could involve teaching us, blessing us, or even allowing us to suffer. Just like the trained pruner knew just how to cut, God knows just what each person needs to become more godly. Often the pruning will hurt, but we will be better for it in the end.

³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Just as a vine was clean when it had been well nourished and pruned, so the disciples had benefitted from the life-giving teachings, and even trials, to which Jesus had subjected them during their time together.

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

As the branches are constantly connected to the vine receiving what they need to be fruitful, so the believer must constantly maintain close communion with Christ. As a believer turns his attention away from Christ to the things of this world, his fruitfulness withers. If he doesn't correct this, he will finally be cut off altogether. The believer must continually return to Jesus, reading his word and praying to him to receive the nourishment that is absolutely necessary for godliness.

⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

Producing the fruits of godliness is evidence that a person's salvation is real. If they are not producing fruit, it is evidence that they are not a child of God. This verse describes those who are not children of God, and how they will be judged in the end, being cast into the eternal lake of fire.

⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

This verse makes a wonderful promise, but with a very big condition. Jesus does not promise that any believer will receive anything he wants at any time. He teaches that the one who abides in him, and is in such close communion with Jesus that his will is the same as that of Jesus, then that person will undoubtedly ask for things which are according to the Lord's will, and the Lord will be pleased to grant it.

⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit

and so prove to be my disciples.

One of the best ways to glorify God is to live a life of godliness in front of others. God is glorified when our way of life says that we love him so much, we want to obey him in every way we can.

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

The depth of the love of Jesus for us is probably something we will never be able to fully comprehend in this life. The love he has for his people has been illustrated by the love of a man for his wife, to the point of being willing to give his life for her (**Ephesians 5:25-32**).

To abide in the love of Christ means to remember it, cherish, and return it to him by obeying him.

¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Jesus doesn't give us commandments that he has not first modeled for us himself. Whatever we are called to do, we can find an example of how he did it himself before us. He calls us to abide in his love through our obedience, and in doing so we follow the example of how he abided in the Father's love through his obedience.

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

The faithfulness and obedience of believers brings great joy to our Lord. He wishes to delight in us, and he does so as we honor him by being true to his word. Great joy and satisfaction also come to the believer himself as he obeys. The commands that the Lord gives are not burdensome (**1 John 5:3**). Rather, they bring blessing and contentment.

¹² This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Just as a parent loves his or her children and wants them to love each other also, so Jesus wants believers to live together with love, united in the purpose of glorifying God together.

13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

There is nothing more that one can give for another than his very life. Therefore, there is no higher way to show love for someone than to willingly give up one's very life for the benefit of someone else.

15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

God's people in the time of the Old Testament served him, and God's people now in the time of the New Testament serve him, but for different reasons. This is because as the time changed from Old Testament to New Testament, man's relationship with God changed.

In the Old Testament the relationship between God and man was more like that of a master and servant. The people, not knowing much about God's plans or motives, obeyed mostly out of fear, just like a servant.

In the New Testament, man is more of a friend to God. Jesus has come and explained God's loving plan to save man, and knowing this plan we serve him more out of love and gratitude than fear. We still revere and respect God, but now we can draw near to him as child to a father because he has made himself known to us much more than to those who lived in the time of the Old Testament.

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give it to you.

The eleven men listening to Jesus at this point had all been chosen by him specifically to be apostles, and to carry out the ministry of establishing the New Testament Church after Jesus ascended into heaven. He even chose Judas, who was not present here, knowing what part Judas would play in bringing about God's plan to save people from their sins through Jesus' death.

See also the notes on **John 14:13** and **John 15:7**.

17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

See notes on verse 12 above.

18 If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

Jesus uses the term "**the world**" to describe those who are unsaved. Generally, the world opposed Jesus, stood against him, and were about to put him to death. Despite the dangers, Jesus did not allow their opposition to keep him from carrying out his ministry. Nor did he change what he said or did in order to please or befriend them. He boldly, though lovingly, spoke the truth knowing many would hate him for doing so.

Reminding the disciples of this, Jesus wished to encourage them not to be afraid or weak in their ministries, or to seek the approval of man. The hatred of the world was to be expected, but they would be blessed by God if they endured.

19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

While those of the world do not like to be confronted with the wrongness of their sin, they welcome the company of those who engage in it with them. If the disciples were to share the attitudes and lusts of the world, the world would love them. But as they would be preaching repentance and holiness, they would be hated. If a believer observes that he is loved by the world, it is time to examine himself to see if he is really living as Christ would have him to.

20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

Jesus had given them similar instructions, as recorded in **Matthew 10:24, 25**, and he reminds them again of the principle of which he spoke there: if they persecuted Jesus, they will persecute those who are rightly following his example as well.

While Jesus had said just a short time earlier that they were no longer servants, but friends, he still uses the illustration that a servant should not expect better treatment than his master. Likewise, those who follow Jesus should not expect to escape the harsh treatment the master endured himself.

21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Many of the people who would first persecute the followers of Jesus would be Jews. They would reject the idea that Jesus was God's Son. Jesus says that this rejection shows that the Jews do not even know the God they profess to serve. Many Gentiles would also persecute Christ's followers. They would resent calls to repentance because they love their sin. It can be said of them as well that they do not know God.

22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

It is likely that Jesus is talking here about the specific sin of rejecting him as the Messiah. Since he came and spoke to them, and showed them miracles, they should have believed in him. Had he not come, it would have been easier for them to claim they had not enough evidence to believe in him. But since he did come and reveal himself so convincingly, they are without excuse. He will make the same point again in verse 24.

23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also.

As Jesus has said before, there is such a union and oneness between the Father and the Son, that to love one requires loving the other. To hate one means to hate the other. This was especially relevant to the Jews, who claimed to love the God of Moses, but hated his Son Jesus.

24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

See the notes on the previous two verses.

25 But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.'

The quote here is taken either from **Psalm 35:19** or **69:4**. Both were written by David describing the way he was hated by men to whom he had done no wrong. Now these words were finding a second fulfillment in the life of Jesus. What had he done wrong to anyone? Absolutely

nothing.

²⁶ But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

See notes on **John 14:16, 17, and 26.**

²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning."

No one was more qualified among men to testify about Jesus than the men he had chosen for this very purpose. In the three years they spent with him, they had seen more of his miracles and received more of his teaching than anyone else.

Chapter Sixteen

¹ "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

Jesus offered the warnings and assurances recorded in chapters fourteen and fifteen to strengthen the apostles in the times when their trials took place. It is much more difficult to endure when hardships come as a surprise. But being able to say, "Yes, things are happening now just as our Lord told us they would," would be an enormous help.

Likewise, we should be warned and assured by the same chapters. If we follow Christ as we ought to, we ought to be prepared even today for the same trials and persecutions that affected those of the first century. And we ought to be strengthened in knowing that Jesus endured such things before us.

² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

The Jews had no use for Christians talking about Jesus in their presence. Many Christians were formerly Jews, but having received Christ they were no longer welcome in the synagogues. The persecution by the Jews reached the point where they were killing Christians for proclaiming Jesus, and the Jews believed God approved of these murders. Saul of Tarsus, who later became the Apostle Paul, was one such murderer.

³ And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.

See the notes on **John 5:21**.

⁴ But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

As was mentioned in the notes on verse one, it is much easier to endure trials when they're not a surprise, when they've been expected. So Jesus warns them ahead of time of what will take place in hopes that remembering his words will strengthen them to endure.

