

# The WORD in John- Studies from the Gospel according to John



20th Annual

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Victory Lectures

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# **The WORD in John- Studies from the Gospel according to John**

**West Virginia School of Preaching  
Victory Lectures**

**Hosted by:  
Hillview Terrace Church of Christ  
Moundsville, West Virginia**

**Lectureship Committee:**

**Elders of Hillview Terrace Church of Christ  
& Members of the West Virginia School of  
Preaching Faculty**

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# Foreword

The year 2014 marks the 20th annual West Virginia School of Preaching *Victory Lectures*. The Lectureship Committee, comprised of the elders of the Hillview Terrace church of Christ and faculty members of the West Virginia School of Preaching, has chosen and organized another valuable topic for spiritual growth. This year's topic "*The WORD in John – Studies from the Gospel according to John*" is designed to invigorate one's faith and appreciation for the incarnate Word, Jesus the Son of God.

As John indicated, the purpose of the Book of John is to produce faith which leads to salvation by sharing some of the signs Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples (John 20:30-31). The Word "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14) which provided mankind with insurmountable evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. It is the intention of this lectureship book to "draw out" the evidences for Jesus' divinity found in the Gospel of John by considering these themes (each title is marked with the corresponding superscript in the Table of Contents to designate theme):

1. "Confessions of the Word"<sup>1</sup>
2. "Conversations with the Word"<sup>2</sup>
3. "Claims of the Word"<sup>3</sup>
4. "Confirmation of the Word"<sup>4</sup>
5. "Concerns of the Word"<sup>5</sup>
6. "Credentials of the Word"<sup>6</sup>

As in the past, this lectureship book could not have been compiled without the help of numerous dedicated Christians. Andy Robison and Michele McIntyre are to be appreciated for their persistence in contacting various writers. Many of our writers serve the Lord as ministers in the Ohio Valley, while others labor in different capacities or in different locales. Whatever the case, their vigor to serve is

commendable, and we are thankful for their service. Special thanks to Lisa Games, Susie Kelch, Kelly Petit, Christie Robison, and Dana Simons, all members of the Hillview Terrace church of Christ, for their work editing each manuscript with care. Without their help this task would have been much more difficult and undoubtedly less successful.

J.S.

05 June 2014

# Dedication



As institutions, whether religious or secular, mature they tend to develop “traditions” and West Virginia School of Preaching is no exception to that trend. Several years ago the Lectureship Committee decided that at the time of the Lectureship each year that year’s printed volume would be dedicated to some worthy Christian whose life exemplifies those characteristics that stood out in the Life of Lives, that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many worthy people have been the recipients of this honor, but none are more worthy than the couple honored with this year’s book—Emanuel and Judy Daugherty.

In the early 1990s the late and lamented brother R. C. Oliver suggested that this area of the Ohio Valley needed a school for the

education of men to become preachers of the Gospel of Christ. He expressed some concerns regarding the fact that brethren in the South were already engaged in such enterprises, but the idea had not yet moved to the area where the Campbell's and other great preaching educators began their work some two hundred fifteen years ago. Five men took up the challenge brother Oliver offered and began seeking a congregation with a good reputation who would be willing to found such a school to do such a work. The idea was turned down by several churches but when presented to the Hillview Terrace congregation, here in Moundsville, the challenge was immediately accepted and the school whose physical facility is located on their property was founded. They chose as their founding director brother Emanuel Daugherty; in this work he served for ten years. The Daughertys labored long and hard to get the work off the ground and soon there was a small but thriving school which has turned out some seventy or eighty preachers of the Word. Brother Daugherty traveled extensively and raised thousands upon thousands of dollars needed to make such an effort flourish. He also recruited two or three dozen students. During this time sister Daugherty maintained the home, entertained, and did all the things expected of the helpmate befitting the school's director who was also a gifted preacher of the Gospel. After a period of time, tiring under the weight of his load, Emanuel decided to retire from the directorship, though he remains on the faculty to this day, and went back to his first love—preaching. He was succeeded by the venerable Denver E. Cooper.

The Daughertys are very congenial people and much loved over a wide area by brethren who love good people. Brother Emanuel has a fine tenor voice and is an excellent song director. No doubt, singing was a part of his early life since he is a native West Virginian having been born in Barbour County where he still has relatives. At an early age his family moved to northeastern Ohio (Trumbull County) where his father found employment and where the whole family worked hard to firmly establish the Cause of Christ. It was there he met Miss Judith Null, whom he later married. He found time to serve a grateful nation in the armed forces and was later employed as a telegrapher on the railroad. His Lord and his heart kept calling him to preach the Gospel. He enrolled in the Memphis



School of Preaching and later in the Alabama Christian School of Religion. Graduating from MSOP the Daugherty family moved to work with the Sullivan Avenue church in Columbus, Ohio. That congregation grew and prospered until their facilities were outgrown. Consequently, they erected a new building on Alkire Road in Grove City, Ohio. They spent 21 years serving this church and subsequently moved to Dewey Avenue in St Marys, WV and from there to Moundsville. While living in the greater Columbus area Emanuel taught in the Central Ohio School for Preachers and Teachers for about ten years. Presently, he serves the Salem Church of Christ on Bowman Ridge, Marshall County as preacher.

Emanuel and Judy are the well-pleased parents of four children—one son and three daughters. Their eldest Bruce is a preacher. He and his family live in Daytona, Florida. Their eldest daughter Ramona and husband Stephan Haynes, along with their family live in Columbus, Rebecca and husband Gospel preacher Brad Poe live in Proctorville, Ohio and Rachel and her husband Maken Cornell reside in Columbus as well. All their children and grandchildren who are of age are faithful Christians in the communities in which they live.

The Daughertys are highly regarded and deeply respected, not only here in Moundsville, but everywhere they have lived. He has preached in many states from Florida to Wisconsin and points east and west. Emanuel is not only one of the faculty at WVSOP, but a published author having written *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. He is known for his fine Bible scholarship and careful preaching of the Word. Not to be outdone though, Judy is also a published author of books designed to help Christian women reach their full potential as servants of Jesus Christ. Like their Master they go “about doing good.” Any locale would be fortunate indeed to have this fine and devoted couple living within its bounds. We feel especially blessed by having them live among us. They are fine examples of Christian faithfulness, goodness, patience and love who are certainly worthy of whatever honor we, in our feeble way can offer. Thank you Emanuel and Judy for all the good you have done, are doing and will do as you serve our beloved Messiah and Savior!

Moundsville, WV, 29 March



# Eldership Honored

Church of Christ, 915 State Ave NE, Massillon, OH 44646

During the more than seventy years of this congregation's existence, she has been blessed with numerous godly elders. The four men who serve the congregation today are no exception: Keith Crum (wife, Jacque), Dave Evans (wife, Ellie), Greg Jones (wife, Dana), and Jeff Thornberry (wife, Adriann).

These men devote countless hours in shepherding the flock here to make sure every member receives what he or she needs to maintain spiritual growth. All are excellent teachers and all have preached on occasion.

They have made sure that the congregation supports both local and foreign evangelism. The church has supported missionaries in Brazil, Hong Kong, France, and India, as well as local mission fields. The congregation supports *Search for the Lord's Way* on the local television station.

The congregation has also supported men who have attended the West Virginia School of Preaching.

Thanks to our heavenly Father for these good men and their wives who support them.



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# Introduction to the Gospel of John

*Job 16:1-2*

*Denny Petrillo*

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31) [All Scripture references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.]

Probably around A.D. 90, the last living apostle, John, pinned these words. It had been around 20 years since a true Gospel had been written. His Gospel was going to be unique from the others, including material that was not found elsewhere. Some argue that this Gospel is 92% unique. A lot had happened in the 50+ years since Christianity began. The church had spread, Jewish opposition increased, and the Romans finally became convinced that Christianity was not a subversive group within Judaism. As a result, governmental persecution arose. This meant that Christians faced opposition from two sides – the Jewish side and the Roman side. These were tough days to be a Christian.

Why would any logically-thinking person become a Christian? John's Gospel, as evidenced by the verses given above, is designed to provide reasons to believe in Jesus. These verses compose what I call a "purpose statement." Relatively few biblical books have purpose statements. So when they do, we need to pay close attention.

By looking at these verses, John's purpose is laid out in simple fashion: (a) give signs that Jesus performed, (b) only give signs that were done in the presence of the disciples, (c) give signs that will encourage one to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and (d) one may have life when he/she believes in His name.

These verses unlock the key to John's approach. Within these

verses are found the most important words in John's Gospel. It is always a good idea to mark each of these key words in one's Bible. It is suggested that each word receive its own color. This will separate the words from each other, and allow the student to easily see how the inspired writer is emphasizing these words in various sections in the book. The verses where these words are found is provided at the end of this article.

### **Key Words in the Gospel of John**

The first word that demands our attention is the word "believe/faith." It is clear from 20:30-31 that John wants men to come to Jesus in faith. This word (*pisteuo*) occurs 101 times in the Gospel (this number includes all forms – nouns, verbs and adjectives). John uses this word to include the totality of one's response to the Gospel of Jesus. It would be an unfortunate misinterpretation of this book to see faith as nothing more than a mental conviction. Consider some key verses related to the concept of faith:

- 1:12 - John notes that those who "believe in His name" are those who have "received" Him. He also points out that such have earned the "right to become children of God." Belief, all by itself, merely puts one in a position to become God's child. Unless he acts on that belief, then he has not earned the right to be called a child of God.
- 3:36 – The NKJV renders this verse as follows: "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Yet this does not fully capture the teaching of this verse. The New American Standard renders it as follows: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Notice that he first mentions "believes" (*pisteuo*), then follows that by saying that unless one "obeys" (*apeitheo*) that eternal life will not ever be seen. Properly understood, John is noting that belief includes obedience.

- 5:24 – One must hear and believe. Believing alone is insufficient.
- 5:38 – One who believes has God’s word “abiding” in him. How has the word formed a permanent home within the believer? Through diligent study!
- 20:31 – As John concludes this verse, he notes: “and that believing you may have life in His name.” “Believing” represents continuous action. One must come to Jesus in faithful obedience, and then maintain that trust and compliance for the rest of his life (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:13).

A second word that demands our attention is the word “life” (*zoe*). If one has that faithful obedience mentioned above, a promise of life will result. Two aspects of life results – temporal and eternal. John will use the word *zoe* in the natural sense, describing one who lives. In chapter four, Jesus raises the Nobleman’s son. Jesus told him “your son lives” (4:53). It is important for Jesus to demonstrate the power to give life, for it will establish His ability to give eternal life. This will especially be illustrated with the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11. Jesus tells Martha that “everyone who lives (*zoe*) and believes in Me shall never die” (11:26). But Jesus also promises, in the present, an “abundant” life (10:10). The quality of the “here and now” is improved when one possesses a genuine relationship with Christ. This involves a daily fellowship with God that those of the world cannot understand, appreciate or enjoy. A failure to believe in the Son of God has consequences for one’s daily life. In such case Jesus says, “you have no life in you” (6:53).

There is a second aspect to the “life” promised to the obedient believer: “eternal life.” Eternal life is the opposite of “perishing” (3:15-16; 10:28). The recipient of this eternal life has heard the words of Jesus and believed them (5:24). He has “hated” his life to the extent that he was willing to live it for God instead of himself (12:25). When Peter was given the opportunity to leave Jesus he wisely replied: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (6:68). When the multitudes followed Jesus, hoping to get another free meal, He instructs them to not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures “to eternal life”

(6:27).

A third word that demands our attention is the word “signs.” John tells us that there are many more “signs” that Jesus performed that he did not include in his Gospel. If you’re like me, you’d love to hear about each and every one. But such was not God’s purpose. What is included in John’s Gospel is good enough. That is, good enough to convict an honest heart. Another 100 “signs” wouldn’t accomplish more than the signs John has given us.

A “sign” is something that points beyond itself. When we look at a stop sign, we do not stand there and admire the color coordination, the shape and the metal used. It is telling us something. So also are the signs of Jesus. They are interesting in themselves, but are designed to convey an essential spiritual truth. The signs point us to Jesus. They point to His nature, character, power and purpose.

So what are these “signs?” Frequently they are miracles, but not always (see 2:18-19). When Jesus changed the water to wine (2:1-11), that was a “sign” that pointed to Jesus’ glory (2:11). Other signs would include the healing of the official’s son (4:43-54), the healing of the crippled man (5:1-9), the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-15), walking on the water (6:16-20), the healing of the blind man (9:1-12), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44). Even the resurrection of Jesus was a sign (20:1-10). John tells us that these signs are designed to produce faith. Yet the heart of the observer has to be open to the “signs.” If one is not disposed to doing the Will of God then faith will not result, no matter how many signs are performed (2:11).

### **Three Threads**

So how does John intend to accomplish his stated purpose in 20:30-31? There are three thematic threads, each running through the Gospel, that accomplish this goal.

The *first thread* is found in the witnesses to Jesus. The word witness (*martus*) occurs 48 times in the Gospel. In Jewish culture, it was not acceptable for a man to only bear witness of himself. He would never be taken seriously if the only one “blowing his horn” was himself. The Jews even accused Jesus of bearing witness to himself: “The Pharisees therefore said to Him, ‘You bear witness of Yourself;

Your witness is not true” (8:13). Jesus had earlier confirmed this view. He said, “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true” (5:31). As a result, John puts together an impressive list of those who bear witness to Jesus. The first is John the Baptist. According to 1:7, he “came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light that all through him might believe.” The witnessing work of John is mentioned in several other passages (1:8, 15, 19, 32; 3:26). In 1:34 John says, “And I have seen and testify (*martus*) that this is the Son of God.” Jesus confirms that John “bore witness to the truth” (5:33). Andrew (1:40), Philip (1:45), Nathaniel (1:49), Nicodemus (3:2) all bear witness to Jesus. The Samaritan woman equally serves as a witness to Jesus (4:39). Perhaps the most powerful “witness” chapter is chapter five. Here we have the listing of six separate witnesses: (1) Jesus Himself – v. 31; cf. 8:14; (2) John – v. 33; (3) The works of Jesus – v. 36; (4) The Father – v. 37; (5) The Scriptures – v. 39 and (6) Moses – v. 46. So why might one believe in Jesus? Because He has an abundance of witnesses to who He is and what He has done.

This thread is significant for us today because our faith is based upon those who bore witness to Jesus. We are not blessed to hear Him preach, nor to see His miracles. Yet we can have confidence in the biblical record because of the many who bore witness to Him.

The *second thread* is based upon the statement “Jesus knows man.” In 2:24-25, John makes the all-important claim regarding Jesus: “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” Examples of this had already been given. In 1:48, Nathanael was astonished that Jesus knew him. Yet Jesus was well aware of the heart of this man and of his deep love for God.

The real thread, however, begins with the claim in 2:24-25. Once the statement is made, John proceeds to prove it. He begins with the ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus (3:1-21). Jesus knew what Nicodemus came to ask about, and what he needed to hear. Rather than engage in “small talk,” Jesus ignores Nicodemus’ complementary words to immediately begin discussing the “kingdom of God.” This ruler of the Jews, of all *people*, should have known how one enters God’s kingdom. Yet Nicodemus, like his fellow Jewish rulers, did not.

Jesus tells him clearly how he and others enter into God's kingdom. Jesus knew that Nicodemus did not "understand" these basic teachings, even though he was a teacher of Israel (3:10).

Jesus' next encounter is with the Samaritan woman (4:1-42). Jesus breaks several barriers to engage in conversation with this woman. He is male, she female; He is Jewish, she a Samaritan (4:9). When Jesus asks her for water, the request eventually leads to a discussion about "living water" (4:13-15). Jesus tells her to "go, call your husband." She replies that she has no husband (4:17). Jesus then reveals three facts that proves that "Jesus knows man." First, He notes that she has had five husbands. Second, He observes that she is now living with a man. Third, Jesus knows that this man she is living with is not her husband. The woman is well aware that Jesus has spoken the truth about her present situation as well as her past (4:19).

The third proof of the "Jesus knows man" statement of 2:24-25 is found with the Nobleman in 4:46-54. The Nobleman's son was sick at Capernaum, and he requested that Jesus come to his house and heal his son. Jesus knew that his request revealed a deeper problem: "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." Jesus knew that the Nobleman had a bigger problem than a sick son. He had a sick faith. Showing compassion, Jesus gave the Nobleman an opportunity to develop a greater faith. He instructs him to return home, because his son "lives" (4:50). The Nobleman believed Jesus' words, returning home. On his way there, he encounters his slaves, who tell him that his son was "living" (had recovered from his fever). The Nobleman inquired when his son had recovered, and they gave him the exact time Jesus had said "your son lives." As with the others, Jesus knew what the Nobleman needed.

The fourth proof of the "Jesus knows man" statement of 2:24-25 is the sick man by the pool of Bethesda (5:1-16). John tells us that this man had been in this horrible condition for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying by the pool, He "knew that he had already been in that condition a long time" (5:6). Jesus asked a question that on the surface seems more than evident: "Do you want to be made well?" When I was a child and first heard this story I thought

“Of course he wants to be made well! Why would Jesus even ask such a thing?” Yet Jesus knows man. He knew that the man needed to be challenged, thus determining the level of his resolve. Some people who are sick have become so accustomed to the lifestyle that they don’t want to leave it. That life is a known, becoming well is a fearful unknown. Jesus proceeded to heal the man, and then later found him in the temple. Jesus said to him, “do not sin any more” (5:14). Jesus knew the man’s life, and knew that he had a spiritual sickness as well as a physical one.

The fifth example is found with the Jews. They opposed Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath and that He had made Himself equal with God (5:16-18). Jesus gives them a lesson about His relationship with the Father, and the authority He possesses as a result of His many witnesses. Then He says to these Jews, “but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you” (5:42). How could Jesus possibly know them, even claiming to know what was within their hearts? Because Jesus knows man.

Numerous other examples can be found. In 6:15, Jesus knew what the 5,000 who was fed wanted to do (take Him by force and make Him king). In 6:61, Jesus knew that His disciples grumbled at His teaching and confronted them about it. A few verses later, John tells us, “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.” In 13:11, we are told again that “Jesus knew the one who was betraying Him.” In 16:19, Jesus knew that the disciples wished to ask Him questions. In 18:4, Jesus knew what the evil Jews were plotting against Him. When Jesus was resurrected, He confronted Peter who had denied the Lord three times. Jesus knew He would do this. Now He gives Peter an opportunity to say clearly whether he loves Jesus or not. Peter replies, “Lord, you know all things; You know that I love you” (21:17). Of course Peter was right. He knew that Jesus knew him and his heart.

The significance of this thread is seen in passages like John 10:14, where Jesus “knows” His own, and John 10:27, where Jesus says “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they know Me.” We can have full confidence that our Savior knows all about us. He knows our struggles and our victories. He knows of our love

and our service. Jesus knows man!

The *third thread* is based upon the many “I am” statements found in the Gospel. The phrase translated “I am” is a particular combination of words in the Greek. It is *ego eimi*. The phrase is emphatic, and usually grammatically unnecessary. This is because in the Greek language the primary verb also includes the person. So, the Greek word *blepo* doesn’t just mean “see,” but means “I see.” When Jesus uses the phrase *ego eimi*, it is a clear claim to being divine. The phrase has its link to Isaiah 43:10. In the Septuagint (the translation Jesus used and quoted from), the Lord says that He wants men to understand “that I am (*ego eimi*) He.” The phrase is also found in Exodus 3:14, where the Lord explains to Moses that he should introduce Him to Israel by telling them His name: “I am (*ego eimi*) who I am.” When Jesus told the Jews, “Before Abraham was born, I am (*ego eimi*)” they tried to stone Him on the spot (John 8:58-59). The Jews knew the significance of this phrase, and they understood what Jesus was claiming. To them it was a blasphemous statement and worthy of death. Yet Jesus knew exactly what He was saying, and the import of the claim. However, claiming something and actually being something can be radically different. Can Jesus actually back up His claim to be the I AM? The usages of this phrase in the book form an important thread. They are all evidences that Jesus didn’t just claim to be the I AM, He proved it.

Time will not allow us to consider all of the nineteen times Jesus used this phrase. But consider three examples:

- In 6:35, Jesus said, “I am (*ego eimi*) the bread of life.” He repeated this claim in verses 41, 48 and 51. Yet the claim was not based upon evidence. A few verses earlier (John 6:1-14), Jesus fed five thousand men. If women and children were present, this miracle is magnified even more. Were there 10,000 there? 15,000, perhaps? This remarkable miracle brings serious reflection in and of itself. Coupled with the claim “I am the bread of life,” we learn an important attribute of Jesus. He didn’t just make the claim to be the bread of life, He proved it with this powerful miracle.



- In 8:12, Jesus said, “I am (*ego eimi*) the light of the world.” Such a statement would normally be made of a braggart who is full of pride and arrogance. In 9:5 Jesus repeats this claim. Yet Jesus proves that this is no idle claim. He proceeds to give light (sight) to one who was in darkness (blind). This man’s blindness was not some temporary affliction. He was blind from birth (9:1). Jesus heals the man, an event that was completely unknown in the annals of human history. The formerly blind man says: “Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind” (9:32). How could one possibly dispute the claim, “I am the light of the world?” Jesus backed up the claim with evidence.
- In 11:25, Jesus tells Martha, “I am (*ego eimi*) the resurrection and the life.” As with the other claims, this could easily be perceived as one made by an arrogant individual (at worst) or delusional (at best). How could Jesus possibly back up such a claim? In the following verses (in chapter 11), Jesus brings Lazarus back to life. Lazarus had been dead four days (11:39). Any possibility of revival was long gone. Even if the ancients had known of individuals who appeared dead for an hour or two, no one was dead for four days and then revived. Jesus with a prayer and powerful voice commands Lazarus to “come forth!” (11:43). Obeying the command of Jesus, Lazarus emerges from the tomb, very much alive. Now what could one say in objection to the claim, “I am the resurrection and the life?” Through the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus proved that this was no idle claim. He truly was “the resurrection and the life.”

The I AM statements in John form a vital thread. These statements reveal to us the true nature, identity and power of Jesus. It is on the basis of these I AM statements that we take seriously the claim in 14:6: “I am (*ego eimi*) the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

## Conclusion

John stated the purpose of this Gospel in 20:30, 31. It is intended to bring one to faith in Jesus. The three threads discussed above (witnesses to Jesus, Jesus knows man, and the I AM statements) form a powerful and convicting message. No honest heart can read this Gospel and conclude anything other than that Jesus is the Son of God. Such a conclusion leads to a genuine faith and a life committed to Him in obedience. When such occurs, that honest heart receives the eternal life promised.

## Key Word List for the Gospel of John

**Believe** – 1:7, 12, 50; 2:11, 22, 23, 24; 3:12, 15, 16, 18; 3:36; 4:21, 39, 41, 42, 48, 50, 53; 5:24, 38, 44, 46, 47; 6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, 47, 64, 69; 7:5, 31, 38, 39, 48; 8:24, 30, 31, 45, 46; 9:18, 35, 36, 38; 10:25, 26, 37, 38, 42; 11:15, 25, 26, 27, 40, 42, 45, 48; 12:3, 11, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46; 13:19; 14:1, 10, 11, 12, 29; 16:9, 27, 30, 31; 17:8, 20, 21; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 27, 29, 31.

**Life** - John 1:4; 3:15, 16, 36; 4:10, 11, 14, 36, 50, 51, 53; 5:21, 24, 25, 26, 29, 39, 40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47, 48, 51, 53, 54, 57, 58, 63, 68; 7:38; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25, 26; 12:25, 50; 14:6, 19; 17:2, 3; 20:31.

**Signs** - John 2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 33, 37; 18:32; 20:30; 21:19.

## Biographical Sketch

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# Lamb of God

*John 1:9-36*

*Tim Hatfield*

Throughout the Gospel of John we have the testimony of individuals who bear witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In John 1:49, we find Nathanael declaring, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” [All scripture references are from NKJV.] In John 4:29, we have the words of the Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well. She said, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” And in John 6:69, Peter would say, “Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Several others bear witness to this truth but the first to be given is that of John the Baptist. In John 1:19-36, we can read of the testimony given by the forerunner of Christ. He identifies Jesus as the Son of God and the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!”

As we begin reading in this section of Scripture we find that men have been sent to have John the Baptist identify himself and to question him concerning his work. In John 1:19-23, we read:

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

The question that seems to be first upon the mind of the priests and Levites that had been sent from Jerusalem was whether or not

John was claiming to be the Messiah. Immediately we find John responding that he is not the Christ. John understood that he had been sent by God to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. In John 1:6-8, we are told, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

The next question of this group was “Are you Elijah?” Again, John responds in the negative. The reply of John is absolutely accurate. He is not Elijah come back from the dead. However, Jesus would later explain that John was the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the coming of Elijah that is given in the book of Malachi. Following the transfiguration the disciples asked Jesus why the scribes taught Elijah must first come. Jesus’ response is found in Matthew 17:11-13, “Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Elijah truly is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.” It is clear that while John was not literally the prophet Elijah, he did come in the spirit of Elijah. In Matthew 11:7-11, we find these words of Jesus regarding John:

As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Jesus would add this thought to these words, “And if you be willing

to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come” (Matt. 11:14). These thoughts concerning John are in keeping with the prophecy that was given by the angel that informed Zachariah he was to have a son. In Luke 1:17, we see that the priest was told, “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

The next question they posed to John was, “Are you the Prophet?” This query had to do with the promise given by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren, Him you shall hear.” John’s answer once more is no.

The priests and the Levites wanted an answer they could give to those who had sent them concerning John’s identity so they pressed, “Who are you?” and “What do you say about yourself?” John responds by referring to the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the one who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (40:3).

In John 1:24, we are told, “Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees.” The Pharisees were a sect among the Jews. They claimed to have a great desire to practice the Law of Moses. The problem the Pharisees had was that they had mixed many of their own traditions with the Law and as a result they had stopped practicing the Will of God. It was also the case with many of the Pharisees that there was the appearance of righteousness, but inwardly there was corruption. It is interesting to note that this sect of the Jews was most similar to the teachings of Jesus, yet we find them coming into conflict with Jesus more sharply than any other group. This was intentional. Jesus needed to show the difference between His teaching and the doctrines of the Pharisees.

The next question this group had for John is given in verse twenty-five, “And they asked him, saying, ‘Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, not Elijah, nor the Prophet?’” John had realized great success in his work. In Mark 1:4-5, we are told, “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And all the land of Judea, and

those from Jerusalem, went out to him were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.” The leaders among the Jews, who did not heed the preaching of John, were growing more and more concerned about his impact on their nation. They wanted to know by what authority he had begun this practice of immersion. Later, John will explain that this practice was given to him by the One who sent him.

The answer of the son of Zachariah to this question was to speak to them of the difference between his work and the work of the One who was to come. In Matthew 3:11-12, John would tell the people:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

John wanted to emphasize the importance of the mission of Christ. The Messiah would bring to the world the blessings of Heaven. It is important to keep in mind that Christ would also bring judgment upon those who rejected Him. John demonstrates his great humility once more by telling this contingent that he is not even worthy of performing one of the most menial tasks for the Lord. “It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose” (John 1:27). This passage speaks to us of the nature of Christ. Even though John was born before Jesus, the Lord was before him. He was before John in rank and in time for He is the One who has always been and always will be.

Verse twenty-eight mentions a place on the east of Jordan called Bethabara. The exact location of this place is unknown. The older manuscripts used the term Bethany, but this was not the same Bethany that was the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary. Frank Pack gives this explanation for the different names: “Because Origen could not locate Bethany beyond the Jordan in his travels, he adopted ‘Bethabara’ as the reading here, and through his influence

this reading passed into many manuscripts” (Pack 42).

The next thing we read of John doing is bearing witness of the Christ. “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29). The Gospel of John does not tell us of the baptism of Jesus, but from the accounts that are given, we learn that this is where Jesus is identified to John as the Messiah. Now, when John sees Jesus approaching he is able to make this great declaration unto his disciples. Jesus is called the Lamb of God. This image brings to our minds at least two important connections to the Old Law. First, we are made to think of all the sacrifices offered under the First Covenant. Imagine how many lambs without blemish were offered in an effort to make atonement for sin. What all these sacrifices could not do, the perfect once for all time sacrifice of Christ was able to accomplish. The second connection with the Law of Moses has to do with the Passover. God was ready to bring the last plague upon the Egyptians. Following this tenth and final plague the Israelites would be delivered from their bondage. The final plague was to be the death of the first born in each house. The only way to avoid this judgment was to slay a lamb and place the blood on the doorposts and on the lintel. God had promised that when He saw the blood, the plague would passover them. That night there was death in every home in Egypt, but God’s people were spared because of their obedience. It was at this time that the Feast of the Passover was given to the people of Israel. This feast was to remind them of how God had delivered them from their bondage. The observance of the Passover involved the slaying and eating of a lamb. It is very easy to see that Jesus is our Passover. In Egypt the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Israelites. At Calvary, the blood of the Lamb of God provided salvation for whosoever will.

The declaration by John that Jesus is the Lamb of God also makes one think of the reference to the Lamb found in Revelation chapter five. In this passage, Jesus is pictured as a Lamb that had been slain. He is the one, the only one, who is worthy to open the seals of the scroll. He is the one who is worthy of all praise and honor. Revelation 5:11-14, reveals to us the praise that is given unto Christ in this throne room scene:

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.

It was the Lamb of God that was slain for us.

John, telling us that Jesus is the Lamb of God, brings one more great image to our minds. It is the Suffering Servant passage from the Book of Isaiah.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. (53:4-8)

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

One of the reasons John was given a commission to baptize was



to reveal the Savior to the world. He tells us in verse thirty-four, “I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” This statement lets us know that John had not been told that Jesus was the Messiah. This is something that was to be made known to him at the proper time. It is clear that this took place when Jesus came to be baptized of John.

And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God” (John 1:32-34)

God is the one who had given these instructions unto John. Later, Jesus would ask the chief priests and elders if the baptism of John was from heaven or from men. They told Jesus on that occasion, “We do not know” (Matt. 21:27), but the answer is given here in John chapter one. John tells us that God sent him to baptize.

In Matthew 3:16-17, we are given the events that followed John’s baptizing of Jesus in the Jordan River. There we read, “Then Jesus, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” This was the sign for which John was to be looking. John then understood that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lamb of God.

Because John was an eyewitness to these events, he is well qualified to make the statement we find in verse thirty-four, “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” Throughout the Gospel of John we find men and women coming to this same conclusion. The apostle John even lets us know that leading people to this understanding was the purpose of his book. “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31). It is this great truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, that we must believe if we are going to have life (John 8:24).

In the next few verses, we find John the Baptist pointing a couple of his disciples to the one they needed to follow. “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God’” (John 1:35-36). John the Immerser understood his role in preparing the way of the Lord. He was doing on this occasion what we need to be doing today, that is, pointing the way to Jesus.

Having examined the witness given by John, I want to close this study by considering the supremacy, the sacrifice, and the submission of the Lamb of God. First, let us reflect upon the supremacy of the Lamb of God. In Revelation chapter five, it is revealed that the Lamb that was slain is the one who is worthy to open the scroll. He is the one who is given all praise, glory and honor. This great scene should remind us all of the place the Lamb of God is to have in our lives. He is our Creator, He is our Lord and our God. He is our King. He is the head of the church. He is to have first place in all things. In Colossians 1:18, we are reminded, “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” On the day of Pentecost, when Peter preached the gospel for the first time, the message he gave to the people spoke of the supremacy of Jesus. He told them, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). As we contemplate the judgment to come we are made to think of the place that has been given unto the Son of God. “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11). The supremacy of the Lamb of God should lead us to give Him first place in all things.

Perhaps the first thought to come to our minds when we think

about Jesus as the Lamb of God is that of His sacrifice. When John identified Jesus in this manner, he went on to proclaim that Christ is the one who takes away the sin of the world. He accomplished this by giving His life for us upon the cross. Jesus knew what it would take to bring about our redemption and He was willing to pay the price. In Matthew 26:28, as Christ was instituting the Lord's Supper, He spoke of the fruit of the vine and said, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The writer of Hebrews reminds us on many occasions of the contrast between the blood of bulls and goats and the blood of Christ. What the blood of those animals could never do, Jesus was able to do in His once for all time sacrifice. In 1 Peter 1:18-19, we are again told of what the Lamb of God has done for us, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The sacrifice of the Lamb of God should lead us to be ever thankful for the love of our Lord.

The final thought I would like us to consider has to do with the submission of the Lamb of God. The image of a lamb brings to mind a creature that is meek and gentle and causes us to consider the humility of our Lord. It is clear when we look to the life of Jesus that His desire was to do the will of His heavenly Father. In John 6:38, He tells us, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." This is exactly what Christ did do by submitting to the will of God in all things. The greatest example of this is seen as Jesus goes to the cross. In Philippians 2:8, we read, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." The submission of the Lamb of God should lead us to submit unto Him in humble obedience. This begins with our obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24). We are to repent of our sins (Acts 3:19). We are to confess Christ (Rom. 10:9-10). We are to be baptized for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). We then are to continue to live in submission to the Lamb of God in all things.

John the Baptist had been sent to prepare the way for the coming

of the Lord. When men came to question him about who he was and the work he was doing he took the opportunity to tell them of the One who was to come. The events surrounding the baptism of Jesus identified Him as the Son of God. With this in mind, John is able to declare, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” The image of the lamb reminds us of the supremacy, the sacrifice and the submission of Jesus. May our Father help each of us to give honor, thanks and obedience to the Lamb of God.

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the *New King James Version*.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Tim Hatfield was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1964. He is the son of Jim and Sue Hatfield. He was baptized into Christ January 3, 1977. Tim married Tammy Bates in 1986; they have three children, Jim, Jessica and Jennifer. He graduated from Ohio Valley University in 1986, with a Bachelor of Arts in Bible. From 1986 to 1996, he worked with the Camden Avenue church of Christ, in Parkersburg,

West Virginia. From 1997 to 2000, Tim worked with the Martin church of Christ, in Martin, Tennessee. Since June of 2000, Tim has been working with the New Philadelphia church of Christ, in New Philadelphia, Ohio. As a part of his work he serves as the speaker for two radio programs, “What Saith The Scriptures” and “Bible Thoughts.” Brother Hatfield conducts three meetings each year and has been involved in mission work to Costa Rica for the past fifteen years.



# The New Birth and Nicodemus

*John 3:1-15*

*Jefferson Sole*

The Book of John was written for the purpose of establishing belief “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). In order to provide evidence for belief, John recorded several “signs” which Jesus performed over the course of His public ministry (John 20:31). However, the astute reader notices that the Book of John is more than a record of miracles; it is also a record of conversations. These conversations, often initiated as a response to miracles, provide evidence for belief (Morris 184). In John 2:1-11, John recorded the first miracle Jesus performed in Galilee when He turned water into wine and “His disciples believed on him” (11). After lodging in Capernaum for a few days (2:12), Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover (2:13). Here, Jesus cleansed the temple which caused the Jews to respond, “What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things” (2:18). A new sign of His authority would not be immediate for these Jews, for it would come after Jesus was murdered by their blood soaked hands and then raised from the dead by the Father (2:19-22). However, many did believe as a result of their eyewitness account “of the miracles which he did” during the feast (2:23). Interestingly, though they “believed” in Him, Jesus did not “believe” (“commit, trust,” BDAG) in them. Jesus’ distrust was well-founded, “he knew all men” (2:24) and “knew what was in man” (2:25). Apparently their belief was superficial. They accepted Him, perhaps, intellectually as a teacher but were unwilling to fully trust in Him as a person (Woods 58-59). Naturally, in John 3:1, John introduced a man named Nicodemus who had witnessed Jesus’ miracles but had limited faith.

## **The Character of Nicodemus (John 3:1-2)**

John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, established Nicodemus as a *spiritual* man with these words, “there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus...” (3:1a). The Pharisees were one of the major

religious sects of the Jews and wielded the most power and influence. They were known for their strict adherence to the Old Law and the traditions of their fathers. Nicodemus was also *influential* as John indicated with the description “a ruler of the Jews” (3:1b). This likely refers to the fact that Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, a group of approximately seventy men, which were regarded by the Jews as the supreme council. Lenski concluded that Nicodemus was likely a scribe because “...the scribes that were in the Sanhedrin were Pharisees” (229). In addition, Nicodemus must have been a *knowledgeable*, renowned teacher because later in the conversation Jesus called Nicodemus a “master of Israel ” (3:10).

The character of Nicodemus is further developed in verse 2, “The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” Speculation surrounding why Nicodemus “came to Jesus by night” has often led expositors to inadvertently assassinate the character of Nicodemus. A popular view is that he was an insincere, coward too afraid to meet Jesus during the daytime, fearing backlash from his Jewish counterparts. Truthfully, little can be garnered from this phrase, except that it was dark when Nicodemus spoke to Christ. However, the remainder of the verse reveals much more about Nicodemus. Nicodemus was *respectful* to Jesus calling him “Rabbi” which was “the customary form of address for disciples speaking to their teacher” (Morris 38). His respect for Jesus continued even after His death, when Nicodemus along with Joseph of Arimathaea prepared His body for a proper burial (John 19:38-42). Nicodemus also appears to be *analytical* when he said, “we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (2b). Clearly, Nicodemus was among those that witnessed the miracles Jesus performed and had drawn an important conclusion, Jesus was a teacher from God and God was with Him. The signs or miracles Jesus performed (2:23) served as His credentials and gave credence to His teaching. However, Nicodemus had not carried the evidence to its fullest conclusion – Jesus was not only “from God” and “with God” but was God (John 1:1-4). Earlier, in John 1:47-50, a man named Nathanael was impressed by Jesus’ omniscience



(47-48) and concluded that Jesus was a teacher but also “the Son of God” (49). There was enough evidence for Nicodemus to draw the same conclusion, but he was cautious in his evaluation. Though Nicodemus was reluctant to accept Jesus as the Son of God, he was just as reluctant to condemn Him (John 7:50-52).

### **Condition for the Kingdom (John 3:3-8)**

Jesus’ ability to know what was in man (2:25) allowed Him to cut through the pleasantries to get to the heart of the matter. Jesus proclaimed, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (3). The words “verily, verily” (“truly, truly”) provide an assurance of truth and “I say unto thee” an assurance of authority. The “teacher come from God” is going to truthfully, authoritatively establish a condition for entrance into the Kingdom of God. The condition is applicable to Nicodemus and all men who live under the Christian dispensation. In order for one to “see” or “enter in” (3:5) the kingdom, one must be “born again.” The word translated “again” could also be translated “from above” and both renderings are accurate. The birth Jesus is referencing by necessity is a “rebirth” and is not earthly; therefore, it is a heavenly, spiritual rebirth (3:12). The thought of being “born again” is perplexing to Nicodemus and he responded, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” (3:4). Nicodemus must have been amazed; how could a Pharisee, member of the Sanhedrin and renowned teacher, not already be qualified to enter into God’s kingdom? The answer should be simple, God establishes the standard for salvation, and mankind must meet the standard. Yet Nicodemus does not rebut the condition but questions how a man can enter into his mother’s womb to be “born again.” This seems like a foolish question. How couldn’t Nicodemus realize Jesus was talking in figurative language? Some claim he knew but chose to misunderstand (Morris 190), however this assessment seems unfair. With the completed revelation of God, the Bible, it is easy to be critical of certain persons in the Bible. However, Nicodemus was likely expecting an earthly kingdom, not a spiritual one, and had witnessed the miracles of God through Jesus. The Jews often misunderstood figurative language with regard to

Jesus and His kingdom (2:19-21). Could God have the capacity to bring about a physical birth again for the subjects who would make up his earthly kingdom? From Nicodemus' perspective and many other Jews it would have been reasonable.

Jesus added clarity with these words, "...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (5). Unfortunately, some have taken these words of clarity on the new birth and wrested them to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). It is evident that Jesus does not introduce two new births in verse 5, after requiring only one new birth in verse 3. Jesus explained being born anew as being born "of water" and "of the Spirit." Both of these conditions must be met in order to be "born again" and to enter God's kingdom. What is the significance of "water" and "the Spirit?" Considering other passages in the New Testament will help one ascertain the meaning. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul proclaimed, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." Paul also wrote of Jesus cleansing the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). From 1 Corinthians 12:13, it is apparent that "water" in John 3:5 is equivalent to baptism ("immersion") in water. From Ephesians 5:26, the manner in which the Spirit operates in the new birth is revealed, namely, through the Word of God.