Jesus did not tell them all these things when he first

chose them because he was going to be with them yet another three years. During that time many of the troubles he is describing fell directly on him. Now that he was leaving them soon, they would endure more of the trials themselves, directly.

⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

Earlier, both Thomas and Peter had asked where Jesus was going and why the disciples couldn't go with him. But as Jesus continued to describe the things to come, they were overcome with sorrow and stopped asking.

⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

From this verse we may conclude that the Holy Spirit would have a great ministry on the earth. What an important role he must be set to play if it was actually to the advantage of the disciples for Jesus himself to leave them so the Holy Spirit would come.

We do see that the Holy Spirit did many wondrous things through the apostles and others in the first century in getting the New Testament church started and spreading. He also inspired the apostles and their close associates to write the Scriptures we have today. The Holy Spirit is involved in active ministry as well today, as described in the next few verses.

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

Here Jesus tells us three ways in which the Holy Spirit would be involved in ministry upon his coming. First, he will convict the world of sin. This means he will convince lost sinners that they have sinned against a holy God and are in need of a Savior. The primary means through which he does this is the preaching of his inspired Word. This is why it is so important for the living and active Word of God to be used in sermons and personal witnessing.

¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

The second thing Jesus mentions that the Holy Spirit would do is convince the world of Jesus' righteousness. Jesus was about to be put to death by people who didn't believe he was the Son of God. They believed that because he said he was the Son of God he was guilty of blasphemy. The Holy Spirit, beginning with the preaching of the apostles, would proclaim the innocence of Jesus. Peter preached about this on the day of Pentecost, and so many Jews were convinced of their guilt in putting the innocent Jesus to death, that three thousand of them became Christian believers that day (**Acts 2:36-41**).

¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The phrase "**ruler of this world**" refers to the devil. For more on this, see the notes on **John 12:31**.

Through the ministry of the Apostles and the inspired Scriptures, the Holy Spirit would proclaim the future judgment and punishment of the devil, who was defeated when Jesus rose from the dead, and who will be cast into the lake of fire after the return of Jesus. In the meantime, the devil will try to take as many people with him to the lake of fire as he can by keeping them in their unbelief. The Spirit would warn such unbelievers of the coming judgment.

¹² I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

There were many great changes that were going to take place after the resurrection of Jesus. Many of the laws and traditions of the Jews would be done away with in the New Testament church. But this was not the time to try to explain all that to the disciples. They had enough on their minds already. All things would be made clear to them later on.

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

The Holy Spirit would guide the apostles in all the knowledge they would need for the New Testament church, but which they were currently unprepared to hear as Jesus spoke to them. The phrase, "**he will not speak on his own authority,**" could also be translated, "**he will not speak of himself,**" meaning he will not speak from himself as

separate from the Father and Son. What he would speak would be what all three are closely united in knowing. Jesus says this to remind the disciples how close and unified are the three persons of our one God. What they would hear from the Holy Spirit would be the same as anything the Father or Son would say.

¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Here are two more statements that make the same point as above: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in complete and perfect unity. The Holy Spirit will proclaim the same truths Jesus had proclaimed, truths he himself received from the Father.

¹⁶ A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.

Jesus was going to die the next day, and they would not see him while he was in the tomb. After his resurrection, they would see him again as he appeared to them at times over a period of forty days.

¹⁷ So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father?" ¹⁸ So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about."

As the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them in such a profound way to give them knowledge and understanding as he would after Jesus' resurrection, they were still either unable or unwilling to receive his words and understand them here.

¹⁹ Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?"

Jesus had the supernatural ability to read the hearts and minds of others, and knew what they were thinking. They were wondering what he had meant earlier, but they had not asked him to explain again, perhaps out of shame or embarrassment for not understanding. Jesus stands

ready to help them understand. He does not wish that those who truly desire to understand the truths he's revealed about himself be left unsatisfied.

²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy.

Here and in other places throughout this section of Jesus' last words to his disciples, he uses the word *world* to refer to the unbelieving Jews. The scribes, Pharisees, high priests, and many ordinary Jews were about to rejoice after having put Jesus to death. Thinking themselves victorious, the Jewish leaders will try to win back those who had turned their loyalties toward Jesus and away from them during his ministry.

The disciples, meanwhile, would be filled with great sorrow the day after Jesus tells them these things, as he is crucified. On the day after his death they will lock themselves in a room and, thinking all hope is now lost, ask one another what they should do next, and whether they should expect a soon death themselves.

But on Sunday, everything will change once again. The disciples will hear of their resurrected Lord, go to see him in Galilee, and be filled with rejoicing. The Jewish leaders will be faced with new problems in trying to explain away the claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

²¹ When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Normally a woman dreads going into labor because of the great pain that lasts for hours and hours. But the result of that pain will be the birth of her new baby. Upon seeing and holding the baby, she is filled with joy, and forgets all about the pain she suffered.

In the same way, the disciples are already sad now and will be overcome with pain and sorrow in seeing the horrible manner in which Jesus is put to death. But when he rises from the dead and they see him, they will be filled with such joy that they will forget about all the anguish sorrow they had just endured.

²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

The disciples had been accustomed to depending on Jesus for whatever they needed. He answered their questions and provided insight for them in the things they wanted to know about their ministry. Rather than praying to God directly, it appears that they just spoke to Jesus himself, since he was right there with them. But after Jesus' death and resurrection, he will ascend to heaven and send the Holy Spirit. In that time, the apostles will pray to the Father himself in the name of Jesus.

It is common for us today as well to say "in the name of Jesus" when we pray. In the Old Testament, priests normally offered prayers to God on behalf of the people. They were called *mediators*, serving as a go-between for God and man. Since Jesus came to earth to satisfy God's justice by dying for man's sin, restoring peace between God and man, he is now our mediator. Like the apostles, we pray to God directly in the name of Jesus, our High Priest.

²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

Up to this point, as mentioned above, the disciples had not prayed specifically in the name of Jesus. They spoke to him directly, and if they did pray to the Father (as modeled by Jesus in the prayer of **Matthew 6:9-13**), they probably did not do so "in the name of Jesus." After he left them, and with help from the Holy Spirit in understanding, they would begin to do so with confidence that God would hear and answer their prayers.

²⁵ I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.

Jesus had given many of his truths to them by hints and illustrations and figures of speech. The original word in the Greek means *proverbs*. But soon, the disciples would be ready and able to receive all truth plainly. After his resurrection, Jesus visited with the disciples at times during a forty-day period teaching them plainly (**Acts 1:3**).

²⁶ In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf;

The Bible plainly teaches that Jesus is our mediator

(see notes on verse 23). He speaks to the Father on our behalf as we pray in his name (**Hebrews 7:25; 9:24**). So it may seem odd in verse 26 where Jesus says, "**I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf.**" What he seems to be saying is that he's already made clear with what he has said before that we will pray to the Father through him, and it isn't something he needs to repeat further.

27 for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

See the notes on **John 14:21**.

28 I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.

Jesus has existed for all time, being in heaven with the Father until he came to earth as a baby born to Mary. He will leave the world by lifting up off the ground and ascending through the sky, forty days after his resurrection.

29 His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech!" ³⁰ **Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God."**

What Jesus said back in verse 16 was too difficult for them to understand. They had spoken among themselves trying to figure out its meaning, but didn't ask Jesus directly what he had meant. Jesus has spent the last several verses explaining to them what they wanted to know. Not only are they grateful that he spoke the meaning plainly to him, but they are amazed that he read their minds, knew they were confused, and gave them the answer they needed without their asking. This is just another proof to them that Jesus came from God.