Jesus emphasized why a new birth, from above that consists of water and the Spirit, is necessary with these words, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (6-7). God established a universal law, "like begets like" upon creation, thus a spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of God, requires a spiritual birth and not a physical one. There is nothing a man can do to circumvent the requirement of a spiritual birth; there is no other way to obtain "newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

Jesus continued, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (8). The word translated "wind" is the same word translated "Spirit" later in this verse. In fact, the Greek word is used 385 times in the New Testament and is translated in the KJV "spirit, Spirit, spirits,

spiritual, spiritually, ghost (in reference to the Holy Spirit) in all but two instances: here in John 3:8 and in Revelation 13:14-15 where it is translated “life” (BDAG). It is not translated “wind” in any other instance. When the word is translated “Spirit” this mysterious verse actually becomes quite clear. The Spirit expresses (“bloweth”) Himself to mankind and mankind hears Him, though we cannot see Him come and go (“listeth”), and this is how everyone is born of the spirit. As noted earlier, the Holy Spirit expresses Himself by the Word of God and mankind hears Him when the Word of God is preached (1 Pet. 1:23; Jas. 1:18). When the Gospel is obeyed by hearing (Rom. 10:17), believing (Mark 16:16), repenting (Acts 2:38), confessing (Rom. 10:9), and being baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) then one is “born again.”

### **The Censure of Nicodemus and Unbelievers (John 3:9-15)**

The words of Jesus baffled Nicodemus and he questioned, “how can these things be?” (9). In response, Jesus rebuked Nicodemus and said, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness” (3:10-11). Nicodemus, being a renowned teacher in Israel, should have been able to perceive what Jesus was telling him about entrance into the kingdom of God. John the Baptist declared the “kingdom was at hand” (Matt. 3:2) and the Old Testament is replete of prophesies concerning the kingdom (John 1:45). Yet Nicodemus (“thee”) and others (“ye”) could not or would not believe the testimony of Jesus (“I”) or those who have believed (“we”). Nicodemus did not believe “earthly things,” such as instructions concerning the new birth which was to take place on earth; therefore, he most certainly would not believe heavenly matters that could only be revealed by divinity (John 3:12). This truth would be a problem for Nicodemus and others, because men are not qualified without the help of God to bear testimony of heavenly matters. The only source of information concerning heavenly matters is Jesus, the Son of God, who “came down from heaven” (John 3:13). If one rejects His testimony, there is no other source regarding heavenly matters to accept.

Without accepting the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

Nicodemus and other unbelievers cannot be saved. Jesus expounded, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (14-15). Here Jesus referred the “teacher of Israel” to the Old Testament, namely, Numbers 21:4-9. The Israelites murmured against God because of their unbelief in the wilderness. For this reason, God sent a plague of serpents upon the Israelites and several were bitten and died without remedy. However, God supplied a remedy when He instructed Moses to erect a brass serpent which was to be looked upon as a remedy for those who were bitten. In like manner, Jesus was “lifted up” upon the cross to be the heavenly remedy for sin (John 12:32). However, one must “believe in Him” in order to be saved from spiritual death. An individual is placed “in Him” when he, in obedient faith, is born of water and of the Spirit (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:10; Eph. 1:19-22).

## Conclusion

Nicodemus was a man with many good characteristics. He was spiritual, influential, knowledgeable, respectful, and analytical. Though He and others believed that Jesus was a “teacher from God,” they did not believe that He was the Son of God. Jesus, the Son of God, provided a condition for entrance into the kingdom of God, a condition that still remains, which includes a “new birth” of water and of the Spirit. If Jesus’ testimony is rejected and one is not obedient to His instruction, there is no hope of salvation. A similar rebuke to that which Nicodemus received on earth will be received by all unbelievers on the Day of Judgment (Matt. 7:23-24).

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Jefferson Sole is a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is currently privileged to be working with the Hillview Terrace church of Christ in Moundsville, WV. He is married to his wife Julia and together they have two children: Jefferson George William (G.W.) and a baby girl to be born in September.



# The Bread of Life

*John 6:15-71*

*Steve Smithbauer*

In His model prayer, Jesus made the request to the Father, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11). [Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.] Bread is a staple of human life and it is necessary for sustenance. As Alan Carr has noted in a sermon outline, bread is one of the few foods which can be tolerated by most digestive systems. It is also among the most enjoyable of foods. While some people enjoy meat and others do not or some desire vegetables and others do not, most people enjoy eating bread. Any way you slice it, we might refer to bread as the universal food (Carr).

Thus, when Jesus makes the bold claim “I am the Bread of Life” in John 6:35, one cannot help but be impressed with the common qualities both He and bread possess. He, like bread for physical sustenance, is necessary for spiritual life to flourish. He too is easily *digestible*, in that His yoke is easy and His burden light, (Matt. 11:30). To the one who consumes His message of love and hope, one would be inclined to declare Him enjoyable as well. “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2:3).

Why, then, following Jesus’ statement that He is the Bread of Life does the confrontation in John 6 occur between the Lord and His one time disciples? While not in the scope of this lecture, the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand nonetheless is what sets the stage for this antagonism. The miracle’s significance is perhaps more apparent in that it is “the only miracle of the Savior recorded by all the four Gospels” (Johnson). After the miracle, the people see in Jesus a mighty leader who can provide their physical needs while they seize upon the opportunity to free themselves from Roman occupation and oppression. As Coffman stated, “...they proposed to make Him king and move against the Romans! With the Messiah feeding them, as God had done so long ago, the problem of the quartermaster was solved” (Coffman). Although Jesus came into the

world for the purpose of being a king as the title Messiah/Christ suggests, the establishment of an earthly kingdom was never in His mind. It is with some degree of irony that Israel of old desired a king to rule over them much to the disapproval of Jehovah (1 Sam. 8:7), and here it is this very desire for an earthly sovereign and lust for world power that blinds them to the loftier spiritual concepts in Jesus' proclamation of being the Bread of Life, and their only hope for everlasting life.

Jesus is distraught with this reaction to the feeding of the five thousand, and sends His twelve disciples across the Sea of Galilee despite the threatening weather (Matt. 14:22), while He, Himself withdraws into a mountain alone. Those familiar with the Scriptures will know that while the disciples were struggling in the midst of the lake, Jesus came to them by walking on the water. When Jesus disembarked on the western shore of Galilee near Capernaum some of the disciples who had witnessed the miracle came there as well. They had not found Jesus on the eastern shore and so took other boats to Capernaum, but they were somewhat perplexed by the presence of Jesus with the twelve. They knew He had not gotten into the boat with them, and there were no other boats there that could have taken Him, and so they demand to know, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" (v. 25). Jesus does not answer this question which would have involved telling them about His miracle of walking on the sea. Instead He makes the accusation and rebuke that they have only come looking for Him because they ate the bread He had miraculously made for them. Matthew Henry's commentary states they followed, "Not because He taught them, but because he fed them; not for love, but for *loaves*" (Henry). Although the miracle was amazing, "yet we find many of them paid little attention to it, and regarded the omnipotent hand of God in it no farther than it went to satisfy the demands of their appetite!" (Clarke). As Wayne Jackson also observed:

With kindly rebuke the Lord charged that the people were not looking for Him because they were impressed with His miracles and wanted to consult Him as a Teacher, but because they had satisfied their bellies with food and wanted



more. He commanded: “Stop working for the food which is temporary, [i.e., giving your attention primarily to the material] but [work; verb implied] for that which will last, and lead to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” His miracle working power was God’s “seal” or certification, that Jesus was His Son (v. 27). Notice that Christ did not believe that “working” and receiving a “gift” were mutually exclusive; they complement one another. (155)

Sadly, men’s hearts do not appear to have changed much in the last couple millennia. Human beings seem even more intent on receiving the temporal blessings of food, clothing, etc. from the hand of God rather than the spiritual ones such as eternal life.

Of course, Jesus is not giving the injunction that we do not labor for our food. Far from it, He commands the very opposite. “Adam was commanded to labor; and toil was ordained as man’s occupation after the fall...[the] Lord Himself spent the greater part of His earthly sojourn in the carpenter’s shop; Paul the apostle sustained himself as a tentmaker” (Coffman). Jesus is enjoining His disciples to *put first things first*, as the saying goes.

To their credit, these soon to be erstwhile disciples understood that something was required to obtain the “meat that endures unto everlasting life.” They ask, “What must we do, that we might work the works of God?” (v. 27-28). Jesus answers that the *work* God requires of them is to *believe* on the one He sent. “This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (v. 29).

In all the New Testament, there is not a more instructive verse than this which designates faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a work performed by men... This statement demolishes the prevalent Protestant heresy that “There is nothing you can do to be saved!” Faith itself is something that must be done; but its importance is sufficient to justify its standing here as a synecdoche of all that must be done. (Coffman)

Of course; there is a difference in believing, and believing in/on the Lord. There are those who acknowledge the existence of God,

or a supreme intelligence of some kind, but do not put their faith in Him. They are much like the devils of James 2:19, who tremble at the thought of the One True and Living God. Albert Barnes has stated of these devils; “they believe in the existence of the one God. How far their knowledge may extend respecting God, we cannot know; but they are never represented in the Scriptures as denying his existence” (Barnes).

The errant then proceed to do as their religious leaders also have done—they demand that He show them some sort of sign, (cf. Matt. 16:1; 12:38), no doubt something spectacular of their own choosing. How quickly the wonder of yesterday’s miracle had faded in their minds! They were so impressed with Jesus’ ability to feed the multitude that they wanted to make Him the King of the Jews, yet now they require that He show them something more as further proof of his being the Messiah. They then compare His miracle of the loaves and fishes to Moses feeding the whole nation of Israel in the wilderness for an entire generation, apparently implying that the manna was superior to the miracle Jesus had done for the sheer volume of people fed for the duration of forty years. Coffman writes:

God’s purpose was different in the two cases. In the wilderness, the survival of the chosen people was the objective; but in the ministry of Christ, it was the identification of Jesus as the Messiah and divine Son of God which was the objective; and, for the latter purpose, creation of barley loaves for five thousand people was just as effective (or should have been) as feeding a million people for a whole generation.

Of course, their misquoting of Nehemiah 9:15 needed correcting, which the Lord promptly does. Making Moses the antecedent of the pronoun “he” was erroneous. Indeed it was not Moses, but the Lord who provided for them sustenance throughout the duration of the forty years. Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (John 6:32-33).

Here Jesus proclaims that neither the bread that fed the five

thousand, nor the manna in the wilderness is the true bread, but that bread is a person—namely Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God the Father not only provided the means to feed the hungry, both in the wilderness and the eastern shore of Galilee, but, as Gill states, “he also gives that bread which the manna was typical of, which He means Himself; who may be compared to bread” (Gill).

From John 6 we may learn and observe how the manna of the wilderness wandering of Israel typifies the person of the Messiah. Alan Carr, in his sermon entitled, *Jesus: The Bread of Life*, makes eight interesting observations on how Jesus, the True Bread may be compared to the manna of the Old Testament:

1. It Was Small - Exodus 16:14 - This speaks of Christ’s humility. He wasn’t born in a king’s palace, but in a manger. He never employed the riches at His disposal, but lived a poor life all the time He was in this world, Mark 8:20. He came this way in order to identify Himself with the sinners He came to save.

2. It Was Round - Exodus 16:14 - This speaks of Christ’s eternal nature. Jesus did not have His beginning in Bethlehem, but He has always been, John 1:1. Jesus is the eternal Son of God! There has never been a time when He wasn’t, there will never be a time when He will not be! He is the I AM!

3. It Was White - Exodus 16:31 - This reminds us of the sinless, holy nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born without sin, lived without sin and died without sin. He was absolutely impeccable in His character. Jesus is the sinless Son of God (1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21).

4. It Came at Night - Exodus 16:13-14 - Jesus came to a world lost in spiritual darkness and gave them light and life.

5. It Was Misunderstood by Those Who Found It - Exodus 16:15 - They called it manna which means, “What is it?” Jesus was misunderstood by the very people He came

to save - John 1:11; John 10:20. (By the way, He is still misunderstood today! He is more than a teacher, a prophet, a poor unfortunate man who got Himself killed. He is the Son of God! He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!)

6. It Was Sufficient For Every Man's Need - Exodus 16:17-18 - This reminds us that Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior. He meets the need of man's soul. Some go deep in the Christian life, others get in but choose to play around the edges, but wherever you find yourself, as long as it is in Jesus, you will find that He is sufficient to save your soul. (Ill. God gave them approximately 240 boxcars of manna per day for 38 years. What a God we serve!)

7. It Was Sweet to the Taste - Exodus 16:31 - Those who partook of the Manna found it sweet and satisfying. By the same token, all those who receive Jesus as their Savior find Him to be sweet to the soul and satisfying to the life. That is why we are encouraged by David to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8).

8. It Was to Be Kept and Passed on to Others - Exodus 16:32 - Jesus is the same way, He is to be shared with those who cross our path. We are to be certain that we share Him with the next generation, because we are only one generation away from extinction as a people at any given time (Ill. 2 Tim. 2:2). (Carr)

While the manna may be typical of Jesus, it nevertheless was not in and of itself sufficient for spiritual needs. It was meant only to provide physical sustenance for the Israelites in a barren landscape. So Jesus refers to the "True Bread" which the Father has sent down from heaven which has eternal benefits and qualities. When these disciples request that Jesus give them this bread to eat, thinking it was physical food, Jesus then plainly proclaims, "I am the Bread of Life" (v. 35). The original language uses the phrase *Egō eimi*, which is literally translated with the emphatic "*I Am.*" There is no

mistaking the reference to the name of Jehovah God in the Old Testament. Robertson observes that no less than twelve other times Jesus refers to Himself in this way in the book of John.

In verses 38 – 39, Jesus explains how He is to be the Bread of Life for all mankind. He came to do the Father’s will, and that involved the unpleasant task of submitting to the Jews and the Romans as they arrested, mocked, humiliated, scourged, and finally crucified Him. So difficult was the task that Jesus confided to His closest disciples, Peter, James and John, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” Then after going a little further into the garden, fell prostrate in prayer and pleaded with His Father, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:38-39). This would not be the end of Him though, for He would rise again on the third day. “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day” (v. 39). This refers to His church, but also indirectly to His own resurrection that makes the final resurrection of the dead on the last day possible. The death on the cross, and his subsequent resurrection are central to the religion of Christ! Clarke points out:

Here our Lord plainly declares that his death was to be a vicarious sacrifice and atonement for the sin of the world; and that, as no human life could be preserved unless there was bread (proper nourishment) received, so no soul could be saved but by the merit of his death. Reader, remember this: it is one of the weightiest, and one of the truest and most important sayings in the book of God.

These doubting disciples then find fault with Jesus and begin to murmur because He said He came down from heaven. They recall that He was the son of Joseph, (or so it seemed to them), and of Mary, His mother; the implication being that Jesus was making the claim of being equal with God, which would be blasphemy in their minds. Here the text begins to refer to them as “the Jews”—a term used elsewhere to describe the enemies of Jesus: i.e. John 18:36 “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then

would my servants fight, *that I should not be delivered to the Jews:* but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Jesus rebukes them, and commands, “Murmur not among yourselves.” He tells them that only those who have been “drawn” by hearing and learning of the Father would be able to come to Him, that is accept Him and His teaching on being the Bread of Life. This portion of the text contains a somber warning to all who would desire to come to Jesus. These peoples’ hearts were obviously not right with God. They certainly knew something of the Scriptures, but did not recognize the application of them in their lives. What was at stake in this for them—and for us? Everlasting life! (v. 47).

Yet, the “the ‘drawing’ power of God is exercised through the teaching of his word, not by means of some non-definable influence of the Holy Spirit,” as Jackson observes on page 156. He further explains that the “drawing” is a beneficent pull, rather than John Calvin’s “Irresistible Grace” that cannot be denied. The Gospel, which teaches us of the loving Savior’s sacrifice for our atonement, is the gentle pull that draws us to Him. We respond to His gift of love! “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

Jesus then repeats what He earlier affirmed, “I am that Bread of Life” (v. 48). The word construction is actually identical to the phrase in verse 35. He then proceeds to tell them why He, the *True Bread*, is superior to the Old Testament manna. While the manna sustained the Israelites in the wilderness, it was obvious that all of them were now dead at this point. Physical sustenance is necessary for life to continue here on earth, but physical life on the earth is not the sole purpose of our existence, nor can physical food sustain us for eternity. The Savior alludes to this very thought in His sermon on the mount recorded in Matthew 6:25-33:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than

they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

What Jesus regards as of paramount import is the partaking of the True Bread from heaven, Himself, that we may gain eternal life. And what is that Bread? Jesus explains, “the bread that will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (v. 51). And So Jesus reveals that it is His sacrifice, the giving of His flesh on the cross of which we must partake. Manna would only sustain the Israelites if they consumed it—a trait which Jesus as the Bread of Life shares with it, and Jesus insists “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (v. 53). Where the two differ is that manna was only a temporary means of providing food for Israel. We read in Joshua 5:12, that the manna ceased the very moment they partook of the “old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more.” Jesus, on the other hand, is to be consumed permanently, and the effects are permanent as well, resulting in “everlasting life.”

We must point out here that the language Jesus is using is figurative. The Jews had difficulty with it because they were so joined with the literal and physical world they could not conceive of the Spiritual nature of His message, and so murmured, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” (v. 52). Jesus, of course, would not have violated any precept of the Law of Moses, of which law the drinking of blood was clearly prohibited (cf. Lev. 17:10).

No, “eating” of His flesh and the “drinking” of His Blood are figurative expressions, while “believing in Him” and “keeping His commandments” are their literal counterparts (Jackson 157).

It should also be observed that this passage of scripture does not refer to the Lord’s Supper in which the bread and fruit of the vine are taken to *commemorate* His body that was nailed and blood that was shed on the cross. Proponents of the false doctrine of transubstantiation, (i.e. the teaching that the bread and grape juice literally become the actual body and blood of Jesus), will not find support here in John 6, but perhaps should feel a rebuke for taking the passage just as literally as these backsliders did!

Because of their preconceived notion of taking Jesus’ words literally, these “disciples” proclaimed, “This is an hard saying, who can hear it?” (v. 60). Clarke again notes:

There is a similar saying in Euripides...; *Tell me whether thou wouldst that I should speak unto thee, a Soft Lie, or the Harsh Truth?* The wicked word of a lying world is in general better received than the holy word of the God of truth!

It appears that these Jews would rather Jesus had told them a “soft lie” instead of the “harsh truth” of the price of the church! Johnson points out that there are only two places in scripture that tell us Jesus “marveled:” Matthew 8:10 and Mark 6:6. Both passages have something to do with faith. In Matthew 8, Jesus marvels at the *great faith* of the Roman Centurion, who was of course not a Jew, and in Mark 6, Jesus marvels at the *lack of faith* in “His own country” among the Jews (Johnson). Yet surely, Jesus must have marveled here at this display of faithlessness as well, though it is not explicitly stated.

The Lord responds by accusing them. “Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?” (v. 62). They had requested a miraculous sign from Him. Jesus here implies that they could not deduce the meaning of His words here and most certainly could not even begin to fathom the implications of His resurrected body returning to the heavenly Father by means of the ascension! Johnson paraphrases this verse this way:



I shall ascend to heaven so that my body cannot be literally eaten; the flesh literally profits nothing. It is the spirit that makes alive. The spirits of men must feed upon me by faith, that they may be made alive.

The line of demarcation had thus been drawn. In verse 66 we read, “From that *time* many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” *Word Pictures* explains that from this saying or circumstance the erstwhile followers of Jesus went “to the rear” or literally, back to the “behind things.” “As in John 18:6; “As soon as He said I am He, *they went backward*, and fell to the ground” (Robertson). Or as Gill observes:

They turned their backs on him; and as the words may be literally read, “returned to the things that were behind;” to the world, and to their old companions, to Satan and their own hearts lusts; like the dog to its vomit, and the swine to its wallowing in the mire.

Jesus gave them the excuse they needed to forsake Him. Perhaps Coffman sums it up best:

The more carnal majority of the throng that heard Jesus found the events and discussions of that day an insurmountable obstacle to their following him any longer. It was clear that Jesus had no intention of feeding them while they made war on Rome; and, when the Lord tried to teach them of the true bread from heaven, they scoffed at it. It became evident as the day wore on that they would have none of the spiritual food that Christ offered. As a last resort, he hurled a shocking metaphor into the teeth of that crowd that wanted to eat, eat, eat, at his hands, saying, “Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you!” Thus the Lord gave them the excuse they needed to leave him.

Seeing the crowds departing, Jesus now pitifully asks the twelve,

“Will ye also go away?” We can almost hear the disappointment—the agony in His voice here. After all, “For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” Luke 19:10. This writer has heard Gospel preachers numerous times refer to this question of the Lord as one of the saddest uttered in the scriptures. The twelve did not always understand Jesus’ teachings, and no doubt this was difficult for them to conceive of here also. They had difficulty accepting that the Messiah’s purpose was not to overthrow the Romans and set up a powerful earthly Jewish monarchy to which all other nations would be subservient. This is evident even as late as in Acts 1:6 where, just before His ascension, they ask Him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

There is a bright spot to all this though. In answer to the Lord’s sad question, Peter, who often acts as the spokesman for the other disciples, is about to say something as profound as His confession of faith in Matthew 16.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (John 6:68-69)

The beloved disciple got it! What Jesus was communicating in His confrontation with the carnal unfaithful disciples may have been a “hard saying,” but the twelve evidently were able to understand it. The Gospel, its heart consisting of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice for sin, is essential for one’s salvation, and as Peter later observed; “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). One Commentary put it this way:

This text is key. It reveals again that being drawn to Him, “given” to Him, “coming” to Him, being His, receiving the promise of eternal life, was conveyed—not by some independent, sovereign act of God, but by their submission to “the words,” i.e., the body of teaching, he had imparted.

(Jackson 157)

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### Biographical Sketch

Steven P. Smithbauer, a 1982 graduate of Ohio Valley College's B.A. Bible program, began preaching full-time for the church of Christ in Cameron, WV on May 16, 1982, where he served for nearly 12 years. He currently serves as the minister for the Weirton Heights church of Christ and has since April 13, 1994. Steve is now in his 32nd year of located work. He has conducted Gospel Meetings and taught at Lectures in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. He has also been active as a teacher in various church camps in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and has taught as a substitute teacher for the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV on occasion. Since 2010, he has also served as one of the elders for the Weirton Heights congregation.

He is married to the former Teena M. Fife, his wife of 34 years, and they have raised three sons, David, who lives with his wife, Jasmine of Fairmont, WV; Matthew of Wheeling, WV; and Lucas, who lives with his wife, Aleta, in Alliance, OH.

# The Resurrection and the Life

*John 11:1-46*

*Jonathan McAnulty*

It is an honor to be able to address this topic of “The Resurrection and the Life.” I am grateful to those who have invited me to once more address this lectureship, and I confess to being entirely inadequate in covering this subject in the space and time allotted to me, for the text, like so much of John’s Gospel, is rich in meaning, application, and import. However, we shall endeavor to do our best.

In John 11:47-48 we find the chief priests and the Pharisees taking council together concerning the problem of Jesus. “What shall we do?” they asked one another, “For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] The event that had driven the foes of Jesus to this point, uniting them together to devise a plan by which to put him to death (cf. John 11:53), was a notable miracle recently reported to them by eyewitnesses: Jesus had raised a man from the dead, a man who had been buried in the ground for four days. And, worse for them, He had done this deed before a crowd of witnesses and in their own backyard. Something, they perceived, had to be done to quash the growth of the popularity of this prophet who claimed to be the Messiah and the Son of God.

The raising of Lazarus, which is the object and focus of our assigned text, is an event which was seminal in the ministry of Jesus. Besides being a rather noteworthy miracle, an undeniable sign performed, not in an obscure backwater, but in the very neighborhood of Jerusalem, it was also the event which marked the beginning of the end of the earthly labors of Christ. John certainly presents it as such in his narrative. The resurrection of Lazarus brought the enemies of Christ together in their plotting of “a vain thing” (cf. Psalms 2:1) It stirred the hearts of His friends, His followers, and those who had witnessed the event, so that “many of the Jews who... had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.” (John 11:45). It

showcased the glory of Jesus in such a way as to force an increased division between those who accepted Him as the Christ, the Son of God, and those who thought something needed to be done about “this Man.”

Lazarus’ resurrection is the seventh of the seven signs recorded by John as a means of showcasing the power, character and glory of Jesus prior to His crucifixion. Of these Westcott observed the following:

The seven miracles of the ministry, which St. John relates, form a significant whole (2:1ff, 4:46ff, 5:1ff, 6:5ff, 15ff, 9:1ff, 11). And in this respect it is of interest to notice that the first and last are wrought in the circle of family life, and among believers to the strengthening of faith (2:11, 11:15); and both are declared to be manifestations of “glory” (2:11, 11:4, 40) So the natural relations of men become the occasions of the revelation of higher truth. (163)

We agree with these observations and would add to them the observation that the beloved author’s reference to “glory” is in keeping with a particular theme of the Gospel, one which rightly deserves a lesson all its own. At the beginning of the Gospel account, John says concerning the Lord’s incarnation, “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), and then, concerning the miracle at the wedding of Cana, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory” (John 2:11). Yet after this, until we get to John 11, the glory of Christ is scarcely mentioned again. There is a brief observation in John 7:39 that Jesus had yet to be glorified (a reference, most obviously, to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ) and Jesus’ is quoted in John 7:18 and 8:50 to the effect that He sought not His own glory, but rather the glory of God. While John uses the miracles to demonstrate the glory of Christ there is no overt mention of that glory in connection with miracles two through six, nor in any of the Gospel’s dialogue surrounding those five miracles. But then we come to chapter 11 and the resurrection of Lazarus. Here we find two distinct references to the glory of God in direct

connection with Jesus' own glorification. Then following chapter 11, the glory and glorification of Jesus is mentioned nearly a dozen more times. While there is much we could say about this, it shall suffice us to once more point out that the raising of Lazarus serves as an obvious turning point in John's Gospel and in the ministry of Jesus, moving us away from the labors of Christ as the messenger of God and transitioning us into His labors as the glorified Savior of men.

More to point, for the purpose of our study, the raising of Lazarus, and the events and dialogue surrounding that miraculous resurrection, are an inspired vehicle of thought which, when analyzed, challenges the reader to confront their perceptions of Life, Death, the Resurrection, and ultimately Christ Himself.

### **The History of the Miracle**

As John opens the account of the raising of Lazarus, Jesus is in the region of Peraea, east of the Jordan where He has been ministering, as recorded in Mark 10:1ff and John 10:40. It is here that the Lord receives word from Martha, and her sister Mary, that the one whom He loves, namely Lazarus, is ill. The affection Jesus has for Lazarus and his sisters is further stressed by John in verse 5, so that we, the reader, might comprehend the nature of the relationship between Christ and this family. Lazarus, and his sisters, are not a mere set of passing acquaintances, but rather they are dear and close friends of the Lord. Though the message does not state it, there is an understood request that Jesus act to heal His friend.

In response to this message, Jesus makes two responses. He first states, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4). This message was seemingly given to the one who had delivered the sister's message, and who subsequently, we guess, returned to share the Lord's response with the sisters (cf. John 11:40). Jesus' second response was then, curiously, to wait another two days. Despite His love for Lazarus, despite His promise to the sisters, despite His ability to heal at a distance, Jesus does nothing but intentionally wait for Lazarus to die. Does that seem callous? If so, mark that feeling, and we shall come back to it.

Only when Lazarus is dead, and Jesus knows it, does He then tell His apostles they are to travel to Bethany. The apostles are a little nervous about such a trip. They remember the last trip to the Jerusalem area not ending well. There is also some confusion on their part as to Lazarus' actual condition, as they misunderstand Jesus' statement, quoted in verse 11, that Lazarus sleeps. But, when Jesus makes it clear this is part of the work He must do, and further says to them "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him" (John 11:14b-15), Thomas replies, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him," (John 11:16b) and they go. Thomas' statement is an interesting one, demonstrating on the one hand a fierce and highly commendable loyalty to the Master, but also serving as foil to the truth of what was to come. We shall return to Thomas' words by the by, so let us mark them in our mind as well.

Arriving in Bethany a few days later, Jesus first encounters Martha. Because it is central to the focus of our study, let us submit the entirety of the conversation to the record (John 11:21-27). Martha begins by saying, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." It seems very likely that the two sisters, heartened by the message of Christ, had been confident of their brother's healing. Following his death, they, in their grief had no doubt said these very words to one another multiple times through the hard days of loss. Jesus' reply to Martha is, "Your brother will rise again." A statement that Martha affirms by saying, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Interestingly, Jesus does not wholeheartedly agree with what Martha says. Instead he rebuts it, albeit gently, with the grand declaration: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Having made such a bold pronouncement, Jesus questions Martha: "Do you believe this?"

It is now that Martha demonstrates the extent of her faith. She confesses, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." This is the confession Peter had made on the Mount. Jesus was the promised Messiah. Jesus was



the Son of God. Jesus was the hope of the Jews and the hope of all the world. This confession, made prior to the actual miracle, is a highpoint of the chapter and marks a change in Martha's attitude and mood. "Her faith answering to the revelation left nothing more to be said. She had risen above private grief." (Westcott 169) She goes to call her sister to speak with Jesus.

Let us move swiftly through the rest of the account. Jesus meets Mary who greets Him in a manner identical to her sister, reinforcing the idea that the sisters had talked of the Lord's absence and what His presence would have meant to them. He is taken to the tomb, where He weeps. The Jews observing Jesus' weeping remarked "See how He loved him," (John 11:36), emphasizing for a third time in the account Jesus' affection for the departed. Directing those present to roll the stone away from the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus prays and then cries out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" Lazarus, once dead, rises to life at the voice of the Lord, comes out, and, at the further command of Jesus, he is loosed from the grave wrappings with which he was bound tight.

What an occasion of joy this must have been for the bereaved sisters, a joy reflected in John 12 at the feast given in Jesus' honor and further reflected in the costly gift of spikenard with which Mary anointed the feet of Jesus. What an impact this miracle had on all those gathered there: friends and enemies of Jesus alike. What a faith it must have created in the hearts of the apostles to know that Jesus had the power to raise the very dead, no matter the time they had spent in the grave. How it must have challenged many of them to reexamine their view of Jesus and of the Resurrection He promised them. And so today it still challenges us, providing us with insights into who Jesus is, a better understanding of the relationship between Jesus and Life, and encouraging the faithful to reexamine their own perceptions of life and death.

### **The Power of Jesus over Life and Death**

It is not a remarkable thing for Jesus Christ to be able to raise the dead, no matter whether that man have been dead four hours, four days, or four-thousand years. Jesus, as The Word, is the Author of Life.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Jesus is the Creator. It was He, in the beginning, who made all creatures that crawl, swim, fly or walk, creatures in the sea, on the land and in the air, calling them into being from nothing. It was He who formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; so that man became a living being (Gen. 2:7). It was He who created the hosts of heaven and it was He who gave man an eternal soul.

These things being so, why should it be in any way unbelievable or strange that the Son of God could return life to the lifeless?

The power of Jesus over death, manifested in the resurrection of Lazarus, is seen even more clearly in His own resurrection. It was His resurrection from the tomb which truly declared Him to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). While there were multiple individuals risen from the grave by the power of God recorded in Scripture, the resurrection of Christ is unique so that Jesus is truly the firstfruits of the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-23), the cream of the crop. Whereas Lazarus, and all the others who came up out of the grave, enjoyed only a respite from the sleep of death, they were each destined to return once more to the embrace of the tomb. Not so with the Lord.

The death that Jesus died, He died once and for all and the life He lives now, He lives forever to God. "Death no longer has dominion over Him." (Rom. 6:9-10) Not that death ever had much dominion over Christ. From the beginning, He had the power to lay down His life, and He had the power to take it back up again (John 10:18). Nor was the reach of His authority limited to Himself: "just as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will" (John 5:21)

And this is exactly what Jesus, as the Savior of men, does. He is the giver of eternal life. He is the Resurrection and the Life. It is

He who grants those who believe in Him and die the chance to live again, and it is He who insures that those who believe in Him and live shall never die.

This is the promise of Christianity: “the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live” (John 5:25). The grave has no power over the man who rests in the capable hands of Jesus, who said, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

And, just as Jesus rose, never to die again, so too those who live in Jesus are free from the threat of death. Though we do not always live or act as if we believe this.

### **Jesus, as the Resurrection and the Life, Challenges Our Perception of Life and Death**

Men, cocooned as we are by our carnal shells, are subject to certain biases when it comes to death. There is a certain expectation and certainty, common to reasonable men, regarding the finality of death, the brevity of our years and the overall futility of life. Death, for the man walking by sight, is a cessation of being; a bleak conclusion to existence. We look to the grave and, lacking the spiritual eyes to see the unseen, we behold only the absence of a person and the termination of experience.

Even among the faithful, who strive to walk by faith rather than sight (cf. 2 Cor.5:7), there is a tendency towards an improper perspective on such matters. How often do we see inconsolable grief at the casket, rather than Christians rejoicing in the death of a brother, celebrating that their time on earth has drawn to an end? How many say with Paul, in the face of their own impending demise, “for me to die is gain” (Philip. 1:21)? How many among God’s people, if they heard a brother say of a departed loved one, “He is dead, and I am glad it is so,” (to rephrase John 11:14-15) would grow offended?

If we cannot relate to the words of the apostle facing death, if we cannot boldly proclaim with the Word of God, “Blessed are those who die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13) and if the words of the Son of God give offense, we would do well to ask ourselves concerning our views on life and death and of our faith in the reality of the

resurrection.

Jesus, as *The Resurrection and The Life*, confounds our expectations, disagrees with our carnal biases and forces us to confront our views on the subject of what it means to die, and what it means to truly live. Several points within our text bring this struggle between world-views into sharp focus.

### ***The Dead Sleep***

Let us begin with the apparent distaste Jesus had for using the word, “dead,” to describe those whose physical faculties had ceased to function. Jesus seemed to greatly prefer the term, “sleep.” This was the term Jesus initially used to describe the state of Lazarus, saying “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up” (John 11:11b). This was a term Jesus is recorded as using on another occasion (cf. Mark 5:39) and it would seem that this was the term Jesus wanted His apostles to adopt in their own speech. Though the apostles were slow to learn this lesson, forcing Jesus to speak in language they were more accustomed to, learn it they finally did, fully incorporating it into the Christian Lexicon (cf. Matt. 27:52; Acts 7:60, 13:36; 1 Cor. 11:30, 15:6, 18, 20, 51; Eph. 5:14; 1 Thess. 4:13,14,15, 5:10; 2 Peter 3:4).

That we should look upon physical death as a “rest” (cf. Hebrews 4:1-11; Revelation 6:11, 14:13) rather than an “ending” is in complete harmony with the will of the Lord. Our language does well to reflect this doctrine that our minds may follow.

### ***Christ’s Goals Are Not Man’s Goals***

Let us next notice, from the text, the dichotomy between the expectations of the carnal and the perspective of the spiritual. The sisters, believers in Christ, and believers in the resurrection, nonetheless greatly desired Jesus to extend the physical life of their brother. In this they share the short-sightedness of believers throughout the ages who pray diligently for the healing of their loved ones upon every occasion. This is not to say that such prayers are sinful, and we note that Jesus did not rebuke the sisters for their request anymore than He rebuked any of the multitudes who came to Him for physical healing. Nonetheless, the motives of Jesus in

such healings are best understood as coming not from a desire to prolong the human experience, but rather from the workings of a compassionate heart which intimately understood what it meant to be counted among humanity (cf. Heb. 2:17-18).

Jesus came not to heal the sick, but rather to seek and save the lost. The giving of spiritual life was of far greater import than the extension of mortal life.

Jesus, though He loved Lazarus, though He loved the sisters, could nonetheless remove Himself from the frail emotions of the flesh and see that Lazarus' dying was not a thing which had to be prevented, but that even a man's death could be made to bring glory to God. Our carnal senses protest at the tragedy of death, but Jesus, immersed in the Spirit of God, could rejoice in it, saying of Lazarus dying, "*I am glad.*" We think it callous for Christ not to act sooner, but Christ was not being unloving by allowing death to take its course. There comes a day for each follower, when Christ, perfect in love, allows them to die.

The plan of God is not undone by the death of a man. Indeed, to the contrary, was God's Will not fulfilled in the death of Christ? If God could use His own Son's death to bring about a furtherance of His divine Will, why should it we think it unreasonable that He might use the death of another, whether that other be Lazarus, or Peter, or Paul, or Us?

Followers of Jesus too often cling to prayer as an avenue of health, forgetting that the true power of Jesus is seen only after death. It was only after dying that Lazarus could best serve as a vehicle by which the glory of the Lord could be demonstrated. It was only after dying that Jesus came into His Kingdom. It is only when we have left this life that we shall fully know and appreciate the glory of the Lord. The Lord, in His love, is going to let us die physically, that He might manifest His glory in our lives, even as He did in Lazarus'.

### ***Following Christ Does Not Lead to Death***

There is a further dichotomy to be observed between the expectations of the apostles, as given voice by Thomas, and the reality of what was to transpire.

"Let us also go, that we may die with Him." So spake Thomas.

Though Thomas was loyal and faithful to Christ, his words express a fatalism, an expectation of the worst. He perceived that following Jesus was going to get him killed. And why not? Had not Jesus Himself said unto them, “But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues,” and “brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.” (Matt. 10:17, 21) Was it not the Master who had taught, “he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matt. 10:28-29) The cross Jesus spoke of was an instrument of death and Jesus made no secrets about the future He was calling the apostles to find (cf. Matt. 24:9). Their following Jesus was fated to involve beatings, trials, scourging, and ultimately painful, physical deaths.

Yet fatalism was not the Spirit to which Christ was calling the apostles. Nor were they going to Judea to die. They went to behold a resurrection and the manifestation of the glory of Christ, a glory showcased in Life! The fatalism, though commendable in its loyalty, was sorely misplaced.

Despite the cross, despite the martyrdoms, despite the promised persecution, Christianity is not a cult of death. It is a cult of life

When the apostles learned this lesson, what a difference it made in their attitude. The fatalism was replaced by optimism, even in the face of persecution, so that they could rejoice in their sufferings, and find joy in the midst of hardships (cf. Acts 5:41) They could count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ and the hope of the resurrection He promised (cf. Philip. 3:7-11).

So too with us, though we must recognize the reality of what Christ calls us to, the necessity of our own cross and the certainty of our own persecution, we must recognize that Christ does not call us to death, but to Life and Life eternal. If we believe, though we die, we shall live, and if we believe, if we live we shall never die. This is not a thing that should bring despair, but rather it is a hope that should overflow into the Joy of the Lord.

## *The Resurrection Is Come*

Finally, in touching upon the ways in which Christ challenges our conventional perspectives, let us observe Martha's faith. Martha, in her conversation with Jesus, evidenced her faith in a coming resurrection, saying, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day., but it seems evident that her faith did not touch her present sorrow. She believed in a Day to come, but how remote was that Day. The separation was too real, the promise too distant.

Let us pause a moment and comment upon how little people have changed, and how we can see in the foibles of each of these examples echoes of our own humanity. Our illnesses weigh heavy on our hearts, just as the illness of Lazarus weighed upon the sisters. We are prone to fears and fatalism, as was Thomas. We fail to see past the casket to the Life beyond, and though we believe, how far away do the promises seem to us in our hour of grief. But the Lord is compassionate, bearing with our weaknesses, and, rather than chastising us severely, He gently offers hope. He offered that hope to Martha, refuting her perception of a resurrection to come by pointing to Himself as The Resurrection: not a future event, but a very real presence.

Jesus' words here contrast a belief in a doctrine with a belief in Himself. Martha found little comfort in the thought of a resurrection at the last day; but Jesus said, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.' Without disparaging Christian doctrine in any sense, we may say that it is faith in a Person, even in Jesus, that makes all the difference. (Coffman 299)

And let us also add this quote:

The resurrection is not a doctrine, but a fact; not future but present; not multitudinous, but belonging to the unbroken continuity of each separate life... It is a personal communication of the Lord Himself, and not a grace which He has to gain from another. Martha had spoken of a gift to be obtained from God and dispensed by Christ. Christ turns

her thoughts to His own Person. He is that which men need.  
(Westcott 168, emphasis added)

The man believing in Christ has Life both presently and always. It is not a gift to be waited for, but a reality that that has come. Further, as it is Jesus who is The Resurrection and The Life, then it is our relationship with Christ that matters, not the state of our physical bodies. A man upon a bed of illness, with Christ, has Life that cannot be taken away. The man buried in the ground, if he be with Christ, yet lives. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living! (cf. Matt. 22:32)

Abraham died and was buried but he lives yet! Isaac and Jacob likewise entered that sleep of death and were buried but they live yet! Moses was buried by the Lord, but He spoke upon the mountain with Jesus! So too with Elijah, whom the apostles beheld. Lazarus, raised from the dead, once more tasted death, but the promise of the Lord stands, “This sickness is not unto death” (John 11:4) How many other men might we add to such a list of those who sleep in the Lord and yet live? How many have we known, faithful soldiers of the cross who have gone on to their rest and their reward, their labors following. Dare we say they are dead? No! Emphatically, no! With Christ they live, for He is The Resurrection and The Life, and if we believe, though we die, we shall live, and if we live, we shall never die.