31 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe?"

They have just proclaimed their faith and belief in him, and he responds with a question that means, "Do you really believe? Is your faith now strong?" In the next verses he will give them evidence that their faith is about to fail, and will need to be strengthened.

32 Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when

you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

Jesus knew that within next day, as he was being tried before the Jewish leaders and Pilate, beaten, and crucified, he would be abandoned in some form by all of his disciples. This would fulfill the prophecy found in **Zechariah 13:7**, about which Jesus spoke in **Matthew 26:31**.

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Jesus promises them that they would ultimately have peace because of their relationship with him. This peace would not come from the world. The world would give the disciples pain and trials. But they were to be comforted by the fact that the pain given to them by the world would only be temporary. The peace they would have through Jesus would last forever.

Chapter Seventeen

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

As Jesus began to pray here, so soon before his death, he asks God to glorify him. This would happen by his resurrection, giving proof that Jesus was who he claimed to be. Then God the Father himself would be glorified by the way the Gospel would spread based on the evidence that Jesus was truly the Messiah, Savior, and Son of God.

² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

Jesus has been given the authority by the Father either to give eternal life or condemnation to all men (**1 Timothy 4:1**). He will give eternal life to all those whom the Father gives to him through the teaching of His word. Those who refuse such teaching will receive the just condemnation for their sins.

For more on those whom the Father gives to Jesus, see the notes on **John 6:37**.

³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

True faith that brings eternal life is not just a knowledge of information about God, and agreement with the facts taught by the Bible. True faith means having a relationship with the Father and the Son, in which the believer continuously comes to love each of them more, and displays this love in worship and obedience.

⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

Jesus speaks here knowing the certainty of his death the next day, and including it in the idea of his having accomplished the work for which the Father sent him to earth. In his teaching and in his death, he brought glory to the Father.

⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

Now, coming to the close of his mission here, Jesus desires to return to the glory that he left behind in heaven when he came down to earth as a man. He will soon ascend and be seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

⁶ I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

Jesus now begins to pray specifically for his apostles. Even as they were chosen by Jesus, the Father as well had a hand in selecting them out of a world of unbelievers. Despite their lack of total understanding about the nature of Jesus' kingdom, the disciples have remained faithful to him. Judas is the exception, but even in his betrayal of Jesus he is helping to fulfill God's plan to save sinners through his Son.

⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you.

They have seen enough of his miracles and heard his words to know that He was indeed the Son of God. They last affirmed this in **John 16:30**.

⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

Unlike other Jewish leaders or teachers, Jesus came and brought the true doctrines of God straight from heaven itself. He backed these truths up with convincing miracles.

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

Some use this verse to teach falsely that Jesus never actually prayed for sinners. Those who teach this are the same ones who teach that God chose long ago which people he would allow to believe in him, and those he would not allow to do so. They teach that those who die as unbelievers did so because God never wanted them to believe (see more in the notes on **John 6:37**). They say that in this verse Jesus is refusing to pray for unbelievers because he knows there is no point in praying for those whom God has decided should not be allowed to

believe. This is a clear contradiction of the Scriptural teaching that salvation is open to all, and the Lord wishes that all will come to repentance. Nevertheless, many people have been persuaded to believe this system of teaching, called *Calvinism*.

In this verse, Jesus is praying specifically for his disciples, who have made themselves friends of God by believing in the Son. Later, in verse 21, Jesus prays that the unbelieving world will come to believe because of the testimony of the disciples. Even later, while on the cross, Jesus prayed for the salvation of those who were crucifying him (**Luke 23:34**).

¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

Here is another statement of the total unity between God the Father and God the Son. The disciples of Jesus belong to the Father as well. And those who belong to the Father belong to the Son. True believers will bring glory to them both.

¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Jesus says he is "**no longer in the world**," referring to his coming departure for heaven. It was common to speak about something that was going to happen very soon as if it already had. As he is about to leave his disciples behind, he prays for their perseverance (remaining firm in their faith).

He also prays here for their unity. Little has done more to harm the cause of Christ than division, both within a particular congregation and among the different denominations. Jesus prays that all believers everywhere would be united in the purpose of glorifying God.

¹² While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

God had chosen and given to Jesus twelve men. Jesus fed them spiritually and carefully guarded them as a shepherd guards his sheep. All remained in the faith except Judas, whose abandonment of Jesus was not only known from the beginning, but part of God's plan to give

his Son's life to die for man's sin. **Psalm 41:9** was an Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by Judas' betrayal.

There is also a reference here to Jesus protecting them from physical harm (see **John 18:8, 9**).

13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

See the notes on **John 15:11**.

14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

As mentioned in the notes for verse eight, Jesus came and brought the true doctrines of God straight from heaven itself. These doctrines go against the way the world thinks and lives. As the disciples learned to be more and more like Jesus, the more different they would be from the ways of the world, and the more they would be hated by the world. The same is true today of those who follow the example of Jesus.

15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

While Jesus knows that great trials and suffering await his beloved disciples, his request is not that they be taken out of the world so as to avoid these things. Nor does he recommend they withdraw into seclusion, like monks who live in separation from the world. Rather, his request is that the Father will give them strength to endure in their faith during the important task of sharing the Gospel with a hostile world.

16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Followers of Christ live in the world, but their ambitions and desires should pertain to the world to come. The believer should think of earth as that which he is simply passing through on the way to something more important.

17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

The word *sanctify* has two meanings.

First, it means to cleanse someone of their sins. This meaning has two applications in the life of a believer. In salvation, the guilt of our sins is washed away completely, and we are dressed in the perfection of Jesus, by which we are allowed in heaven. The other application is the slower, ongoing process in the earthly life of a believer in which, over time, his tendency to sin diminishes and his tendency to obey God increases. This kind of cleansing makes a person more like Jesus day by day. For more on this, see the notes on **John 13:10**.

The second meaning of *sanctify* is to set someone apart for a special ministry. Jesus probably had this meaning in mind as well as he asked the Father to guide them by the truth through the Holy Spirit as they carried out their special ministry of establishing the New Testament church.

¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Here the word *consecrate* is used, having the same meaning as *sanctify* when it is used to mean setting apart for a special office. The meaning here appears to be this: just as Jesus dedicated himself to his ministry of seeking and saving the lost, in obedience to the Father, he prays that the disciples will follow his example and dedicate themselves to the ministry for which they're being set apart.

²⁰ I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

As Jesus has just finished praying specifically for the apostles, now he prays for all of his followers who will come in the future. They as well will be subject to temptations as the evil one tries to persuade them to abandon their faith, or if not that, at least to behave in a way that denies the faith they proclaim.

The devil will especially sow seeds of division among believers. This would be a very effective way to harm Christ's church, getting his followers to concentrate on their disagreements, treating one another as the enemy, rather than focusing on knowing and sharing the Gospel. Many of the world's unbelievers would use the division that exists among professing Christians as an excuse to avoid joining the body of believers themselves.

²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

There are many disagreements about what is meant here where Jesus says, **"the glory that you have given me I have given them."** While God the Father has glorified Jesus in many ways, which glory is it that can be said to have been given by Jesus to all his followers as well? One reasonable (but complicated) answer is that Jesus has glorified us with divine indwelling (God living in us) like he received during the time he spent as a human being. As Jesus lives in us, and we submit to him in obedience, our love and unity will be visible to the world.

²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Jesus prays that the disciples would join him in heaven ("**where I am**" refers to where Jesus is about to be) where they will be able to see the full glory of Jesus as he is seated at the right hand of God.

²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.

See notes on **John 17:3**.

²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Jesus came to earth and revealed the Father in a way unknown to the people in the time of the Old Testament. He will continue to reveal the Father by means of the Holy Spirit, who will inspire the apostles and their close associates to write the books of the New Testament. By means of this revelation, we can come to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, even thousands of years after he stopped walking the earth as a man. Now we who are believers make up the body of Christ on earth. He lives in us and shows his love through us to an unbelieving world.

Chapter Eighteen

¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

John does not record how Jesus prayed in such agony in this garden, and how his disciples kept falling asleep instead of keeping watch for him. All three of the other gospels did write about this time spent in the garden. You can read their accounts in **Matthew 26:36-47, Mark 14:30-36, and Luke 22:40-44.**

² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

Apparently Jesus did not announce in the upper room that he and the disciples would leave for the garden after eating. But Judas knew that since Jesus had stayed late in Jerusalem to have supper, he probably would not go all the way back to Bethany to spend the night, and would instead go to the Garden of Gethsemane where he often prayed, sometimes spent the night, and often invited the disciples to meet him.

³ So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

We don't know exactly how many people came for the arrest of Jesus, but there are some clues to help give us an idea. In verse 12, the captain of the band of soldiers is described by the Greek word *chiliarchos*. This word was used for captains in charge of 1,000 men. This band of soldiers may well have numbered as many. Sometimes the soldiers of such a captain were divided into two groups of 500, and only one group may have been present. Still, 500 soldiers plus all the Jewish leaders plus any curious citizens who joined the mob would have made a very large crowd coming toward a group of twelve men who had only two swords with them to ward off thieves (**Luke 22:38**).

Although there was a full moon, the soldiers still carried torches and lanterns to find Jesus in case he tried to hide himself among the trees or caves. They also brought weapons to help subdue him in case he resisted, or to put down a popular revolt if one started. Little did they know how easily Jesus would submit to them, and how they themselves were part of God's plan.

⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" ⁵ They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

John does not include the detail that Judas kissed Jesus to identify him before the crowd. This may have happened before the crowd answered Jesus' question here. Some suggest it probably didn't happen until after verse 9 of John's account. Since things happened so quickly, and the story is being told from the perspective of four different men in the gospels, it is difficult to put all that happened in chronological order.

⁶ When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

John is the only gospel writer who tells us this happened. At the words of Jesus, all those in the group who have come to find him, probably hundreds of people, fell back to the ground. In making this happen, Jesus likely was just giving another sign that he had the power to ably defend himself if he wanted to. They were going to arrest him and put him to death not because he was powerless to stop them, but because he was allowing them to do it to fulfill God's plan.

⁷ So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." ⁸ Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go."

Having displayed his power in sending them backwards, Jesus shows his authority in commanding that his disciples be allowed to leave. It is Jesus alone who must suffer for the redemption of mankind in what is about to take place. The disciples themselves would endure their own suffering later on as they established the New Testament church.

⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one."

See notes on **John 17:12.**

¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

While all four gospels describe a disciple cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, only John names the two involved: Simon Peter and Malchus. This is likely because both of these men were still alive when Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written, and naming them may have caused unnecessary trouble for them. Probably both were dead by the time John wrote his book.

¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

Peter is reminded that Jesus could defend himself fine if he wanted, but instead he will carry out his mission to die on the cross for the sins of humanity. It had been explained to Peter and the other disciples what was going to happen, and Peter was wrong to try to prevent it.

Luke's account tells us that Jesus restored the ear of Malchus as though nothing had happened to it (**Luke 22:51**).

¹² So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

There had been other times before when Jesus escaped being arrested, because his time had not yet come. The soldiers, wishing to ensure there will be no escape this time, bind him. It is likely they also wanted to humiliate him, treating him like an ordinary criminal.

¹³ First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

Annas had been high priest for a long time, and five of his own sons had succeeded him in that office. Now his son-in-law was the high priest. We may conclude that he was a very influential man among the Jews whether or not he was still officially in power. Because of this, and his house being close by, they led Jesus there first for his suggestions on how to proceed.

¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people.

See notes on **John 11:49-51**.

15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

It is thought by many that the disciple who entered with Jesus was John. They reason that John normally describes himself without using his own name, and John and Peter were frequently together.

However, when John writes about himself, he nearly always describes himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. And being a fisherman from Galilee, it is unlikely that he was well-known to the high priest in a way that would allow him to enter here without being in danger himself.

Keeping in mind that the word *disciple* can broadly mean anyone who is following Jesus (including believers today), and that John doesn't specify that the disciple mentioned here was one of the twelve apostles, it very well may have been someone like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea, two well-known Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus.

16 but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in.

It would have been better if Peter had just gone away. By staying around, but without much courage, he is placing himself in great temptation of denying Jesus, which he will do three times just as Jesus said.

17 The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

This verse does not say that the girl asked Peter the question at the door, but that the girl who was at the door was the one who asked the question. According to the other writers, she did not ask at the door, but near the fire (which John mentions in the next verse). She probably got a good look at him at the door, thought about it momentarily, then went by the fire to ask him directly. He says he is not a disciple of Jesus, the first denial.

18 Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and

warming himself.

While the daytime could be quite hot, overnight and approaching morning was cold enough that the heat from burning charcoal was desirable.

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

While Annas was not the current high priest, he still retains the title, having been the high priest for a long time. He is questioning Jesus to get useful information that Caiaphas can use to condemn him. He hopes to be able to accuse Jesus of raising a rebellion against the Roman government so they will put him to death. So, he asks questions about why Jesus is gathering people to himself (the disciples), and what he was teaching them and preparing to do with them.

²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world, I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said."

If Jesus had been trying to form a revolt against the Roman government, he would have done it in secret, quietly gathering the people he needed and launching a surprise attack. But that's not what he did. He taught in public where anyone could hear him and accept or reject the things he taught.

Jesus knows that Annas is trying to set him up for false accusations, and although he is prepared to die for the sins of the world, he will not quietly allow unjust accusations to be made without a response. He challenges Annas to find those who have sat under Jesus' teachings in the synagogues so they can testify. But Annas has no desire to do what's right. He only wants Jesus to die.

²² When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?"

Jesus had spoken in his own defense, as is the right of anyone accused. This officer had no right to strike Jesus. He may have been trying to increase his favor with the powerful high priest.

24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

As Jesus had been bound when he arrived before Annas, and Annas delighted in seeing him this way, he had him bound again before sending him off to stand before Caiaphas.

25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."

Remaining there and continuing to warm himself up by the fire probably wasn't a good idea. Peter opened himself up for further questions, tempting him to deny Jesus again, which he does here for the second time.

26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?"

The questioner here no doubt got a good look at Peter in the garden when he attacked Malchus, the questioner's relative, cutting off Malchus' ear. The questioner is sure that this is the same man now standing before him who made that attack with the sword.

27 Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.

Luke tells us that after Peter's third denial, when the rooster crowed, Jesus turned and looked directly at Peter (perhaps through a window), and Peter, remembering that Jesus said he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed, wept bitterly (**Luke 22:61, 62**).

28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

The law required that any trials, convictions, and sentencing take place during the day. The fact it was now early morning reminds us that all of this took place in a rush overnight, and there was nothing fair or just about the things that were happening to Jesus.

Because the Jewish law disqualified any Jew from eating the Passover who had come in contact with a Gentile during the feast, the Jews stayed out of the

governor's headquarters to avoid the risk touching any non-Jews.