There is no death in Christ. Rather, in Him is Life, and that Life is the Light of men.

### **Jesus Calls Us to Life**

We would be amiss if we did not recognize that The Resurrection, as profound and majestic and glorious as it is, pales in comparison to The Life. The Resurrection is an event, over in the twinkling of an eye, a transition from one state of being into the next. But The Life is an ongoing activity, an unending cycle of growth and productivity.

The raising of Lazarus from the tomb provides an analogy of the resurrection and the life that Jesus offers us. Jesus called and Lazarus answered. Jesus spoke and Lazarus had life. So too, Jesus calls us to live again, He speaks to us that we might have life in His



Words.

We are dead in sin, bound by our transgressions, but Jesus calls us to a resurrection into spiritual life. This is no less momentous an event than the raising of Lazarus, for while Lazarus was called back to a mortal life of woe, we are called into a spiritual life of righteousness.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:1-4)

Christ said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Life is not the cessation of activity, nor does an abundant life imply a dearth of things we should be about. Rather the opposite is true. We are to walk in newness of life. Elsewhere Paul teaches us that we are His workmanship, created for good works and we are to walk in those works (Eph. 2:10). Jesus calls us to live for God today, resurrected into righteousness, busy and active in doing good in His name. Life is a period of growth and activity, and if we have life in Christ we should be growing and active.

We should not be deceived. There will come a day, unless the Lord returns first, in which our mortal bodies will cease to function. “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Yet this is not the end, and those who have been raised in the first resurrection with Christ need have no fear of the second death (Rev. 2:11, 20:6). Rather, Jesus says,

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come

again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

Jesus spoke these words to men He knew were going to be killed for their testimony. They would breathe their last upon the earth and be buried. Yet they would not be dead. And when He returned in triumph, when He spoke their names, calling them forth, they would rise as surely as Lazarus and they would journey with Him once more to that place prepared for the Lord's faithful.

Thus did Paul write:

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:15-18)

The Lord calls us to Life. He calls us to live now for Him. There comes a day when He will call us forth to live with Him eternally.

The Lord said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" He says the same to us. Let us, with her, and with all who have called upon His name, say, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." And having made this good confession, let us submit ourselves to Him, partake in His death, burial and resurrection that we might too might have Life, and claiming that Life, let us live it abundantly.

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the *New King James Version*.

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## Biographical Sketch

A 1995 graduate of Ohio Valley College, Jonathan McAnulty has worked with congregations in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. He is married to the former Sandra Kay Treadway, and they currently have four children, three dogs, two cats, a collection of rabbits and one frog (which Sandra does not claim any part of). The family enjoys gardening, reading, and a wide variety of games. The two oldest children both have aspirations of graduating from WVSOP in the next few years. Jonathan McAnulty currently works with the Chapel Hill church of Christ in Gallipolis, OH.



# A Lame Man Walks

*John 5:1-29*

*Steve Haguewood*

## **What is a miracle?**

A popular definition of the term miracle is a setting aside of the laws of nature by one who is divine (Basic 352). Another definition of miracle is an interference with natural forces by the supernatural (Lewis 5). Lewis goes on to explain in a footnote that his definition is a bit of a concession to those who might take issue with the existence of supernatural and insist that nature is the final say in all things. He calls them naturalists while those who believe in the possibility of supernatural (God) he calls supernaturalists. Not everyone who believes in the word miracle agrees that it includes setting aside nature's laws. James Hastings challenges this notion in his *Dictionary of the Bible*. He claims, "The widely prevalent idea that a miracle is a historical event which violates the laws of nature is unsatisfactory" (663). He argues that miracles simply involve the use of the divine within natural laws. William Smith agrees with Hastings in his *Smith's Dictionary Bible*. He states, "A miracle is not a violation of the laws of nature. It is God's acting upon nature in a degree far beyond our powers" (408). One of Smith's objections to the traditional definition of miracles is that it deters some from belief by making them seem improbable (409). Thus he is arguing from consequence which is a logical fallacy.

Smith does go on to describe the difference between miracles and so-called magical events that take place. He said miracles are superior because:

- (1) The greatness, number, completeness, and publicity of miracles.
- (2) In the character of the miracles. They were all beneficial, helpful, instructive, and worthy of God as their author.
- (3) The natural beneficial tendency of the doctrine they attested.
- (4) The connection of them with a whole scheme of revelation extending from the origin of the human

race to the time of Christ. (409)

These men offer reasonable arguments for their belief that God does not set aside laws of nature but simply acts upon those laws in a manner which is beyond human capability. But if they cause nature to act differently than its normal fashion in a way not humanly possible then they are a manifestation of the supernatural. Thus are an exception to the laws of nature, a setting aside. Even Smith states specifically, “But if the motions and operations of be produced really by His divine will, then His choosing to change, for a special purpose, the ordinary motion of one part does not necessarily or probably imply His choosing to change the ordinary motion of the other parts...” (408). No one says it must change the other parts but if it changes the ordinary motion of one part it has circumvented or set aside a natural law.

The claim that miracles do not set aside the laws of nature does not explain how Moses’ hands in the air could have made a difference in the battle between Israel and the Amalekites (Exod. 17). Neither does it explain how five barley loaves and 2 fish could be divided among 5,000 people and 12 baskets of left overs collected. Nature does not allow for bread and fish small enough to be carried by a young boy could possibly stretch to that extent. Though some deny the setting aside of natural laws, most still believe God must be involved in miraculous actions. Even Hastings and Smith see the necessity of divine involvement through human agency in the miraculous occurrences of the bible.

### **What Miracle?**

The fourth Gospel, written by John the apostle, includes specific miracles, some not found in the synoptics. John also records fewer miracles than other Gospel authors but includes miracles with specific purposes. Eventually he says his recording of miracles is to produce faith. John wrote, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted].

John includes seven miracles in the fourth Gospel:

- John 2, turning water to wine
- John 4, healing the nobleman's son
- John 5, healing the lame man at the pool
- John 6:1-14, feeding the 5,000
- John 6:16-21, walking on water
- John 9, healing the man born blind
- John 11, raising Lazarus from the dead

These miracles are shared with mankind by the Holy Spirit through John's pen to produce faith where faith did not exist before. Faith is instilled in man in two ways: (1) God confirms Himself and His Word through His servants. (2) God conveys His message to the inspired authors miraculously. Through such confirmation and conveyance men can come to believe in the God of the universe.

The miracle at hand is found in John 5:1-29 and is the healing of the man who was lame for 38 years. John 5:5 says the man had been lame for 38 years. Muscles that are not used suffer from what is called atrophy. Atrophy is a wasting away of a body part (Webster's 54). Atrophy is mostly caused by disuse of an organ or muscle (Hastings 36). The government health website, PubMed says that disuse atrophy is caused by a lack of physical activity most often because people simply do not use the muscles enough (Muscle). The longer the disuse the worse the deterioration is made due to atrophy. In other words, a man who is not able to use his legs for six months would suffer slight to moderate muscle loss. A man who was not able to walk for 38 years would suffer total deterioration. His muscle loss would be catastrophic. After just six months of being not-weight bearing on his legs after an accident, this author spent an additional six months of surgery and physical therapy regaining the ability to walk. In an instant Jesus told the man lame for 38 years to take up his pallet and walk (John 5:8). Amazingly, the man was able to do exactly that. He had no surgery, no medicine, no bone grafts, and no physical therapy. As soon as Jesus spoke to him his legs were made whole and he could walk and carry his bed with him. At such a sight one would expect others to be moved by exuberance for

the man who had been lame and to celebrate with him that he was made well and no longer forced to beg for a living. Such was not the case.

### **How Did People See the Miracle?**

This leads to the discussion about the reactions humans have to seeing the power of Jesus demonstrated. Miracles were intended to produce faith. Some were able to see the power of the miracle and respond in faith. Some were not able to respond quite so favorably and faith was not the end result of their observations. This is because each person sees with certain preconceived expectations which lead toward or away from the real source of power. Different approaches are demonstrated in the reactions of those who witnessed the miracle of healing the lame man in John 5:1-29

Reaction to the same event is all about perspective. When two people see the same automobile accident they will events differently to the responding police officer. A young man may say the old guy in the Buick was driving too slowly and impeded the progress of the young man in the Corvette. An older man may say the young man in the Corvette was driving way to fast and recklessly and ran over the man safely driving his Buick. Who is right and who is wrong? In some sense it depends on your perspective. (It also depends on the laws regulating speed.)

In John 5 there are three different perspectives demonstrated by those who witnessed the miracle of healing. There were those who wanted religion but did not want Jesus. They wanted to feel good about themselves but had no desire toward real godliness. There were those who wanted Jesus and no religion. They wanted to have Jesus in their lives but did not want the responsibility of discipleship. They wanted Jesus on their own terms. And there were those who wanted Jesus and religion. They saw the inseparability of Jesus and religion. Religion cannot exist without Jesus and Jesus exists to make us religious. For Jesus, “organized religion” based on love for Him is why He came.

### **Religion Without Jesus**

Some in the story wanted religion without Jesus. They were



rigid and staunch in their dogmatic position. F. F. Bruce said they are, “a perfect example of the unspiritual heartlessness which results from barren institutionalism” (106). They believed the lame man and Jesus went beyond the teachings on the Sabbath.

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. (Deut. 5:12-14)

The healing of the lame man took place on the Sabbath. R. V. G. Tasker sees this as a significant detail and one that opens up the controversy in this story (88). Campbell Morgan sees the Jews as being on the side of the law in this instance (89). Although he sees this as simply a technical break of the law he, of course, leaves room for this to be acceptable since it was Jesus. Ray Summers disagrees saying the carrying of the bed was not the type of work forbidden by God’s law of the Sabbath (88). F. F. Bruce leaves more room for Jesus and less room for the Jews. He believes they had a faulty interpretation of the Sabbath based on their own commentary of Deuteronomy 5:13-14 called the *Trace of the Sabbath* (Bruce 125). *The Tract of the Sabbath*, Mishnah 7:2 as documented on [jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org) reads:

*MISHNA II.*:The principal acts of labor (prohibited on the Sabbath) are forty less one--viz.: Sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding into sheaves, threshing, winnowing, fruit-cleaning, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, wool-shearing, bleaching, combing, dyeing, spinning, warping, making two spindle-trees, weaving two threads, separating two threads (in the warp), tying a knot, untying a knot, sewing on with two stitches, tearing in order to sew together with two stitches, hunting deer, slaughtering the same, skinning them, salting

them, preparing the hide, scraping the hair off, cutting it, writing two (single) letters (characters), erasing in order to write two letters, building, demolishing (in order to rebuild), kindling, extinguishing (fire), hammering, *transferring from one place into another*. These are the principal acts of labor--forty less one. (emphasis added)

To the prevalent Jews of the day carrying his bed from the place of the pool to his home would violate the Sabbath Law because it was transporting something from one place to another. While it is true this violates their interpretation of the law, a violation of the actual law has not been established certainly. It appears Jesus disagreed with their assertions about the Sabbath as He often argued with them concerning whether it was lawful to do good works on the Sabbath or not. "Jesus persistently maintained that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. He ignored the mass of scribal regulations, and thus inevitably came into conflict with the authorities" (Morris 271). Had this act been a violation, the Hebrew writer could not have written accurately that Jesus was tempted in all points yet without sin (Heb. 4:15).

They were so interested in their own personal views they forgot to see the good that had been done. They were so blinded by their own ideas they could not see the Messiah as He stood before them doing good for the less fortunate. "For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath" (John 5:16). The Jews wanted their religion and did not want Jesus. When a view on religion that is held becomes more important than Jesus it ceases to be religion and becomes man-based religion that is fraught with falsehood and rejection of the Christ.

### **Jesus Without Religion**

There are those who want to have Jesus in their lives but do not want to be "tied down" to religion. They may say, "I love Jesus but I do not believe in 'organized religion.'" That sounds good to some, but it does not hold water as a philosophy of theology.

Consider the man who was healed. He enjoyed the healing. He was carrying his pallet and enjoying life when the Jews saw him. He

does not even know who it was that made him well according to John 5:13. He had not asked any questions, expressed no compulsion; he only went his own way having gained the power to walk, maybe for the first time ever; at the very least for the first time in 38 years. He was not interested in Jesus or anything real or significant. He just wanted the healing. “Do not bother with anything else; just heal these legs if you please.”

Consider though the definition of religion. The term according to modern definitions falls short of the actual meaning. Webster’s defines religion as a set of beliefs or something one does devotedly (767). One may do anything “religiously” today; even going to the bar to drink regularly may be referred to as “religiously.” *Dictionary.com* gives the etymology of “religion” as coming from the Latin, *religare*, re- again, and *ligare*- to tie or bind. Thus the definition of religion would be to re-tie or reconnect things that have become separated.

Mankind was in full fellowship with God when living in the Garden of Eden. After eating of the forbidden fruit that fellowship was broken. After that time God needed to act on our behalf to reunite man to Himself (religion, reconnecting). He did so by sending Jesus to the earth so that He might save those willing to obey (John 3:16). He established the only system capable of religion. By Him alone one may have the relationship retied that was severed in the Garden and by the subsequent sin of each person. Religion does not exist without Jesus and without religion there is no connection to Jesus (John 14:6).

## **Jesus and Religion**

Jesus wants humans to understand the importance of both Jesus and religion. In reference to being the Way, William Barclay explains this. He points out that Jesus is giving the Jews something they already knew about (183). God often warned Israel about the way in which they ought to go. He tells Israel not to turn to the right or left but to “walk in the ways that the Lord your God has commanded you” (Deut. 5:32-33). Follow the spiritual guidance that comes from God. He tells Isaiah, “This is the way; walk in it” (Isa. 31:29). In each of these instances His Word is to be the guiding

principle behind all they are to do. The Psalmist says, “Teach me your ways, O Lord” (Psalm 27:11). Jesus answers in John 14:6, “I am the way...”

In this very text Jesus tries to connect the dots between His blessings and proper service in the life of the recipient. He tells the man who was healed, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more...” (John 5:14).

Religion is the way Jesus ties us back to the Father according to John 14:6. The only way to the Father is by way of Jesus Christ. His way is that system that began to take form in the promise of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament. That system was built looking forward to the coming of Jesus. Then the New Testament system was built looking back at what He has already accomplished. He gave us, through His sacrifice, the “new and living way” that gives us confidence to approach God (Heb. 10:20).

Simply put, Jesus and religion are inextricably tied together. You cannot have one without the other. To have Jesus one must be reunited to Him. That is religion, the process in which He receives men back to Himself after he separated himself by sin.

## **Summary**

Religion without Jesus ties you back to nothing. It is based on selfishness and a mean-spirit. That is the mindset of those Jews who looked at the lame man who was walking. No one celebrated with a man who was healed after 38 years of being an invalid. No one rejoiced at the great new life this man was given. No one asked who helped this man until they realized their own feelings ought to be hurt. Their feelings were hurt not because God’s Law had been violated. They were hurt because their own assumptions and subsequent conclusions were violated. The only time they were interested in Jesus was when they planned to correct Him for violating a Law He created. When humans get so closed-minded that they miss Jesus because of their own biases they are no longer involved in religion but in their own opinions. And no human opinion can reconnect you to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus without religion is a cop-out. It is the mindset that a person can have all he wants with no responsibilities or compulsions toward

the One who provides those blessings. This is a lazy approach to life and is untenable. The system Jesus has established is the definition of organized. He is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). Jesus told the woman at the well that worshippers must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Worshipping in spirit means with the proper attitude. Worshipping in truth means it must be done as directed. The term must in John 4:24 is the Greek word *dei* and emphasized the absolute essentiality of following this instruction. Frank Pack says of being in truth, “It is according to the truth as revealed in Jesus Christ” (76). Worship is directed both in part and in practice by our Lord. At His command worship it offered and when done according to His word with a heart to please and praise it is accepted. Jesus cannot be acquired by humans outside of His religion.

The only way to be united with Jesus is through His religious system. The only way to salvation is through Jesus. His system yields such unbelievable blessings that it ought to attract each human. But those blessings come with responsibilities, as do all blessings. The new and living way offers to man a better life both here and in the here-after. Jesus called it abundant life in John 10:10.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that a miracle took place in John 5. A man was lame for 38 years waiting for the waters to be stirred was suddenly and miraculously healed by Jesus. Though some may disagree, it can hardly be fathomed that a miracle is anything but the setting aside of natural laws to accomplish a divine task. Having been a lame man, this author knows first-hand that his legs did not heal naturally. After four surgeries and six months of medical restrictions, an additional six months of physical therapy were required for this author to walk again. 38 years of atrophy would not heal naturally as quickly as this man was healed. The miracle was separate and apart from anything possible in nature. Jesus was capable of operating outside the boundaries of nature in healing the lame man.

It is clear this miracle made people take notice. The purpose of miracles was to draw attention to Jesus for the purpose of producing faith in the faithless. Jesus healed this man to draw attention to

Himself. It served that purpose well. It made Jesus the most popular, and with some the most infamous, man in town. People were talking about what happened with this lame man who was now walking.

Most were not talking about the miracle itself. They were focusing on what they perceived as a violation of the Sabbath Law. They saw a man carrying his pallet on the Sabbath and forgot that the man was lame just minutes before they saw him. They forgot the man had been lame for 38 years prior to this instant in time. It is a sad commentary on the state of man when he focuses on a perceived negative and misses such an awesome positive as this miracle. Jesus does such a great thing for this lame man finds Himself challenged by the Jews because of their misunderstanding of the law of the Sabbath that Jesus created.

Do not be so consumed with your dogma that you miss Jesus. Pay attention to His Spirit, to His character, to His life and to His love. Remember how He approached the woman at the well when no one else would. Remember His love and care for Saul when the disciples were scared of Him. Remember that He loves you and forgave you of your sins just the same as He must for everyone. Nicodemus (John 3) and the woman at the well (John 4) both needed exactly the same thing, Jesus. Be willing to be His, not a minion of some religious dogma but a disciple of Christ.

Do not forget that Jesus is in the religion He established. His blood was shed so that it would be effective. He came to complete the plan by which you might have hope of eternal life. Do not long for the benefits of a system you have no plan to implement in your life. His way is not burdensome; in fact, it is the only way to remove the burden. But it is absolutely essential to your salvation. Outside of His religion, His plan to reconnect you to Him, you are lost and without hope. You cannot have Jesus without religion.

Remember the purpose of religion, to reconnect people to the fellowship with Christ of which sin has deprived them. You cannot have one without the other. Religion without Jesus is selfish dogmatism that will not save anyone. Jesus without religion is a lazy way of saying you want your cake and eat it too. You cannot have Jesus unless you walk in His way. Jesus and religion are one

and the same. He is the path we take and He revealed that path in the inspired Bible He left for man to follow.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Steven Haguewood currently works with the North End church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV. Before coming to Parkersburg he received his B. S. in Bible and M. A. in New Testament studies at Freed-Hardeman University and worked with the Theo church of Christ in Theo, MS. He has written in numerous brotherhood papers including the West Virginia Christian, Magnolia Messenger, Carolina Christian, and Gospel Advocate. He has spoken on several lectureships including the WVSOP, F-HU, and the Ohio Valley Lectures as well as preaching and lecturing in Haiti and Jos, Nigeria. He has held meetings in Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, and West Virginia. He taught Bible classes for the last six years at Ohio Valley University and was recently added to the faculty at the West Virginia School of Preaching to teach the Gospel of John and Denominational Doctrines.

Steven is blessed with a wonderful Christian wife, Jennie, and four lovely children.



# Humility of Service

*John 13:1-17*

*Matt Thomas*

The last night of Jesus' earthly ministry was very eventful. He observed the Passover meal with His disciples, taught His disciples many valuable truths, prayed His great Messianic prayer, and was betrayed into the hands of His enemies. In the morning, He would carry His cross "outside of the camp," up Calvary's mountain to bear the sins of humanity "in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). [All Scripture references are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

Up to the time of the Passover meal in the upper room, the Apostle John in his Gospel account reveals Jesus' creative power by recording seven profound and powerful miracles. What would be the last thing He wants to impress upon them before taking up the cross? Perhaps a great demonstration of judgment to instill fear until He returns again? Maybe a political upheaval leaving the apostles in power? Or ousting the Romans from Palestine? No - instead He would put on a towel and become their servant!

The text for this study is found in John 13:1-17. In the upper room, Jesus imbeds into His disciples the *mindset* which would accompany the *message* of the gospel to all men. He vividly demonstrates to these men that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). He also instilled in them that, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

In showing Himself to be a servant of men, Jesus left us a vivid portrait of the kind of heart we are to have for others.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's

son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (John 13:1-17)

### **Humility of Service – The Purest Expression of God's Love (13:1-4)**

Jesus "loved them to the end." The verses which follow this chapter-opening comment reveal *how* Jesus would love His disciples in His last hours on earth. Whatever it involved would be considered "love." It involved the humility of service! Serving is the greatest expression of love one can show for another, and the Lord seized the occasion of the Passover Feast to love them by washing their feet. It would be an act of love *to* them, and an act of love *for* them, in that

they would take up the blessing and begin to live the life of servants of Christ!

Serving is the lifestyle of the one who loves. Consider for yourself whether servanthood was something Jesus did, or something Jesus lived. His service to men, did it emphasize His works, or His nature? I propose that God's loving nature was highlighted *through* His works of service. Jesus' servant nature combined with His teaching gave men a clear portrayal of who God is. Therefore "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" that He might "declare Him" to us (John 1:14, 18). And this was the point He made to Philip who wanted a glimpse of the Father, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). What God wants in man is inward transformation (2 Cor. 3:8; Rom. 8:29), abounding in love (Philip. 1:9; John 13:34), and not merely outward religious service (Psalm 51:16-17; Matt. 9:13; 23:23). It is epitomized by the Lord washing the feet of His disciples.

The *humility* in service is that it requests nothing in return – it is self-sacrificial, *agape* love. Consider the Lord's epic story of "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37). The context surrounds a question to Jesus from a lawyer, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The answer He gives is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself." Then Jesus tells a story about what it means to love the Lord your God with all you have, and your neighbor as yourself. He describes a Samaritan man (whom the Jews would have despised) who unselfishly serves a stranger in need:

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?' So he answered and said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.' And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.' But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Then Jesus answered and

said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.” So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’ And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’(Luke 10:25-37)

The flow of the argument is Eternal Life – Love – Servanthood. The Lord was clear; the “neighbor” was the one who served his fellow man. The Lord was also clear when He charged the audience to “Go and do likewise,” that they may receive eternal life! For those who have put on Christ as Savior, adopting the servant life is the surest way to the kingdom of heaven, as it involves love both for God and for man. Remember Matthew 25:31-46!

The apostles eventually got this message. Instead of arguing who would be greatest, they became servants. Peter and John warmly gave what they had to the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6). Paul recalled to the Thessalonians, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake” (1 Thess. 1:5). Then he reminded them of what kind of men he and his travelling companions were.

Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But *we were gentle among you*, just as a *nursing mother* cherishes her own children. So, *affectionately* longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own *lives*, because you had become *dear to us*. For you remember, brethren, our *labor and toil*; for laboring *night and day*, that we might *not be a burden to any* of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how *devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you* who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a *father* does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when *you received the word of God* which you heard from us, *you welcomed it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. (1 Thess. 2:6-13)  
[Emph. mine, *italics* – MT]

The Thessalonians then “became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” (1 Thess. 1:6-7). Do you think the humility of service shown by the apostle and his companions affected their receiving the message of the gospel?

If anyone had the credentials to speak on humility, it was Paul. Thus he said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24, and consequently to all Christian servants of the Lord,

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

As you can see, the concepts of *salvation*, *love*, and *servanthood* are interwoven. Adopting the servant life of Jesus as our own is the expression of God's love to the world. As a final note on this point, let's run a little test to see the power of servanthood in our lives. Replace the word "love" with the word "serve" and its derivatives in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 and see what happens:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but *do not serve*, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but *do not serve*, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but *do not serve*, it profits me nothing. *A servant* suffers long and is kind; *a servant* does not envy; *a servant* does not parade *himself*, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek *his own*, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. *Servanthood* never fails." (*Italics* denote changes to original text - MT.)

Servanthood never fails. It does not fail God, you, your marriage, your family, your brethren, your friends, your acquaintances, or strangers. It will not fail you in the day of judgment either. But there is more...

## **Humility of Service – Freed Servants Who Free Others (13:5-15)**

### ***Servanthood Frees the Servant***

Beginning with the servant himself, his service toward God frees him from the restraints of men! In *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster suggests that servanthood "releases you from the terrible burden of always having to get your own way" (97). When men are servants, they are less likely to be "drawn away by their own desires and enticed" (Jas. 1:12-15), which leads men into sin

through “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Servants are free to love people unconditionally (Samaritan man, Luke 10:25-37). We are free from competition with others (2 Cor. 10:12). We are therefore free to “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). We are free to defer the matter to God, and not seek retaliation (1 Peter 5:7). We are set free from the seething anger and bitterness of self-pity, to drop a matter, yes, and even to not pick it up in the first place (Eph. 4:31-32).

Martin Luther wrote, “A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.” Luther’s statement may well have been influenced by Paul’s inspired discourse in 1 Corinthians 9:18-23 on the liberty of a Christian,

What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Paul was free from all men in that only one was the true Lord of him. But he willingly made himself a servant to all, that he might win more souls. Wonder where he got that idea?

### ***Servanthood Frees Others***

A “freed” servant has a powerful influence on others besides himself. Jesus did not demand to be served due to His lofty status as the Son of God, or His perfect conduct as a man. Servanthood is

not restrained by position, status, or power. He was the last one on earth who men would expect to put on the towel, and yet He chose to serve them. His position, status, and power made His action that much more profound. This is indeed what makes servanthood so powerful, when those who are not expected to serve do so anyway, expecting nothing in return. Yet, hoping for a great return, in that those served will see and follow Jesus through our example.

For a great example of how servant-minded disciples make servants, consider Onesimus...

### *The Conversion of Onesimus*

Onesimus was the slave of a convert named Philemon (See the Book of Philemon). He ran away from his life of servitude to find freedom. What he didn't expect was that he would find freedom by running straight into slavery. He met the slaves of Christ!

When Onesimus met Paul, he was in chains in a Roman prison (Philem. 13). He had appealed to Caesar and there awaited his trial. However, he found favor in the eyes of the Romans there, and rather than being housed as a common criminal, the apostle was permitted to live in his own rented apartment and to minister the Gospel to the Romans, though probably bound with a chain and in the company of a guard (Acts 28:16, 30; cf. Eph. 6:20). He must have had a great impact on Onesimus. Through a little "detective" work we can find out from the letters Paul dictated to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon during this two-year period just what else Onesimus witnessed when he came to Paul in that Roman prison. Onesimus was hearing sermons from Paul, but he was also *seeing* sermons.

He would have met Luke, a Greek physician (Col. 4:14) who enjoined himself to the apostle (Acts 16:8-10) to care for his physical infirmities, and those of his travel companions. Luke stayed with Paul until his final days of the second Roman imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11). What a moving sermon it must have been to see that Christian doctor, a free man, having left his home and livelihood, to tenderly care for Paul and his companions.

He would have met Aristarchus, a Jewish convert from Thessalonica (Acts 27:2; Col. 4:10-11), who was "ruffed up" by an



unruly crowd in Ephesus (Acts 19:29). Instead of saying, “I didn’t sign up for this,” Aristarchus accompanied Paul and in some sense became a “fellow-prisoner” with the apostle in Rome - perhaps voluntarily (Col. 4:10). His lack of regard for chains must have been an inspirational sermon to Onesimus, who would have learned what Paul meant by, “I do not count my life dear to myself” (Acts 20:24).

He would have been acquainted with Epaphras, a fellow Colossian who was “always laboring fervently...in prayer” for the Colossian brethren, which would have included Philemon! (Col. 4:12-13). How dumbfounded he must have been to join in prayer with this group of men and hear Epaphras thanking God for and praying for the man he had just run away from. His fervent love for them was a “sermon” which Onesimus would surely remember upon his own return to the city and to his master!

He met Timothy, apparently a gentle young man who developed a lion heart. About him Paul said, “For I have no one like-minded . . . as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel” (Phil. 2:19-22). He went where he was needed, including Ephesus and Philippi (1 Tim. 1:3; Phil. 2:19-20). Though the work was not easy, and he had been imprisoned himself at some point (Heb. 13:23), Timothy was Paul’s staunchest soldier, and his right hand man. Onesimus would have taken some great lessons from him in gentleness, humility, bravery, and faithful service to the Master.

He would have known Tychicus who traversed in and out as Paul’s emissary to transport letters to the Colossians (Col. 4:7-9), to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21-22), and probably later to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:12). Eventually, one of those trips would take him to Colossae, and Onesimus would be going with him (Col. 4:7-9)! They went with Paul’s “emancipation proclamation” to Philemon. Whether he freed him in the flesh we do not know, but now he was freed in spirit to become a slave of Christ alone (Philemon 16).

He would have met John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). John Mark had started out with Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey, but along the way (at Perga in Pamphylia), he left them and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13), which brought doubt upon the young man’s character and integrity. But time

passes and people change. Mark was given another chance to serve and is commended by Paul as a “fellow-worker” (Philem. 24) who is “useful to me” (2 Tim. 4:11). Interesting, that’s what Onesimus means, “useful,” or “profitable.” John Mark’s story must have been special to him – a deserter who runs away but is given another chance to redeem himself, but through the Lord! Redemption in Christ. Forgiveness from God and from men. Another very personal and powerful sermon for Onesimus!

Demas is a sermon, too. This brother is mentioned three times in the letters of Paul. First, he was with the apostle at some point during Paul’s initial Roman imprisonment, and he is complimented as Paul’s “fellow-worker” (v. 24). Disappointingly, in the epistle he wrote before being led to his execution, Paul urged Timothy to “give diligence to come shortly to me.” The reason? “For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica” (2 Tim. 4:9-10). Whatever the reason for his decision, he finally tired of the servant life, and so followed his heart back into the pleasures of that culture. Yet, all others carried on the work. Demas preached a sermon on the cost of discipleship, from which Onesimus learned not to be so easily moved.

Finally, there was Epaphroditus. What kind of sermon did he preach?

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me. (Phil. 2:25-30)

In Epaphroditus, Onesimus saw a soldier. Though wounded in the flesh, he carried on “*Semper Fi*” – the Latin for “always faithful, always loyal,” which slogan the Marines have adopted in battle.

These were *free men who were voluntary slaves of Christ*, and who *preached through their works* while Paul was preaching from his chains. These were the men who freed Onesimus! He never saw slaves like this - slaves who served in righteousness, out of love for their Master Jesus Christ. Until this time, Onesimus only knew slavery by compulsion. Until this time, he had never seen servitude from a godly spirit. Until this time, he had not met the church!

### **Humility of Service - Our Blessing (13:16-17)**

In John 13:16-17, Jesus gave the disciples the key to a blessed existence. If they would but keep the perspective that they are not greater than their Master, not only would they be freed men, but they would also be blessed. If it is not beyond the Master of the Universe to serve, then it would not be beyond them to “take a towel and gird themselves” for the service of sinful men. With this in mind, they would be equipped for their mission to save men with the *right message* and with the *right mindset*!

This understanding brings peace to the servant of Christ. The reason not all Christians are at peace is because, though they have put Christ on in baptism, they have not put on the towel of servanthood. They have become the seed which fell on stony ground or among thorns. They will never fully enjoy the service of God because they will never change a life, including their own. No Christian is immune to this danger – not teacher or preacher, not elder or any other. But neither is any Christian exempt from the promise to be exalted and honored by the Father (John 12:25-26). Those who serve will be the ones honored by the Father. Those who serve get to be close to Him, and He close to them. In John 14:23 Jesus said, “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.”

Every Christian is created anew to “walk in good works, which God created beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Servanthood is not a popular notion in our culture. Foster wrote,

Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people, or gifted people, but for deep people. (1)

Let me ask a few pointed questions: Which best describes our culture, “servanthood” or “serve me hood”? Do we live in a “deep” or “shallow” culture? Which is held in greater esteem, those who are served or those who serve the served? Yes, servanthood goes against the grain of societal acceptance. Yet that is exactly why it is so powerful. *Most people have never seen a true servant, let alone a free man who serves through love for God.*

If men will believe it, it is the “abundant life” of John 10:10. Through the humility of service men are exalted. They would become great men in God’s eyes.

## **Conclusion**

What Jesus gave in the upper room was the second greatest gift He could give them (the first being His body on the tree for our justification). He gave them here the secret to *quality* of life – servanthood. It is the great expression of God’s love, the greatest persuasion of men’s hearts, and ironically, the greatest freedom of all. The only men who cannot be enslaved are those who *volunteer* to be slaves. You cannot rob a man of his life if he gives it to you! His spirit is free from bondage – free to live and free to die.

In America today, the “land of the free,” men are slaves of sin, unless they become Christ’s! The world desperately needs to see free men who have voluntarily become slaves of Christ, and slaves of Christ who live as free men, “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God” (1 Peter 2:15-16). “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

We are nothing if not a servant. I am persuaded that if Jesus were to grace us with His presence today at this lectureship, in the midst of a crowd of devoted Christian teachers, preachers, and

lovers of truth, and give us one glimpse of His glory, He would put a towel back on, and begin to wash our feet, or some other humility of service. What would you think of Him then? What would you say? Hopefully you would say, “not only my feet, but my hands and my head too,” and then go and do likewise.

### **Works Cited**

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### **Biographical Sketch**

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# His Diety

*John 1:1-3; 3:31-36; 8:57-59*

*Denny Petrillo*

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...” (John 1:1). [All Scripture references are from the NJKV.] Our Lord Jesus Christ is called through the inspired apostle John, “the Word.” A study of how Jesus is the Word is a beneficial study to every student wishing to learn more about the savior of man.

## **Background to the Concept of the *Logos***

Initially, one must understand what the Greek word “*logos*” meant to the Greeks, and what advantage it offers in understanding why Jesus is called such. In John’s Gospel he uses the word *logos* 40 times, applying it to Jesus 4 times. “*Logos*” is a Greek word that, in its most basic definition, means “a word.” It is the expression of thought; (a) as embodying a conception or idea; (b) a saying or statement (this may be by God, John 15:25; or Christ, John 2:22); (c) discourse, speech, or instruction, etc. *Logos* is a collecting or collection both of thoughts, and words used to express those thoughts. It therefore means both the outward form by which the inward thought is expressed, and the inward thought itself. An example of the outward thought would be any saying, decree, precept or discourse (i.e. the Ten Commandments are called in the Septuagint “the ten words” - Exod. 34:28.) The “inward thought” would include the use of the mind to think, reason, consider and discern. While the concept of the *logos* is somewhat familiar to the Greeks, the idea that it represents a person, even a divine person, is unique.

A brief look at Old Testament usage of “the word” may be of value here. It initially points to Genesis 1 where the act of creation is effected by God speaking. The idea of “the word” develops itself from there. First, the word, as embodying the divine will, is personified in Hebrew poetry. The word is “a healer” (Psa. 107:20);

a messenger (Psa. 147:15); the agent of the divine decrees (Isa. 40:11). Second, the word is personified wisdom (Job 28:12ff; Prov. 8:22-31). Third, the word is the Angel of Jehovah (Gen. 16:7-13; 32:24-28; Hos. 12:4, 5; Exod. 23:20, 21; Mal. 3:2) (Vincent 2:25-32).

### **The Use of the Word Logos in the New Testament**

In the writings of John, and in the New Testament itself, the word *logos* is used for the Christian message. As the Christian message, it has several functions.

1. The Word judges (John 12:48).
2. The Word purifies (John 15:3; 1 Tim. 4:5). It purifies by exposing evil and by pointing to good.
3. Through the word belief comes (Acts 4:4; Rom. 10:17). No one can believe in the Christian message until he has heard the word.
4. The word is the agent of rebirth (1 Pet. 1:23).

In studying the word *logos* in the New Testament, instruction is given on what one must do with the *logos*. Here are a few examples:

1. The *logos* must be heard (Matt. 13:20; Acts 13:7, 44).
2. The *logos* must be received (Luke. 8:13; Jas. 1:21; Acts 8:14; 11:1).
3. The *logos* must be held on to (Luke 8:13).
4. The *logos* is something to abide in (John 8:31).
5. The *logos* must be kept (John 8:51; 14:23; 1 John 2:5; Rev. 3:8).
6. The *logos* must be witnessed to (Acts 8:25; Rev. 1:2).
7. The *logos* is something which must be served (Acts 6:4).
8. The *logos* is something which must be announced (2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 15:36; 17:13).
9. The *logos* must be spoken with boldness (Acts 4:29; Philip. 1:4).
10. The *logos* must be taught (Acts 18:11).
11. The *logos* must be acted upon (Jas.1:22).



12. The *logos* may involve persecution and suffering (1 Thess. 1:6; Rev. 1:9).

Because of the fact that the *logos* involves obligations, it means that the *logos* is liable to have failures. Here are the New Testament examples of these failures.

1. The *logos* may be disbelieved (1 Peter 2:8).
2. The *logos* can be snatched away or even choked (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:15).
3. The *logos* can be corrupted and adulterated (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2).
4. The *logos* can be rendered ineffective (Mark 7:13) (Barclay 178-85).

### **Why Is Jesus called “The Logos?”**

It can easily be seen by these examples that the *logos*, although a commonly used word in the New Testament, blossomed into great importance to Christians, and not only first century Christians but Christians of every age. When Jesus is called the *logos* one can view the examples above to attest to the fact that being called such opened a door to the importance of Jesus. Without further delay it will now be profitable to look at exactly how Jesus is the *logos*.

*First*, the plainest reason why Jesus is called the Word seems to be that as man’s words are the interpretations of his mind to others, so was the Son of God sent in order *to reveal his Father’s mind to the world*. John says that “the word was God.” This designates a real subsisting Being, not an attribute of God (Henry and Scott 324). Therefore, the Son of God may be called “the Word” because he is the *medium* by which God declares His will, and issues His commandments. John uses the word *logos* to express this very idea. Man desired to know God, and Jesus was that avenue by which they can do so. Jesus himself said “If you have seen me you have seen the Father” (John 14:9). A great deal can be found out about someone when their words are examined. Jesus said that a man’s words are a window into his heart (Matt. 15:18-20). Man can find out more about God when Jesus, “the Word” is examined. Why? Because He

Himself “is God.”

*Second*, Jesus is also the *logos* of God in the sense that *He is the total concept of God*. As noted above, the Father is speaking through the Son. Yet the Father does more than just speak through Him. He communicates through the Son in both words and His deeds. Jesus is manifesting the characteristics of a divine being. The writer of Hebrews supports this idea when He writes in Hebrews 1:1, 2; “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.” Jesus is therefore the Word of God in that He is Deity expressed. Want to know how God feels about something? Look at Jesus. Want to know how God would react to opposition, faithfulness, oppression, and evil? Look at Jesus. He is God’s expression in the flesh. As Vincent said, “the mind of God became a man” (33).

*Third*, Jesus is called the *Logos* because *He is the Creator*. John proceeds to say that “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:2). God spoke the creation into existence. Jesus, as the *Logos* was that creative force. As a matter of fact, John clearly says that there was nothing made that Jesus did not make. Some today would argue that the Father first created Jesus, then through Jesus created everything else. This is why, for example, the *New Word Translation* of the Jehovah’s Witnesses changes the clear reading of Colossians 1:16. The NKJV reads: “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.” The *New Word Translation* translates this as follows: “because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships of governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him.” Notice twice they add the word “other”? There is zero justification for this in the original. Instead, there is a clear contradiction with their theology. Yet the truth is clear here. Jesus, as the *Logos* created everything. Think about this. If

he created *everything*, and is Himself created, then He had to have created Himself! The very thought of this is sheer foolishness.

### **The Deity of Christ, the Logos: Three Texts (1:1-3; 3:31-36; 8:57-59)**

John had clearly identified the purpose of his gospel – to bring about belief in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (20:30, 31). It is therefore crucial that we understand the very nature and person of Jesus. As clearly indicated above, He is the *Logos*. This designation alone should prove His divinity. Yet there are many more evidences found within the pages of John’s gospel. We will devote ourselves to three of these texts.

The *first text* we will consider is John 1:1-3. In discussing the *Logos*, John makes the following observations:

“In the beginning was the Word” (v. 1) and “He was in the beginning with God” (v. 2). John does not indicate that in the beginning the Word came into existence. Rather, he says that in the beginning “was” the Word. This language demonstrates that *before* any creative acts took place, Jesus, the *Logos* was already in existence. This is because He is eternal. He has always existed.

“The Word was with God.” This language indicates that Jesus was both separate from the Father and was equal with Him. As the creative process was to begin, Jesus was present. The Greek preposition translated “with” is actually the word *pros*. This word means “by, at, near” (BDAG 875). The proximity of Jesus with the Father in the beginning indicates His status of equality.