29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"

Pilate was kind enough to come out to where the Jews were, since they didn't want to enter for risk of defilement. And it would seem by his question he has in mind to judge fairly, to hear the accusation, evidence, and the defense.

30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."

This is a disrespectful, ungrateful response by the Jews to a man who (1) could have just told them to go away since they weren't willing to enter directly into his court; and (2) asked a reasonable question of those who were seeking to bring accusation against someone. The fact that they avoided answering the question directly shows they didn't have a real case against Jesus.

31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."

At this point, Pilate would prefer that the Jews handle this matter themselves. They had the freedom to punish people by flogging them or excommunicating them from their fellowship. But this isn't enough for the Jewish leaders. They want to put Jesus to death and be done with him, and only someone from the Roman government itself, like Pilate, has the authority to see that through.

32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus had said in **John 3:14** and **12:32** that he would be "**lifted up**," a polite phrase used to describe crucifixion. When Judea was made a Roman province early in the first century, the Jews lost their authority to put people to death according to their own laws. Because of this, Jesus knew that he would be handed over to the Romans to be killed, and that their method of doing so was crucifixion.

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

In **Luke 23:2** we read that the Jews told Pilate that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews, and was forbidding them from giving tribute to Caesar, a false accusation. By making such a charge, they made sure that Pilate would take the situation seriously. Pilate could lose his position if someone truly were raising up a rebellion against Caesar and he did nothing about it. He asks Jesus directly about what claims he was making.

³⁴ Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"

Jesus is asking whether Pilate has seen any evidence in him that he was trying to form a rebellion against Caesar, or whether he was just taking the word of the Jews who were falsely accusing him. This question is intended to remind Pilate that it is only right to consider whether any true evidence exists, rather than accepting hearsay only.

³⁵ Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"

By saying "**Am I a Jew?**" Pilate is saying that he is not unreasonably influenced by accusations brought by Jews if they seem to have no merit. However, in the case of Jesus, he was brought forth by a large crowd of his own people and the chief priests, so Pilate believes it is reasonable to ask what Jesus may have done to bring this about.

³⁶ Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

It must have been difficult for Pilate to understand the idea of a kingdom not of this world. In his mind, a kingdom is made up of kings who put together armies of well-armed men to conquer others and claim land. Jesus says he is a king but not of that kind of kingdom. If he were a king of this world, he would have led his armies in a fight instead of allowing himself to be arrested unarmed in the garden where he often prayed. The kingdom of which Jesus is King is a spiritual one, existing in

the hearts of all those who submit to his authority.

³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Sometimes a common way of saying something in one language seems to say something else when translated into another language. The phrase **"you say that I am a king"** that Jesus used does not mean that Pilate was admitting that Jesus was a king. Rather, it was a way of saying "what you have said is the truth." Jesus goes on to say that his purpose in coming to the earth was to establish this spiritual kingdom, made up of those who believed the truth of the Gospel.

³⁸ Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."

We don't know whether Pilate asked his question in a way to ridicule Jesus, or if it was a genuine question on his mind. What we do know is that at some point during this meeting, Pilate received word from his wife that she had a disturbing dream about Jesus, and was concerned that Pilate not bring harm to him (**Matthew 27:19**). That plus his inability to find any true guilt in Jesus led him to conclude that he ought to try to let him go free.

³⁹ But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" ⁴⁰ They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate was in a difficult situation here. He did not want to harm Jesus because he found no guilt in him, and he was troubled by his wife's dream. But he also didn't want to just let Jesus go, angering the Jewish leaders who would accuse Pilate of allowing a rebellion against Caesar to start. Pilate was hopeful here that the crowd would agree to Jesus' release, thus solving his dilemma. Surely, he thought, they would rather see Jesus set free than a dangerous criminal. But to his surprise and dismay, the crowd chose the release of the criminal.

Chapter Nineteen

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

To be flogged was to have one's hands tied to a stake, exposing the bare back to be whipped. Often the whip had chunks of bone or metal attached to it, taking pieces of flesh away as the person was whipped. Most people who were to be crucified were flogged first, and some of them died during the flogging.

Pilate probably did not do the flogging himself, but ordered it to be done.

² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.

³ They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.

The soldiers were not only well practiced in inflicting pain on those whom they were killing, but took great delight in humiliation as well. As Jesus was claiming to be a king, they decided to mock him by dressing him as a king, including a crown of thorns pressed down into his head, drawing blood.

⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

Pilate hoped that having Jesus flogged would satisfy the Jews and he could then let him go without putting him to death (**Luke 23:16**). He has Jesus brought forth in his pitiful condition, hoping the Jews would agree that he'd suffered enough, especially when Pilate himself proclaimed Jesus' innocence. No doubt the humble manner in which Jesus allowed himself to be mistreated had served to convince Pilate even more of his innocence.

⁶ When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

Here it is only the Jewish leaders who cried out for Jesus to be crucified. In verse 15, the common Jews will follow their example and shout for his crucifixion as

well. These are the same people who, only five days earlier, were shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" to Jesus as he was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. This shows us what influence the Jewish leaders had with respect to the people.

Pilate officially declares that Jesus is not guilty and tells the Jews he has no intention of crucifying him, and if the Jews wish him to be crucified, they should take him and do it themselves, and suffer the consequences. With this, he hopes the situation is now over.

⁷ The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." ⁸ When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

Most Romans were *polytheists*, meaning they believed in many gods. They also believed that these gods often afflicted human beings out of revenge for offenses. They also believed that sometimes these gods visited earth in human form. The fact that Jesus had endured his flogging in such a dignified way, along with the fact that Pilate's wife had a disturbing dream, and now the idea that Jesus may be a son of a god were enough to frighten Pilate. He really wanted to let Jesus go, but the Jewish crowd was large, angry, and threatening to cause the kind of chaos that would get Pilate removed from his high position.

⁹ He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

Undoubtedly, the point of this question was to try to see whether or not Jesus was the son of one of the gods Pilate believed in. Jesus had already told Pilate about his kingdom, and had convinced Pilate of his innocence. All that was left for Pilate to do was the right thing. He didn't really need further information from Jesus to know what was right, and Jesus offers him none.

¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?"

Although Pilate is actually full of fear, still he acts as though he is in control of this situation, in hopes of intimidating Jesus into giving him some answers that might help him decide rightly what to do in this situation. If Pilate had been so confident in his

ability to release Jesus, he would have done so. But he is too afraid and Jesus knows it.

¹¹ Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

For Jesus to remain silent here would indicate that Pilate was correct, that he was the one with the power. So, Jesus decides to speak here so the truth will be heard. He points out that Pilate is not the one who ultimately is in charge of whether Jesus will live or die. Jesus is. He is laying down his life by his own choice, and he could stop any of this at any time if he wanted to.

Pilate's authority has come from God, who knew in advance what Pilate would do in such a situation, and allowed him to be used in the plan of Jesus dying for the sins of humanity. Caiaphas, to whom Jesus refers in the last sentence of verse 11, was also allowed by God to assume the position of high priest. Both Caiaphas and Pilate would be guilty for their roles in sending Jesus to his crucifixion, but since Caiaphas was acting with such hatred and purpose, declaring long before that Jesus should die, he is considered more guilty than Pilate, who finds himself in a difficult position, and is too weak to do the right thing by letting Jesus go free.

¹² From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."