“The Word was God.” This is the most direct statement made by John. Here he clearly declares the deity of Jesus, even to the point that He Himself is God. There is nothing in this that would indicate anything less than complete equality. Whatever the Father is, Jesus is. Whatever attributes describe God were those possessed by Jesus. Most are aware, however, the religious groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses have designed a creative explanation for this phrase. This will be discussed in a special excurses at the end of this study.

“All things were made through Him.” Only God can create. He is the only one who has the power to speak things into existence. Therefore John here clearly identifies the divinity of Jesus. He had

the power to speak things into existence. Only God has this power, therefore Jesus is God.

The *second text* that proves the deity of Christ is 3:31-36. John the Baptist was called to bear witness to Jesus. In this section there are those who wanted to see John claim a level of equality with Jesus. John states clearly that he needed to “decrease” while Jesus “increased” (3:30). He then offers the reasons for this:

Jesus “comes from above” (v. 31). Here John is clearly separating himself from Jesus. He is just a man. Jesus is divine, having come from “above,” the realm of heaven (as John says later in this verse). While some might argue that angels come “from above,” such an argument would weaken John’s point. Are angels superior to man? The biblical record indicates otherwise (Psa. 8:5, where the literal reading is “Thou hast made him a little lower than God” [*Elohim*], and Heb. 1:14 where the angels are “ministering spirits”).

John twice says that Jesus “is above all” (v. 31). Many want to add to this “except the Father.” But John makes no such exception. Here “all” means exactly that. He is above “all,” and only God holds that distinction.

John says that “God sent Jesus,” and that the Father “has given all things into His hands.” It is clear that John is here referring to the incarnate Christ. When Jesus became flesh, He emptied Himself of equality with God (Phil. 2:6-7). Yet the divine nature is seen in that the Father gave authority to Jesus that He did not, and would not give to a man (like John).

Salvation (“eternal life”) is found only in Jesus, the Son of God. The fact that Jesus is God’s Son is a claim to being equal with God (5:18).

The *third text* that proves the deity of Jesus is 8:57-59. This discussion is noteworthy because, like the conflict in 5:18, it provoked the Jews to try to kill Jesus. What Jesus said that elicited this response was, upon close evaluation, a claim to be the “I Am.” It began with a discussion about Abraham. Jesus told the Jews that Abraham “rejoiced to see My day, and He saw it and was glad” (v. 56). This statement implied that Jesus was alive with Abraham, and had special knowledge about the words and feelings of the great patriarch. When the Jews challenged Jesus, He took the discussion

to a whole different level. He boldly declared: “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” The wording here has a direct link to Isaiah 43:10:

“You are My witnesses,” says the LORD,  
“And My servant whom I have chosen,  
That you may know and believe Me,  
And understand that I am He.  
Before Me there was no God formed,  
Nor shall there be after Me.

This passage also brings us back to the discussion between Moses and the Lord, where the Lord said: “And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14). Despite claims to the contrary, Jesus said exactly what He meant to say, and was perfectly understood by the Jews. They knew what Jesus was claiming. He was claiming to be the very I AM, the Lord God Himself. This is why the Jews took up stones to stone Him.

## **Conclusion**

It may be noted that when John said “the Word” the Jews understood what he meant. The “*logos*” was a term used by the Jews applying to the Messiah. In their writings he was commonly known by the term “*mimra*,” i.e. “word:” and no small part of the “interpositions of God in defense of the Jewish nation were declared to be by “the word of God.” Thus in their Targum on Deuteronomy 26:17,18 it is said, “Ye have appointed THE WORD OF GOD a king over you this day, that he may be your God”” (Barnes 263).

The Jews knew the importance of the *Logos*. Jesus was what God wanted to say to man. Unfortunately few Jews accepted God’s communication to man.

The total purpose of this study was to show the eternal importance of the *Logos*, and how he is essentially and totally God’s offered salvation to man. May Jews and Gentiles, people of every kind, turn to hear and obey God’s Word, the perfect *Logos*.

## Special Excursus: Does John Say Jesus Was “a god?”

There are some things said in the first chapter of John that a study of the Greek will help clarify concerning the *Logos*. Because of the fact that the religious world today has attempted to minimize the position of the *Logos*, it will be the purpose of this excursus to view the arguments presented and offer a scriptural refutation of these arguments. It may be noted that it is with deep respect and caution that a study like this be approached for fear of lessening the greatness of the *Logos*.

One of the major arguments in progress today concerning the *Logos* is whether or not he is indeed God. The questions raised are: “Is Jesus really God?” “What position does Jesus hold?” In the first chapter and first few verses of John’s Gospel he mentions some things about the *Logos*. Most translators today, in their proven scholarship, render John 1:1 as follows: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (NKJV). However, some people today are translating the remainder of that verse “and the Word was a god” (Watchtower Society, *The Word*, p. 5). The obvious reason for this being to lesson Christ from His position in the Godhead. A quotation from the Gnostic view will clarify their feelings.

...the Greek word for “God” is at the beginning of the statement although it belongs to the predicate and it also does not have the definite article “the” in front of it... the omission of the definite article “the” before the Greek word THEOS makes the word THEOS like an adjective that “describes the nature of the word” rather than identify his person. This fact accounts for it that some translators render it: “And the Word was divine.” That is not the same as saying that the Word was God and was identical with God. One grammarian would translate the passage: “And the Word was deity,” to bring out his view that the word was not “all of God.” (Ibid. 54-57)

Is this the true position of the *Logos* that John intended? Is Jesus merely one of God’s “angels?” Here is a further explanation of what

Jesus is said to be by some of today's Gnostics.

Certainly the Word or *Logos*, whom God his Father used in bringing into existence all other creatures, was the chief or the firstborn among all the other angels...he is the only begotten son because he is the only one whom God himself created directly without the agency or cooperation of any other creature. (Ibid. 59)

No other mention of the liberal's views need to be made at this time, their view is quite clear. In this study of the *Logos* it is important to find out exactly who the WORD is. A look at some Greek scholars of the past and present will indeed clarify who the *Logos* is.

In commenting about the absence of the definite article Tasker says:

In the original, there is no definite article before God. The significance of this is that the Word does not by Himself make up the entire Godhead; nevertheless the divinity that belongs to the rest of the Godhead belongs also to Him. (45)

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest made this observation:

The definite article appears before "word." He is not merely a concept of God among many others, for the heathens have many concepts of God. He is THE concept of God, the only true one, the unique one. He was in existence when things started to come into being through the creative act of God. He existed before all created things. Therefore, He is uncreated, and therefore eternal in His being, and therefore God. (51)

Again one final explanation by the nationally recognized scholar, Augustus H. Strong:

In John 1:1 the absence of the article shows THEOS to be

the predicate (cf. 4:24 *pneuma ho theos*). This predicate precedes the verb by way of emphasis, to indicate the progress in the thought = ‘the **Logos** was not only with God, but was God.’ Only *ho Logos* can be the subject for in the whole introduction the question is not who God is, but who the **Logos** is. (305-6)

In discussing this text with Jehovah’s Witnesses and others, I apply what I call the “rule of 6, 12 and 18.” In verse 6, the text says that there came a man, “sent from God,” whose name was John. I ask: “who sent John the Baptist?” The answer always is, “Jehovah God did!” In verse 12 it reads that those who have received Jesus, “to them He gave the right to become children of God.” I ask, whose children do we become? The answer always is, “Children of Jehovah God!” In verse 18 it reads that “no man has seen God at any time.” I ask, “who is it that no one has seen?” The answer always is, “Jehovah God!” These answers are true to the Jehovah Witnesses view of these three verses. However, in their answers they have trapped themselves. In *none* of these verses does the definite article appear in the Greek text! To be consistent, they would have had to translate each of these as “a god.” Yet clearly this is not the meaning of these verses. The fact is, there is no need for the definite article to appear in the last clause of verse one. The text is, to all honest students, identifying Jesus as God.

Further explanations may be profitable to all, but the point is clear that the Greek supports the fact that Jesus is God, in whom “all the fullness of deity dwells” (Col. 2:9). John never intended to propose that the *Logos* was a created being given the position of God’s son. Jesus is capable of being “the Word” because he can comprehend God like no created being can (Matt. 11:27). He is indeed God. The expression, God, must be taken in its highest sense. The Gnostics just discussed will admit that the *Logos* is a deity, but in the lower sense of the word. When John says that the word was the creator of the world, it is equivalent to the assertion, that he was God in the highest possible sense. In whatever form or manner one may think of God, the notion of Creator is inseparable from the notion of Supreme Being. A Christian will argue from the



Creation to the Creator; and this very argument is one proof of the existence of God (Clarke 5:509-10). Since Jesus is the creator, it is a valid proof of His existence as being God.

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# The Messiah...The Son of God

*John 1:37-51*

*D. Gene West*

## **Introduction**

To say that the Book of John is radically different from the other three accounts of the life of Jesus is to make a gross understatement. The Book of Matthew begins with the genealogy and birth of Jesus; Mark with the work of John the Baptizer followed by the baptism and temptation of Jesus; Luke with the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptizer followed by the foretelling of the birth of Jesus, but John begins with Jesus in Heaven with the Father—with His being not only the Son of God, but GOD! John explained that Jesus—God became flesh and dwelt among us. However, for the mission of Jesus to be fully accomplished, it was altogether necessary that Jesus, in human form, be recognized by fellow humans as Messiah, the Anointed Son of the living God. F. W. Farrar in his introduction to the New Testament entitled *The Messages of the Books* put the matter rather beautifully when he wrote:

In almost every church you find, somewhere depicted, the four symbols of the Evangelists—the man or angel for St. Matthew; the lion of St. Mark; the calf of St. Luke; the eagle for St. John/ The man was chosen as the emblem of St. Matthew because he brings out Christ's kingly and human character; the lion for St. Mark, from the strength and energy of his delineation; the ox for St. Luke, because he indicates Christ's priestly and mediatorial office; the eagle for St. John, because "he soars to heaven above the clouds of human infirmity, and reveals to us the mysteries of the Godhead, and the felicities of Eternal Life, gazing on the light of immutable truth with a keen and steady ken. (1314)

The symbology created in medieval times to aid the illiterate in remembering some truths about the Christ can still serve as fresh

reminders to the common man regarding the person of whom these four men, by the Spirit's inspiration wrote. When it is said that the structure and language of the Gospel as the Spirit inspired John to write it is radically different, there is intended no hint that John's writing and that of the other "Evangelists" were in any way contradictory. John did not reflect on the truthfulness of what the others said. He merely began his presentation of Christ from a different point of view as did the other three men. The messages of these books are in no way contradictory; they all teach the same truths in different words "as the Spirit gave them utterance." John revealed things the others did not, such as the Lord's pre-human life as the Word with God and His being God in the beginning (John 1:1-5). John's presentation is not in any way biographical as is understood in modern times.

The recognition of the Messiah—the Son of God, was to come from the common people, ordinary folk, if you please, and few could be more common—ordinary than fishermen, farmers, and fig tree keepers. Kings, governors, and politicians, both secular and religious were not, with one possible exception, going to honor Jesus as Messiah, or the Son of God, or admit that He was an extraordinary man in any sense. However, the common people not only heard Him gladly (Mark 12:37), they followed Him gladly! It can be said that the first chapter of John is one of preeminently eyewitness testimony. Furthermore, it is testimony of the purest sort because it came from those who had no earthly gain to be made, but they did have spiritual loss to suffer. Hence, it is the goal of this presentation to show that the common people (not rude or uncouth, but ordinary hard-working and God-fearing people) were the first to apprehend and appreciate the truth that Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, was the Son of God—the Messiah, the Anointed of God to be the Savior of mankind in all ages. The Messiah rules as King over His spiritual Kingdom made up of saved souls who recognize Him as Savior, Son and Messiah—the very one spoken of by the Old Testament Prophets who guided the people to the One who brought the salvation from sin planned by God from the very beginning.

## *Jesus, Andrew, the Messiah*

John recorded the first recognition of Jesus as God's Messiah. The text reads as follows: "One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus" (John 1:41-42a). A few broad brush strokes to set the color of the background of this passage are both needed and appropriate.

A major player in the life of Jesus at this time was His cousin John the Baptizer. He declared Jesus, the day before the incidents of this passage, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John also spoke of evidence for Jesus' being the Messiah was the Spirit of God descending on Him when He was immersed by John to fulfill all righteousness. On the day John declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God two men who had previously been disciples of John heard Jesus speak, and upon hearing His words they were prepared to become disciples of our Lord, so they began following after Him. Jesus realized what they were doing and asked them what they were seeking and they replied they were seeking the place where He dwelt. Jesus took them to His dwelling place where they spent the rest of the day. One of the men involved in this short scene was Andrew, physical brother of Simon Peter, whose name Jesus later changed to Cephas, meaning "a stone." Within this milieu is found the events set forth in the above-quoted passage.

After hearing Jesus speak Andrew immediately excused himself for the purpose of seeking His brother Simon (vv. 40-41). Simon was soon found and Andrew, speaking of himself and the other disciple, said, "We have found the Messiah" (v.41). The first question to infiltrate the mind is: How did Andrew know the One he had heard speak, in whose presence he had spent some time was/is the Messiah? Is there evidence, since the Book of John is about evidence, for his making such an assertion? That the Messiah was coming was never doubted by any Jew who had studied the Old Testament Prophets, for they had spoken of Him and His coming for more than a thousand years. From the time of Moses to the time of the coming of Jesus the Jews read their prophets and knew He was to come. As a matter of fact, Paul speaking in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia,

declared that “the prophets were read every Sabbath,” obviously in the synagogues. Though the leading Jews in Jerusalem heard the reading of the Prophets every Sabbath, it made no difference to them for they crucified the Lord of Glory nonetheless. However, there can be no doubt that Andrew did not make the same error as his fellow-countrymen, for Jesus showed evidence of His Messiahship which Andrew quickly recognized and accepted.

### ***Evidences of the Messiahship of Jesus Andrew Would Have Known***

First, Andrew had heard the Harbinger of Jesus declare emphatically, twice, that he was not the Messiah (Christ) (John 1:20-21). When the Jews insisted on knowing just who John was he quoted Isaiah 40:3-5 which identified him as the forerunner of Jesus, the voice crying in the wilderness. John was not the Messiah, but he knew who was! When he had seen Him on the occasion of His baptism, John used a prophetic title for the Messiah when he said, “Behold the ***Lamb of God*** who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). John knew Jesus because he saw the Spirit descending on Him after His immersion. However, when he wanted the people to know that Jesus is the Messiah he used a prophetic title to declare that awesome truth. Andrew heard that statement for at that time he was a disciple of John. Therefore, when Andrew saw the Messiah, he immediately recognized Him as the One of Whom John the Immerser spoke. Knowing the Old Testament Prophets and hearing John use their very words to describe the Messiah was one reason Andrew immediately knew that Jesus, Son of Mary, was/is the Messiah!

Secondly, Andrew knew the history surrounding the life of the One he recognized as Messiah. Knowing that Jesus was/is the Messiah further involved the Prophets from Moses on down to John the Baptizer. Andrew knew these prophets and therefore knew where the Messiah was to be born and under what circumstances. He also knew that all that the Prophets had said regarding the birth of Jesus proved beyond doubt that Jesus is Messiah. No one else ever fulfilled those prophecies, though many in Palestine had claimed to be messiah prior to this time.

Furthermore, Andrew would have known the actions of Herod the Great in his effort to kill what he considered to be a rival king. He would have known of the flight into Egypt for the preservation of Messiah's life, His return to His homeland, settling in Nazareth, and developing into a carpenter like His earthly father Joseph. As Paul told Agrippa, "these things were not done in a corner"—there was nothing secret about anything of which the Prophets spoke regarding Jesus and Andrew, like everyone, else had ability to see (witness) the truth of the Prophets being fulfilled. J. C. Ryle made a powerful point in his *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel John Volume I* when he wrote concerning Andrew:

The extent of Andrew's religious knowledge ought not to be overlooked. Poor and humble in station as he was, he seems like all the Jews to have known what the Old Testament prophets had fore told about Messiah, and to have been prepared to hear of a person appearing in the character of Messiah. It is one of many expressions in the Gospels which show that the lower orders among the Jews were far better acquainted with the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures than the poor in our own day generally are with the letter of the New Testament, or indeed of any part of the Bible. (751)

Since Andrew, like so many of his time, belonged to that great throng of people who awaited the coming of the Messiah, we can be assured that he would have mental record of the Scriptures that spoke of the Messiah and would have used his reason to put the evidence he had gleaned from the Old Testament and the early life of Jesus together and was ready to declare as Messiah the One who fit the criteria.

In addition to this, John the Immerser knew Who it was for Whom he was forerunner; he knew the One on Whom the Spirit alighted was the Messiah. He witnessed that phenomenon and since Andrew was one of John's disciples he may have witnessed it also, or at the very least heard the testimony of John concerning his being eyewitness to the dove (Holy Spirit) coming on Jesus marking Him as Messiah. John's speaking of this event would have generated

faith in his disciples, including Andrew, that John had indeed seen the Messiah and immersed Him to fulfill all righteousness. So great is the accumulated evidence that those seeing it would have needed help *not* to have known Messiah when they saw Him. Again, all these evidences had been foretold in prophecy, even to the point of who John was and what he was doing to serve Jesus. John was the one who came in the “spirit and power” of the great and awesome prophet Elijah (Luke 1:17). Not only so, but according to the text Andrew had had opportunity to spend time with Jesus, listen to Him teach and that served to further convince him that he and the other disciple had found Messiah. This caused him to change his discipleship from the Harbinger of the Messiah to the Messiah! After Andrew spent time with Jesus where he was staying, he came away believing Jesus to be Messiah and did not hesitate to tell that to his brother Simon. Mark Johnson in his book, *Let's Study John*, summarized all these truths and more when he wrote:

The overwhelming impression made by Jesus upon those he first met is reflected in extraordinary array of titles accorded to this stranger from Galilee in the space of a handful of verses. He is the ‘Lamb of God’ (1:36), ‘Rabbi’ (1:38), ‘the Messiah’ (1:41), the One of whom Moses and the prophets had written (1:45), ‘Son of God’ and ‘King of Israel’ (1:49) and finally, ‘Son of Man’ (1:51). All these are epithets impregnated with Old Testament expectation of the coming Saviour whom God had promised. Even though the full meaning of Christ’s identity would not become clear for another eighteen months or so, at the time of Peter’s famous confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:18), these men became sufficiently aware of Jesus’ uniqueness to set him apart from any other religious leader they had ever encountered. (29)

Thirdly, Andrew would have known and could faithfully testify to his elder brother that Jesus is Messiah because of the open claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, not the least of which was that Jesus did not reprimand Andrew, or anyone else who referred to Him as the “Anointed of God.” The fact that Jesus permitted men to use



names and titles of divinity when speaking of Him, and to Him, certainly takes its place as testimony that Jesus was the One who is described in the Word of God as Messiah. As a matter of fact, Jesus described Himself by such names and titles. For example: In John 11:25 Jesus told Martha, sister of Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25). Again, in John 14:6 Jesus proclaimed, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Andrew had the right evidence; he used his powers of reasoning correctly and came to the correct conclusion! They had found Messiah! Andrew made this declaration with great certainty.

### ***Philip, Nathanael and the Son of God***

The day following Andrew’s declaration of his having found the Messiah; Jesus, desiring to go into His home province of Galilee, came across a man from Bethsaida named Philip. Our Lord was in the process of calling men to be His apostles, thus all who were called were Galileans. When Jesus met Philip, He said simply, according to John’s narration, “Follow Me,” and Philip immediately accepted our Lord’s invitation and became one of His disciples. As Andrew desired to have his brother Peter come to know Jesus as Messiah, so Philip had a friend or relative that he wanted to follow Jesus. Philip “found” Nathanael, The word “found” suggests Philip actively sought Nathanael, and when he found him he said: “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45).

In his invitation to Nathanael to join him in following Jesus, Philip presented some of the evidence as to why Nathanael should do so. First, they had found the one of Whom Moses spoke. Perhaps he had reference to the statement of Moses made in Deuteronomy 18:15 when Moses said, “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear. . .” (cf. Acts 3:22; 7:37). Most of the Jews of that day knew the Law of Moses and would have known immediately that this was a mosaic prophecy of the coming of the great Law Giver and Deliverer, Messiah and King Jesus of Nazareth—the Christ of God. However, Moses was not the only one to have spoken of the coming

of this heavenly Personage; the prophets of the Old Testament had also written extensively of Him. Jesus, Himself said that he had to fulfill all that had been written in the Law of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets concerning Him (Luke 24:44). Then to identify the Lord more carefully Philip said His name was/is “Jesus of Nazareth.” Then Philip identified the Messiah as being the “son of Joseph.”

This mark of identification causes the modern student who believes in the virgin birth of Jesus, to raise his eyebrows and wonder, for Joseph was not His father, but His earthly guardian, or foster father. However, that most of the people who lived where Joseph and Jesus lived and worked, would have supposed that Jesus was the son of Joseph. This would not be surprising. Perhaps many of them did not know of Joseph’s desire to quietly put Mary away when he learned that she was with child before they came together. Heaven explained this whole situation to Joseph, and knowing what can be known of his character there is no reason to believe that Joseph, or others made it a matter for “gossip.” Hence, no special explanations were made when Joseph was called the father of Jesus. It is certain that Philip meant no disrespect to the Messiah for He was the One of whom: a) the Law of Moses spoken; b) the inspired Prophets had written; c) His name was Jesus of Nazareth; d) He was thought to be the son of Joseph the Carpenter.

Judging from Nathanael’s reply, this mark of identification caused him to wonder if the One of Whom Philip spoke was the One of Whom Moses and the Prophets spoke and wrote. Nathanael’s blunt and rather caustic reply came in the form of a question, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (v. 46) Homer Hailey in his famous work *That You May Believe* remarked thusly:

Nathanael was not impressed. But when he came to meet Jesus and heard Him tell of his former activities, Nathanael was so stirred that he answered, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (1:49). The impression of these early disciples was that Jesus was the Messiah, of whom Moses and the prophets had written, the Son of God, the King of Israel. Their testimony does not prove that He was any one of these, but it does bear witness to the impression

Jesus made upon them. There is no evidence that any one of the group ever retracted the impressions or denied them. The impressions grew into assured conviction and remained through life. (89)

While it may be true that the testimony of these disciples is not absolute evidence that Jesus was Messiah, the One of Whom Moses and the Prophets wrote, the Son of God, it does provide a great deal of evidence that caused them to come to the correct impressions they held. Furthermore, they can lead those in the 21st century to have the same impressions, *i.e.* come to the same true conclusions as those First century people whose faith was developed on the solid evidence they saw and heard. For 21 centuries the same evidence has been bringing honest people to the same conclusion. Furthermore, it will continue to do so as long as time lasts.

It is appropriate that the evidence that convinced Nathanael be briefly explored. After Nathanael asked if anything good could come out of Nazareth, obviously meaning that the Messiah, the One of Whom Moses and the Prophets had written and spoken could not possibly come from Nazareth for the prophets had not prophesied of Nazareth as being the place from which the Messiah was to come and Nathanael no doubt knew that. Philip did not argue with him, but simply offered the challenging invitation, “Come and see” (v. 46). As Nathanael approached Jesus, the Lord paid him quite a compliment saying, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (v. 47). Somewhat stunned by what he heard, Nathanael replied, “How do You know me?” These two men had never seen one another; yet, Jesus seems to know very well the inward man of Nathanael. That is, by any stretch of the imagination, extraordinary—bordering on the miraculous, is it not? Jesus replied telling Nathanael that even before Philip called on him to come and see the One of Whom the Old Testament so richly testified; while he was taking his rest beneath a fig tree, perhaps refreshing himself with some of the fallen fruit, Jesus saw him! It is probable Nathanael was resting under a tree that could not be seen from the vantage point of Jesus, but since Jesus spoke of Nathanael’s inward nature, it is much more likely that Jesus meant that He knew who Nathanael was by supernatural insight.

As Henry W. Clark in the *Westminster New Testament Gospel of St. John* put it:

That Christ's knowledge of Nathanael was due to special supernatural insight, and not by any previous acquaintance, is evident. "I saw thee" refers, clearly, not to literal sight, but to knowledge otherwise obtained. Nathanael himself takes it so, as shown in the impression made upon him by Christ's words; and Jesus (v.50) accepts Nathanael's interpretation. (48)

Regarding the exchange between Jesus and Nathanael A. W. Pink in the first volume of his work on John remarked:

"Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (1:48). How this incident evidences the Deity of Christ! It displayed His *omniscience*. Christ saw Nathanael, and read his heart *before* he came to Him. (831)

There are some particularly interesting and informative words used in this little quote. "Christ saw Nathanael, and ***read his heart***, before he came to Him" (83 emp. added). Jesus looked into this man's soul before they ever spoke a word. What more would be needed to convince any thinking person that Jesus was who Nathanael confessed Him to be—the Son of God—the King of Israel?

At this point, Nathanael made a confession of Christ as the ***Son of God*** that is similar to that made by Peter when in Matthew 16:16 he declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." In a double exclamation Nathanael declared, "You are the Son of God!" You are the King of Israel!" God promised in prophecy found in Psalm 2:6-7 that Jesus would be both King of Israel and Son of God. The Psalmist wrote: "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You" (Psalm 2:6-7). This Psalm evidently had great significance to Nathanael, for he simply rearranged the

words to declare that Jesus was/is God’s Anointed One—God’s Son, God’s King of His Israel. F. F. Bruce, in his commentary on the Gospel and Epistles of John wrote appropriately:

Whatever doubts Nathanael may have had vanished instantaneously. The one who manifested such intimate knowledge of his movements and thoughts was certainly the one to whom the ancient scriptures pointed forward. He addresses Jesus by the courtesy title Rabbi (‘Teacher’), but proceeds to give him far loftier designations than that. In effect he acclaims him as Messiah, using two messianic titles conjoined in the second psalm where God says to the anointed King of Israel, enthroned on the holy hill of Zion, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you’ (Ps. 2:6f). To the Evangelist as he wrote, ‘the Son of God’ had a much greater depth of meaning than this. (61)

After Jesus confessed Nathanael as a true Israelite with no deceit in his life, Nathanael confessed our Lord as: “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; you are King of Israel.”

Like Andrew, Nathanael read the testimony of the Old Testament Prophets and knew what the telling marks of the Messiah—the Son of God would be. Nathanael knew that among other things to be done by the Son of God were the miracles He would perform. He also knew that the Old Testament Prophets had referred to the Messiah as King of Israel on a multitude of occasions. When Jesus performed a miniscule miracle (if there is such a thing) by telling Nathanael what kind of man he was—i.e. a true Israelite in whom there was no guile or deceit, very different from his fore-father Jacob, father of the twelve princes who were the head-waters of the nation of Israel (*cf.* Gen. 27). No such subterfuge was found in the heart of Nathanael and he was amazed when he saw Jesus had read his heart as he approached our Lord. Nathanael was an honest man, one who would not stoop to engage in the kind of deception Jacob did at the insistence of his mother.

Hence, Jesus is recognized and acknowledged by two common men—not kings, prime ministers or judges, but two “everyday

fellows” who knew the Messiah when they saw Him.

## Conclusion

The narratives of these two men, by being preserved in the pages of Inspiration, come down to the modern man so that he may be able to recognize Jesus as the Son of God the Messiah and seek Him out through a study of His word and find Him to be the authentic One in whom he can believe as Messiah, Son of God and Savior to all who will come to Him by faith. This is the purpose for which He was sent into this sin-encrusted world. On the day of His resurrection from the dead, an event that has been authenticated by so many witnesses that people in whom no deceit is found may recognize Him as the Son of God, with all that entails. Thank God that He saw fit to preserve these narrations of Andrew and Nathanael so modern men might read them and believe in Jesus as Christ just as these men did in ancient times.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Brother West is a native of West Virginia and has spent most of his preaching career of sixty-two years preaching in the Ohio Valley, seldom more than one hundred miles from his home in Chester, WV. Fifty-seven years ago he married Shirley Ann Bissett. They are the parents of three children, Kandi Davis, Mary Amy Kessinger and Todd C. West. They have seven grandchildren ranging in age from twenty-five years to five years.

Brother West has served as preacher for the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ for a total of eighteen years with a hiatus between. He has taught in the West Virginia School of Preaching since its beginning in 1994. For several years he taught English Grammar, *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah-Lamentations*, *Acts*, *Romans*, *Galations*, *Philippians*, *Philemon*, *Hebrews* and *Revelation*. He has written commentaries on all the New Testament Books, three of which are in publication and the others are soon to be, God willing. Due to health issues he has had to reduce his teaching load to three books, *Ezekiel*, *Acts* and *Revelation*. With improving health perhaps God will allow him to teach more in the not-too-distant future.

May God bless you as you read these lectures—may they be as manna for your soul.





# Worship and a Samaritan Woman

*John 4:1-42*

*Joshua Ball*

The world is filled with talented, able people. There are people who are able to earn gold medals, earn Nobel prizes in science or literature, and those who are able to create beautiful works of art, to name just a few. Subtlety, however, is a talent that often goes overlooked. Jesus Christ, during his earthly ministry, showed many great abilities: His capacity for faith in the Father, His countless miracles, His deep patience, and many other wonderful things. One of the greatest abilities He possessed was the brilliant subtlety He used in guiding people to the truth through everyday conversation. An excellent example of this brilliance in conversation can be found in John 4:7-26 where Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman at the well.

The conversation between Christ and the woman at the well is unquestionably unique. It is not unique in being a private conversation, for Jesus also spoke privately with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). This dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is unique because of the great cultural divide between the two, and the excellent way in which Jesus guided the woman to the knowledge of Him being the Christ.

This study is a straightforward examination and reflection upon the way in which Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman. After a short introductory section considering the brilliance behind Jesus' method of communication, the individual techniques that Jesus used will be addressed. After each section discussing Jesus' techniques, I have included application for Christians to use today.

## **Understanding the Brilliance of Christ's Conversation**

Before the conversation is examined in detail, it is important to understand two (of many) general principals behind the brilliance of Jesus' communication with the Samaritan woman. First, consider that a great communicator is capable of effectively teaching regardless

of the size of his audience. A great number of people are fearful of speaking in front of large crowds, but can speak decently in front of a small group. On the other hand, there are some who thrive in front of large crowds, yet are uncomfortable with small, intimate discussions. For example, it isn't difficult to think of a preacher or two who are able to deliver powerful, eloquently spoken sermons, yet come off flatly when spoken with personally.

Jesus was one of the few, golden ministers who could communicate confidently and effectively with one-on-one conversations as well as speaking publically with large crowds. Jesus delivered the unrivaled Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, convincing many of the truth of God, but He also privately conversed with the woman at the well in John 4. Both situations required different types of talent and skill, and Christ was able to succeed at both. He was fearless in front of great crowds, but still sharply navigated small group discussions.

Second, and closely related to the first point, consider that it is a very different skill to hold a private conversation compared to delivering a lecture or monologue. At first, this may seem to be the same as the first point, but there is a subtle difference: one does not need a large crowd in order to deliver a monologue: people monopolize conversations all the time. Jesus did not monopolize any conversation. He was able to share dialogue, even when leading the discussion.

People monopolize conversations for many different reasons. Some people are so self-absorbed that they don't even think about the person with whom they are speaking. Other people are legitimately clueless about how to carry on a proper conversation. Many times people monopolize conversations out of fear. For example, if a speaker is unsure about what they are discussing, the very thought of someone asking a question they cannot answer can cripple them. As a result, the speaker never allows the people they are speaking with the opportunity to interject or volley ideas, and the result is a one sided conversation. Regardless of the reasoning, "speaking at" people rather than "speaking with" them alienates souls, and is a social faux pas that we as Christians must avoid at all costs.

Once again, Jesus never monopolized conversations. There is no question that he often led and directed conversations, but he never

hijacked one and prevented the other person or people from inputting their questions and comments. As will be seen in this study, Jesus allowed the woman to redirect the conversation as was appropriate, and He was able to use her redirection to teach her greater truths than she would have learned otherwise. Jesus shared this moment with the woman at the well, and because of his humility in doing so, the woman became much more emotionally invested in His message.

With both of these facts considered, it is evident that Jesus was a tremendous personal evangelist as well as a public preacher. Now, looking at the conversation in detail, it will become clear to us that Jesus subtly and artfully interacted with this woman in ways far beyond the capacity of a mere man. Jesus' brilliance in teaching is a solid testimony to His divinity.

### **The Brilliance of Christ's Conversation**

#### ***Jesus Boldly Overcame Tremendous Social Boundaries to Speak with the Woman (John 4:7)***

The conversation between Christ and the Samaritan woman took place next to a well in Sychar, in the land of Samaria (John 4:5-6). Jesus' disciples had gone to town to find food for the group (John 4:8), but Christ was weary and thirsty, and sat down next to Jacob's well, likely for rest (John 4:6). When Jesus had sat down, the woman, whose name is not recorded, came to draw water from the well.

In John 4:7, Jesus began the conversation when he asked, "Give Me a drink." [All Scripture references are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.] This was a simple request. Nothing about Jesus asking this woman for water would seem offensive to anyone in this day and age, but for the culture in which Jesus lived, this was nothing short of scandalous. In verse 9 it is explained, "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." The nations simply did not associate with one another. Jesus' shocking question led the woman to understandably ask, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" There were at least three social boundaries which Jesus ignored in order to approach this woman, only two of which were immediately noticeable to the woman.

First, Jesus was a Jew, asking a favor from a Samaritan. It is

beyond the scope of this study to look at all of the reasons why the Jews and Samaritans were at odds with one another, but suffice to say, they did not care for one another. The Samaritans did not worship God properly (John 4:22), and they were not of pure blood, making them regarded as unclean heathens to the Jews. It would be a strange thing indeed for a Jewish man to ask an allegedly unclean Samaritan woman for a drink. On John's explanation in verse 9 that, "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans," Frank Pack writes,

The [Greek verb] translated here 'have dealings' with Samaritans probably means 'use vessels in common,' since Jews regarded Samaritan women as ceremonially unclean. This seems more logical since to have no dealings with Samaritans would actually be contradicted by the fact that the disciples had gone away into the neighboring town to buy food. The Samaritan woman knew that Jews would not use the utensils that she used, and this added to her surprise. (72)

Jesus, however, did not subject Himself to the traditions made by man, and clearly did not find it wrong to drink from the Samaritan's utensils. If receiving a drink from the woman was not a sin, certainly speaking with her was not either. Jesus was a Jew, but His love and care had no geopolitical borders.

Second, Jesus was a man, speaking with a woman. Even though God regards men and women as equal (Gal. 3:23), throughout history woman have wrongly been dismissed as inferior. There is no question that God has called for different roles for men and women in the church and in the family (1 Tim. 2:8-15), but both are still equal in God's eyes. All throughout the Bible it is seen that God used women to boldly carry out His purposes. Deborah in Judges 4 and 5, Anna the prophetess in Luke 2:36-38 and Mary, the mother of Jesus are but a few examples. Despite the great capable women recorded in the Old Testament and the mighty women that lived during Christ's time, there was still a prejudice against women's capacity to understand spiritual things. Jesus, as the Son of God, did not, and does not hold this view.

Besides the prevalent myth of female inferiority was the fear

of public misconceptions that made it a taboo for men to speak with women. Even today, some men fear speaking with women lest someone, “get the wrong idea.” The “wrong idea,” of course, is that others will assume there is a sexual purpose behind a man speaking with a woman who is not his wife. Jesus had no sexual intentions in conversing with this woman, and did not allow such an absurd notion to stop him from approaching her. Jesus had a mission to share the truth with the woman, and no worldly fears would stop him.

Third, what the disciples no doubt found bewildering when they later returned from their trip to town in verse 27, regards spiritual purity: Jesus was holy, and He was speaking with a sinner. This false idea that Jesus could not associate with sinners reared its ugly head other times in Scripture as well (Mark 2:16; Luke 7:39). Even if someone did not believe in the deity of Christ, they at least understood that Jesus claimed to be from God, and people found it incredibly difficult to understand how a holy Man could associate with a lowly sinner.

Without doubt, the woman with whom Jesus conversed was a sinner. In John 4:17-18 it is revealed that the woman had five husbands in her past, and was currently with a man with whom she was not married. Even though the details of this woman’s marriage history are never explained, it is contextually clear to see that her circumstances with men were sinful. This was not a pure woman without blemish, but a woman with the deep sinful stains of adultery.

Regardless of the sins in this woman’s life, Jesus spoke with her anyway. In fact, it was because of this woman’s sins that Jesus cared in the first place, a principle seen in Mark 2:16, where Jesus said, “I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Jesus ever cares for those burdened by sin and he showed his deep love by approaching this troubled woman. David Lipscomb rightly stated, “The pains and patience of Jesus to reach this woman with the stains on her character ought to be an assurance to his followers that such are open to salvation and frequently the first to be reached” (64).

Today, there are many Christians who fail to do their spiritual duty of spreading the Gospel because of social boundaries. While many of the customs of Christ’s day do not apply to our present

culture, there are still numerous cultural trends which keep us from acting as we ought. For some, the evil of racial prejudice prevent them from speaking with God’s children of a different color. Others fear that by speaking with non-Christians or denominationalists, they will be seen by others as not being as “pure” with their associations. Regardless of any reason, cultural taboos are merely excuses, for Jesus showed in this account that there are no cultural norms, stereotypes, or customs which are powerful enough to prevent Christians from reaching out to the lost.

### ***Jesus Found Common Ground With the Woman (John 4:7-9)***

Overcoming social stigmas is no easy task, especially when the other person is aware of the stigmas as well. Deciding to ignore social taboos is the first step. The second step is to figure out a way to initiate the conversation. How can someone broach a conversation with someone with whom they have little to nothing in common? Jesus solved this problem by finding something they did have in common: thirst.

Jesus had been traveling with His disciples from Judea to Galilee, and would likely have been tired from his journey (John 4:3-4). At the end of verse 6, it says that the time was, “about the sixth hour,” which in Jewish time was noon. F. F. Bruce notes that this would be, “...a natural time of day for a weary traveler to seek rest and refreshment” (102). It was at this very time that the woman came to draw water (John 4:6).

Regardless of how diametrically different these two people were, both needed water. James Burton Coffman accurately described the significance of this interaction when he wrote,

These are multiple contrasts of race, sex, religion, moral status, marital status, social position, ability, wisdom etc. [between Christ and the woman. These] must be accounted [as] the most dramatic and significant of any that occurred in our Lord’s ministry. Yet, Jesus and that woman had one thing in common; both wanted a drink of water. Unerringly, Jesus saw the common ground between them and did not hesitate to stand with her

upon that common platform of their mutual need. (121)

No matter the amount of differences between two people, there is always a common ground that can be found. All people require food, water, shelter, and security. It is no wonder that Jesus felt compassion on those who were without food in John 6 and Mark 8, when he fed the five-thousand and four-thousand respectively. It is no wonder that Christ explains in Matthew 25:35-46 that an essential element of salvation is feeding the hungry and giving water to the thirsty. Christ Himself understood the pain of hunger and thirst and wished for no man to suffer the same. The common hunger and thirst between us and the lost should fuel our motivation to provide for them as we can.

By asking for water, Jesus bridged that great cultural gulf between the two of them, opening a door of goodwill. It is curious, however, that initially Jesus did not offer water, but asked for it instead. Brother Guy N. Woods writes, “By this simple request, Jesus opened the way for conversation. By asking a favor, he made it possible for one to be granted. In so doing, he demonstrated that one of the best ways to obtain another’s good will is not at first to *give* the blessing, but to *receive* one!” (78).

This request of Jesus seems counter-intuitive at first, but at a closer inspection reveals great wisdom. There is no question that all people, even the lost, have an internal moral compass. People may allow their consciences to be seared (1 Tim. 4:2), but for most healthy people, they have a distinct sense of right and wrong. This Samaritan woman came across a tired Man who needed water, just as she did. She had the ability and the utensils to help Him, whereas He (from a human standpoint) did not have what was needed to drink. Jesus was tapping into this woman’s sense of compassion, to look past the differences that separated them, and to start her mind on a topic of godliness.

One of the great methods that we Christians can use to reach out to the lost is to follow a similar path as Christ and ask others for help. People who are asked to help become that much more emotionally invested in the relationship or conversation. This technique can be abused of course, and it is prudent to remember

that Jesus immediately offered something in return for the woman's generosity: living water (John 4:10). Christians likewise should offer everything they can in return for the aid of others, specifically they should share the message of Jesus Christ.

Another important aspect of Jesus' brilliance in finding common ground with the woman at the well was His environmental awareness. Jesus was always aware of the environment around Him, from the people involved to the items and events in focus nearby. In Luke 22:19-20, Jesus used the bread and fruit of the vine which were standard emblems in the Passover feast to liken them to His body and blood. In Matthew 24:32, Jesus used a fig tree to teach about the signs of the destruction of Jerusalem. The use of water in John 4 is merely coincidental: yes, He needed water, but He would have been able to use something else if the circumstances were different. Jesus' ability to incorporate environmental factors into His teaching and conversations is simply unparalleled.

Jesus was not alone in using this skill, although He was unquestionably the best at it. Phillip the evangelist used his environmental awareness with the Ethiopian eunuch. When he approached the chariot in which the eunuch was traveling, Phillip noticed that the man was reading from the book of Isaiah. In Acts 8:35, Luke records, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him." Philip did not try to introduce something new and different to the man, but used what the man was already studying in order to bring him to the truth of Christ. Paul, likewise in Acts 17:22-23 used environmental awareness when he approached the philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens. Paul declared to the men that he took note of their deeply religious nature, seeing statues for gods all throughout the city. Paul referenced an altar he found that was dedicated, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." Paul then said in verse 23, "Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you." Paul was then able to beautifully introduce the message of the one true God with ease.

Today, Christians should likewise be aware of their environment in order to use any opportunity to teach others about Christ. Better yet, we should place ourselves in locations where we can more easily find common ground with others. There are numerous outreach



opportunities that we can attempt if we stop and look at the common needs of those who surround us. Tax preparation help, marriage counselling, and grief support are but a few programs that cater to the needs of large amounts of people. Likewise, soup kitchens and clothing giveaways are commonly used to care for the needy. We should stop and reflect upon our own needs so that we may be more aware of the needs of the underprivileged. We should care for people and offer help out of the love and sincerity of our hearts, but always remember that the ultimate gift to give is the message of Jesus Christ.

### ***Jesus Delicately Pushed the Conversation from the Physical to the Spiritual (John 4:9-14)***

Once Jesus asked the woman for a drink of water, she immediately showed her amazement. In John 4:9, the woman asked, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” Jesus answered in verse 10, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

The initial reaction of the woman was understandably zeroed in on the cultural division between Him and her. Jesus, ever the master teacher, was able to subtly redirect her question to something greater. The woman’s question centered on the cultural identity of Jesus and herself: He was a Jew, she was a Samaritan. Consider the way in which Jesus took the principle of cultural identity and was able to redirect it to His own spiritual identity: “If you knew... you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” While He did not overtly declare his deity, He did describe the power that only God could have, that is, being able to give living water.

Jesus could have bluntly answered her question, but He chose not to. All He would have had to say to answer the woman was, “Yes, I am a Jew asking for water.” However, if Jesus entertained the question in this way, He would have lost the wonderful opportunity to show her the answer rather than just telling her. Once the woman understood that Jesus was all-loving and divine, it would make complete sense to her why it was acceptable for Him to ask for water.

Jesus further redirected the woman's misunderstandings in order to state the true foundation of His message. The woman asked in verses 11 and 12, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" The woman noted what Jesus had said, but she did not understand His meaning. She did not understand what, "living water," was or how to get it, but she did recognize the sound of its greatness. If this Man claimed to be able to produce this fantastical water, He must be claiming to be greater than Jacob, the maker of the well at which they were sitting. She understandably asked if He truly claimed to be greater than Jacob.

Jesus replied in verses 13 and 14, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." David Lipscomb writes, "Jesus again tries to direct her mind away from this material water to the water of spiritual life" (59). The woman had still not understood what Jesus was saying.

Once again, Jesus did not directly answer the woman's question, and instead took her statement and question and redirected them subtly. He could have simply said, "I am not talking about physical water, but eternal life," and, "Yes, I am greater than Jacob," and finished the conversation there. Yet, as before, if Jesus answered in such a way, the conversation would have ended before it could truly begin. Instead of saying, "I am talking about spiritual water: eternal life," Christ described it: The relief from physical water is temporary; the relief from living water (i.e. eternal life) is permanent. Instead of saying, "Yes, I am greater than Jacob," Jesus described His power: Christ named Himself as the giver of the spiritual water, something Jacob could never do.

After addressing the input of the Samaritan woman, Christ took the conversation to another level with a bold claim, that those who drink of the living water from Him would have everlasting life. Not only was He greater than Jacob in that He could provide living water, but the living water could grant eternal life. It was clear that Jesus

wanted to communicate to this woman that He was no ordinary Man.

For Christians today, this ability to subtly redirect conversations is needed no less now than it was then. There are countless misconceptions against the Lords' church today. Many initial Bible studies with non-Christians center on correcting false ideas that they have on baptism, grace and works. Other times, non-Christians come into a study with an angry bias, wishing to just discuss hot-button issues like homosexuality and abortion instead of Jesus.

While it is good and right to address topics such as these, it is not always wise to begin with them. Hebrews 5:12 notes, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." Also in Hebrews 6:1, the author writes, "Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection...." Through these passages, it is evident that there are some Biblical topics which are more foundational than others. It may be unwise to begin a Bible study about homosexuality with someone when they have no comprehension of God's love and justice first. It is pointless to begin a Bible study on baptism with someone who does not believe in the existence of God or the deity of Christ. During these situations, it is wise to follow the lead of Christ and gently guide the non-Christian to bigger, more foundational matters of faith first. Once they learn the basics of who God is and how He works, then the, "hot-button topics," will no longer be a significant problem.

### ***Jesus Was Brave Enough to Make the Conversation Personal (John 4:15-18)***

In verse 15, the woman appropriately answered Jesus' exultation of the living water by saying "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Whether the woman answered in jest (lighthearted or otherwise) or seriously, the text does not reveal. In any case, the woman recognized that Jesus was making a very serious and bold claim. Instead of answering the woman's plea, Jesus decided to try something different and take the conversation to a personal level. He said rhetorically in verse 16, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

The woman responded in verse 17a that she had no husband. Jesus, knowing this already, replied in verse 17b, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.” Jesus did not accidentally stumble into a personal detail, but walked in fully knowing the reality of the situation.

David Lipscomb finds interest in this sudden change of direction with Jesus. Lipscomb writes, “He has failed to reach her spiritual nature by the figure of the living water so he seeks to reach her in a different way. He knew her condition and character and opened a way to impress her with his divine knowledge by telling the plain facts of her life. He suited his instruction to her capacities” (59). Whether the woman truly failed to show legitimate interest in Jesus’ figure is a matter of debate, but in any case, Jesus found it necessary to change the direction of His approach. If the woman was skeptical, she would soon be no longer, and if she was legitimately curious, her curiosity would soon deepen even greater.

There are at least three purposes that Jesus was able to accomplish in addressing the Samaritan woman’s personal life. First, it allowed the woman to see that Christ was divine. Jesus had unquestioningly described His power in words up to this point in the conversation, but He had not yet revealed any of that power. In explaining the woman’s marital background, He demonstrated a power which could not be possessed by anyone other than someone blessed by God. Granted, demons had the ability to know and speak truths (Acts 16:16-17; Luke 4:40-41), but it was evident that this Man had no demon. Based upon His comments about the, “gift of God,” His assurance of everlasting life, and His miraculous knowledge, the woman deduced that He was a prophet (John 4:19). She was correct, but she still did not see the full picture of His deity yet.

Second, Christ’s calling attention to the woman’s personal affairs succeeded in bringing the woman’s sins to the light, engaging her in the conversation to a much greater degree. Even though Jesus was leading the conversation, He was not the only person involved. Perhaps if Jesus never made note of the woman’s history she would have never been as emotionally engaged in the conversation as she would otherwise. By bringing up intimate details, the woman would

be shocked into paying much closer attention. This strategy of Jesus worked very well, for in John 4:29, the woman exclaimed to those in town, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did.” Jesus did not tell her everything she ever did, but He did surprise her enough that, to her, He might as well have done so.

Third, Christ’s miraculous foreknowledge subtly showed the woman that spiritual truths are important not only on an intellectual level, but on a deeply personal level as well. In verse 14, Jesus spoke that those who drank the living water would have, “in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” The phrase, “in him,” carries much weight. The blessings of Christ demand an inner commitment and pursuit to, “Flee... youthful lusts” and to “... pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). Nobody can receive Christ’s blessings by merely acknowledging that He offers them: they must allow Christ’s gift to transform their entire inner being through obedience. The sins of the woman would forever prevent that gift to take root unless she could repent and turn away from such evil.

Clearly, this miraculous technique that Jesus used in revealing the history of the woman is not a skill that can be used by us today when evangelizing. Miraculous foreknowledge is no longer possible, and even if it was, it would be impossible to imitate what Jesus so perfectly accomplished. This is an ability which must simply be admired from afar.

Just because this miraculous technique is impossible today does not mean that there are not viable principles behind it which can still be used. While it is foolish to haphazardly pry into the intimate details of a person’s life who is studying the Gospel, there is a potential blessing in tactfully asking about certain details. It is not automatically inappropriate to ask a person about their life, family or history, and in fact, in the right circumstances it may be generously welcomed. By both sharing and asking appropriate personal information, Christians are able to bring a spiritual discussion to a more personal level, where the Gospel can work the greatest. What sort of questions are appropriate to ask depends on the individuals in the conversation, how long they have known each other, and what kind of rapport they have with one another. In all ways, we must make absolutely sure that

we show honor and dignity to anyone with whom we are studying.

***Jesus Allowed the Woman to Change the Topic away from Something She Was Not Willing to Discuss (John 4:19-24)***

In verses 17 and 18 of John 4, Jesus names the shameful sins that the woman has committed. While this was very bold and appropriate for Jesus to address, the woman was not prepared to go into any more intimate details. While Jesus was the one who had been subtly redirecting the conversation thus far, in verses 19 and 20, the woman was then the one to take the conversation in a different direction. In verse 19, she states, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet...” She recognized the miraculous ability Christ had demonstrated, and then used that as an excuse to change the subject. In verse 20 she stated, “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

On this redirection, Frank Pack writes, “It is possible that she genuinely wanted to know the answer, and feeling that she was in the presence of a true prophet she might get a proper answer. However, it seems much more likely that she wished to take his attention off her own personal sins, so she changed the subject abruptly” (75). Whether her motivation for the question was embarrassment or legitimate curiosity, it matters not, for Jesus sincerely accepted the question and sought to answer it. Note that even if the woman was embarrassed, Christ did not do wrong in addressing the woman’s sins. If He had not revealed His powers in such a way, the woman would not have had the opportunity to ask the question in the first place.

It is vital for ministers and evangelists to recognize appropriate boundaries when speaking with others. Just as it was not inappropriate for Christ to address harsh spiritual truths (e.g. Matt. 7:22-23; 26:34; John 4:17, 18; Acts 9:4, 5) it is not inappropriate for evangelists to do so today. However, there is a time and a place for all things. Jesus did not harp on the Samaritan woman about her sins when she showed discomfort: neither should we. As with all things, prudence is needed to evaluate what is appropriate and what is not, but as a general rule, pestering someone about their sins is a surefire way for them to lose all interest in conversation.

It is one thing if a person is in denial about their sins and shows no interest in any spiritual discussion at all. With individuals like that, it is useless to converse with them at all. For them it would be casting pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). However, if the person still has a spiritual curiosity in a different area, it is completely appropriate to address the topic in which they are interested. Even if it is a diversion, wonderful questions are still wonderful questions. Jesus Christ showed the appropriateness of this action.

### ***Jesus Excellently Answered the Woman's Question (John 4:19-24)***

Once the woman recognized that Jesus had prophetic abilities, she asked a simple, but important question in the form of a statement. She stated in verse 20, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." This statement served as a question: "Where is the right place to worship God?" In verses 21-24, Jesus responded, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Much could be said about the doctrine Jesus preached in these short three verses. Countless sermons have been written and delivered over the last two-thousand years on how to worship God in spirit and truth. Without a doubt, this teaching is absolutely vital for Christians to appropriately approach and worship God. For the purposes of this study, the details of Christ's teachings will not be considered, but only the fact that Christ answered the woman.

In order to properly answer the Samaritan woman's question, Jesus had to do at least three things. First, Jesus took into account the woman's background and worldview. This Samaritan, as a woman, was not as religiously educated as others such as Nicodemus (John 3:1-21). It would not serve any purpose for Jesus to answer the woman with technical jargon or lofty explanations.

As a general principle, Jesus rarely if ever spoke with any



complicated terminology. There is no doubt that Jesus' teachings were challenging and hard to understand (e.g. Jesus' insistence on being the Bread of Life in John 6), but it was never difficult because of an explanation using technical knowledge. Note that just because Jesus' teachings were not difficult with technical details, not all Christian teachings are as easy to understand, as even Peter had difficulty with the inspired teachings of Paul (2 Pet. 3:15-16). The Spirit has taught us as is appropriate, but for us, we should always seek to make things as simple and understandable as possible.

Second, Jesus answered honestly and succinctly. Even though Christ did not use heavy terminology, He didn't insult the woman's intelligence either. Christ first let the woman know that in a short time that neither the mountain nor Jerusalem would be the place of worship for God. However, the truth of the matter was the Samaritans were worshiping God in the wrong location and in the wrong manner. Jesus clearly told her this truth: "You worship what you do not know." Even though this was likely a hurtful fact for the woman to hear, it was important that she know the truth. The Jews were the people selected by God, and they were the ones who were worshiping in the correct location.

Thirdly, Jesus corrected the woman's misunderstandings and put forth the foundational truth she was missing. Underlying the woman's question was a misunderstanding that the method of worship by the Jews and Samaritans would continue forever. There was no way for her to independently know that Jesus had come to abolish the old worship system; she did not even fully understand who Jesus was yet. Jesus told her that the time had come when worship would be done in spirit, that is, from the heart, independent of geographical location. He also stated that God's worship would be done in truth, that is, accurately and honorably according to God's wishes.

Jesus' consideration of the woman's question is a model to all who wish to proclaim the Gospel message today. Certainly we teachers have all failed one time or another to teach with the techniques used here by Christ, by not considering our audience, not being honest and succinct with them, or not correcting any of their misconceptions. It is not uncommon to talk with someone who is unsatisfied with the answer they received from a preacher



or Bible teacher regarding their spiritual questions. Sometimes these individuals complain, “Oh, so-and-so didn’t really give me a good answer,” or, “So-and-so just got angry and never really answered my question.” As Christian teachers, it is absolutely essential that we be patient and understanding with all those who are studying the Word. Consider the subtle techniques of Jesus and many of our problems will be solved before they even begin.

### ***Jesus Confessed That He Was the Christ (John 4:25-26)***

The woman, aware that Jesus was telling her of the great change in the method of worship, rightly associated that change with the Messiah: “When He comes, He will tell us all things” (John 4:25). Everything that Jesus had done to that point had led the woman to the correct conclusion, and yet He never once had to actively state His identity. In John 5:30-47, Jesus mentions five different witnesses to His divine identity: His own self, John the Baptist, His works, the Father, and the Scriptures. The Samaritan woman only had a few minutes to converse with Jesus, but in even that short time she was able to associate Jesus with the Messiah, reasoning from His words, His miraculous foreknowledge, and her own understanding of Scripture. Whether she was fully aware that He was the prophesied Christ at that moment is unknown, but her association of the two was brilliant. Jesus Christ, in such a short period of time, was able to bring a woman from thinking about petty cultural taboos and water to wondering about the Messiah.

Jesus did not hide the truth, but solidly declared that great confession in response to her, “I who speak to you am *He*” (John 4:26b). Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the One who would tell the world all things. Jesus is the One who would know the proper place and method to worship the Father. Jesus is the One who would miraculously know the inner details of this woman’s life. Jesus is the One who would give eternal life to those who drank of Him. Jesus is the One who asked this woman for a simple drink of water. Christ did not hide this truth from her, but spoke it boldly and clearly.

Immediately after the confession of Jesus, the disciples returned from town, and the woman left her waterpot to tell the men of the city of the wonder and amazement of Jesus Christ (John 4:27-29).

The woman exclaimed, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” In verse 42, after the whole town had a chance to get to know Christ, they told the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

Jesus is the Christ. He confessed it, and we all today have the wonderful privilege to confess it as well. It is the confession that can save our very souls (Rom. 10:9). By sharing this confession daily, telling others of this great truth, perhaps those who listen to us may one day be curious and come to learn of Him also. We pray that everyone who hears our confession may one day say, just like the men of Sychar, “we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

## Conclusion

Jesus was and is the Master Teacher. His ability to evangelize on a personal level is beyond compare, and all of us today can only hope to emulate Him with a fraction of His skill. We are blessed that the Holy Spirit found it important to record this wonderful conversation between our Lord and a humble Samaritan woman. It is a message of hope that no matter the person, no matter the culture, no matter the sins they might have, all can come to the knowledge and belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Joshua Ball was born in Ronceverte, West Virginia in 1985. He is a third generation evangelist, the son of Keith Ball and the grandson of Charles Cole, both stalwart Gospel ministers. Joshua graduated from Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee in 2007, and later the West Virginia School of Preaching in 2013. He comes from Columbus, Ohio, where he is currently the campus minister for the Fishinger and Kenny church of Christ, ministering to the students at the Ohio State University.



# The Light of the World

*John 1:4-9; 3:16-21; 8:12-30; 12:44-50*

*Ryan Currey*

I want to begin by thanking the elders of the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ and the West Virginia School of Preaching for inviting me to be part of this wonderful lectureship. The topic that I have been assigned to cover is “The Light of the World.” It is a theme, as most Bible topics, that is such a simple topic, yet deep enough that it cannot be truly covered with just one lecture.

Technology has come so far. In fact, it is amazing when you watch how fast technology grows. Most of us take for granted what is before us. We often take for granted that which we have had for a long period of time. Something we often overlook is the electric lighting that we all have. We take it for granted until we no longer have it at our disposal. When the power goes out and we are in the dark, it is then that we realize how much we depend upon it. Another light we take for granted is the Light, Jesus Christ. This Light changed the world forever. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12). I truly believe that people treat Jesus like they do their electrical lighting. They take Him for granted until they no longer have Him as part of their lives. When tragedy strikes in their lives, it is then that they realize just how much they relied upon Him. John 8:12 will be a key verse in our lecture. Brother Wayne Jackson stated the following:

When the Israelites departed from Egypt, ‘Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them they way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light’(Ex. 13:21). These phenomena accompanied God’s children throughout their wilderness sojourn. When the Lord was living on earth, this wilderness wandering was commemorated yearly by the feasts of tabernacles. It is said that during this feast the people lit large lamps or torches within the temple court and gave

themselves to festivity. The brilliant lighting supposedly was a memorial of the pillar of fire which they followed in the wilderness. Perhaps in the Lord's presentation there was an allusion to the aforementioned lighting: 'I am the light of the world.' He is the illuminator of men. From this account we gather: (a) Men are in darkness. (b) Christ is man's illumination. (c) To benefit from this illumination, the Lord must be followed. (d) Like following the pillar of fire, he must be pursued daily. (e) Following that light will result in life. (162)

I mention what brother Wayne said to set the stage for what we will be discussing momentarily. We must realize that light is something we cannot live without. Darrell Beard stated, "Natural light is necessary to our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. It is a form of energy which is involved in the production of food, oxygen and heat" (357). Just as man cannot live without natural light, man certainly cannot live without the "Light" of the world, Jesus Christ. Think of a world for a moment without light. You cannot do it. It is hard for us to even imagine such a place. We know that God's first recorded command was, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3). If you look in the dictionary, the first definition for "light" is "something that makes vision possible." In other words, light make it possible for us to see. Without light, we are hopelessly blind — blind to our surroundings, blind to our situations and circumstances, and blind to even ourselves. Light makes it possible for us to see clearly—things as they really are. Jesus, the Light of the world, makes it possible to see things clearly. More importantly, He makes it possible to see sin for what it really is and what it really does. Isaiah stated, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2). Did the people truly grasp what Isaiah was meaning? I do not believe they did. Jesus, the Light of the world, makes it possible to see things clearly. When Jesus arrived into this world, He came into a world of darkness... a world that had not heeded words from Isaiah the prophet. Jesus exposed

the darkness, and for us today we can see everything clearly. The Light of the world is shining brightly today.

### ***He is Light and Life***

He is the light and life of the world. Our text tells us “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” It begins by tells us that “In Him was life...” This is a theme that is mentioned often in the book of John. “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). Another passage that we often quote says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus brought life to a dead world. The world was dead because of sin. John 11:25 also tells us that He is the source of eternal life.

But not only within Christ was life, but also He was the light of men. Guy N. Woods states, “Jesus is the light of men because his teaching is to the mind of men the illumination factor as natural light is to the eye” (25). This is a familiar theme of John. Light is something that illuminates. It reveals what is hidden. What happens when we turn on light in the middle of night in a dark room? Why does the light bother us? Because we had become used to the darkness. Jesus was such a bright light in this dark world of sin, that the world could not comprehend Him. That world had become accustomed to darkness (John 1:10-11). John tells us that Christ is the source of life and light, both physically and spiritually. We must also be able to understand the major difference between light and darkness. Light, of course, “Signifies truth and moral uprightness, while darkness denotes error and moral corruption” (Woods 25). We know when darkness entered into this world. Darkness entered in the world when man first sinned. “So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6). The darkness that entered the world at the moment attempted to cover the world. It did for a long period of time. There was no victory over sin. Real forgiveness is what the first covenant lacked. The book of Hebrews tells us, “It *was* symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the

service perfect in regard to the conscience” (9:9). What we must keep in mind is that the Old Testament brought about remembrance not remission. Think about what the Hebrews writer states:

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. (10:1-3)

Under the Old Covenant there was no way to take away this darkness. People had the law to follow but it was just a “shadow of the good things to come.” However, the Light entered into the world to put away the darkness, not only to illuminate and take away sin, but also to give us a light to follow. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Jesus brought not only life into this world, but also light into this dark world that needed it so badly... a world that was lost in sin and had no hope. Think about for a moment what the book of Malachi tells us,

A son honors *his* father, And a servant *his* master. If then I *am* the Father, Where *is* My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’ “You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, *Is it* not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” Says the Lord of hosts. (1:6-8)

Do you think the world was in need of a light to guide them



out of their darkness? They had gone to a point where they were offering their sick and lame and blind animals to the Lord. They were offering defiled food on the altars. We must keep in mind that approximately 400 years had passed from Malachi until Christ. There is no question the world got even darker and further away from the Lord during that time. As David Roper points out in his commentary on the Life of Christ, a lot changed during that time. Roper comments that by the time Christ came into the world, there had been changes in worship, changes in religious leadership, the rise of Sectarianism with the Pharisees and Sadducees and other sects. He went on to say,

Regarding the world into which Jesus came, let us conclude by noticing the prophecy that the Messiah would grow up ‘like a root out of parched ground’ (Is. 53:2)...but the hearts of the people were still like parched, dry earth. For this inhospitable environment, Christ would come. Nevertheless, the religion of Jesus would ultimately grow and spread through the world. (26)

The world was not just in need of a light, they were in need of the Light of the world. The Bible tells us, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4). Many different commentators suggest that Jesus coming at the right time was due to the prophecies being fulfilled, that travel and commerce was possible in a way that it had never been before, that there was a universal language in place, etc. I would believe that all of this may very well have been a factor in the timing of Jesus. However, Jesus just did not come at any time. Jesus came at the right, perfect time when the world was in need of the Light to bring it out of darkness.

### ***He is the Light, Therefore We Should Bear Witness of the Light***

Read John 1:6-7, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.” Strong’s states, “to bear

witness” means, “to testify, give testimony, commend, speak well of” (1513). Of course we all realize that John was the forerunner to Christ. His preaching was to pave the way for the Light. However, just as John went forth bearing witness and speaking about the One who was to come, we must go forth and speak of the Light Who has come into the world, lived, died and resurrected from the dead. We must not only do that from the pulpit. We must do so in the streets where we live. We must be as John and get out among those who are lost and preach of the Christ and show the Light that will bring them out of darkness.

I am truly convinced that our brethren will not do so, until they see us being an example. Paul preached this message to Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). I know that Timothy was young, but what did Paul tell him? He said to be an example to the brethren. We have to be an example as John and Timothy, and speak about the Light of the world. We must be as the apostle Paul who wrote, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). However, we must not only preach this message to our brethren we must preach it to those who are in darkness in need of the Light. It was John’s obligation and job to be witness of the Christ. It out still our job today go forth and preach to the lost and tell them about the Light of the world. We must lead them to the Light of the world.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor.15:1-4)

### ***He is the Light, Therefore Some People Flee***

In John 3:16 we have a glorious verse that teaches us what our

heavenly father did for mankind. As David Roper points on pages 134-139 this verse teaches:

“For God” (The Greatest Being) “So Loved” (The Great Trait) “The World” (The Greatest Company) “That He Gave” (The Greatest Act) “His Only Begotten Son” (The Greatest Gift) “That whoever” (The Greatest Opportunity) “Believes” (The Greatest Foundation) “In Him” (The Greatest Attraction) “Shall not Perish” (The Greatest Tragedy) “But” (The Greatest Difference) “Have Eternal Life” (The Greatest Promise).

Often times we read verse 16 and we stop reading. However, when we read on, the other verses that follow give John 3:16 an even greater meaning. “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17). Guy N. Woods states, “Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it because it was already condemned but by declaration of the fact and through the offer of redemption to prompt men to turn back from their course of destruction” (67). Jesus did not come to condemn the world. He came to save the world. He came to shine as The Light unto the world and illuminate sin for what it was and that being the great separator from God. “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He came to save them from their lost condition of living in darkness to a saved condition of walking in the light.

Because He is the Light, He exposes and makes everything clear. Some people love the darkness because darkness hides certain lifestyles. That is the case in John 3:19. The Bible tells us, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). We live in a world where people love darkness, just like in the days of our Lord. Jesus shined as a light and exposed all their evil ways. Many ran away from the Light, and some ran to the Light. “But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God” (John 3:21). It has always been the case and will always be in the future that

those who practice evil deeds love the darkness and stay away from the Light. All you have to do is read Romans 1:26-31. Those people ran from the Light. But Jesus the Light still went forth shining and illuminating sin and expects us to do the same. The blessing is that is people put these sins away and come to the Light of the world they will be saved and forgiven and darkness will be done away with.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

We must take this message to this world of darkness that surrounds us every day and let them know that Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it (John 3:17).

### ***He is the Light, Therefore We Should Follow Him***

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life’” (John 8:12). Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus makes this bold proclamation before the Pharisees the Bible tells us. As they always did the Pharisees object to this notion that Jesus is the light of the world “The Pharisees therefore said to Him, “You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true” (John 8:13). Jesus then starts talking to them about what they have objected to. It seems to many people this is a detour because the word “light” is never mentioned again. This text is one that can be confusing to people. Jesus says He is the light of the world. The Pharisees object, and then Jesus starts talking about what they want to talk about. We have seen this before in the ministry of Jesus. In John chapter 4, Jesus is speaking to the woman at the well. He starts by speaking to her about the living water. She then takes him to the topic of worship and Jesus goes with her to talk about that subject

matter. So here Jesus deals with the detour in John 8 in such a way to bring back to His original thought of Him being the light of the world. You see Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees about His relationship with the Father is showing how He is the Light of the world.

We then see the proof in this text. Jesus then goes into detail about being from the Father, and acting on the authority of the Father, and going to the Father and doing nothing of His own will (John 8:16, 18, 26, 28-29). Obviously there were those who believed that He was the light of the world from this conversation, because of what the Scripture tells us, "As He spoke these words, many believed in Him" (John 8:30). It seems as though it was a detour in all actuality all it did was cause those listening to be even more convinced that Jesus was the Light of the world. Let us notice another passage where Jesus makes this claim of being the light of the world.

I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak. (John 12:46-50)

There is one very important word in Verse 26. That word is "abide." You cannot abide, i.e. "continue, dwell, stand, remain or be present" in darkness and follow what Jesus said in John 8:12. Jesus said that He is the light of the world and they who follow Him. You either are abiding in darkness or following Christ. You cannot have it both ways. You are either one or the other. We have too many Christians who are lukewarm. We know what Jesus said about that in Revelation 3:15-16. Brethren who are lukewarm are just like those who are abiding in darkness. We are either walking in the

light and being faithful or we are not. Remember again that Jesus said the one who “follows” Him. If I am going to follow Christ then I am going to not only listen to what he says but I am going to be a doer of what he says: The Pharisees listened to him, but “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 8:43). Jesus said we are to receive His words (John 12:48). Think about what we read in the book of James, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jas. 1:22). In the church today we have a lot of hearers. We need more doers, we need more people receiving the words of Jesus not just hearing the words of Jesus. I cannot receive some of the words of Christ. I must receive all the words of Christ.

We must never forget that Jesus was the Light of the world. I am commanded to be a light unto the world.

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:14-16)

I have noticed there are different types of lights in the Church. We have those whose lights have burnt out. We have those whose lights shine but just some of the time. We have lights that are energy savers. We have those who lights continually shine every day. The question I must ask myself is, “What type of light am I?” Jesus was the light to the world. Am I doing my part in letting my light shine? That does not mean just being an example and a good person. It means going to the next step as our Lord did. It means exposing error as He did. Think for a moment about Ephesians 5:8-13. Now let us focus on Ephesians 5:5 which says, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” He understood that this was the darkness that these Christian had come from. He is telling them, that they once were children in darkness, but now they are children of light so they should be living as such. Not only

were they to be Christian examples in the way they lived and acted, but also they were to expose the unfruitful works of darkness. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11). Too many Christians today want to play in darkness. They want to know how far they can go until it is sin. Listen to what Brother Charles Hodge stated,

To be saved, sinners must see sin as God sees it. Repentance will not come until sinners sense the horror of sin. People who do not fear God do not fear sin. People with a holy view of God sense the enormity of sin. God hates sin, and we must hate it; but, sadly, too many do not hate sins as sin. The more holy we become, the more we hate sin because we understand what it does to our relationship with God. (106)

However, it is important to note that Paul said to avoid the unfruitful works of darkness and not the people that are in darkness. That is certainly what our Lord did. He exposed the works of darkness and wanted to save the people who were living in darkness. An example of this is found in John 4:16-18. Jesus allowed her to see her sin for what it was. Notice the response. “The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” Then they went out of the city and came to Him.” Jesus loved this woman so much that He showed her where she was walking in darkness. We must be lights in the world and not only shine but expose. We are commanded to not allow the world to change us, but instead to be changing the world. “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

There is no disputing the fact that Jesus was the light of the world. He expects us to follow His example. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk just as he walked” (1 John 2:6). Jesus said that we are to follow Him. Let us all follow the Light of the world which will keep us from darkness. Let us follow the Light of the world which will lead us to an eternal home in Heaven, a

home in Heaven where there will be no darkness.

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. (Rev. 21:22-24)

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Ryan Currey was born in Ripley WV. He grew up in Ravenswood, and graduated from Ravenswood High School in 2001. He is a graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, WV (2005). He is married to the former Megan McCracken of Moundsville, WV and they have a son Carson (7 Years Old) and a daughter Mille Cate (4 years Old). He has done mission work in Costa Rica, and for 11 has worked with the West Virginia Christian Youth Camp as a counselor, bible class teacher, director, and member of the board. Ryan was the associate minister at the Camden Ave Church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV for 3 years. He and Megan have been working with the Bridgeport Church of Christ for 6 years.



# The Way, the Truth, and the Life

*John 14:1-9*

*W. Terry Varner*

John 14:1-9 is part of the Farewell Address of Jesus. The address prepares them for His impending death, resurrection, and departure. It was a terrible blow to His disciples. They all forsook Him (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50).

The Gospel of John is remarkable because of the things omitted, and at the same, it is valuable because of things it makes known that are not found in the Synoptics; i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Hayes claims that ninety-two percent of the teachings of the Gospel are peculiar to John (89).

Our lecture will set forth the following points: (1) *The Christ Who Comforts* (John 14:1-4), (2) *The Christ Who Saves* (John 14:5-6), and (3) *The Christ Who Reveals the Father* (John 14:7-9).

## **The Background**

The following events transpired giving the background to John 14:1-9.

- Judas is identified as His betrayer (John 13:18-30).
- Jesus foretold His departure (John 13:33, 36).
- Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-30; Luke 24:14-23).
- Jesus predicted the disciples would be offended in Him (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).
- Jesus predicted the disciples would suffer persecution (Matt. 10:35-36; Luke 12:51-53).
- Jesus gave the new commandment of love (John 13:34-35).
- Jesus predicts Peter's three-time denial (John 13:36-38).

## **The Christ Who Comforts (John 14:1-4)**

With these events, the disciples were distressed, discouraged,

and disappointed. Jesus, facing the great crisis of the cross and rather than eliciting sympathy for Himself, seeks to comfort them (John 14:1-4).

They were troubled in their hearts; i.e. thoughts, feelings, volition, emotions. The **heart** (*kardia*) is “the seat of spiritual life, the center of faith and feelings, the innermost being of personality” (Turner and Mantey 279-80). **Troubled** (*tarasso*) means “to cause inward turmoil, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw in confusion” (Danker 990). Jesus was soon to depart to heaven; i.e. “My Father’s house.” With His impending departure, they were unable to go with Him (John 13:33, 36). They had left all to follow Him (cf. Mark 10:28)—family, friends, occupations, etc.—and they were deeply troubled and in need of encouragement and reassurance.

Their faith in God and Christ must be strengthened. Offering reassurance and comfort, Jesus said, “You believe in God, believe also in Me” (14:1). Many commentators understand this as a double imperative. To believe in God and in Christ is a “simultaneous injunction of faith in God and in Christ under the same conditions implies the divinity of Christ” (Westcott 167).

God is the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3). Jesus, being deity, and knowing their inner discomfort offers them comfort. In essence He says, “Stop letting your hearts be troubled.” This meant “some serious trouble ahead of them and that in the immediate future; Jesus was not referring to some remote and distant time. And in that revelation Jesus was saying, ‘Let not your heart be troubled’” (Morris, *Reflections* 489-90). They knew Jesus had been “troubled in spirit” (John 13:21). This would likewise trouble them and especially since they could not go with Him.

Jesus had never let His disciples down. He would not do so now, regardless how it may appear. Peter, learning from the comforting Christ, later instructs the Christians of Dispersion, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed, ‘and do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled’” (1 Peter 3:14).

The Jews sought and plotted to kill Jesus. The theme reoccurs through the Gospel of John (cf. 5:18; 8:37, 40; 19:1, 19, 25). Is it possible the combination of the Jews plotting to kill Jesus and His impending departure that the apostles realized the persecution by

their fellow Jews would fall on them? Indeed, beginning in Acts 4 and continuing through the centuries Christians have been persecuted.

John 14:2-3 contain a series of important thoughts to comfort and reassure them. Jesus restates His departure to heaven. He *promises*, “I will come again”; i.e. Second Coming. He *reassures* them “if it were not so, I would have told you.” He *promises*, “where I am, there you may be also.” The disciples will share a future with Him in His Father’s house. “Faith in Him was their key to security, no matter how well-grounded their fears for themselves might be” (Tenney 214). He had never told them a falsehood, so they could always depend on His words.

The word **mansions** (*mone*) means *dwelling places*. The word *mone* is used only here and in John 14:23, “We will come to him and make Our home [*mone*] with him.” Mansions is from the Latin *mansiones* and entered the English text through Jerome’s Latin Vulgate. Dwelling places means “stopping, dwelling, or lodging places” where travelers found rest on a journey. The text means there is “[p]lenty of room in heaven, room for [Christ] but also for you” (Hendriksen 265). This is reminiscent of Romans 8:17 where Christians in eternity are “heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Whitelaw suggests the meaning of mansions in John 14 is “co-partners of My glory” (303). What could be a more comforting promise?

“[T]he way you know” (14:4) shows that Jesus had taught them He was the Savior that leads to eternal life. Jesus’ statement is an apparent allusion to the puzzlement of Peter in John 13:36-38. However, they would not fully understand all things until after the resurrection. Jesus had frequently taught the disciples that He is the way of salvation (cf. John 6; 10; et al.).

### **The Christ Who Saves (John 14:5-6)**

Thomas is puzzled and wants clarity. “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Earlier, Thomas urged the apostles to go to Jerusalem in order to die with Jesus (John 11:16). Later, Thomas wants evidence of the risen Lord (John 20:24-25). Recall the words of Peter. “Lord,

where are You going?” (John 13:36). Jesus replied that where He was going they could not, at the present, go (John 13:33, 36). If they did not know where He was going how could they know the way? To Thomas this was insurmountable. “For us generally a clear apprehension of the end is the condition of knowing the way. But in spiritual things faith is content to move forward step by step. . . . The ‘way’ is itself the revelation, and for the man the only possible revelation, of the end” (Westcott 169).

Jesus’ reply is more comprehensive than Thomas’ question. “I am *the way, the truth, and the life*. No one comes to the Father except by Me” (John 14:6, emp. added). The text is multifaceted and inexhaustible.

### ***Exegeting John 14:6***

This is the sixth **I AM** saying by Jesus found in the Gospel of John (cf. 6:35; 8:12, 58; 10:7, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1). The words **I AM** is a title of God (Ex. 3:14). **I AM** evidence of the deity of Jesus. With the words **I AM**, “Jesus claims eternal existence with the absolute phrase used of God” (Robertson 158-59).

The Jews understood what Jesus was claiming when He said, **I AM**; i.e. He is deity. Jesus’ use of **I AM** irritated the Jews with charging Him of speaking falsely (John 8:13) and having a devil (John 10:20-21). Consequently, this created division among them (John 10:20-21) and they took counsel to put Him to death (John 11:53).

Salvation is implied with the Sixth **I AM**. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10). In the Gospel of John, there are fourteen private conversations of Jesus similar to John 14:5-6. Hayes (89-90) shows that these conversations follow a certain pattern. There is (1) an introductory question, (2) Jesus answers with a double construction, (3) Jesus’ answer is misunderstood, (4) Jesus explains and corrects the misunderstanding, (5) Jesus proceeds with fundamental teaching; i.e. John 2:19; 3:3; 4:10; 4:32; 6:34; 13:36; 14:5.

Jesus applied the three descriptive epithets to Himself. Jesus said, “**I AM** *the way, the truth, and the life*.” These three epithets

emphasize the many-sidedness of Jesus' saving work.

Jesus is *the way*. As the way, Jesus, in answering Thomas' question, tells all men that He, and *He alone*, is the way to the Father. "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the way to the Father's house (heaven). Jesus came from the Father (cf. John 5:37; 13:16) and leads to the Father (John 14:2). Jesus is the way to eternal destiny with God. Therefore, Paul writes that it is "by the blood of Jesus . . . [we have] a new and living way . . . [to] draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:19-20, 22).

Jesus is *the truth*. The truth connects to John's Prologue (John 1:1-18) which speaks of Jesus as "the word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . *full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14, emp. added; cf. 1:17). Jesus not only is the truth, He is the bearer of the truth. Jesus told Pilate "[f]or this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to *the truth*" (John 18:37, emp. added).

Jesus is *the life*. This is the second time Jesus stated that He is *the life*. Earlier, He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). The life relates to John's Prologue (John 1:1-18) and evidences His deity. "In Him was *life*, and *the life* was the light of men" (John 1:4, emp. added). Jesus came that man "may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). **Abundantly** (*perisson*) means life that is "profuse, going beyond what is necessary, having in abundance" (Danker 805).

Morris gives an interesting summary of the exegesis of John 14:6. "'I am the Way', said One who would shortly hang impotent on a cross. 'I am the Truth', where the lies of evil men were about to enjoy a spectacular triumph. 'I am the Life', when within a few hours His corpse would be placed in a tomb" (Morris, *Commentary* 641).

### ***Exposition of John 14:6***

John 14:6 emphasizes many facets of Jesus' saving work. His work is unique and sufficient. His work is all-encompassing and shows that Jesus is the answer to man's every need. There are several aspects of Jesus as *the way*, *the truth*, and *the life*.

First, **Jesus is *the Way***. Jesus is the way to the Father whether or not men recognize Him as such. He is the way to man's eternal home of heaven; i.e. the Father's house (John 14:2, 6). Jesus is the way that fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of "[a] highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of holiness" (35:8a; cf. 35:8b-10). Jesus' death on Calvary opens "a new and living way" (Heb. 10:19-20) to the Father. It is a spiritual way answering man's lostness as "the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Therefore, Jesus gives men access to the Father (cf. Eph. 2:18).

The early Christians were followers of "the Way" and were persecuted by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 19:2) and others. The way is used synonymously to describe Jesus and the church over which He is the head (cf. Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Some Jews "spoke evil of the Way" (Acts 19:9) and created "a great commotion about the Way" (Acts 19:22). Paul admits, "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). Paul was a member "of the Way" (Acts 24:14) and taught Felix to have a "more accurate knowledge of the Way" (Acts 24:22).

The way to the Father is *the church*. Scripture states that Jesus would establish His church (Matt. 16:18), owns His church by the shedding of His blood (Acts 20:28), and is "the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18; cf. Eph. 1:21-22). The church (body) is singular (Eph. 4:4). Jesus is the Savior of the church (body). "Wives, submit yours to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also *Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body*" (Eph. 5:22-23, emp. added). Jesus died and shed His blood "that He might reconcile [all men] to God in one body through the cross. . . . For through Him [all men] have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:16, 18).