After the death of Julius Caesar, all the kings of Rome were called Caesar, just like the kings of Egypt in the time of the Old Testament were all called Pharaoh. The king at the time of the events of this chapter was Tiberius, a cruel man who guarded his throne jealously. If word got to him that someone was stirring up rebellion where Pilate was governor, and Pilate didn't take action, he likely would put Pilate to death. So the choice Pilate is facing is either to put an innocent man, who might be a son of a god, to death, or to set him free and risk his own death at the hands of Tiberius. The Jews are well taking advantage of the situation to threaten Pilate into having Jesus crucified.

¹³ So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was

the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

Pilate probably hoped by saying "**Behold your King!**" that the people would look upon Jesus, who had been beaten and flogged, and conclude that his claims were harmless and his death unnecessary, consenting to let him go free.

¹⁵ They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

As mentioned in the notes on verse 6, these are the same people who were shouting praise and adoration for Jesus, believing him to be their king, only five days earlier when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

The Jews would regret their choice of Caesar over Jesus when the Roman government brought great destruction on them within a few decades. Those who never came to believe on Jesus are still regretting the decision even as they suffer in torment awaiting God's final judgment.

¹⁶ So he delivered him over to be crucified.

Pilate makes his decision. Rather than risk death at the hands of Tiberius, he gives the Jews what they want.

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

Jesus was made to walk a long way, carrying his own cross until he no longer could. At that point the soldiers pulled Simon the Cyrene out of the crowd and made him help carry the cross (**Matthew 27:32**). Some think the place of public execution was called the place of a skull because the hillside looked like a skull from a distance. As well, there probably were skulls lying in places on the ground from criminals executed in the past.

¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

The two who were crucified with Jesus were thieves. They both cast insults at Jesus while they were being crucified (**Matthew 27:44**). After a while, one of them began to believe on Jesus and asked him to save him (**Luke 23:39-43**).

¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

It was common to write the name of the criminal on a sign, along with the crime for which he was being put to death, and put it above his head for all to see. This would help encourage not to engage in the same criminal acts. In the case of Jesus, since Pilate had found no wrong in Jesus, and probably to irritate the Jews, he had "King of the Jews" written on the sign above Jesus.

²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" ²² Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Many Jews were able to read this inscription because of the location being so close to the city, and the sign being written in three languages. Seeing the manner of Jesus as he suffered, praying for those who were killing him (**Luke 23:34**), and offering forgiveness to a thief probably affected them, making them reflect on the truth of who Jesus was. The Jewish leaders, being upset about this, asked that the sign be changed to say Jesus *claimed* to be the King, not that he really was. Pilate had already made enough concessions to satisfy the Jews against his own better judgment, and he refused to give in on this.

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things,

It was common for the soldiers who were executing people to take the clothes from their victims and keep them for themselves. Unlike the images we see on crucifixes, Jesus probably hung on the cross completely naked, adding to the humiliation of an already tortuous

form of death.

A tunic in one piece without seams was valuable, and somewhat uncommon, except for priests. Had it been torn apart, it would have had no value, so the soldiers cast lots (similar to rolling dice today) to see who would own it. That some of Jesus' clothes were divided up and others gambled for was predicted in the Old Testament centuries before (**Psalm 22:18**).

²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Three women are mentioned here, all of whom were named Mary, showing what a common name it was at the time.

It was difficult enough for Mary, the mother of Jesus, to see her son suffering the way he was. But watching the soldiers take down his clothes and happily divide them among themselves, without regard for Jesus himself, must have added to her grief.

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

The disciple mentioned here is John himself. He does not use his own name in this book to describe himself, but refers to himself most often as the disciple whom Jesus loved, as he was indeed the disciple with whom Jesus was closest.

What takes place here is the simple transfer of Mary's care from Jesus to John, being that Joseph probably had died long before. This is not, as Catholics are taught, an instruction for all believers to adopt Mary as their spiritual mother and offer prayers up to her. While Mary was faithful in giving birth to Jesus and raising him as he was living in human form, it is misleading to refer to her as the Mother of God. Her nature is no more eternal than that of any other human being, and she was a sinner saved by grace through her faith in Jesus.

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."

One of the symptoms of dying by crucifixion was a nearly insufferable thirst, due partly to hanging on the cross out in the sun, and partly to loss of blood. That Jesus would declare this in asking for a drink was

predicted in **Psalm 69:21**.

²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

This sour wine, referred to as vinegar in some translations, should not be confused with the vinegar mixed with gall mentioned in **Matthew 27:34**. That vinegar would have had a drugging effect, lessening the pain suffered by Jesus. As the purpose of his death on the cross was to suffer the punishment for the sins of mankind, he refused the drink offered there. Here, though, the drink appears to be simple vinegar, the only effect of which was to treat in a small way his thirst.

³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Jesus declares that the suffering of God's punishment for those who believe has been fully carried out. While sometimes there are natural consequences of our sin that we will suffer while we live on earth (hurt feelings, damaged relationships, legal penalties, etc.), there is no indication in Scripture of additional suffering of believers being necessary in order to be permitted to enter into eternal life. Any teaching that a believer must suffer to some degree between the time of death and entering eternal life disagrees with what Jesus said here before he died.

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

Jewish law stated that a man who was hanged on a tree as punishment should be buried the same day because such a man was cursed, and the presence of the hanging bodies beyond the same day would defile the land (**Deuteronomy 21:22, 23**). When the law was written, such a hanging brought death quickly by strangulation, whereas a crucifixion on a cross could allow a person to survive for days. Since this was not only a Sabbath approaching, but the special Passover Sabbath, the Jews asked that the legs be broken so the victims could no longer push themselves up and down to breathe, and would suffocate quickly, allowing their bodies to be taken down.

³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Jesus died more quickly than is normal for someone being crucified. This could be because he was beaten so severely before ever being nailed to the cross. More likely it is because Jesus chose to die at the moment he did, as indicated by the words in verse 30 which tell us he **"gave up his spirit."**

³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

Just to make sure Jesus was dead, one soldier gave a forceful thrust of his large, pointed spear into the side of Jesus. We're not told which side, but it was likely Jesus' left side, piercing the heart. Around the human heart there is a membrane called the pericardium, containing a liquid resembling water that keeps the surface of the heart moist while it continuously beats. To strike in this area would have caused John to see what looked like blood and water flowing together.

Some who are skeptical that Jesus rose from the dead suggest that he may only have been unconscious, and regained consciousness after being placed in the cool tomb. However, the fact that the experienced believed him dead and did not break his legs, plus the fact that one of them stabbed him in the side as described here, leave us with no doubt that Jesus was dead.

³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness--his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth--that you also may believe.

Here John reminds us that he is writing down his eyewitness testimony in hopes that the reader will believe on Jesus.

³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken."

In the Old Testament, as Moses was preparing to deliver the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt, he gave them instructions from God on preparing the Passover meal. One instruction was that every Jewish family was to kill a lamb as a sacrifice to God. The lamb was to be without blemish, and they were not to

break any of its bones in the sacrifice (**Exodus 12:46**). The families which obeyed these instructions of Moses were spared from having their firstborn struck dead during the night, a tragedy which convinced Pharaoh to set the Israelites free. The sacrificial lamb was a symbol of the Christ who would come centuries later and be sacrificed to deliver them from the wrath of God.

³⁷ And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

This was prophesied in **Zechariah 12:10**. Those who today still believe the Messiah is yet to come should consider how all the Old Testament prophecies about his earthly life were fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission.

Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest ruling council of the Jews. The Sanhedrin played a major role in having Jesus put to death, but Joseph of Arimathea did not offer his consent in those discussions (**Luke 23:50, 51**).

³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus near the beginning of Jesus' ministry is described in **John 3:1-21**. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin who came to believe in Jesus. These spices and aloes he brought were commonly applied to dead bodies to help preserve them and delay their decay.

⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

It is likely they washed the dirt and blood from the body before applying the spices and aloes and wrapping the linens around the body several times.

⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had

yet been laid.

It was common for rich men like Joseph of Arimathea to have their own gardens outside the city to visit and enjoy. It was also common to have one's tomb made in their own garden. This tomb was like a cave cut out of the rock on a side of a hill.

⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Time was running short to take care of Jesus' body before the Sabbath began, so Joseph of Arimathea made arrangements to place Jesus in Joseph's own newly made tomb. It is likely that this was considered a temporary resting place until something could be made specifically for the body of Jesus. The way they prepared the body shows us that they had no expectation of him rising from the dead. They rolled a large stone in front of the entrance to keep anyone from tampering with the body while it was there.

Chapter Twenty

¹ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

None of the gospels give a full account of the events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus. For a more complete understanding of what you read in **John 20:1-18**, read also **Matthew 28:1-8**, **Mark 16:1-8**, and **Luke 24:1-11**.

Matthew tells us that Mary Magdalene was not alone when she came. She and the other women who were with her came as early as Jewish law would allow them to on Sunday morning. Jesus had been buried late on Friday, remained in the tomb during all of Saturday (the Sabbath), and rose from the dead on Sunday morning.

The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus out. There is no mention of his walking out from the tomb. He apparently left the tomb miraculously, similar to the way he would appear to the disciples miraculously that evening (verse 19). The stone was rolled away to let people in to see that Jesus was not there.

² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Piecing this together with the other Gospels, it appears that Mary Magdalene ran from the tomb while the other women stayed there and were visited by two angels, who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead (**Luke 24:5-8**). Not having stayed to see this, Mary Magdalene reports to Peter and John (referred to here as "the other disciple") only that the tomb is empty and Jesus' body is gone.

³ So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

Mary Magdalene had run to give them the news, and now they ran to the tomb. If someone was up to something regarding Jesus' body, they needed to act as quickly as possible to stop it.

⁵ And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying

there, but he did not go in.

In light of all that's happened, John is just too uneasy to go in by himself, so he stays outside and just looks in.

⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

Peter, showing his typical boldness, does not hesitate to enter the tomb, and moves right past John to do so. The fact that the linens are lying there indicate that the body has not been stolen. What thief would take the time to undo all the wrapping that was done to a Jewish body? That the head cloth was neatly folded was further evidence that nothing improper had happened here.

⁸ Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

John not only runs faster than Peter, but he believes faster as well. While he does not yet have a complete understanding of the Scriptures which predicted the resurrection (as indicated in the next verse), the words of Jesus himself and the sight of the empty linens are enough to make him believe a miracle has happened.

⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Verse eight has just told us that John believed after he saw the evidence. It would have been better had he believed either because of the testimony of Scripture, or because of the words of Jesus without the visible evidence, but like the other disciples, he needed to see some proof with his eyes. So we have in these two verses somewhat of a confession: that John didn't yet understand the Scripture's teaching that Jesus must rise from the dead, but because he saw the evidence, which reminded him of Jesus' words, he believed.

¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes.

Luke tells us that as Peter returned home he marveled at what had happened, but not that he believed. He no doubt wondered what could explain the presence of the empty grave clothes. While John believes, there isn't

any record that he shared his belief with the others before Jesus appeared to them all.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.

Comparing this passage with **Mark 16:9**, we may safely conclude that the Mary referred to in this verse is again Mary Magdalene. She probably followed Peter and John back to the tomb, but was unable to keep up with them and arrived after they did. Whether she got there before they left or not, we do not know.

¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

Mary's shock and grief are affecting her even more than the sight of these two angels, whom she must have recognized as angels based on their appearance. The crucifixion itself was traumatic enough, and now this. From the time she first saw the empty tomb on her first trip until now, she has it in her mind that the body has been taken away by unknown people to an unknown place, and this is devastating to her.

¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

As Jesus approached she turned to see him, but apparently she didn't turn fully to face him and look at him closely, as she does in verse 16.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away."

Mary wouldn't expect Joseph of Arimathea to be at the garden so early in the morning, but it wouldn't be unusual for the caretaker of his garden to be. Since they had laid Jesus in there hurriedly before the start of the Sabbath, maybe she thinks Joseph had since had him moved somewhere else, and the gardener should know.

It's quite an expression of love Mary makes here, offering to carry the body of full-sized dead man away so she could treat it properly.

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

The way he said, "Mary," in a voice she had heard before many times, finally captured her attention and convinced her that he was alive and before her.

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Some versions translate Jesus words as, "don't touch me," but the better translation of the original phrase is, "don't cling to me" or "don't keep hanging on to me." It is likely that Mary did wrap her arms around him, probably at his feet. By saying he has not yet ascended to the Father, he is telling her there will be more time for her to see him and embrace him later, but now she has a more important task. She must go and report to his disciples that he is alive.

Jesus calls his disciples "brothers" for the first time here. Before he had called them "servants," then later "friends." Now, he calls them brothers reminding them that they (and we) can become "sons" of God through his death, adopted into the family of God through our faith in Jesus. When Jesus ascends to heaven forty days later, it will be not only to his Father, but their (and our) Father as well.

18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"--and that he had said these things to her.

Full of joy, she leaves Jesus to obey his command to announce that he is alive. **Mark 16:11** tells us that despite her eyewitness testimony, despite the missing body with grave clothes left behind, and despite the many times in which Jesus described his coming resurrection, the disciples do not believe her.

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

One can imagine the state of the disciples as they hid themselves inside this locked room after the death of

Jesus. They were full of fear and hopelessness, wondering what to do next. They probably felt bad for Mary Magdalene, who, it appeared to them, had lost her mind and was claiming she had seen Jesus alive, the poor woman.

Suddenly, without bothering to use the door, Jesus simply and miraculously appears among them inside the room, saying "**Peace be with you.**" What they've had the last couple of days was anything but peace, and now that was going to change.

²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Showing them his hands and side not only brought the disciples back to believing, but it also shows that this wasn't simply a spiritual or figurative resurrection. The same body which was beaten and nailed to a cross, and which had died, was now living again. He even ate a piece of fish as further proof (**Luke 24:42, 43**).

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

As Jesus was soon to leave the earth, he would leave these men, his apostles, with the task of establishing the church of the New Testament. They would be sent throughout the populated earth to preach, teach, evangelize, perform miracles, and oversee the writing of the Scriptures that are now in our New Testament. The church they were to establish by his power and in his name would be referred to figuratively as the body of Christ on earth.

²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The apostles don't actually receive the Holy Spirit here, but rather Jesus gives them an illustration of the way it will soon come upon them. He has already told them they will receive the Holy Spirit after he ascends to heaven (**John 7:39; 16:7**) and this was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:1-4**).

²³ If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.

This verse has been used to support the Catholic

teaching that priests have been given the authority, passed down from the apostles, to forgive people of their sins on behalf of God. That is a misunderstanding of what Jesus was saying here.

If we were to expand the above translation of the verse above to better account for the unusual tenses in the original language, we would find Jesus saying something close to this: "Whatever sins you forgive, they are as already having been forgiven; and whatever sins you retain, they are as having been unforgiven."

To understand the meaning of this, it is helpful to consider the coming role of the apostles. They were about to take the Gospel around the world, proclaiming with the authority of Jesus both what sin is and how to be forgiven of it.