Jesus as the way gives life to the church where Christians, as followers, are to imitate Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:2; 1 Peter 2:21). This is the essence of our life in Him and in the church. "The church is the sphere in which the new life in Christ is lived out. The church provides the framework for Christian ethical activity. The church is a part of God's redemptive plan, not only as the means of communicating the saving Gospel, but also as the place where the



redeemed life is actualized (Eph. 4:1-6, 11ff.)” (Ferguson 26-27).

For all men, Jesus is the way to the Father. The way Jesus opened to all men to the Father is through church. We dare not magnify Christ and diminish the church. “Attempts to separate Jesus from the formation of the church ignore the fact that His theological statements formed the genesis of early Christian dogma” (Simpson 199). When men obey the gospel they are saved and added to the body or the church by God (Acts 2:47). Jesus is “the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23).

Second, **Jesus is *the truth***. Jesus is the truth whether or not men recognize Him as such. Truth is characteristic of the Godhead; i.e. the Father (John 3:33), Jesus (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit (John 14:17). Only as men know God do men know the truth. God sent Jesus to reveal the truth and the Holy Spirit to guide men to write the truth; i.e. the Scriptures (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21). The expression “as the truth is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21) means “the very truth of God, truth itself resides in him” (Morris, *Commentary* 294).

Jesus as the truth relates to John’s Prologue (John 1:1-18). Jesus is “the Word” (John 1:1) and “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us . . . *full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14, emp. added; cf. 1:17). Jesus reveals both grace and truth. Grace by itself makes men unbalanced. While God blesses men with His grace, He also demands men *do* “the truth” (John 3:21); i.e. obey. God desires “truth in the inward parts” (Ps. 51:6). It was the desire of Jesus that men come to “know You, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom You sent” (John 17:3, emp. added). Truth is a characteristic of God. “God is true” (John 3:33). Jesus told the Jews that He spoke “the truth which I heard from God” (John 8:40). Paul wrote, “Let God be true but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). The Christians at Thessalonica “received the word of God . . . as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). They believed the truth.

Jesus asks the Jews who opposed Him, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God. . . . And because I tell you *the truth*, you do not believe Me . . . and if I tell you *the truth*, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear them, because you are not of God” (John 8:42, 45-47, emp. added). The truth identifies

Jesus with the Father and argues that he who has no knowledge of God does not know God; i.e. the truth.

Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). “No answer is given in words, but the Passion narrative gives the answer in deeds. . . . Truth as Jesus understood it was a costly affair” (Morris, *Commentary* 294-95). Jesus shows the consequences of the truth for men when He states, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know *the truth*, and *the truth* shall make you free” (John 8:31-32, emp. added). The New Testament associates the truth with the Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 11:10) “as *the truth* is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21, emp. added).

Jesus expressed His mission as “[f]or this cause I was born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to *the truth*. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:32, emp. added). Jesus made known “the truth which [He] heard from God” (John 8:40). Jesus links closely the truth to other terms; i.e. freedom from sin (John 8:32), the word (John 8:31; 17:17), grace (John 1:14, 17), et al.

The truth of Jesus is expressed in *His words*. “And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). Truth is personified in Jesus and depicted as (1) objective and understandable (John 7:17; 8:32; 17:17; 20:30-31; cf. Eph. 3:1-4) and (2) saving (John 8:32; 20:30-31; Acts 2:40; 20:32; Jas. 1:17; 1 Peter 1:22).

The Word of God to men in its written form is the Bible. The Bible gives man truths concerning God, the world, and man. The Bible is true, authoritative, trustworthy, etc.

It is declared that what God says is true, and there is no way to separate that truth from the Bible for it is exactly in that Bible where God speaks. You cannot separate truth from the Word. Jesus expressed that emphatically when he said, “Thy word is truth” (John 8:32). Jesus is not only declaring what God says is true, but that truth characterizes the Word, the Scripture itself. (Van Kooten 147)

The inspired and authoritative Scripture does not depend upon anything outside of itself to establish its authority or to determine how much authority it has. We cannot dismiss the authoritative Bible. It is this authoritative message that enables man to be saved by obedient faith. “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 8:29).

Jesus is the truth. Jesus is “the Word” (John 1:1-3, 14). The word of God is truth (John 17:17). There is a richness of modifiers of the word (*logos*). The word is described as the “word of the gospel” (Acts 15:7), “the message of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18), “the word of truth” (2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; Jas. 1:18), “the word of life” (Philip. 2:16; 1 John 1:1), “the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13), “the word of faith” (1 Tim. 4:6), “the word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22), etc. Therefore, the Bible is the word of God and Scripture’s purpose is to

... indicate a message that God actually communicated to someone. . . . In the New Testament time God spoke first of all directly through Christ His Son (Heb. 1:2). But God also communicates his saving truth through the apostles. These communications are also called the “word” of God (Acts 4:31; Col. 1:25; 1 Thess. 2:13). . . . It . . . also refers to the entire revelation of God: the Bible, the total Scriptures. (Van Kooten 17)

Third, **Jesus is *the life***. Jesus is the life whether or not men recognize Him as such. Jesus personifies life as Savior. Jesus as the life relates to John’s Prologue (John 1:1-18). “In Him was *life*, and *the life* was the light of men” (John 1:4, emp. added). Jesus is the Savior of man from sin and death.

Two words occur in the Bible for life. *Bios* from which we have biology referring to the manner and duration of life (cf. Job 10:20; Prov. 3:2; Mark 12:44; Luke 8:43; etc.). *Zoe* which is used here refers to spiritual life and stands in antithesis to death and sin. “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one [Adam], much more those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in *life through the One, Jesus Christ*”

(Rom. 5:17, emp. added). Trench explains the significance of *zoe* in relation to Christ and spiritual life.

It is God's word alone which proclaims that, wherever there is death, it is there because sin was there first; wherever there is no death, that is, life, this is there, because sin has never been there, or having once been, is now cast out and expelled. . . [and] only this makes death to have come into the world through sin, life is the correlative of holiness. . . . *Zoe* at once assumes the profoundest moral significance; it becomes the fittest expression for the very highest blessedness. . . . Christ affirming of Himself, *ego eimi he zoe* (John xiv.6) . . . that He was absolutely holy. . . . No wonder, then, that Scripture should know of no higher word than *zoe* to set forth the blessedness of God, and the blessedness of the creatures in communion with God. (94-95)

Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25). In the New Testament, spiritual life is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Jesus who died on Calvary's cross now lives. "He is risen" (Mark 16:6; cf. Matt. 28:16; Luke 24:6). His resurrection is the heart of the gospel message. "For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9; cf. Mark 12:27). "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19).

Christians have "a living hope" that promises "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4). **Incorruptible** means "not liable to death," **undefiled** means "unstained or unpolluted," **will not fade away** means "its nature is fixed and unalterable and so is its place, and **reserved in heaven for you** means "'guarded' or 'watched over'" (MacArthur 35-36). This makes the "Father's house" (heaven) the most secure place known. No sin shall ever enter into it (cf. Rev. 21:27; 22:14-15).

Joseph was commanded to "call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The Gospel of John

portrays Jesus as the life and Savior of men. Jesus is “the life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). Jesus was sent by the Father to redeem man (John 3:16). Jesus possesses life (John 5:28-29; 3:40; 14:6). Jesus brought life to the world (John 6:33, 51). Jesus as the life is portrayed as: (1) the life that makes men free from sin and death (Rom. 8:2) bringing “life and peace” (Rom. 8:6) Christ conquered more than death. He conquered sin and death. (2) Jesus “has given to man all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3) so that we have life now and life to come (1 Tim. 4:8; Titus 1:2). Therefore, Jesus is “the Prince of life” (Acts 3:15). Life is the gift of God to man. Life is the antithesis of sin and death.

The true God is the only being in the universe who has “life in Himself” (John 5:26). Being thus the foundation of life, He provides eternal life for His own without cost (Rev. 21:6); *dorean* [without cost, or as a gift]) through the medium of faith (John 3:16). Certainly, “eternal life” is indeed endless life (comp. Matt. 25:46), but at the same time more than deathlessness. It is divine life. (Cook 92-93)

Jesus provides an abundant, overflowing measure, a surplus of life. “There is nothing cramping or restricting about life for those who enter His fold” (Morris, *Commentary* 509). He came that men might have everlasting life (John 6:51). Only those who come to Him have life (John 5:40). The life He gives saves man from perishing (John 10:28). As the Lord of life, Jesus raised Lazarus (John 11:25), Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:41; Luke 8:54), and the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14). Jesus is the life because the Father “has granted the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). He is the first-fruits from the dead giving man hope of eternal life (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Titus 1:2).

The following well summarizes Jesus as Savior who died and shed His blood to purchase the redemption so that man can come to the Father.

It is not merely that Jesus died; He died for a *certain purpose*. He came to give His life that *sinner*s might be *saved* from

what they *deserve* (eternal punishment, Rom. 6:23). He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). . . . He came . . . to give His life a ransom for man (Matt. 28:20). Thus, it is seen that Christ offered a *particular sacrifice* (Himself) for a *specific purpose* (Heb. 9:7, 12; 7:18-25; 9:22; 10:4; 11:28; 13:11; cf. John 3:16; Lev. 17:11). (Warren 44-45)

**Jesus' Conclusion.** Jesus concludes His tripartite statement with "No one comes to the Father except by Me" (John 14:6). Jesus is **the way** to Father. The statement is both *inclusive* and *exclusive*. Jesus is the *only* way to the Father (Heaven). *Inclusively*, only those who walk with Jesus in *the way*, *the truth*, and *the life* reaches the Father. *Exclusively*, none other has the authority to lead men to the Father (Heaven). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus' conclusion is a blow to current Post-Modernism's doctrine of Pluralism. Pluralism teaches "all viewpoints are equally true and have equal validity" (Gardner 474). Pluralism argues for religious diversity by claiming that *Jesus is not* the only way, not the *only* truth, and not the *only* life. In addition the New Testament *church* is *not* the only church and that *truth* is relative and *not* absolute. Pluralism also teaches that spiritual life comes not from Jesus only but also from Buddha, Confucius, et al. Diversity and Pluralism walk hand-in-hand. Pluralism is contradicted when Jesus says, "I am *the way*, *the truth*, and *the life*. No one comes to the Father *except* [if and only if] by Me" (John 14:6, emp. added).

### **Christ the Revelator (John 14:7-9)**

"If you had know Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him" (John 14:7). Jesus did not mean that they were ignorant of Him as they had left all to follow Him for three and a half years. They saw His miracles and heard Him teach. Jesus means "that they did not know his essential being" (Morris, *Reflections* 495).

"From now on you know Him" is significant and refers to those events then taking place and those events that would follow. These

events would be critical to their understanding. In days, weeks, and years that followed, the apostles would have a deeper knowledge of God and His working. “From now on you know Him” is reminiscent of David’s words, “Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You” (Ps. 36:10). Jesus is giving man something new and outstanding—the fuller knowledge of God.

Jesus suggests something new to His apostles in the words “and have seen Him.” The Jews would argue that no man “has seen God at any time” and lived (Ex. 33:20; cf. John 1:18). “Jesus was claiming to give those who believed in him an intimacy with God such as the ancient world knew nothing” (Morris, *Reflections* 496). The words “and have seen Him,” perhaps, to the ancient world “was the most staggering thing that Jesus ever said. To the Greeks God was characteristically *The Invisible*. The Jew would count it as an article of faith that no man has seen God at any time” (Barclay 185)

Thomas is silent. Philip wants more information, “Lord show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us” (John 14:8). Did Philip expect Jesus in some way to cause the Father to appear before He left them? Whatever Philip had in mind, Jesus would show them the Father. Philip, speaking for all, said, “it is sufficient for us.” “Sufficient for us” (*arker hermir*) means “[t]his would be enough to stop their anxiety” (Rogers and Rogers 216). The revelation from Jesus is sufficient for all things.

Jesus explains and asks, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9b). This relates to John’s Prologue (1:18) where Jesus’ work is described as, “He has declared Him [Father]” (John 1:18). Declared (*exegesato*) means “to relate in detail, tell, report, describe, to set forth in great detail” and Danker goes on to say of John 1:18, “he has made known or brought news of (the invisible God)” (349). Jesus was sent to reveal God the Father so “that [man] may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Jesus being deity is “the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3). “There is nothing of God that man in the flesh could comprehend or grasp of God’s nature, character or being, so long as he is in the flesh, that God has not summed up in Christ” (Hailey 20).

These texts teach that to know Christ is to know the Father and



vice-versa. The Father is not known except through the Son. “If you would have known Me, you would have known My Father” (John 8:19; cf. 14:7). “What is God like? He is like Christ. There is a perfect family likeness. This is the glorious anticipation of the believer, too; one day our family likeness to Him will become evident (1 John 3:2)” (Cook 44). Jesus states that the likeness between the Father and Him is evident in His question to Philip and the apostles. “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?” (John 14:10). Consider the following:

This emphasizes the unity of the Father and Son. They are one (John 10:30). However, they are one in NATURE not in PERSON. Jesus is in the Father in that the Father’s will guides, directs, and motivates Him. . . . The Father is in the Son in that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ (Col. 2:9). Jesus was God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). The Father, therefore, is seen in the Son, for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell (Col. 1:19). (Pugh 75-76)

What are some things Jesus reveals of the Father?

- *God calls for His children to be obedient* (cf. Matt. 22:37-39; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Matt. 7:21; Rev. 2:10).
- *God provides for His children.* He provides salvation (cf. John 1:29; Rom. 5:8-9) and supplies “all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Philip. 4:19).
- *God is a forgiving God.* He is “not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). He forgives if we obey (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- *God guides His children through His inspired and authoritative word* (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).
- *God is a loving God.* (1 John 4:8, 16).
- *God loves His children unreservedly by sending Christ to defeat sin and death* (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8-9; Heb.



2:14-15).

- *God has goals and purposes for His children.* He gives us life (John 10:10) The Christian's goal is to spend eternity in Heaven (Heb. 11:13, 16; cf. 2 Peter 1:5-11; Rev. 21:1-7; 1 Thess. 5:9).
- *God has fellowship with His children* (John 4:23; cf. 2 Cor. 3:16; 6:16). He gives the Christian the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the word (Col. 3:16) giving strength to your inner man (Eph. 3:16).
- *God is accessible to His children* (Matt. 7:7-8; Heb. 4:16). (Varner 18-20).

## Conclusion

We have argued that John 14:1-9 sets forth the following:

- Jesus is **deity**. “I AM” (John 14:6; John 1:1-3, 14) who reveals the Father (John 14:9; Heb. 1:3).
- Jesus is “**the way**” (John 14:6) to the Father by being faithful members of His body, the church. “He is the Savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23).
- Jesus is “**the truth**” (John 14:6; 1:1-3, 14) and guides men to the Father by His inspired, inerrant, trustworthy, and authoritative Scriptures (John 8:32; 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:14-17). “He who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt. 10:22).
- Jesus is “*the life*” (John 14:6) and as life He is “the life [Who] was the light of men” (John 1:4). God “the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). He is described as Savior of men (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:47; John 3:16; 4:42; Acts 4:12; 5:31; Rom. 5:8-9; 10:13; 1 Cor. 1:18; Eph. 2:5, 8; Titus 1:4; 1 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18).
- Therefore, men “may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 1:10).

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### **Biographical Sketch**

W. Terry Varner married Lillie L. Garrison from Littleton, over 50 years ago. They have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren. Terry received formal education from Abilene Christian University, Waynesburg University, West Virginia State

University, Moody Bible Institute, National Christian University, Malone College and Alabama Christian School of Religion.

Varner has extensive teaching experience from conducting Bible classes at various congregations for more than 50 years. He has also taught 3 to 5 classes, at a time, at the West Virginia School of Preaching since its beginning. Varner was involved in located work at numerous congregations in the Ohio Valley for over 40 years. He retired from fulltime located work in 1997. Presently he serves as elder and evangelist at West Union, WV and as Research Coordinator for Warren Christian Apologetics Center, Vienna, WV. Varner has also dedicated himself to proclaiming the Gospel in written form as well. He owned and published *Therefore Stand*, a monthly eight-page paper for 24 years. In addition to *Therefore Stand* he has also written and/or published several books which include such titles as: *Studies in Biblical Eschatology (An Answer to AD 70 Theory)*, *Elkins-Ross Debate* and *The History and Use of the Cross*, which has seen four reprints.

# Witnesses of the WORD

*John 5:30-47*

*Charles Pugh III*

The Christian worldview, set forth in the Bible, is the culmination of biblical revelation resulting in the affirmation and defense of the proposition that the true meaning of life is not merely discovering a principle, or principles, but it ultimately is the discovery of a Person. This Person is identified as the **Logos**, and this **Logos** (the WORD) is God (John 1:1).

In a 2013 book, *Encounters with Jesus—Unexpected Answers to Life’s Biggest Questions*, Timothy Keller says the Greeks in the ancient world thought the meaning of life was to contemplate the rational and the moral order of nature, which they identified as the **Logos** (1). Keller observes that the well-lived life, according to the Greeks, involved conformity to this “principle” through philosophical and intellectual pursuits. However, Keller opines that it is good that the ultimate (true) purpose of life is not merely intellectual and philosophical pursuit, because this would leave out many people (2-3). If the true purpose of what life ultimately is all about involves a relationship with an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omnibenevolent Person, then it is possible for any person anywhere, and from any background, to experience the fulfillment of life’s purpose.

## **THE GOSPELS: Christological Compositions**

The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), or better described as the four accounts of the one gospel, were challenged in the 1800’s and early 1900’s by scholars who saw these documents merely “as popular folk literature, collections of short literary units (pericopae) handed down through the oral tunnel, strung together . . . like beads on a string” (Burridge 336). This “higher criticism,” for all practical purposes, shredded the Gospels—denying their authority and historicity. Burridge describes these attacks of higher criticism as follows:

Far from being coherent biographies of Jesus, the Gospels were unique forms of literature “of their own genre,” *sui generis*. . . . [R]ather than being biographical accounts of the human life of Jesus of Nazareth . . . not read as whole or coherent narratives . . . the author was regarded as a mere stenographer, recording the stories from oral tradition, rather than as a historian or writer with any literary intentions. . . . [F]orm critics concluded the Gospels were not really about Jesus. . . . (336, 338)

In somewhat dramatic fashion, since the end of the twentieth century, there has been a major shift in how the consensus of scholars now look at the Gospels. Instead of the old form-critical approach of the Gospels being disjointed collections of pericopae strung together most Gospel scholars and commentators of today see the Gospels more like historical monographs with formal similarities to ancient Greco-Roman biographies. (For an account of how this consensus has changed see the work of BurrIDGE, Richard. *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004, pp. 252-88).

In his recent work in the area of the historicity of Jesus Christ, Roy Abraham Varghese well summarized the significance of this shift from liberal form-criticism approach to the Gospels to a genre of the Gospels being primarily like that of ancient Greek-Roman biography:

. . . [T]he Gospels belong to a biographical genre common in the Greco-Roman world. The form-critical Bultmannian quest for the historical Jesus, it is now widely recognized, was simply a wild goose chase.

According to Richard BurrIDGE, author of a path breaking work . . . the very literary structure of the Gospel is a testimony to the evangelists’ central claim about Jesus: “The shift from unconnected anecdotes about Jesus . . . to composing them together in the genre of an ancient biography is not just moving from a Jewish environment to Greco-Roman

literature. It is actually making an enormous Christological claim . . . that God himself is uniquely incarnate in this one life, death and resurrection.” (23)

### THE GOSPELS: Court-Case Compositions

In addition to being Christological compositions, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (though each, by miraculous intervention, wrote from a different viewpoint, and for different original readership) each wrote for the purpose of providing evidence that sufficiently enables one to conclude that Jesus Christ is deity (the Son of God). The Four Gospels harmoniously affirm that Jesus is uniquely God incarnate, and such ultimately is evidenced through His death and resurrection. He is worthy of the trust and worship reserved for God alone.

The presentation of the evidence provided by the Four Gospels is set in the motif (design, theme) of the term “witness.”

The [witness] concept is laden with overtones of the law court and is often used forensically by the biblical authors . . . . Using terms such as *martyrs* (“witnesses” [noun]), *martyria* (“testimony”), and *martyreo* (“to witness, testify”), the gospels feature the witness theme within the matrix of truth and judgment surrounding Jesus’ earthly ministry and claims. Each Gospel also testifies to Jesus’ gathering and commissioning of followers who would in turn serve as witnesses to Jesus in the early church. The witness theme is most prominent in John and Luke (Luke-Acts), but ***it is a significant motif in all four Gospels.*** (Köstenberger 1000, emp. added).

The witness theme “may be regarded in the first place apologetic. . .” (Scott 196). By *apologetic* is meant a connection with the word ***apologia***. Peter wrote that Christians should always “be prepared to make a defense [***apologia***] to anyone who asks for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15, ESV). ***Apologia*** “was often used of the argument for the defense in a court of law” (Rogers and Rogers 575). The Gospels should be read as biographical material, but

they also should be read as material that has an apologetic purpose (i.e. a rational defense of the deity of Jesus Christ). These two characteristics of the basic literary nature of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John cause us to describe them as Christological apologetical treatises.

The Greek-Roman biography connection and similarity imply the Christological-biographical nature of the Gospels. The witness motif implies the apologetic nature of the Gospels.

Simon Greenleaf was called by some “the greatest of the nineteenth century common-law experts in legal evidence” (Montgomery 753). Greenleaf authored a work titled *The Testimony of the Evangelists Examined By the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice* (1874). The purpose/thesis of this volume, concerned with the Four Gospels, was described by Greenleaf as follows:

Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice . . . the witnesses being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth. In the course of such an examination, the undersigned coincidences will multiply upon us at every step in our progress; the probability of the veracity of the witnesses and of the reality of the occurrences which they relate will increase until it acquires, for all practical purposes, the value and force of demonstration. (46)

One of the “great key-words of the Fourth Gospel [John]. . . is the word witness” (Barclay 29). John uses the verb form of witness (*martyreo*) thirty-five times constituting 43 percent of its usage in the New Testament, and he uses the noun form (*martyria*) fourteen times, which is 38 percent of its use in the New Testament (Köstengerger 1002; see also Hailey 85). These are words of “the Legal Sphere” (Strathmann 476). The term witness is set in the court-case theme, and the basic question undergirding the composition



is: “What evidence can you [Jesus] adduce that your claims are true?” (Barclay 194). Uniquely, Jesus, in one sense, is on trial, but in another sense He is also the Judge. He “acts as both witness and judge” (Köstenberger 1003). In an excellent literary contribution to the entry on “Witness” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Allison Trites wrote:

The Fourth Gospel provides the setting for the most sustained controversy in the N. T. Here Jesus has a lawsuit with the world. . . . John has a case to present, and for this reason he advances arguments, asks juridical questions and presents witnesses after the fashion of the OT legal assembly. (1048)

### **A Conjunctive Proposition (Deity Plus Humanity)**

The basic thesis of the Christian faith is captured in the conjunction of two propositions: (1) The WORD (*Logos*) was God, and (2) The WORD (*Logos*) became flesh and possessed characteristics incarnated in a human body that provide evidence that the Person in this human body was God (cf. John 1:1-3, 14). In order to prove this thesis, John sets forth a sufficient (though not exhaustive) amount of the available evidence (cf. John 20:30-31; 21:25). John, as each of the Gospel writers, intended for his readers to use their reasoning powers, weigh rationally the data presented, and through this process be brought to the point where the readers, from an act of will, trust in Jesus and with an obedient faith (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26) come to possess eternal life in promise and hope (John 20:30-31; Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25).

Varghese says, “. . . [T]he entire edifice of Christianity from its inception rested on the affirmation that Jesus was human and divine” (41). Today, we know that DNA encoded in each single cell of the estimated 100 trillion cells in an average adult human body is an absolutely awesome revelation of the power and glory of God. A single cell contains such vast information that, if written out, the information would fill a set of 1000 encyclopedias, each volume containing 600 pages (Brand and Yancey 45)! However, as impressive as DNA encoded in a human body is, Deity incarnated in a human body (i.e. Jesus Christ) is an even more obvious awesome

revelation of the power and glory of God (cf. John 1:14)!

### **The Case for Christ: A Discourse of Deposition (John 5:17-47)**

One of the foundational New Testament discourses of Jesus Christ, in which there is provided a summation of the case for His claim that He was fully the majesty of deity and fully the manhood of humanity, is John 5:17-47. In his standard work, *The Christ of the Gospels*, J. W. Shepard called this discourse an “apologetic address” (159). Leon Morris says it is a discourse “of critical importance, the significance of which is not always realized” (311). The great textual scholar, Henry Alford, affirmed: “This discourse is a wonderful setting forth of the Person and Office of the Son of God in His Ministrations as the Word of the Father” (746). J. B. Phillips inserted in his translation before this entire discourse the subheading: “Jesus makes His tremendous claim” (196). Perhaps J.C. Ryle penned one of the greatest tributes to this text when he wrote:

Only one thing is certain. Nowhere else in the Gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, orderly, regular statement of His own unity with the Father, His Divine commission and authority, and the proofs of His Messiahship, as we find in this discourse. To me it seems one of the deepest things in the Bible. (285)

There are three keys in this discourse concerning the nature of the deposition (testimony, witness) for the case of the deity of Jesus Christ. The text can be outlined with these three keys serving as the main points. They are (1) Jesus’ **unification with God**, (2) Jesus’ **authorization as God**, and (3) Jesus’ **substantiation** (proof) **from God**.

Open hostility to Jesus in John’s narrative becomes obvious from this time in the ministry of Christ (cf. John 5:16, 18). “From this point the blood red line of conspiracy against the life of Jesus runs through this Gospel” (McGarvey and Pendleton 198). The subsequent discourse (John 5:19-47) is Jesus’ answer to this increasing hostility. The discourse is a powerful apologetic (defense)

of His “character, mission, authority, and credentials as the Son of God” (199). First, He affirms and defends His person and His work (John 5:19-29). Secondly, He sets forth evidence that proves or substantiates the veracity of His claims (John 5:30-47). The first and second keys establish the former (i.e. His person and work). The third key establishes the latter (i.e. the truth of His claims).

### ***Jesus’ Unity with God (John 5:19-23)***

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” (John 5:19, ESV). The text says Jesus “answered” (verses 17, 19, ASV). The Greek construction here “indicates a legal force . . . to make a defense” (Rogers and Rogers 193). Jesus’ defense of why He had healed the lame man on the Sabbath (John 5:1-10) was that He *was bound in action with God*. He said, “. . . My Father is working until now, and I am working” (John 5:17, ESV). Jesus said He did nothing of Himself, but only what “My Father” does. Barclay elaborates:

To see Jesus in action is to see God in action. The things that God did are the things Jesus does; and the things that Jesus does are the things that God does. . . . Jesus never did what He wanted to do; He always did what God wanted Him to do. . . . His identity is not based on independence, but on submission. (186).

Jesus was not working independently of the Father. He cannot act in independence of the Father. He did what He saw the Father doing. Dodd captures the power and beauty of this community of action with His Father in the figure of “a son apprenticed to his father’s trade. He does not act on his own initiative; he watches his father at work, and performs each operation as his father. . . . The affectionate father shows the boy all the secrets of his craft” (qtd. in Morris 312).

Jesus says, “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing . . .” (John 5:20, ESV). Jesus’ unity with His Father involves not only being bound in action but *bound in*

*affection*. Barclay eloquently describes it:

The unity between Jesus and God is unity of Love. We speak of two minds having only a single thought, and two hearts beating as one. In human terms that is a perfect description of the relationship between Jesus and God. The love between Father and Son is so intimate, so close that Father and Son are one. There is such complete identity of mind and will and heart, that Father and Son are one. (186-87)

### ***Jesus' Authority as God (John 5:24-29)***

The stress of the preceding section of Jesus' discourse concerns His relationship with the Father—His unity with God. Now, He proceeds to affirm His authority over men, which is the result of the divine authority inherent in His very nature (deity). To Pilate's claim that he (Pilate) had the authority to release or crucify Jesus (cf. John 19:10), the Lord replied that Pilate would have no authority unless it had come "from above" (John 19:11). Jesus affirmed God as over all. The expression "from above" ultimately means from God (cf. Mark 11:28-30; John 3:3, 7, 27, 31).

The actions of God that manifest the most obvious expression of His divine sovereign authority are (1) the impartation of life, (2) the execution of judgment, and (3) the resurrection of the dead. Only God can give life, execute judgment, and resurrect the dead in the absolute, final, and ultimate sense. God is the Giver of life and breath (cf. Acts 17:25). God is the Judge of all the Earth (Gen. 18:25). God has the keys of death and Hades (cf. Rev. 1:8, 17-18).

Contextually, these three actions, inherent in divine authority, are the "greater works" that Jesus claimed His Father would "show Him" [the Son] (John 5:20). All three of these works (imparting life, executing judgment, and resurrecting the dead) are works Jesus claimed He would do (John 5:24-29). Hailey summarizes in the following:

In summary, the three claims show that all judgment, present and future, is now in the hand of the Son; decisions of judgment are to be made by Him. The final judgment will

be determined by His word (12:48-50). The responsibility of giving spiritual life and of raising men from death in sin is now His and is to be effected by His word. And finally, the raising of all the physically dead, the righteous and the wicked, is committed to Him and likewise will be accomplished by His word. These claims definitely relate Him to the Father as equal with Him. (104)

### ***Jesus' Substantiation from God (John 5:30-47)***

#### ***The Christ as Witness (verses 30-31).***

Jesus did not wait for the Jews to recover from His stunning declarations. Immediately, He launched into the proofs for His case. "The magnitude of Jesus' claims called for substantiation" (Tenney 107). He affirms, "If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony [witness] is not deemed true" (John 5:31, ESV). Some see a contradiction between this statement in John 5:31 and what Jesus said as recorded in John 8:14: "... [E]ven if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true . . . ."

The alleged contradiction cannot be proved. Lenski explains: "Legally a man's unsupported testimony regarding himself or his own case cannot stand and be accepted as true" (402). Robertson further elaborates, "In law the testimony of a witness is not received in his own case (Jewish, Greek, Roman law). See Deut. 19:15. . . . [H]ere Jesus yields to the rabbinical demand for proof outside of himself" (88).

John 8:14 does not contradict this when Jesus says, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I came from and where I am going" (NKJ). Jesus agreed "with the Pharisees that unsupported testimony has no legal value. . . . [Here] He has two points. . . . He is qualified to bear witness though His enemies are not, and . . . His teaching is not unsupported" (Morris 440). In 5:31 Jesus acknowledged the legal principle from Deuteronomy 19:15, making His testimony legally competent through the deposition of another witness, the Father, and in 8:18 He does the very same thing, which qualifies 8:14.

John 5:32ff and John 8:17-18 are parallel passages attesting

powerfully to our Lord's deep concern for proof—adequate evidence. No less than eleven times does Jesus use a word from the word family representing witness, testimony, etc. in John 5:31-39. Herein is the record of His emphasis on substantiating the case for His Messiahship/Sonship/Deity. He established it by proof or competent evidence.

### *A Cry in the Wilderness (verses 32-36).*

Jesus basically is concerned here about marshaling evidence from two primary sources—i.e. His own witness (testimony) and the witness (testimony) of His Father. He implied the former in 5:19-31, and the latter in 5:32ff. “Before exhibiting the Father's testimony Jesus meets them on their own ground” (Dods 743). He references their deputation of John from chapter one—“You have sent to John and he has borne witness to the truth” (John 5:33). This statement is a summation of John 1:19ff.

The deputized delegation sent by the Jews to John came with the question: “Who are you?” (John 1:19, 22). He said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; Make straight the way of the Lord” (John 1:23). This was as the prophet Isaiah had written (Isa. 40:13). John's testimony was negative and positive. He “was not the Christ, Elijah, or the prophet [John 1:20-21]. The positive testimony was that he was simply ‘voice,’ the definite article being omitted in the original. John's testimony of himself was who he was not, and who he was” (Hailey 86).

John “has borne witness” (5:33) is perfect tense, thus indicating “the testimony preserves its value notwithstanding the disappearance of the witness” (Dods 743). The testimony of John still has value (cf. Rogers and Rogers 194). It is “in effect still standing for the present moment” (Lenski 404).

Jesus notes that had the Jewish authorities heeded the truthful witness of John—“a burning and shining lamp” (Jn 5:35)—they would have accepted the more extensive testimony of Jesus' own deeds, Moses and the Scriptures, and indeed the Father himself. To the extent that they do not, it is they, not he, who stand on trial and under judgment. (Cummins 443)

Of course, Jesus received John's testimony (cf. 5:33, 35). However, there is a sense in which Jesus did not receive (take) John's testimony (5:34). Lenski says such means "take" in the sense of "to use it against his opponents. . . . Jesus, as the defendant facing these Jews as his accusers, does not call on [John] to bring in the decisive testimony. . . . Jesus' great witness is God himself" (405). And so Jesus says, "But the witness I receive is not from man . . . [and] is greater than that of John. . . . [T]he Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me" (John 5:34, 36-37, ASV). "Good as the witness of John is, Christ has superior testimony" (Robertson 90). As great as John and his witness was (cf. Matt. 11:1-11), Jesus has a greater witness—His Father. In this text Jesus implies the essence of the Father's witness as two-fold. The two-fold witness of the Father set forth *in this great apologetic discourse* consists of: (1) the confirmatory works, and (2) the Christological writings.

*The Confirmatory Works (verses 36-37).* Jesus stated: ". . . [T]he very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me [i.e. through the works] (John 5:36-37, NKJ). The word for works here is *ergon*. It means the "sundry signal acts of Christ, to rouse men to believe in him and to accomplish their salvation" (Thayer 248). It is used here to refer to "the deeds of God and Jesus, specif. the miracles" (Arndt and Gingrich 308). In the text of John 5, the Father witnesses through the works. This parallels the statement of Jesus when He said, ". . . [T]he Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10, NKJ). Is this not the same as the affirmation of the writer of Hebrews who stated that "so great a salvation . . . first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, *God also bearing witness* both with signs and wonders, with various miracles . . ." (Heb. 2:3-4, NKJ, emp. added)?

The works (miracles) performed by Jesus demonstrated His deity.

His works demonstrate the divine attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence (John 1:48-49; 2:1-11; 2:24-25; 4:17-19). His works demonstrate His power over

nature (John 2:1-11), disease (John 5:1-9), material things (John 6:5-14), the devil (John 12:31-33), and death (John 11:41-46; 20:1-29). Truly, because “such mighty works are performed by His hands” (Mark 6:2), we must conclude, even as He affirmed, that the same works bear witness that the Father has sent Him (John 5:36). Both the words and the works of Jesus constitute sufficient evidence that He is “The Revelation of the Father.” (Pugh, *Things* 77)

*The Christological Writings (verses 39-47)*. Hailey well describes the flow of the passage before us in which this powerful apologetic discourse of our Lord is contained. He wrote:

In defense of His claim to judge, raise the dead, and give life (John 5:19-29), Jesus affirmed that He had greater witness than that of John the Baptist. The Father was bearing witness through the works which He had given Him to do (John 5:36-37). Jesus then appealed to a second testimony of the Father when He said, “Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life. The life was not in Scripture, but in the “me” to whom Scripture testified. (116)

*Search* in John 5:39, can be either imperative or indicative. Some good scholars hold to the former (imperative) sense, which interprets the statement as a command to search the Scriptures. Other reputable scholars hold to the latter (indicative) sense, which makes the matter be taken to indicate the state of the situation of these Jews. Regardless of whether imperative or indicative, the basic point made by Jesus remains the same: ***The Father bears witness to the deity of Jesus Christ through the Scriptures.***

The present tense of search “emphasizes the contemporaneous aspect of the witness [as] . . . the Scriptures continue to witness to the claims of Christ. . . . [I]t is a comprehensive hermeneutical key” (Rogers and Rogers 195). A “*thorough search* (see also 1 Pet. 1:11) *into the contents and spirit of Scripture*” (Alford 741) evidences this



great keynote of God's written revelation.

To the mind that is taught by the Holy Spirit it matters not where the Bible is opened—Christ will be seen everywhere. He is set forth in prophecy and in type of almost every kind. It was this profound truth that Peter laid such stress on in his address in the house of Cornelius, when he said, “*To Him give all the prophets witness*” (Acts x. 43). (Collett 190-91)

The Father, through the Scriptures, has testified of the divine nature of the person and work of the *Logos*—the Word in the flesh, the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Sacred Writings. “**JESUS, THE DIVINE, ETERNAL WORD**, is inseparable from Scripture, the Word of God made a book . . . [T]he Messiah Savior *holds the preeminent place in every part of Scripture*” (Pache 215, emp. added). Paul wrote that Timothy from childhood had “been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15, ESV). John wrote, “. . . [The] testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

Jesus Christ—His person and His work in redemption and salvation—relates to *every* book that contributes to the sacred canon that forms the Holy Scriptures. “A book-by-book glance at each of the 66 books that comprise the Bible will evidence how the Bible marvelously is a one theme Book, and this theme is in a real sense, Jesus Christ” (Pugh, *Bible* 11). If it should have been obvious to those before whom Jesus was delivering this great discourse that the Scriptures “bear witness of [Jesus Christ]” how obvious should it be to us today? They had the Old Testament, but today both Old and New Testament writings are available and manifest the Christological thrust of the biblical revelation.

Jesus only gave one writer as an example from the estimated forty biblical writers whose writings bear witness of Him, in some sense. The example Jesus gave was Moses. He said, “Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses . . . If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you

believe my words?” (John 5:45-47, ESV).

Lenski’s comments on Jesus’ reference to Moses are insightful and powerful. He says,

Let the critics who repudiate the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch face this authoritative declaration of Jesus. It is worth more than all the so-called “research” that has ever been put forth and it stands overagainst these critics as Moses overagainst these Jews. . . . Nor did Moses write of Jesus only in a few detached places. . . . [T]he whole center and substance of what he wrote is Jesus. . . . From the story of creation onward, through all the following history, ceremony, prophecy and promise, he is ever in the mind of Moses. Moses in person and in office is even himself a type of the Mediator to come. (425-26)

Jesus, consistent with the court-case motif of the Gospels as Christological apologetic compositions, utilized an ancient legal technical term that meant “to bring charges in court” (Rogers and Rogers 195). He said Moses (through his Christological writings) would *accuse* them (verse 45). They could not use Moses’ writings to support their rejection of Jesus. Their rejection of Him (Jesus the Christ) was a rejection of Moses and all the Old Testament prophets. His argument, as implied, is as follows:

1. If you believed Moses, then you would believe Me (Jesus Christ).
2. It is false that you believe Me (Jesus Christ).
3. Therefore, it is false you believe Moses.

Disbelief in Jesus is disbelief in Moses. The force of this argumentation is captured in Jesus’ statement: “Moses, on whom you have set your hope.” A true disciple of Moses would be on his way to becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ (cf. Morris 334). But they had missed it! How stunned this must have left them!

## Conclusion

Is it not impressive that John adds no remarks at the end of this apologetic masterpiece delivered by our Lord? “Its testimony is most effective just as it stands” (Lenski 427). What a powerful marshaling of evidence that testifies to the veracity of the claims of the *Logos* (the WORD)—Jesus Christ. May people everywhere be impressed with the soundness of the case for Christ to the extent that they embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior through obedience to His gospel.

Christians also need to see the practical value of this discourse of our Lord as set forth in this witness-theme. The excellent article by Trites, to which I referred earlier, addresses this value. From this, I draw what seems to me are two extremely significant major points. First, this discourse of Jesus implies the importance of the historical foundations of Christian faith. This emphasis is set in a solid presentation of eyewitness testimony. Trites says, “Unless the testimony of these eyewitnesses can be impugned as spurious, misrepresented or erroneous, their evidence of Christian origins must be taken seriously” (1048). The witness nature of the case for Christ buttresses the historical solidity of the Christian faith.

In the second place, the nature of this material with the witness theme is extremely pertinent to our bewildered skeptical age.

All of this material is suggestive for [twenty-first] century apologists. The person and place of Jesus in the Present pluralistic [philosophical] theological climate is still very much a contentious issue. The claims of Christ as the Son of God are currently widely disputed. In such an environment a brief must be presented, arguments advanced and defending witnesses brought forward, if the Christian case is to be given a proper hearing. To fail to present the evidence for the Christian position would be tantamount to conceding defeat to its opponents. (1048)

Soldiers of Christ, ARISE!

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# The New Commandment

*John 13:18-35; 15:12-17*

*Gavin James*

## **The Foundations**

Though faith is “the substance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1) [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.], it is love that is the substance of Christian faith and fellowship. Love also abides, but it is greater than faith or hope (1 Cor. 13:13). The Lord who upholds all things (Heb. 1:3) is love (1 John 4:8). Love ought to be the foundation of all communication and interaction.