Consider the example of Peter in **Acts 2**. He preached to the Jews a message that convinced them of their guilt in having put to death the innocent Son of God. Being sorry in their hearts, they asked him, "What shall we do?" In other words, they wanted to know how they could be forgiven. **Acts 2:38** tells us "**And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" Once someone followed Peter's instructions here, it was not necessary to appear before Peter or another apostle or priest and have them say, "You are forgiven." They were forgiven by having followed the instructions. Peter and the apostles did not forgive sins on behalf of God, but they did announce the way to receive forgiveness, and could even go so far as agree that a sinner had been forgiven if they followed the instructions given by the authority of Jesus. But this is different from a priest claiming on behalf of God to forgive someone of their sins.

²⁴ **Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."**

It is easy to be critical of Thomas for his outspoken unbelief. But the truth is he was not much worse than any of the rest of the disciples. None of them believed after Mary Magdalene testified to them that Jesus had risen, and they only believed now because they had seen him and touched his hands and side, the same evidence required by Thomas.

²⁶ **Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and**

Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

It would appear that the apostles have already begun their practice of meeting on the first day of the week, and Jesus gives this practice his blessing by appearing twice in their midst. Thomas, who missed the previous meeting, makes sure he is present for this one.

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

While the disbelief of all the disciples was sinful, we see the patience and grace of Jesus, to the ten who were present the week before, and now to Thomas.

²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Many false religions teach that Jesus never claimed to be God. In this verse, he clearly receives and accepts the confession from Thomas that he is both Lord and God.

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is a promise that applies to us today. We who believe do so not because we have seen the resurrected Jesus with our own eyes, but because we accept the testimony of the apostles as recorded in the New Testament.

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Many of the works Jesus did that were not recorded by John were recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Still many more works were not recorded at all, there being too many of them. John will refer to the great number of Jesus' works again in the last verse of his Gospel.

The point of all four of these writers is not just to record history, but to persuade the reader to believe on Jesus and be saved. No more important decision can be made than this.

Chapter Twenty-one

¹ After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way.

Jesus did not stay with the disciples throughout the forty-day period between his resurrection and ascension, but rather made appearances to them at times. He made several appearances to people since the appearance to the disciples at the end of the previous chapter that John did not record.

The Sea of Tiberias is also called the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples have gone to Galilee to meet Jesus there, as he instructed them to do.

² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.

Most if not all of these seven were from this area. This is before the Holy Spirit came upon them, beginning their ministry. In the meantime, they support themselves and make themselves useful by fishing.

³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

At least some of these men had been professional fishermen before Jesus called them to be disciples. To go all night and not catch anything was highly unusual. From this we may conclude that God prevented any catch to set the stage for Jesus' miracle.

⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

The day is still not all the way light, and they are some distance from the shore.

⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

Jesus uses the endearing term "children" to call out to them, but they still don't recognize that it's he. Then he gives them some advice similar to that which he gave them some time before after another unsuccessful night of catching fish (see **Luke 5:1-11**). But they don't recognize him until after they take his advice, and it works out much the same as it did in the Luke passage.

⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea.

John refers to himself again here as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Peter, showing his tendency to make quick decisions and act on them, puts on his clothes, jumps out of the boat, and begins to swim toward his Lord, leaving the others to deal with the great catch of fish.

⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

The original text says they were about two hundred cubits away, which would be about 90 metres.

⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread.

It appears that Jesus has prepared this fire and provided the fish that were already laid out on it, as well as the bread. Some suggest that this was another miracle, Jesus having produced charcoal, bread, and fish out of nothing, but there is nothing in the text to indicate this.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.

We do find what appears to be another miracle in this verse, as the nets did not tear while hauling in a greater load of fish than that for which they were designed. John likely points this out to give credit to Jesus for making it so. So impressed were they with the large number of fish that they took the trouble to count them.

¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

John, who wrote this book to convince all who read it that Jesus was God in the flesh, points out here that the disciples themselves were now all very firm in their faith. While their faith had failed them somewhat when Jesus was crucified, all of them were now sure in their belief about who Jesus was, and what their response to him should be.

¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

As we've seen, Jesus first appeared to the disciples minus Thomas on the evening of the day of his resurrection. He appeared to them a second time a week later in the presence of Thomas. Now he appears to a group of them for the third time. He had also made other appearances to other people, including Mary Magdalene (as we saw in **John 20:11-17**) and two followers on their way to Emmaus (**Luke 24:13-31**).

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

While Jesus has appeared to the disciples twice before, this is likely the first heart-to-heart conversation Jesus has had with Peter since the three denials on the night of the crucifixion. Before those denials, Peter had boldly proclaimed that even if all the other disciples abandoned Jesus, he would not. In other words, he was claiming to love Jesus more than the others did. Now Jesus reminds him of this and asks him whether it true that Peter loves him more than the others do. Instead of making such a proud boast as before, Peter simply says, **"You know that I love you."** Jesus replies with an instruction for him to help nurture those who are new in the faith to come to spiritual maturity.

¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep."

Jesus' question is the same without "more than these." Peter's answer here is identical to his first answer. The word Jesus uses for sheep could be translated "little sheep," so his instruction here is similar to the previous verse.

Throughout this conversation between Jesus and Peter, there are different words used in the Greek that are translated into *love* in our version, different words used that are translated *know* in our version, and different words used that are translated *feed* or *tend*. For example, Jesus did not use the same word for *love* in all three questions, and Peter did not use the same word for *know* in all three answers. There probably isn't much significance to this, though many have tried to find some. They likely were just using various words in the same way we do at times for variety in the way we speak.

¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

Three times Peter had denied Jesus publicly, and three times he is asked by Jesus here to publicly declare his love for Jesus in front of the other disciples present. Peter was grieved by the memories of that night, when after boasting of his great dedication, he forsook the Master more than other disciple except Judas. He knows it will not be enough simply to keep saying he loves Jesus. He said so on the day he betrayed him as well. It will now be up to him to prove it by his actions, obeying Jesus' instructions here to care for God's flock of believers.

¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

Through this illustration Jesus predicts that Peter will live a long useful life and then be put to death for his faith. Historical sources outside the Bible tell us that Peter lived almost 40 more years, being put to death by the Roman emperor Nero in A.D. 68, by crucifixion. Because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus, he asked to be crucified upside-down, and his request was granted.

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?"

After Jesus said, "**Follow me,**" it appears he and Peter got up and began to walk. With Jesus just having predicted for Peter his future, a long life followed by a martyr's death, Peter turns around and sees John and wonders what will happen to him. Peter and John were close, and it is natural to wonder such a thing.

²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

Jesus reminds Peter that his chief concern should be with his own spiritual walk, fulfilling the tasks God as laid out for him as an apostle. How long or short the life of John would be, or even whether it would be longer than Peter's own, was not an issue that Peter should allow to distract him from doing all the apostolic work that lay before him.

²³ So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

As often happens with rumors, the misunderstanding that John was not to die spread among many, especially after John so far outlived all the other disciples, most of whom were killed for their faith. Several years had passed between the conversation of Jesus and Peter, and the time John wrote his Gospel. He would have known well about the rumor, and he wishes to clarify here what Jesus said.

²⁴ This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

This is the verse which reveals to us without doubt that John was referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved. All that which we've read to this point is the trustworthy testimony of an eyewitness.

²⁵ Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

Even though four true, inspired Gospels were written with many stories and words of Jesus, they only tell a small part of all the things he said and did. The Holy Spirit through these inspired men revealed enough for us to believe on Jesus, but not so much that copying the books in those days would have been too great a task, or our Bibles today too heavy to carry.