It seems appropriate also to delineate the kinds or types of love that are not attributed to the new commandment before attempting to affirm the basic nature of it. This manner of love is not an attitude one has towards certain people as well as foods or fictional characters. The love spoken of here is not merely a feeling or emotion, because it would be difficult if not unlikely to command an emotion. Emotions can also be fleeting and fickle. Wiersbe poses the question “Can true love be commanded?” in order to emphasize and recognize that the Christian sense of love Jesus employs here is not such a feeling, but “an act of the will” (46). Leon Barnes also points out “that this love is a behavioral love not an emotional one. It does not mean we will always *feel* loving; it means that our *actions* will always be loving” (emphasis added, 15). In one sense, true love is neither commanded or obligated; “love became active as an inward power and not a duty imposed” (Cook 198), yet once that love has been enjoyed, one can be commanded to abide in it (John 15:9).

Neither should it be thought that, for the sake of false peace, the capacity for or the ability to express love is the sole test of fellowship among Christ’s disciples. While love is the “key to unity” (Roper 424), the need to abide in Christ and His Word (John 15:7) is just as important. Pluralism is not demanded by this kind of love. The fact that love “believes all things” (1 Cor. 13:7) cannot mean that to love is required to accept any and every belief or proposition. If love also “rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6), then one cannot

accept a universal list of oft contradictory statements. Such extreme pluralism is nonsense to philosophers such as Gregory Bassham, who asks:

[W]hat sense does it make to say of an alleged religious entity that it is neither one nor not one; that it is neither the sustainer of the universe nor not the sustainer of the universe; that it is neither the source of authentic religious experience nor not the source of authentic religious experience? On the face of it, such a concept is simply unintelligible. (129)

While “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) or showing someone “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26) ought not to be done with undue offense or haughtily, evangelism is the greatest act of love one could bestow upon another soul when the result should be a closer walk with Jesus Christ. “[T]o love God and keep his light under a bushel is a contradiction of terms” (Bertocci 504). Jesus revealed His knowledge of Judas’ plan, but it did nothing to soften his heart. Peter believed he would be with Christ to the very end, but Christ shocked him by telling him the truth of the matter (Luke 22: 33, 34). More often than not, the difficult truths contained in the sword of the Lord which cuts to the heart (Heb. 4:12) must be handled delicately, and certainly with sincere love and a pure heart. If any lesson can be taken from the pages of the history of Christendom, the following account of a Dr. Sands’ persecution for Protestantism in a Catholic nation has much to say regarding humility in correcting error:

The keeper of the Marshalsea appointed to every preacher a man to lead him in the street; he caused them to go on before, and he and Dr. Sands followed conversing together . . . the keeper said to Dr. Sands: “I perceive the vain people would set you forward to the fire. You are as vain as they, if you, being a young man, will stand in your own conceit, and prefer your own judgment before that of so many worthy prelates, ancient, learned, and grave men as be in this realm. If you do so, you shall find me a severe keeper, and one that



utterly dislikes your religion.” Dr. Sands answered, “I know my years to be young, and my learning but small; it is enough to know Christ crucified, and he hath learned nothing who seeth not the great blasphemy that is in popery. I will yield unto God, and not unto man; I have read in the Scriptures of many godly and courteous keepers: may God make you one! if not, I trust He will give me strength and patience to bear your hard usage.” Then said the keeper, “Are you resolved to stand to your religion?” “Yes,” quoth the doctor, “by God’s grace!” “Truly,” said the keeper, “I love you the better for it; I did but tempt you: what favor I can show you, you shall be assured of; and I shall think myself happy if I might die at the stake with you.” (Foxye 358-59)

It is one thing to love, but it is another thing for one to make it easier for others to love one. It is one thing to find fault, but it is another thing to improve another’s knowledge of the truth. This principle is found throughout Scripture, but Paul in particular wrote:

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26)

### ***The First***

While John doesn’t record the impetus for Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, other Gospel accounts reveal that there was a dispute among the disciples regarding who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matt. 20:20; Mark 10:35; Luke 22:24), and this was not the first time such a dispute had arisen (Matt. 18:1; Mark 9:33; Luke 9:46). Theologians, preachers, Christians and Bible students are often cautious in applying certain principles and precepts of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John to anyone other than the apostles, unless it can be found elsewhere in the New Testament. The promise of the Holy Spirit guiding them “into all

truth” and showing “things to come” (John 16:13), for example, applies only to the apostles and perhaps, by implications, certain others that would receive such gifts after having the apostles hand laid on them (Acts 8:17). While every Christian should certainly follow this commandment of love (Heb. 13:1; 1 John 3:11), it might have special implications and application to the apostles and leaders in the church. A spiritual kingdom, Christ’s church and body, would be new in contrast of any kingdom which came before by that common love: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest *among* you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves” (Luke 22:25, 26). Even the bishops, or elders, of a congregation are called stewards (Tit. 1:7) as the congregation is not their own to lord over, but Christ’s.

This love can also grow lax when it is expected or thought to arise naturally. This strongest kind of love cannot exist without some amount of preparation and effort. Even the love between family members does not always strengthen itself naturally.

Love for a child does not always come naturally. There are children who, almost from the beginning, are not very loveable. There are those who have been loveable at points in their lives but have become completely unlovable. But in a Christian life we are obligated to love forever, to have a love that will not turn loose. (Barnes 14)

Love can be tough work in all kinds of relationships. Parents do not choose the children that God blesses them with. In some cultures, young people do not even choose for themselves who their spouse will be, but that does not mean the divorce rate is any higher in those countries because they did not choose, or choose based on emotion. Christians do not choose their neighbors or those that they worship with at the congregation in their geographic location, yet Christians are commanded to love them and anyone in the community who may become a member. The disciples probably wouldn’t have chosen each other’s company for personal reasons, but it was Jesus who

chose them (John 13:18). Some people may even have difficulties in their relationship with God, because there is but one God. If one is to have a relationship with God, it is in a sense “arranged,” because there is only one God (Eph. 4:6). One cannot choose a God who is good but not severe (Rom. 11:22) any more than one could choose a God who is severe and not good; choosing any idea other than God, the God who is and reveals Himself through nature and His Word, and calling it “God” is idolatry. For this reason early Christians would usually not burn incense to Caesar as a god, but that does not mean that they did not show more love, respect and honor for their civil government (1 Pet. 2:17) than others. Moffatt points out: “It was a tragic irony that the Jews, who were exempt from this Caesar-worship, troubled the State by rebellions, while the Christians on the whole showed civic loyalty” (42).

Loving one another does not preclude loving those outside the body of Christ. It rather implies that, as the old adage goes, charity begins at home. John argues “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20). Likewise, how can Christians love the lost if they can’t even love each other? Anyone is equally capable of showing love, Christian or not, for many times “the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8), but this love is commanded whether brethren are themselves loving or not. “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (Matt. 5:46).

One who seeks to be first in any relationship is essentially sabotaging that relationship. The goal of such relationships is not to see one’s wants or needs met all the time. Some relationships can exist if one’s wants or needs are met half of the time. The best relationships, however, are those where each party works to meet the other’s wants and needs at all times.

### *The Feast*

The text at hand includes the identification of Judas Iscariot as the betrayer of the Lord, so it seems all the more appropriate that negative examples be utilized to determine the positive nature of

Christian love. Christ promised that “the love of many will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12) and that even among Christians there would exist offenses, hatred, and betrayal (Matt. 24:10). Concerning Jesus, Sanders states that “His heart aches for the abandon of love, and His work languishes when it is absent” (71). How much love must have been lost for Judas to bring himself to betray his Master? Many feel it is safe to assume that Judas never had such love in his heart. Theological perspectives such as and similar to Calvinism demand that he was a devil even before Jesus pronounced him as one (John 6:70) and always would be. A thorough examination of this point is outside the scope of this particular study, but Peter was never one to mince words. He says plainly that Judas had a part in ministry and apostleship yet he “by transgression fell” (Acts 1:25). Jesus still extends the offer of friendship but is rejected. Love ought to be unconditional, but it is not a one-way street. Friendship with Christ requires obedience (John 15:14). “Service rests on love. Apostasy is the fruit of self-seeking . . . Love assures obedience; obedience assures love” (Cook 193, 219).

Much interest is given in the seating arrangement of this meal among Gospel commentators, perhaps with pure and noble intentions, but the various opinions exist because of many who conclude without or against supporting evidence. John, the author of this Gospel account, is assuredly the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 21:20, 24), which “marks an acknowledgment of love and not an exclusive enjoyment of love” (Cook 194). If Peter sat next to John, who in turn reclined on Jesus’ bosom, why would Simon Peter have to beckon to one he reclined next to (John 13:24)? On the other hand, one should reserve the judgment that Peter sat far enough away that he had to signal to John. There might have been some circumstances that are not evident that Peter saw fit to motion wordlessly to his immediate neighbor. Far more convoluted are ideas regarding which seats would be considered seats of honor or those of more intimate friendship. Certainly there were indeed seats for those of higher standing at weddings and wedding feasts (Luke 14:8-10), but whether the same principle applies at this setting is not as evident. In judgment, the right hand and left hand imply honor and dishonor (Matt. 25:33ff), but in a kingdom it would be understood

that both would be a seat of honor (Matt. 20:21), and neither one of these passages shed any light on the matter at hand. It is safe to say that John reclined at Jesus' bosom, and anything beyond this may be speculation.

Barclay goes so far as to surmise that, because of the discrete nature of these revelations to each, that John reclined on one side of Christ and Judas at the other (145). The handing of the bread to Judas (John 13:26) evidences some amount of proximity, or perhaps even honor bestowed upon him. "In the east to eat bread with anyone was a sign of friendship and an act of loyalty" (Barclay 142). To identify a traitor in this manner would have irony similar to being betrayed with a kiss (Luke 22:38). Even if the positions on both sides of the host were reserved for close friends, how the reality of the situation fails to match such an ideal. How vivid would such an image continue to ring in the disciples' mind either way: The Great Shepherd with a sheep on one side and a goat on the left, or perhaps with a sheep and a wolf in sheep's clothing. The same sort of imagery is employed in the Gospels at the cross, a penitent thief on one side, a reviler on the other, and the Christ at the center desiring to reconcile all people and all things (Col. 1:20). The Christian pleads that the sinner "might become both almost and altogether such as I am" (Acts 26:29) with the full joy and glory and untold riches that come from being united with Christ. Jesus, because of His great love, left this path open for Judas until this penultimate moment. He chose darkness though Christ offered him light and life, and he walked into the night with purpose, but without love or hope.

### ***The Forbearance***

Part of the lesson here is that love should be patient, or longsuffering (1 Cor. 13:4). This, in part, explains why Jesus' love demanded He tolerate Judas for so long knowing what he would do. Patience doesn't always mean waiting for an extraordinary amount of time; sometimes it requires letting go completely of one's own desires, recognizing that they may never or simply shouldn't come to pass. Did Paul continue persecuting the church after his baptism? Of course not. Judas' actions cannot be exonerated by prophecy. Coffman explains "God's foreseeing future events imposes upon

those events no necessity of happening, any more than a mortal's knowledge of past events caused them to occur" (338). It's very possible that the leaders of the synagogue were resourceful enough to capture Jesus eventually if Judas had not betrayed Him. Neither does the necessity of the atonement, or reconciliation between God and man, excuse such treachery. Jesus charged Pilate and the Jews with sin for allowing and ensuring His crucifixion (John 19:11). Many have guessed that he might have had political ambitions or other motivations besides covetousness (John 12:6), but no number of good intentions could possibly excuse such an act (cf. 1 Sam. 15:17-23). Neither does the entrance of Satan into Judas (John 13:27; Luke 22:3) abrogate his free will in the matter. Cook contrasts the language describing this going out with the former blind man being cast out of the synagogue (John 9:34); "the departure was a free act of Judas" (195). Perhaps Satan is mentioned to remind Christians of the real enemy; that Judas did not succumb to any temptation that Christians are immune to. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Let the paltry sum Christ was betrayed for, the price of a slave (Exod. 21:32), not be thought of as insult to injury on the traitor's behalf. Let it be a reminder of the willingness of the Lord to take the form of a servant (Philip. 2:7) and permit so grave an injustice only if He Himself were the victim.

Love ought to have a positive effect in the Christian's thinking and trust of others, especially brethren. The disciples' reaction to Christ's revelation indicates this. Upon hearing that one of them would betray Jesus, the disciples went around asking, "Is it I?" (Matt. 26:22; Mark 14:19) expecting a negative response; or as McGarvey and Pendleton render it, "Surely it is not I?" (424). What easily might have devolved into a round of accusations or confusion was time better spent in self-examination. They may not have suspected themselves, but they themselves were the only ones they had the right to suspect. It would not be enough to consider the beam in their own eye (Matt. 7:3) but rather search for the potential motes therein. Guthrie concurs and expounds "The discovery that a traitor belonged to the group led to serious self-examination . . . Moreover, they must have marveled at the patience Jesus had shown toward His betrayer on the eve of His passion" (309). Likewise, "Let a man

examine himself” (1 Cor. 11:28) and “keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas 1:27).

Now the question of Judas’ identification as betrayer is primarily who he was identified to. As the others asked “Is it I?” even Judas followed suit (Matt. 26:25). Christ effectively answered in the affirmative, that Judas was the one He spoke of, and this would have been evident to others had they heard “You have said it” (Matt. 26:25; cf. Clarke 249) . It seems likely that this information was meant for Judas personally and the others were ignorant of it (cf. Woods 294), especially given their reactions to Judas’ later exit. If they did know Jesus’ earlier words, they showed Judas the benefit of the doubt beyond reason, in effect hoping against hope (Rom. 4:18). There’s something to be said of the benefit of the doubt, of not suspecting brethren of impropriety if there are alternatives and not sufficient evidence. Even the dipping of the bread was likely a sign for John and possibly Peter alone (John 13:23-26). The only words that all of the disciples likely heard and did not understand were these: “What you do, do quickly” (John 13:27). It wasn’t just that most of the disciples did not believe he was capable of evil, they went so far as to assume he went to be of service or to do something good (John 13:29). If John heard Judas’ final instruction and already knew that he was the traitor, he still never dreamed that he would do so that very night!

If the nature of the commandment is understood, one may still ask what is so “new” about it. Some believe that Christian fellowship and charity would give love new meaning and power (Wiersbe 25). Cook also declares “In this case the ‘newness’ of the commandment . . . must be sought in the newness of the motive and of the scope, inasmuch as the example of the self-sacrifice of Christ . . . revealed to men new obligations and new powers” (197). Christ’s willing sacrifice revealed a deeper love than the world had ever known before or will ever know; “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7, 8). It is the kind of love that God demonstrates: to the Son of God, to his children, and even from the Son to His disciples (John 15:9). One



disciple betrayed Him, and many abandoned Him, but John followed his Lord and Master to Calvary. Even at the darkest hour, he was not ashamed to be known as one who loved Christ. If all others say it is a shameful thing to follow Jesus, then so be it. Sharing of such shame and suffering may not lighten the load, but such will be shared nonetheless if there is a common love between two or more. As John left Calvary before all things were finished, so did Christ certainly bear more than any other man could.

Perhaps nothing makes God more worthy of worship than his willingness to become Co-Sufferer . . . it is the love of God which means self-sacrifice, self-limitation, and suffering for the sake of others . . . If God is the Person who finds it worthwhile to suffer in order that increasing goodness may come into the world, then, as we have said, religion as it ought to be must reflect that fact . . . True religion is never an escape from suffering and hardship, but it is a *fellowship* in joy and suffering, for this is the basic purpose of religious living. (Bertocci 456, 457, 472-73)

The greatest glory (John 13:31-32) is found in loving service and sacrifice. Wiersbe marvels at how “The Father had put all things into the Son’s hands, *yet Jesus picked up a towel and a basin!*” (16). The key to the command is that Jesus told His disciples to love each other as He loved them (John 13:34). The fullest and utmost joy (John 15:11) is found in the same to one another and to God. To alter a popular expression, joy is putting Jesus and others first while putting yourself last. Jesus makes no distinction between persecuting the church and persecuting Him (Acts 9:5) or between helping those in need and assisting Him (Matt. 25:37-40). “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Likewise, love one another and serve one another and so fulfill this new commandment. This new commandment is not easy, but another challenge each Christian should consider and rise to meet. “Do we calculatingly reckon up our gifts to Him, carefully measuring out the expenditure of time and strength we devote to the interest of His kingdom?” (Sanders 70-71).



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### **Biographical Sketch**

Gavin M. James was born in Gallia County, Ohio, on April 9, 1985. He currently resides in Gallia County, serving the Rio Grande church of Christ as a Bible teacher for teenagers and also works as a Campus Minister for the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College. He broadcasts “Reasons I Believe” weekly on the college cable channel (RGCATV-17) each semester to the campus and surrounding community, including Rio Grande, Wellston and Jackson in Ohio. Gavin looks forward to graduating with a Bachelor’s Degree in Chemistry from the University of Rio Grande in May of 2015.

Gavin and his wife Kelly were married in March of 2008, just a month after the day they both obeyed the Gospel. A year later, they received custody of Kelly’s niece and nephew; Makia and Matthew, currently ages 8 and 7. Gavin is a 2012 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching and former minister of the church of Christ in Sesser, IL.

# His Humanity

*John 1:10-18*

*Neal Pollard*

In John 12:34, the people who had been listening to Jesus teach asked Him, “Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus had just made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, been audibly recognized by the Father out of heaven, and foreshadowed His coming death on the cross. They go back to the beginning of Christ’s teaching for this designation, “Son of Man,” an obvious description of His humanity. Even today, who Jesus is serves as an enigma to most. To the Muslims He is a great prophet, but nothing more. To those in western culture He is the source of fundamental fanaticism and squelcher of hedonistic fun. To the atheist, He is a barrier to their wishful idea of an objective, “factual,” naturalistic worldview. Even many in the name of Christianity do not know who He really is. Many who obey the Gospel never come to really know Him. That only comes thru the proper development of a relationship with Him, with abiding trust, full submission and dependence, prayer and the guidance of Scripture. When we dedicate ourselves to these, we will know who this Son of man is.

One of the first things the Gospel of John says about the identity of Jesus is that He lived on this earth as a human being. Acceptable faith in God requires belief in the humanity of the Son of God. In his epistolary writing, John says, “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God...” (1 Jn. 4:2-3). Then, he writes, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 Jn. 7). To not only be “not of God” but “a deceiver and an antichrist” is as serious as any matter could be. Thus, faith in the humanity of Christ is an essential.

In the preamble of the fourth Gospel, John introduces this eternal truth even as he makes his introduction of the One who preexisted as

the Word. The implications of the doctrine of incarnation impacts everything about the heart of the Gospel, Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. It makes no sense without the truth of Jesus having come in the flesh. The theological term "incarnation," taken from the Latin *incarnatio*, literally means "taking on flesh" (Myers n/p). Another writer adds much to this discussion, saying, "It refers to the Christian doctrine that the pre-existent Son of God became man in Jesus. The term does not appear in the New Testament, but the elements of the doctrine are present in different stages of development" (Achtemeier n/p). He points the student in the proper direction for understanding this profound theme, and that direction is the New Testament. Of the many texts that develop the theme, none is more significant than John 1:10-18. In at least four different ways, the inspired writer, John, elaborates on this indispensable idea of the incarnation of Christ. Notice how he does so.

### **"He Came to His Own" (John 1:11)**

In John 1:10, John begins from the macro-perspective looking at "the world." Three times, John mentions the world and does something significant with each reference. John begins with Jesus' existence— "He was *in* the world." This is a statement of fact verified by not only the writers of the New Testament, but also contemporaries of Jesus outside of the Bible. Notably, Josephus, at best a neutral witness (Blomberg 431-436), and Tacitus, a decidedly hostile witness (Van Voorst 39-53), affirm the existence of Jesus in the world. Even noted skeptics and agnostics of the present day, like Bart Ehrman, ridicule the notion that Jesus is the figment of Christianity's imagination. He wrote, "He certainly existed, as virtually every competent scholar of antiquity, Christian or non-Christian, agrees" (285). Many others, skeptic and believer, would line up to corroborate the statement Ehrman makes. Thus, John is simply stating what is seen even today as incontrovertible fact— Jesus was in the world.

Second, John says that "the world was made through Him." This fact is not embraced by the skeptic, agnostic, and atheistic communities, but John affirms it as vehemently and matter-of-factly as the first assertion. This is one of multiple statements asserting

the preexistence of Christ. This world into which He came was the very world He made. John has already said, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life...” (1:3-4a). Therefore, John is simply building on what He has already introduced. Of course, other New Testament writers harmonize this teaching. Paul writes, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16-17). Notice this affirmation in 1 Corinthians 8:6 as well. To this, the writer of Hebrews adds that the Father made the world through His Son (Heb. 1:2). John is setting up an incredible truth. Jesus became flesh and entered a world that He Himself personally constructed. What an unfathomable thought, that the Creator became part of the creation.

Third, John says that “the world did not know Him.” Jesus made the world, then entered the world. Once here, the creation rejected the Creator. Obviously, the Bible student understands that this was part of the “predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Yet, though this was the eternal purpose of God for the redemption of mankind, God will hold all those accountable who do not know Him (cf. 2 Th. 1:7-9).

Taken together, John 1:10 points to this fact of incarnation asserted in John 1:11. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” Through His omnipresence, the pre-incarnate Word, Christ, had witnessed every instance of the biological miracle of birth that He had set in motion—from Cain forward. Incredibly, He submitted Himself to that very process (cf. Phil. 2:7-8).

### **“The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt among Us...” (John 1:14)**

Certainly, this is recognized as the clearest affirmation of the humanity of Jesus in this paragraph. Understanding from the initial paragraph of this Gospel Who the Word is, we understand John 1:14 to overtly refer to Jesus Christ (see especially John 1:1-2). It is upon this declaration that so many of the mysteries of Christ’s identity are brought together. It is when we contemplate this truth that we are

awestruck by so many of the statements made in the New Testament, especially the many found in the four Gospel accounts. He grew hungry (Mat. 4:2). He experienced thirst (John 19:28). He needed sleep (Mat. 8:24). He experienced a full range of emotions—crying (John 11:35), zealous passion (John 2:17), and gladness (John 11:15). The writer of Hebrews indicates, in the broad sense, that Jesus was tempted in all points like we are (4:15) and that “in the days of His flesh” offered prayers “with vehement cries and tears” (5:7).

That Jesus assumed flesh is fundamental to the heart of the Gospel. Peter preached it in the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:30-31), Paul introduces the Roman epistle with this doctrine (1:3; see also a powerful statement in Rom. 8:3), Paul ties the fact of it to God’s eternal redemption plan (Eph. 2:15; Col. 1:22), and every time the New Testament writers refer to His birth, earthly life, death, burial, or resurrection, they are implicitly referencing His incarnation!

In this specific paragraph in John one, John alludes to the fleshly assumption of Jesus with various words: “begotten” (see below), “flesh,” and “Son.” The Maker participated in the human experience. The theological implication of this is great. The writer of Hebrews asserts, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:9-11). This passage asserts His fleshly position (“a little lower than the angels”), purpose (“for the suffering of death...that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone”), product (“crowned with glory and honor”), preincarnation (“for whom...and by whom are all things”), perfection (“make...perfect through sufferings”—not a suggestion that Jesus was imperfect before the incarnation, but that by such He experienced in the flesh what He already knew in His perfect mind), and peace (“are all of one”).

## **“He Who Comes after Me Is Preferred before Me, for He Was before Me” (John 1:15)**

John the Baptist makes a very significant statement by saying this, even if it may be missed at first glance. His witness is, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’” What does the harbinger mean here? Reading Luke 1:24-28, one sees that Elizabeth was already six months pregnant with John when she visits the now-expecting Mary who would, of course, bear Jesus. In this sense, then, Jesus came after John. Yet, John also professes that Jesus was before him. This is a witness to Jesus’ preincarnate form. One cannot help but think of Isaiah’s prophesy about Jesus’ coming and the nature of it. Isaiah 9:6-7 avers, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this” (Isa. 9:6-7). Isaiah foresaw One who was yet to be born, but was in fact Mighty God and Eternal Father!

## **“We Beheld His Glory, The Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father...” (John 1:14b)**

Twice in this paragraph, Jesus is referred to as “the only begotten” (1:14,18). He is referred to as the “only begotten Son” in the latter passage. Twice in John three, He is the “only begotten Son” (3:16,18). Once in his epistles, John refers to Jesus by this term (1 John 4:9). The Greek word is *μονογενής* (*monogenēs*), meaning, “Unique, one of a kind, one and only” (Zodhiates n/p). Zodhiates adds, “John alone uses *monogenēs* to describe the relation of Jesus to God the Father, presenting Him as the unique one, the only one (*mónos*) of a class or kind (*génos*), in the discussion of the relationship of the Son to the Father” (ibid.).

This term, while not concerned with the integral doctrine of the virgin birth and Jesus’ relationship to His mother, does speak of the Word as the Son of the Father. The three everlasting personalities

of God are co-eternal, but Jesus, in coming down to earth, assumed a role of submission in the relationship with the Father. This in no way makes Jesus sub-God or an under-God. Deity is possessed of one nature, and that nature includes perfection and limitlessness in such things as power, knowledge, and presence. Yet, Jesus voluntarily limited Himself in some ways by coming to earth. Truly, “This text makes it absolutely clear that the mission of the *Logos* was unique in the history of the world. This uniqueness of the Son makes it impossible for Christianity to be a syncretistic religion” (Borchert, n/p). To the Greek speakers in secular usage, the idea of “*monogenēs*” was of ‘a sole descendent,’ i.e., without brothers or sisters” but it was also used more often in the sense of being unique, unparalleled, and incomparable (Kittel, et al. n/p).

Looking at Jesus in the sense of “*monogenēs*,” we do think of His humanity in one sense. He was sent on a mission by the Father on this earth, and He accomplished that by taking on the robe of flesh and living as a human being on this earth. The taking on of flesh was pivotal to the reason why He came and did so. He was begotten to save us from our sins (3:16).

## **Conclusion**

One writer fires the imagination, saying,

Here is an exceeding wonder. What manner of person must Jesus have been when the men who companied with Him in the days of His flesh, who saw Him eating and drinking, who knew Him in all the intimacies of daily interaction, could thus think and speak of Him? [as equal with God, n/p]

It is incredible to consider the very agent of the creation “tented” among men, sitting at dinner tables, laughing, teaching, cleansing the temple, fishing, engaging in relationships, and feeling. He grew from the dependent baby in Mary’s arms to the Mighty One who calmed the seas, healed the sick, raised the dead and willingly gave up His life on a Roman cross. He is the One whose body was raised incorruptible to live forevermore. What a mystery! How hard to grasp yet how vital to believe. He came (John 1:11) and became



flesh (John 1:14) that we might become the children of God (1:12)!

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### Biographical Sketch

Neal was born in Oxford, Mississippi. Son of a preacher (Gary, Sr.). Formal education: Faulkner University, Freed-Hardeman University, Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver (B.A., M.B.S.). Have preached in gospel meetings, lectureships, and seminars in 25 states and 7 foreign countries. Direct Future Preachers Training Camp and Bear Valley Lectures each year. Part-time instructor at BVVID, currently teaching “Preacher And His Work.”



# The Prophet

*John 7:1-52*

*Emanuel Daugherty*

## **Introduction**

This fall marks the 20th anniversary of the beginning of West Virginia School of Preaching. It has been one of the great joys of my life to have had a part in the history and work of the school through the years. As always, I humbly and gratefully appreciate the invitation by the lectureship committee for asking me to speak again this year.

Chapter Seven Outlined:

- I. Jesus' Brothers Urge Him to Go Up to the Feast (1-13)
- II. Three Discourses at the Feast of Tabernacles (14-36)
- III. Christ's Authority for His Teaching (14-24)
- IV: From Whence Is the Christ? (25-32)
- V. His Approaching Departure (33-36)
- VI. The Discourses on the Last Day of the Feast (37-52)
  - A. Jesus the Fountain of Life - Rivers of Living Waters (37-39)
  - B. The Division of the Multitude (40-44)
  - C. Reaction of the Chief Priests and Pharisees (45-52)

Conclusion: John Seven speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles and Jesus announcing Himself as the fulfillment of the antitype of that great feast which represents blessings to come upon believers in the Gospel Age with its attendant blessings, under the metaphor of Christ being the "Living Water."

## **Historical Introduction: Jesus' Brothers Urge Him to Go up to the Feast (1-14)**

About six months pass between chapter 6 and chapter 7, and John is silent concerning the activities of Jesus during that period.

John was selective in his telling of the life of Jesus. “John has at the utmost an account of but 20 days of the Lord’s ministry” (Thiessen 176). “The Jews had sought to kill Him, hence, He confined His ministry to the area around Galilee” (Hamilton 73). Woods says, the reason why the unbelieving Jews sought to kill Him was because they were “incensed by His teaching and inflamed by His claims to be the Son of God and Savior of the world”(141). Jesus’ brothers were urging Him to go up to the feast of Tabernacles to demonstrate His power so that His followers can marvel at His works, and thus, to their minds, increase His popularity among the people and thereby increase His following. We might call this “good *worldly* advice.” Worldly men still prefer the sensational and spectacular over the teaching of plain, ordinary truth. John adds that “even His brothers did not believe in Him” (5).

It is important that we explain this interchange between Jesus and His brothers, for some have accused Jesus of lying when He said He would not go up to the feast, but then He did (11). But Jesus said, “My time is not yet come.” Jesus had an *appointed* time given by God, and an *opportune* time to do His teaching and works. Jesus often spoke of His time or hour [*hora*], the time that God had planned for Him, His destined time; His passion - arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:27). Here He uses a different word [*kairos*] the best time, the suitable time, the opportune time (6, 8; Barclay 231). Jesus is saying, He would not go to the Feast at this time, but wait for the opportune time to make His appearing at the great feast; and this we will see is true. An appearance at the Feast without the ‘right timing’ would force the hand of the Jews against Jesus but that time had not yet come. God does not work on the timetable of men. That ‘time’ would be the next year at the Feast of the Passover when the Lamb of God would be slaughtered.

Some commentators have actually had the temerity to accuse Jesus of deliberately lying to His brothers. One says, “Jesus Christ did of set purpose utter a falsehood” [Schopenhauer, German philosopher] (Barclay 231). Barclay’s remarks regarding this conversation help to clarify what was actually said and meant by Jesus’ reply to His brothers.

## **The Three Discourses at the Feast of Tabernacles (14-36)**

### ***Discourse One, Jesus' Authority Questioned***

The question of Jesus' authority has arisen on other occasions and would several times more until the time of His crucifixion (see Matt. 21:23). Those in the crowd wanted to know, "How does this man know 'letters' having never studied." The English Standard Version says it this way, "How is it that this man has learning when He has never studied?" They were not questioning His literacy; that is, how He learned to read and write, but His teaching; where did He get His knowledge of the Scriptures having never studied under any known rabbi? Jesus, by this time in His ministry, is a well-known, recognized Teacher; Nicodemus acknowledged Him calling Him 'Rabbi' in John 3:1. A rabbi became a teacher by studying under another rabbi, and learning all the thought and opinions of famous rabbis of the past. Jesus did not acquire His doctrine in this way; His teaching came from above, from the Father (16; 1:18).

Jesus refuted their charge by drawing attention to the divine source both of His claims to be a teacher and of the content of His teaching. He was no up-start, puffed up by His own self-gathered knowledge, nor did He aim at winning honor for Himself; He was sent by God and His supreme object was to reflect the glory of Him that sent Him (16). This was the hallmark of honesty and sincerity. (Tasker 104)

Evidence of the divine character and authority of His teaching is to be found by all who honestly determine to do the Father's will (17). "By this our Lord simply said that where there is the strong determination to do what God requires the effort will lead to a knowledge of the divine origin of the message and its meaning...The honest heart, the sincere soul, whose only motivation is to do right will have no difficulty in determining what is right" (Woods 147).

### ***From Whence Comes the Christ? (25-32)***

The boldness of Jesus' teaching and the hesitation of His antagonists to say anything against Him made a deep impression on

His hearers. Some thought that He might actually be the Messiah. But this thought is quickly dismissed by those who were unable to “judge righteous judgment...who judge solely based upon appearance” (24). Among those in the multitude there were some who observed superficially, they thought they knew where Jesus was from; “he’s the carpenter’s son.” But they also reasoned that no one could really know from where the Messiah would arise.

Jesus now proclaims loudly so that others can hear and be drawn closer to Him. “You both know me and you know where I am from,” so you think. “But He who sent me is true,” He is the Father, but you really don’t know Him. This greatly angered the leaders of the Jews, but none of them laid a hand on Him, because “His hour had not yet come,” that is, the time for his sacrificial death and suffering (cp. comments on verses six and eight).

Yet many in the multitude believed in Him. Jesus was winning this contest! The many that believed also argued in His defense. They said, “When the Christ shall come, – when the fact materializes – will He do more signs than this man has done?” (Morgan 134).

They put forth a reasonable and effective argument. Jesus had performed many miracles and it was the view of Jewish teachers that Messiah would do this [work wonders and miracles, ebd] when he came (Isa. 35:5, 6). The Christ would give supernatural proof of his identity by performing miraculous powers no mere man could do; Jesus had done this: ought they not then to accept him as the Messiah? (Woods 152)

### ***Jesus’ Approaching Departure (33-36)***

When the rulers of the Jews heard the murmuring in the crowd, they sent officer’s to arrest Jesus. Knowing what was in their hearts concerning Him, Jesus announced that He would be with them only a little while longer, that He was going away to a place where they could not find Him. The reaction of the Jews was mocking derision; “Where will he go that we cannot find him? Will he go unto the Dispersion among the Greeks? Will he teach the Greeks?”

The Greeks are heathen Greeks. The Dispersion among the Greeks are Jews living outside the Holy Land. Thus being rejected even by the Jews scattered abroad, He would be reduced to teaching the heathen Greeks. One can imagine the sneering ridicule in these words applied to Jesus claiming the position of the Messiah. A fine Messiah descending to such a depth” (Lenski, *Eisenach Gospel*, 623).

### ***Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles***

This feast is one of three commanded by God for all Jewish males to keep every year: (1) Passover, (2) Pentecost, and (3) Tabernacles. About the middle of the Feast is when Jesus chose to come, and He, with His fellow countrymen, was celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles [booths, or tents made of branches], remembering that Israel lived in temporary dwellings during their sojourn in the Wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. The feast was held in the 7th month, the 15th of Tishri, [September - October] (7:2; see Lev. 23:39), and lasted eight days. It was about 6 months after the Passover (the feast of chapter six). It was also called “The Feast of Ingathering, or Booths,” and was celebrated as a thanksgiving for the harvest of oil, grain and other produce. In Jesus’ time this was the feast “especially sacred and important to the Hebrews” (Josephus Ant. VIII.iv.1; #100).

“Water” is used here as a metaphor pointing to blessings to come on those who believe, and can be traced through many books of the Old Testament. There is the account of bitter water made sweet at Marah (Ex. 15:23) and water from the Rock (Ex. 17:1ff; Num. 20:14; 1 Cor. 10:4). Other examples of water used as a metaphor will be given later in the chapter.

“On the last day, the great day of the feast...” This was the eighth day, the last day the feast (See Lev. 23:36 and Neh. 8:8). A highlight of the Feast was the Water Ceremony. Each day of the feast a priest would draw water from the Gihon spring that supplied the water to the Pool of Siloam. The priest would take a golden pitcher, and with crowds of rejoicing people following, he would pour it on the altar of sacrifice. A great chorus of singers of the Levites would chant, “In that day...with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12:3). Immediately, the *Hallel*, (parts of the Psalms 113-118)

were chanted by the Levites and the people repeated each line after the priests. It was a ceremony filled with joy and thanksgiving.

## **The Discourses on the Last Day of the Feast (37-52)**

### ***The Water of Life Offered to the Thirsty***

Jesus stood (as a herald) and cried (out with a loud voice). “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.” Jesus is not a water vendor. We recognize He is speaking of quenching spiritual thirst. Zechariah prophesied, “In that day, living water shall go out from Jerusalem” (14:8). Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, taught, “Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). Thirst is often used to express one’s spiritual appetite. David poetically wrote, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...” (Psa. 42:1-2).

“Out of His heart (ESV from within him) shall flow rivers of living water, but this He spoke of the Holy Spirit, whom those believing in him would receive, for the Spirit was not yet given: because Jesus was not yet glorified” (38-39; see John 16:7). Jesus was glorified when He was resurrected and had ascended back to the Father (John 17:5; Philip. 2:5-11). The promise of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on Pentecost and the beginning of the NT church (Acts 2:16ff). On Pentecost people in the crowd thought Peter and the apostles were drunk, but Peter said what was happening to the apostles was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28). In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (2:1-4) and the indwelling Spirit upon obedient disciples (2:38). Those who believe in Christ would themselves become fountains of blessing to others. Hailey observes, “Jesus had promised personal satisfaction in that which He would provide; now He promises that those who drink would not only be satisfied themselves, but they would also be able to provide for the wants of others, “for from within him [the believer] shall flow rivers of living water” (7:37-39). The believers would be a blessing to others.

### ***“That Rock Is Christ”***

The water ceremony during the Feast of Tabernacles also



commemorated Moses' providing water from the Rock (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-11). "All drank of the same spiritual drink they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them. That Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). Let us drink deeply! (Matt. 5:6).

It is pure. "For with you is the fountain of life" (Psa. 36:9). It is abundant, free-flowing, a never ending stream. Jesus promised the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well "a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). For twenty centuries the "fountain of life" has been providing everlasting life to men and women.

Hear the lament of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah - "O LORD, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You shall be ashamed. Those who depart from Me Shall be written in the earth, Because they have forsaken the LORD, The fountain of living waters" (Jer. 17:13). "For my people have committed two evils: The have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13-14). Isaiah invited, "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isa. 55:1).

### ***CHRIST Is the "Fountain of Cleansing"***

"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1; 1 John 1:7). There is only ONE "well of salvation" revealed in the Gospel; that is Jesus! Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinks of the water I give shall never thirst" (John 4:10, 14). Wherever the Gospel is preached the well of salvation is opened giving eternal life (Rom. 1:16). Cleansing for sin comes when the believer contacts the blood of Jesus in baptism. Paul writes (Rom. 6:3-5), His blood was shed "for the remission of sins" (Matt 26:28; cp. Acts 2:38). In Romans 6:3-4 the beloved apostle Paul shows that in baptism, the believer is baptized into Jesus' death, dying to sin, and just as Christ died and was buried and was raised from the dead, we too die to sin, are buried [in water], and are raised from death [in sin] to new life. "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Rom. 6:6). Isaiah said,

“With joy, you shall draw water from the wells of salvation.” The water of life is there waiting for the sinner, but he must “draw” it out. Grace offered is of no benefit until accepted” (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16).

### ***Blessings Drawn from the Wells of Salvation***

What are some of the blessings drawn from the wells of salvation? Grace, mercy, peace and goodness are wells of life springing from the heart of God offering salvation from sin. There is faith, hope, love to carry us on our journey through life (1 Cor. 13:13). There is the fruit of the Spirit – Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22-23), and the Christian graces – faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, charity (2 Pet 1:5-7). These help to make us morally and spiritually pure. Topping it off is the unity that binds us together in peace in the wonderful fellowship of the church.

### **The Division of Some in the Multitude (40-44)**

From some in the multitude came the words, “This is of a truth the Prophet,” a reference to Deuteronomy. “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear. . . I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him” (Deut. 18:18-19). This response to Christ’s teaching is a quite natural reaction, for this would bring to mind the water from the rock, the miracle of Moses in the books of Exodus and Numbers that provided for the great multitude that were needing water in the Wilderness of the Sinai desert. Raymond Brown reminds us of the meal Jesus provided with just a few loaves and fishes when he says, “We saw it in 6:14 that the resemblance between Jesus’ power to multiply loaves and that of Moses to bring down manna from heaven led the crowd to identify Jesus as the Prophet. The same type of resemblance is at work here” (Brown 329; see Psalm 105:40-41).

### ***Others See Jesus as the Messiah***

However, the idea of Jesus being the Messiah is met by a challenge. The critics ask, “What, does the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” (41-42).

“Some deny His Messianic character because He comes from Galilee. They are sure that Christ must be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, as the Sanhedrin itself, years ago, correctly answer the question of the wise men from the east at His birth [Matthew 2:5 compared with Micah 5:2]. (Spaeth 106)

Barclay rightly observes, “Here is tragedy. A great religious experience had ended in the aridity of a theological wrangle” (252). That Jesus is the Prophet whom Moses said would come, and that He is the Messiah of the prophets is clearly acknowledged by the inspired writers of the New Testament.

For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’ Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. (Acts 3:22-24)

### **The Chief Priests and Pharisees (45-52)**

The officers sent to arrest Jesus returned empty to the rulers who had sent them (32). The report filled them with great contempt for the officers, for various would-be believers and especially for Jesus. Students of the Scriptures perhaps do not grasp the depth of the intellectual snobbery and insolent pride of the Pharisees in the time of our Lord. The following quote from William Barclay helps us to see the contempt they had on their fellow-citizens who were not of

the sect of the Pharisees [they referred to them as the *People of the Land*].

To marry a daughter to one of them was like exposing her bound and helpless to a beast. The rabbinic law said: ‘Six things are laid down about the People of the Land: entrust no testimony to them, take no testimony from them, trust them with no secret, do not appoint them guardians of an orphan, do not make them custodians of charitable funds, do not accompany them on a journey.’ Further, they wrote, ‘it is forbidden to be a guest of one of the People of the Land, or to entertain such a person as a guest. It was even laid down that, wherever it was possible, nothing should be bought or sold from one of them. (253)

The officers had been held spellbound by His teaching and when confronted by the chief priests and Pharisees, they could only reply, “No man ever spoke like this man.”

Guy N. Woods offers five reasons for the officers being so awed by the personality and words of Jesus (1) He spoke with divine authority; (2) His words were more applicable to man’s needs than any other was able to speak; (3) He addressed the heart and conscience; (4) He spoke for the Father as well as for Himself; and (5) His manner of speaking was fully in keeping with His momentous theme (Woods 159).

## **Conclusion**

Jesus proved Himself to be the Prophet and Messiah and Water of Life by word and deed. The fountain of cleansing is still open to those who need to be washed and cleansed. And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” Let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17; Acts 22:16). Make your life a channel of blessing for others and from you shall flow rivers of living water.

## **Addenda: The Feast of Tabernacles Outlined in Zechariah**

In the setting of Tabernacles Zechariah 9-14 describes:

1. The messianic king comes to Jerusalem, triumphant and riding on a donkey (9:9).
2. Jehovah pours out a spirit of compassion and supplication on Jerusalem (12:10).
3. He opens up a fountain of cleansing: for the house of David and Jerusalem (13:1).
4. Living waters flow from Jerusalem to the east and west (14:8; see Ezek. 47:1 ebd).
5. And finally, when all enemies are destroyed, people come up year after year to properly keep the Feast (14:16).
6. In this ideal keeping of the feast of Tabernacles everything in Jerusalem is holy, and there are no more merchants in the Temple (14:20-21). (Raymond E. Brown, *Gospel of John* Vol 1, 326)

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Emanuel Daugherty is a native of Barbour County, WV and is married to the former Judith Null. They have four children and eight grandchildren and one great grandchild. He graduated from Getwell Road School of Preaching (Memphis School of Preaching) and Alabama Christian School of Religion (Amridge University). He has preached at Alkire Road in Grove City, OH, Dewey Avenue in St. Marys, WV, and served as the first Director of West Virginia School of Preaching. Presently brother Daugherty is preaching for the Salem church of Christ in Glen Easton, WV and continues teaching at WVSOP.

# Forgiveness and the Adulterous Woman

*John 8:1-11*

*Neal Pollard*

The fact that there have been some who have disputed the place of John 8:1-11 in the text of Scripture, either at all or at this point in the text, is not the focus of this assignment. It will be assumed that this passage is inspired of God and is, as such, Scripture that is profitable and that equips the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is a powerful lesson on forgiveness found in the account of the woman caught in adultery.

Examining the text, one observes the setting. The place first mentioned in the text is the Mount of Olives (1). It “gained its name from its extensive olive groves which were renowned in antiquity” (Elwell n.p.). This is the place where Jesus will spend most of the last week of His life before the crucifixion, teaching there (Mark 13) and praying there in the evenings (Luke 21:37; Mark 14:26). It overlooks the city of Jerusalem and the temple and stands to the east near Bethany, where Jesus’ dear friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus live. Jesus descends from the nearly 2700 foot heights of this mount to enter Jerusalem. That Jesus was at the temple, given what is revealed in the verses following, indicates that He was in the temple area rather than inside the temple building or sanctuary.

The timing of the events is “early in the morning” (2). This would have been an active time of day, as people were beginning the hustle and bustle of trade, commerce, daily chores, and the like. The text mentions “all the people” gathering at the temple, and Jesus is busy sitting and teaching them.

The people who make up this biblical account are an interesting and diverse lot. There is Jesus along with all the people, the Pharisees and scribes, and the woman caught in adultery. The scribes and Pharisees bring this woman and her situation to Jesus “testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him” (6).

Thus, a guilty woman, vulnerable and worthy of death, stands before Jesus and her accusers. What Jesus does in this situation transcends both expectation and rebuttal. Examining this account and the woman who is the focus of it, notice her from the various perspectives of those present that day.

### **To All the People, She Was an Object of Curiosity and Possible Amusement**

Here are the people who have gathered to hear Jesus who undoubtedly witness the Jewish leaders bringing this woman before Him. If there is anyone who feels compassion, the text says nothing of his defending her or intervening on her behalf. They are the common people, the rank and file, as indicated by the original word translated “people.” They are individuals bound together by some common tie, whether ethnicity, class, or even religious persuasion. They are the multitudes, average in every way. It is not clear if they were anxious or prepared to pick up a stone to kill this woman.

The sinner is surrounded by plenty of people who are witness to his transgressions. They watch the sinner’s behavior and hear the sinner’s words. When such a one comes to Jesus, they are curious to see what will become of him. They are neither supporters nor necessarily detractors. They are onlookers, whether skeptical or hopeful or even wholly disinterested.

### **To One Man, She Was a Sexual Object to Use**

It is always interesting to read this account and think about the man who was not caught in adultery or set with her in the midst of “all the people” and Jesus. He is conveniently left out of the trap. Yet, since this woman was caught in the very act, she was engaged in sexual activity with a man. At least one of them was married for it to be adultery. This passage also powerfully demonstrates that adultery involves more than the marriage covenant, but entails the idea of sexual immorality. Otherwise, the charge makes no sense.

The faceless, nameless man was using this woman. She was a tool for sexual gratification. Had he honorable feelings for her, he would not have participated in something that meant potential death for her. He allowed her to be exposed to shame and contempt. For



all that is unknown about him, he was taking advantage of her. The Bible does not say which of the two was the aggressor, but neither one of them was innocent. The man had not given her his name. It is an illicit, illegitimate relationship.

The sinner will always have those who stand ready to wallow in the mire with them. With no regard for the sinner's soul, these conspirators feel no compunction about leading or following the sinner into sinfulness. The Prodigal Son could not have lived loosely alone (Luke 15:13; cf. 15:30). There will always be the masses intent on doing evil (Exo. 23:2; cf. Mat. 7:13). Among them will be those who see the sinner only as someone to use for their own satisfaction. Having the wisdom to recognize this, the sinner should have sufficient motivation to separate himself or herself from such unworthy company.

### **To the Scribes and Pharisees, She Was a Pawn For Their Use**

It would have been wonderful if these religious leaders were genuinely concerned about upholding moral purity. If they had the proper reverence for God and humble submission to His Law, perhaps they would have been like the spiritual ones Paul calls for in Galatians 6:1 who meekly approach the sinner full of introspection and fear of God in an attempt to restore him to fellowship with God. There is no such compassion or thought from these religious elites. They were so consumed with hatred for Jesus, they did whatever they could and were willing to drag whoever they felt could help them serve their ulterior purpose. This woman was just a puppet in their hands, as far as they were concerned.

The sinner will be surrounded by those who have no interest in his spiritual welfare. However they can use him, they will eagerly do so. They definitely do not see the sinner as a lost soul or even consider his spiritual condition. Sometimes, the people of God can even look at the sinner like these religious leaders did. Without any interest in the salvation of the sinner, they are perfectly willing to condemn him and "cast the first stone." Their goal is not to restore him. It is to condemn him. Perhaps they wish to exert an air of spiritual superiority over the sinner.

## **To the Law of Moses, She Was a Sinner Worthy of Death**

The law was black and white concerning one known to commit adultery. Leviticus 20:10 unambiguously says, “If there is a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” Adultery was condemned in the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:14). In the Old Testament books of poetry and the prophets, as well as the books of law, adultery was roundly censured. The adulterer was depicted horribly and negatively. This was so vile a sin that God used it to illustrate spiritual apostasy, the very falling away from faithfulness to Him.

In the heavenly court of justice, this woman was guilty. She *was* worthy of death. There was no mitigating circumstance or piece of evidence that could have justified her. Jesus explicitly refers to her life as being tainted by sin (11).

The sinner can do nothing to justify himself or herself. Paul writes that death is what one earns as the payment for transgression (Rom. 6:23). As that woman stood there in the midst of her castigators, she was what they said she was. Of course, Jesus adeptly points out that they were what she was, too. His powerful statement, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first” (John 8:7), convicted each of them in their conscience until they all leave in shame (John 8:9). Why? They were sinners, too! Perhaps their sin was not adultery, but the fact of their sinfulness left them in the same position as their scapegoat.

What a helpful reminder for everyone! Held up against the perfect measuring stick of Scripture, we are worthy of condemnation. Paul says,

What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” “Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit”; “The poison of asps is under their

lips”; “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom. 3:9-18)

Each and every accountable person to have lived on this earth is in the same category as this lowly woman. One may not regard his or her sin to be as serious or to carry the consequences of the sin of this woman, but, eternally, the consequence is the same. While men may not be in a position to throw rocks at us, God has the right to consign us all to a devil’s hell for eternity. That, without Christ, is mankind’s just desserts.

### **What Was She to Jesus?**

Despite the attempted trap of the religious hypocrites, this narrative narrows its focus to two people—Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. Regardless of what anyone else thought of her, what Jesus thought of her is what mattered most. What would He do with a woman who seemed so obviously tainted with the stain of sin? What was she to Jesus?

*She was a person to defend.* Those Jewish leaders brought this woman to Jesus, surely trying to discredit Him in the eyes of “all the people.” For Jesus to encourage a stoning would have no doubt created problems with the Roman authorities, would have marred His image in the eyes of His heretofore adoring audience, and would have made them look as if they had won an advantage over Him. Yet, unwittingly, these men took on the very One who made their minds and mouths. John is speaking of Jesus when he says, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men” (John 1:3-4).

Thus, Jesus meets their pretense first with silence and then with a stroke of logic the brightest defense attorney could not originate. He challenges them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” Their response proves Jesus’ successful defense. Not a rebuttal was offered or counterargument produced. Beginning with the oldest even to the last, these testers left Jesus and

the woman there alone.

It is wonderful to observe that Jesus is the best and only defense that a person could ever have. The writer of Hebrews teaches that Jesus, the great High Priest, does more perfectly what all other high priests did under the Old Law. In Hebrews 5:1, he says, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” He does not have to offer, like they did, a sacrifice of sin for Himself (Heb. 5:3), since though He was tempted in all points as we are did not ever sin (Heb. 4:15). He lives to make intercession for the saints (Heb. 7:25b). There is not a sinner He does not wish to defend. There is no greater proof of this than the great sacrifice He made to rescue mankind from a sentence of eternal separation from God. He shed the blood that justifies and saves one from wrath (Rom. 5:9).

*She was a soul to save.* He certainly is the reason for her physical preservation, but Jesus’ response proves Him more concerned with her spiritual preservation. He points out that no one stayed and stood to condemn her (John 8:10). Jesus had given her the opportunity for salvation.

It is certainly in keeping with Jesus’ overall mission to see Him as her Savior. Luke 19:10 reveals that Jesus came to this earth to seek and save the lost. This woman is a more transparent example of a lost person needing salvation, but every one stands shoulder to shoulder with her in abject need before the Savior. Jesus looks at every sinner as a soul to be saved. His marching orders just prior to ascending into heaven shows His concern for saving lost souls. The so-called “Great Commission” calls His disciples to be engaged in saving souls (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-47).

Christ notes that no one had pronounced sentence against her and judged her guilty with His use of the intense word “κατακρίνω” (“condemn,” v. 11). So, Jesus says that He does not “κρίνω” (“condemn” her, v.12), meaning “to judge, to form or give an opinion after separating and considering the particulars of a case” (Zodhiates n.p.). Jesus is going to ultimately give His life on the cross of Calvary to provide the opportunity for everyone who submits to His plan to be judged and separated out for eternal life

(cf. Mat. 25:31-39, 46). He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pe. 3:9).

*She was a forgiven one to send.* It is noteworthy to see that the story does not end with the granting of pardon. Jesus goes further. When she tells Him that no one has condemned her, Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:12). Certainly, there is relief in forgiveness, but there is also a need for purpose and for further accountability.

Paul would later teach, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Rom. 6:1-2). God knows that we will always need grace and forgiveness, but His grace is not a license to continue in sin. He wants us to live in the light (cf. 1 John 1:7-10). This woman is not given a blank check to live according to the flesh. She is given a new lease on life to rise above the horrible past she now had.

John Raidt, one of the 9/11 Commission Report investigators, once spoke about the footnotes at the end of the nearly 600 page report. It contains 1742 footnotes, many of them stories of people who came face-to-face with the horrors of 9/11. Raidt said that a common thread between these people was the guilt so many of them shared. In their case, they had nothing about which to feel guilty. Many of them, even a decade after the tragedy, struggled with whether or not they did wrong or if they did enough (Mitchell Dillon, Illustration Exchange). The chances are very remote that you and I will be in a similar circumstance as them. Not to belittle their grief and anguish, but we actually do also face choices and decisions that have lifelong and even eternal implications.

While we may find ourselves feeling undeserved guilt, there is a measure of guilt that is healthy to feel when we sin. Some people sin and seem to do so with a callused conscience or they suppress their guilt. But just what is the right way to respond to guilt? When is it not enough or too much? Because we’re human, we will struggle with this all of our lives—even if we are Christians. Paul talks about his sin and spiritual inadequacy in Romans seven and concludes, “Wretched man that I am.” The one who saves him, though, is Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 8:1-2).

Another person, a faithful child of God, lusted after a married woman. He lured her to his room, seduced her, got her pregnant, and then tried to cover it up. He tried to get her husband to sleep with her to try and cover his tracks. After his deception failed, he arranged to have her husband killed. Then, he married the woman and the baby is born which means at least 9 months goes by after this. Finally, he is confronted with his sin and is made to see the dire consequences of what he had done. How many people have gotten into similar messes and have chosen to be hard-hearted? They defend their actions or minimize it. They give reasons for why they feel justified. But David, one after God's own heart, is crushed when Nathan so bluntly reveals his sin. Moved by the Holy Spirit, he writes the 51st Psalm. While no one would want to be in David's shoes, we all have sinned and fall short of God's glory. So, when we do come face to face with the guilt of our sins, we will imitate David's example. He accurately assessed his spiritual problems (1-5), acknowledged God's ability to help (1-5), aspired to overcome his sin (6-12), went into action, doing what was right (13-17), and anticipated a better future (18-19). What God wanted for David He wanted for the adulterous woman and He wants for us. He wants us to see sin as the hideous thing it is, but then He wants us to see His ability to help and to see our ability to overcome it, do right, and have blessed assurance for the future.

## **Conclusion**

This woman was viewed from every conceivable angle, from curious spectacle to sexual object, from contempt to compassion. The view that mattered most, Jesus' vantage point, saw her not only for what she was but for what she could be. The example of her story helps us to appreciate that not only is sin bad, but it can be remedied. Jesus would say to every obedient one today what He told her. "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

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# The Door

*John 10:1-10*

*Van Sprague*

In this portion of the Bible we find uncompromised truth presented with tact. Jesus' teaching is clear, while convicting the gainsayer and edifying the needy. Let us examine Jesus' story, followed by His application. If we as His followers, may grow in our appreciation of our life in His fold. If one has yet to enter in by the Door, let him be so moved by Jesus' timeless appeal.

When interpreting Scripture, it has been said "we interpret it literally." Such a claim is a misnomer at best. One may have the correct idea when making this statement; however, the language is confusing. If we truly understood the entire Bible literally, it would be incomprehensible and absurd much of the time. One must look no farther than Jesus' "I Am" statements, studied in this lectureship, to see the error of this assertion. What would it mean to say we, *literally*, believe Jesus is the bread of life, light of the world, door, shepherd, or true vine? All of these claims are true, but they are to be understood in regards to the style of the language. Let us suggest that sound hermeneutics requires that we comprehend God's Word *literally*. Doing this, one takes into account whether any portion of Scripture is literal or figurative. Further, is it a narrative, allegory, parable, poem, or another of a host of devices mankind (and, so, our God) uses to communicate?

While such consideration is important regarding the appropriate application of the knowledge of syntax, lexicology, and historical and biblical context of any Scripture, we find it especially important in regards to the text at hand. John 10:1-5 reads thus:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name

and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

Subsequently, the Messiah called Himself both the door and the shepherd. Reading this passage without regard to what type of literary device our Savior employed leads to false interpretation, and/or inadequate understanding of the mixed metaphors, door and shepherd. To avoid confusion, let us investigate what type of expression Jesus used here. Then we will have the necessary vantage point to correctly understand the remainder of this section.

In an attempt to clarify Christ's fluid adaptations of figures, Libscomb read this section as one parable and distinguished it from verses 7-10.

There are two parables presented here that are often combined as one. This creates some confusion. Again, persons frequently conclude that because a person or fact represents one thing in a parable it must do it in all parables. This produces confusion. The first parable here spoken concludes with verse 6. A second and distinct parable begins with verse 7 and concludes with verse 10. In the first parable, Jesus is the Shepherd entering into the fold and calling [H]is sheep. In the second, Jesus is the door by or through which the sheep enter into the fold of God. After the conclusion of the two parables, [H]e presents truths drawn from them. (150-151)

According to the English rendering in the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, John would seem to have confirmed such an understanding. Verse 6 reads, "This *parable* spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them" (Emphasis mine VVVS). While it is true that a figure, once interpreted, may represent something else in another context, one does not need to look far to find difficulty with treating the first 5 verses of John as a parable.

The word we typically translate parable, “*parabolē*,” is found nowhere in John. What the KJV rendered “parable” is actually from the word “*paroimia*,” which is never used in Matthew through Luke. This word is used only three other times in Scripture: John 16:25, 29, and 2 Peter 2:22. In each of these cases the KJV used “proverb,” and the NJKV used “figurative language,” “figurative language,” and “proverb,” respectively. The Septuagint named the book, Proverbs, “*ai paroimiai*” (Nicoll 789).

Lest we be found guilty of false assumptions about the technical meaning of this word, by treating it as if it “always or nearly always has a certain technical meaning” (Carson 45), let us see if “parable” is a fitting translation, considering the context. The primary way the word parable is used denotes parallels drawn between a physical story and a spiritual lesson which are expressed by means of simile. Most exceptions are applied metaphorically and still told as stories – often in the aorist tense and indicative mood – which could have happened but may not be factual (see Matt. 21:33-44). John 10:1-6 has more in common with a secondary usage of the word for parable. It appears to be when an observable fact is set forth as a figure and used to illustrate an abstract principle which is not directly stated. Three examples of this can be found in Luke 5:36-39.

Then He spoke a parable to them: “No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘the old is better.’”

The word often translated, “parable,” is translated with its less common usages in places like Luke 4:23, “proverb,” and Hebrews 9:9; 11:19, “figure.”

While “parable” is a possible meaning for the word used in John, this writer finds clarity in translating this word “proverb” or

“illustration.” This lacks the explicit similitude of a parable. It is a statement of observed, practical truth from which one may draw countless parallels, applications, and lessons. In fact, one may not know what Jesus meant by this unless He clarified by attaching specific aspects of these figures with concrete, literal, parallels. The illustrative nature of this passage is what gives it its plasticity. Woods expanded, “Jesus is ‘the door’ ‘the shepherd,’ and the ‘sheep,’ in various applications made. He is also ‘the pasture,’ the source of all spiritual blessings. Only by [H]im may one enter into the blessings and privilege of salvation” (207).

To further emphasize the flexibility of this story which allowed Jesus’ free movement from being on figure to another, let us ask. Could these verses be used to illustrate other points, rather than what Christ drew from them? With all do reverence and concern for rightly dividing the Word, let this writer say, “Yes.” Consider this. If one is cognizant of Jesus’ application, he may assess implications of the axioms set forth in the observations of shepherding, and, in good company, make application in a variety of situations (See Luke 20:27-40; 1 Tim. 5:18).

While it would be inaccurate to imply it is how Jesus used His illustration, one may find appropriate parallels to how elders should lead and know their sheep. Members could see how they should submit to the eldership. Leaders, in general, could learn from the examples provided in shepherding, regardless of the application being made in the church, at home, or in the work place.

Seeing the type of figure Jesus was employing, let us observe how this was the ideal image to present in the current situation. What was the setting?

This paragraph is a continuation of the conversation which arose out of the healing of the blind man. Instead of being introduced by any fresh note of time, it is ushered in by [amēn amēn], which is never found in this Gospel at the commencement of a discourse. The subject also is directly connected with the miracle and its consequences. (Nicoll 788)

After Jesus healed the blind man, and affirmed that part of His purpose was “that those who see may be made blind” (John 9:39), our passage under consideration comes as part of his answer to the question in 9:40, “Are we blind also?” This was a query by the Pharisees, who just exercised themselves in excommunicating, from the synagogue, the same man Jesus had healed. It was the perfect picture for his audience to have the best chance of understanding and receiving His message.

Sheep were a direct part of every Jew’s life, so shepherding provided a clear vehicle of communication. Shepherds who first saw Christ may have been shepherds over flocks to be offered as sacrifices at the temple. Migdal Eder, or, “watch tower of the flock,” was located near Bethlehem by the road to Jerusalem. Edersheim explained that this place “was the station where shepherds watched the flocks destined for sacrifices in the Temple.” If the shepherds of Luke 2 were the ones keeping the sacrificial lambs at the time, then they “would be in the temple, and meet those who came thither to worship” (80-81). Jesus would not have been the only Jew so entwined with, and dependent upon, shepherds. Every Pharisee present would have utilized shepherds, or he would have had to be a shepherd himself in order to faithfully administer regular worship to God. It would have been this way since before they could first remember.

What is more, God regularly referred to religious leaders as shepherds, and used shepherding in other illustrations. Even a cursory understanding of the Old Testament would show someone that God drew shepherding comparisons for Himself, His people, and their leaders (Psalms 23; 79:13; 95:7; Isa. 40:11; Jer.23:1; Ezek. 34, etc.) In their day to day lives and religious pursuits, the Pharisees would have been involved with, and mindful of, the workings of shepherding. As such, the story beginning John 10 was apt to be understood and applied.

The sheepfold was a place where shepherds would bring their sheep for the night. It was walled with stone or hedges, and had one entryway. There were community sheepfolds that even had heavy doors that locked. Butler described that “sometimes there were sheepfolds of a less imposing structure out in fields and upon the

hills. They had lower walls and were without door. The shepherds themselves lay down across the entrance gap at night and literally became the door of the sheep” (108). If someone were to be found attempting to enter any other way, but the door way, it is fanciful to come to any other conclusion but that they were there to steal the sheep by stealth or force, if needed.

When the shepherds would come in the morning, they would access the fold by admittance of the porter, who was a shepherd taking his turn at the watch, or a paid watchman. Then he would call his sheep by name, and his own sheep would follow him. Concerning this phenomenon, Hartley recorded this experience with a shepherd:

I then bade [the shepherd] call one of his sheep; he did so, and it instantly left its pasturage and its companions and ran up to the hands of the shepherd with signs of pleasure and with a prompt obedience which I had never before observed in any other animal. It is also true in this country that “a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him.” The shepherd told me that many of his sheep were still wild, that they had not yet learned their names, but that by teaching them they would all learn them.... The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind the sheep of his presence. They know his voice and follow on; but if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated they turn and flee, because they know not the voice of a stranger. (“Sheep”)

This was a familiar picture drawn by Christ for His, primarily, hard hearted audience.

The condition of the hearts of the Pharisees was the main reason for what John recorded after the parable. “Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them” (John 10:6). That is, those listening did not (or would not) comprehend the meaning. As with the effects of parables, this tale had a similar purpose. Jesus spoke this way “Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn so that I should heal

them” (Matt. 13:15 quoting Isa. 6:10). Woods commented, “[H]is design was to expose the blindness of [H]is wicked and corrupt opposers” (206). Some do not understand, because they do not want to understand. Jesus was about to apply this saying in such a way that none listening could deny what He was implying.

Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. (John 10:7-10)

Using the same words beginning chapter 10, “*amēn amēn*,” He continued His discourse affirming that what He was about to say was every bit as true as the principles contained in His illustration. “In the entire [New Testament], only the Lord Jesus uses *amēn* at the beginning of a sentence as a word of affirmation. Throughout the Gospel of John, the Lord uses the word *amēn*, doubled... which could be rendered, ‘I who am the Amen (Truth itself) tell you as a most certain and infallible truth...’ (Zodhiates 135). Then Jesus made the first application to the previous verses. The true seeker, like the sheep with the shepherd, would hear Christ’s words and follow him. On the other hand, those not of His fold would spurn Jesus’ exclusive claim.

Claiming His preeminence and anointment, Jesus said “*egō eimi*.” Literally He said, “I, I am.” The second word would have been all he needed to refer to himself. The addition of a first person pronoun was for emphasis. Wuest translated this section, “I alone, in contradistinction to all others, am the door belonging to the sheep” (238). Zodhiates word study assigned it the meaning “... I have always been” (513). While this phrase may just emphatically distinguish one’s identity, like when Abraham used it to say “I, I am the foreigner” (Gen. 4:9 LXX), and when the man who was blind from birth used the phrase in John 9:9, as if to say, “It is I! I am the one who was born blind. It is not another.” By the reactions to its usage, it

is clear it had other meanings. For instance, when Christ said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58) the Jews took up stones to kill Him. Here, it was understood that Jesus was asserting His preexistence to Abraham and, therefore, His superiority. This is why he received such an antagonistic response. These words, when placed in the scenery of absolute authority, present in John 10, harkened to God’s identification of Himself to Moses, in Exodus 3:14. They are the same words that any who read the Septuagint version of the Scriptures would have seen. “I AM.”

Jesus was, and is, the only door of the sheepfold, and there can be no other. The concept presented implications that will resonate throughout eternity. It necessarily followed that one who tried to enter any other way was on an evil endeavor. Without having to say it directly, one logical conclusion of Jesus’ claim placed these Pharisees, and any others who denied Christ, in the category of thieves and robbers. The former steals by stealth and the latter by force. “The Pharisees were guilty of doing both; they deceived the people by cunning and adroitness; and the antagonism they felt toward Jesus would eventually result in violence leading to his death” (Woods 203).

However, there were those who did not hear the voice of the false shepherds (vs 8), but the true shepherd (vs 3). Dorris explained, “‘Hear’ is used in the sense of intelligent hearing. They recognized and gave heed to [the true shepherd’s] voice. They could ‘hear’ simply a rabbi’s voice as well as the shepherd’s” (Lipscomb 152). These were those who recognized the variety of facts and signs that gave witness to Jesus’ deity. “The [man who was blind] was manifestly one of the true sheep for he saw through the hypocrisy and false shepherding of the Pharisees – he knew not their voice, for they, with one voice, contradicted plain evidence of Jesus’ Divine nature” (Butler 108).

Some others who demonstrated they saw the proof of Jesus’ Messiahship, or “heard His voice,” were Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38), the Magi (Matt. 2:1-12), Nicodemus (John 3:1-21), and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:7-29). Who the porter of the sheepfold represented is never elucidated by Scripture. Nonetheless, any of the above, or uncountable other sources that validate the authenticity



of the identity of the Christ, attest to the variegated evidences one could amass in favor, in absolute proof, of the identity of this Jesus of Nazareth being none other than the only begotten Son of God. Perhaps the porter is not named because he could be represented by any such exhibits. Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus Himself are a few who could have acted as porter, given their witness to the coming one (John 1:29; 5:39, 46, 47; 8:14).

Jesus was the only entrance to the fold. While the fact would expose, convict, and judge any found using some other way, it did not come without promise. He said, “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture,” and, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:9, 10b). Blessings would be bestowed upon *anyone* who would enter by the Christ, the door.

The word, “saved, and the concept, entrance by way of Christ, are commonly lifted from this passage and applied directly to the church. Such is not in accordance with this message. Let there be no doubt that one *must* enter into the church, the single fold Jesus has made (See John 10:16; Eph. 2:14-18). Also When one enters, having believed in Jesus as Savior, having repented of his sins, having committed to confessing Christ, and having been baptized to wash his sins away, he is saved (Rom. 10:14; Matt. 10:32, 33; Acts 2:38) However, this specific usage is not in the context of this passage.

The word *sōzō*, translated “saved” can also mean “safe.” Considering the rest of the language in this verse is still couched in the shepherding metaphor, we see no reason why we would not accept this verb at its fundamental definition. “The basic meaning of the verb *sōzō* is to rescue from peril, to protect, keep alive” (Zodhiates 1354). Here, a rendering of “will be kept safe,” or “will be protected,” would agree with pastoral setting of the rest of the passage. Shepherds fought wild animals, cleared grazing areas of noxious weeds, cleansed wounds, and much more in order to keep their sheep safe.

If “the door” were specifically concerning ones entrance into the church, what would be the significance of going in and out and finding pasture? Certainly someone would not advocate that Jesus leads Christians in and out of the church. Dorris stated, “The ‘door’

here represents Jesus beyond doubt, but how? In the fold is shelter by night, in the pasture is sustenance by day. . . . The door then represents the gateway to all spiritual blessings” (Lipscomb 152). Going in and out signifies following Jesus’ call, as obedient sheep. Finding pasture is a reference to the care one receives being part of Christ’s fold. We agree with Nicoll concerning Jesus exclusive claim as “the door:”

Primarily uttered for the excommunicated man, these words conveyed the assurance that instead of being outcast by his attachment to Jesus, he had gained admittance to the fellowship of God and all good men. Not the Pharisees, but Jesus could admit to or reject from the fold of God. (789)

Have we diminished the text by denying that it is specifically concerned with salvation and entrance into the church? Absolutely not. When Scripture is interpreted consistently within its context, it is magnified. What we have here is more than a promise of salvation and fuller than admittance to the church. Certainly one enjoys both of these when, as a docile lamb, he submits to Jesus’ leadership. What Christians may glean from the passage at hand, however, is that we are immeasurably blessed in our salvation and membership, because, having entered in by the only access to Christ’s flock, we have His protection, provision, and leadership into the greatest field of endeavor imaginable – the super abundant life of a lamb of God. Without compromise, let us live it, and let us teach it.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Van Sprague began preaching shortly before attending the West Virginia School of Preaching in 2004. Upon graduation in 2006, he began serving in the church at Rio Grande, Ohio. In 2010 he accepted a work in Lubeck, West Virginia, where he is currently ministering. He instructs Personal Evangelism and Prayer at the West Virginia School of Preaching for second year students, in the fall quarter. Jennifer (Noland) has been his bride since 2002, and they have two daughters, Victoria and Isabella.



# The True Vine

*John 15:1-11*

*David Deagel*

The tender sacredness of last words rests on this Parable of the True Vine, the very last our Lord gave His disciples, on the very night when He was betrayed the very day before He died on the cross for us. Not twelve hours after these quiet words came from his lips, those lips were silent on the cross, parched with the thirst of agonizing death. (Charles 1)

Thursday evening, before the crucifixion, the Apostles and our Lord are gathered into the upper room to sit and partake of the Passover meal. Jesus reminds the twelve that the time is soon arriving for His departure from them (cf. John 13:33, 36; 14:3, 18-19, 25-31). Upon hearing these words one can only imagine the great despair and heavy-heartedness that filled the room. The Passover was a feast of celebration and reminder of the liberation of their ancestors by the mighty hand of YHWH. Yet this particular feast soon turned to sadness and anxiety over the words of the Master Teacher's own looming exodus.

As Jesus stands in the midst of the Apostles and says, "Arise, let us go from here." (John 14:31), it seems as though He senses the sadness which has overcome His followers. He saw their reluctance to move, and the alarmed and bewildered expression that hung upon their faces; and he could not but renew his efforts to banish their forebodings and impart to them intelligent courage to face separation from him. (343).

It is at this moment that Jesus begins the allegorical Parable of the Vine and the Branches. "In the allegory of the Vine we have our Lord's first and last teaching harmoniously combined; the parabolic and the personal element beautifully blended; the ends of the Gospel

united in a perfect circle of revelation” (MacMillan 8). Jesus knew of the coming torture and suffering that was some twelve hours near. Yet his words were not of the coming trial, beatings, and his death upon the cruel cross of Calvary. His words were not filled with woes of self-pity, cries for vindication, or calls for retribution. The next words from the mouth of the Lamb of God were words of encouragement and care for His disciples.

### **The TrueVine**

Why the allegory of a vine? What is the symbolism? Grapevines were an important crop at the time of Christ and for years past. “It is thought that cultivation of the grapevine began during the Neolithic era (6000-5000 BC) along the eastern shores of the Black Sea... but archaeological finds of grape seeds indicate...[seeds were] distributed throughout much of Europe during the Atlantic and Sub Boreal palaeoclimatic periods (7500-2500 years ago) (Mullins 4).

The grapevine is the world’s most widely grown fruit-plant; it is cultivated on all continents except Antarctica (Mullins, 10). “Palestine was a country of vineyards. Nearly half the land in cultivation was set to vineyards” (Dehoff 333). The hillsides of Jerusalem were an area of fertile soils, adequate rainfall, and a mild climate which was well suited for farming and abundant vineyards. As Jeremiah prophesied, many landowners planted vineyards on the hills of Palestine (cf. Jer. 31:5).

Perhaps as Jesus and the Apostles arose to travel to the Garden of Gethsemane they traveled near a vineyard that prompted the discourse. Perhaps as they traveled, passed the gates of Jerusalem, and witnessed the engraved golden bars resembling a vine on the Temple as a reminder of the Israelite Nation of old. Perhaps even before leaving the room of the feast, carefully twisted and placed above a window hung a vine. Just as Jesus in past times used common surrounding objects to create perfect thought provoking and soul stirring lessons, he again, perhaps, employs the same tactic.

It is quite possible, as some have suggested, that the reference to the True Vine was taken from the recent partaking of the fruit of the vine. Morris writes, “A surprising number of commentators see in the vine a reference to the Eucharist, but this seems farfetched”

(593). However, Coffman concludes that the imagery could be taken from the idea that Israel was a vine or from “the institution of the Lord’s Supper” (343). In either case, the vine was a very significant symbol. “Symbolism involving vines and vineyards can be found extensively in the Old Testament and in some parables in the gospel tradition, but it can also be found in pagan religious traditions” (MacRae 183). It would have been something with which the disciples would quickly identify. It was a powerful symbol of Israel itself. The symbol of the vine was engraved on the coins during the Maccabean period and on the front of Zerubabel’s temple after being renovated by Herod the Great.

The first depiction of a vine in scripture is seen in the vision of the chief butler while in prison. Joseph interprets the dream as the number of days until the butler is restored to his service to Pharaoh (cf. Gen. 40:5-13). The first of which a vine is represented as the nation of Israel may be seen in Jacob’s blessing to Judah (Gen. 49:9-12). Of this passage Coffman only states that, “The safety, plenty, and peace of an abundant agricultural life are symbolized by these quaint figures of speech” (569). However, John Gill suggests:

Which may be understood either of the tribe of Judah... or else of Shiloh the Messiah, which some interpret literally of him, when the prophecy in Zec. 9:9 was fulfilled, as is recorded in Mat. 21:2 but others better, figuratively of Christ’s causing the Gentiles... to cleave to him the true vine, John 15:1, in the exercise of faith, hope, and love or to join themselves to his church and people...(np)

Whether this passage speaks of Israel, Christ, or simply Judah, other references point to Israel as a vine. Psalm 80 speaks of the “vine” which God brought out of Egypt, and how God cared for the vine, nurtured it, planted it, and allowed it to grow (cf. Psalm 80:8-10). The Chief Musician adds to the imagery of God’s people illustrated as a vine in the statement, “Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine” (Psalm 80:14). This portrayal of the vine was not the True Vine of which Jesus speaks. The vine of the Old Testament became a disappointment to

Jehovah. That vine was planted and expected to bring good fruit but its production was wild sour grapes (Isa. 5:1-7) and changed from the noble vine which was planted to a “degenerate plant of an alien vine” (Jer. 2:21).

In utter contrast to the vine of the Israelite Nation, Jesus, is the “True Vine” (John 15:1). It is a statement of His deity, His purpose, and His care. Ironside writes:

All else had failed, but He was to be the witness for God in the world. He was to bear fruit for Him. But He was going away...How should He take Israel's place in testimony and bear fruit in the world? He says, All my own are branches in the Vine and will bear fruit for God here in the world. He pictures Himself as the Vine proper, and then all those redeemed to God by His precious blood who have found in Him their savior and Lord as the branches in that living Vine here in the world to bear fruit for the Father. (363)

As the last of the seven great “I AM” statements, Jesus, once again, declares his right of authority and power. “I AM,” a reference of deity directly (cf. Ex. 3:14). It is a statement that brought blood seeking anger to the listening Jews inside the Temple (John 8:58-59). “Now he proclaims his birthright and destiny—THE TRUE VINE, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD!” (Woodson 95). As the “True Vine” He is the Vine which is genuine. The term used “stands in contrast to that which is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated or pretentious” (Jackson 2). The true vine is what supports the branches and provides all nutrients, water, and minerals that allow the branch to grow and produce fruit. It is the source of life. Without the true vine providing for the branches they would not accomplish anything, “for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5c). Without nourishment from the vine, the branch will die. The branch has no root; it is not connected to a source of life, and cannot bear fruit without being joined to the vine (v.4). It is the vine which is attached to the roots which bring in sustenance for the branches and makes available all that is necessary to produce fruit.

Jesus Christ, as the true Vine, is the perfect Vine come from



God; grounded in faith, supplied by the Spirit, providing truth and life to the disciple. There is no life and no fruit apart from Jesus Christ. He is the Tree of Life from which springs life eternal. As the True Vine, He is not:

the nation of Israel; not a people gathered by miracles from Egypt, and isolated and trained in the wilderness, a nation of transitory generations, falling again and again, forgiven again and again, restored again and again; but the Christ Himself, in whom all nations are to be blessed, Son of Abraham, Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God...the Source of all the true spiritual life the world has ever known... the Source of the wisdom of the wise, of the goodness of the good, of the life of the Church. (Charles 15-16)

He is the Great "I AM."

### **The Vinedresser**

The Vinedresser is clearly identified as the Father of all Mercies, God. The vinedresser is the farmer who takes constant care of the vineyard for it is his livelihood and love. He tills the ground, plucks the weeds, and waters the vine. It is the Vinedresser who prunes the plant (v.2), rejoices in a great harvest (v.8) and loves the Vine, its branches, and its fruit (v. 9).

In addition, I suggest also, that it is the Vinedresser which lifts up the hanging branches (v.2). In each translation available to this author the translation of the second verse reads, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away." However, a footnote provides an alternative rendering of the phrase, "takes away" to He "lifts up." The term "airo" in the present active participle is as defined by Thayer, is "to raise up, elevate, lift up, to raise up from the ground, take up stones" (16). These branches are still in association with the vine. Could an alternative be, "every branch in me [Christ] not bearing fruit" He raises up? (YLT) This rendering emphasizes the care of the vinedresser to the branches that remain in Christ. A branch that is hanging to the ground, still connected to the vine, needs to be lifted up and placed, typically, on an arbor. The

branches need lifted up to receive oxygen and sunlight to develop fully its fruit. A branch resting on the ground will be unproductive. Similarly, God picks up and supports the Christian to assist in the development of their fruit, i.e. Christian character. Hannah, in her prayer reminds the believer, “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory...” (1 Sam. 2:8; cf. 2 Tim. 4:17-18; Jas. 4:10; 1 Peter 1:5; 5:6-10).

Others see this passage as a reference to the twelve. The branch not bearing fruit is that which the Vinedresser takes away can be seen as a direct reference to Judas. That very evening Jesus identified the betrayer by dipping His bread with Judas (John 13:26). The reference also can be used for any Christian today who does not bear fruit. The branch that needs pruning can be seen as a reference to Simon Peter for the upcoming denial, sorrow, and repentance. Coffman adds, “Of course, the primary application to the analogy here is to the apostles; but there is a sense in which, by extension, the teachings apply to all who are in the Lord” (344).

The Vinedresser lifts up the Vine and then prunes the branches. He rids the plant of the insects, moss, and parasites that inhibit the growth and ripening of the fruit. The vinedresser prunes and cuts away the dead and unfruitful areas thinning the canopy to allow more air flow and light to the remaining plant. Pruning of the vine provides essential benefits to allowing the vine to produce more fruit.

Pruning is done out of care and compassion for the vine and its fruit. Pruning of the Christian is done by a loving and caring God who desires the best for all His creation. The goal of pruning is to produce more fruit. God may employ various ways to initiate this pruning to include trials (Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Jas. 1:2-4) and discipline (Heb. 12:7-11; Rev. 3:19), all in the effort to benefit believers (Mal. 3:3; 1 Peter 1:6-9). God working within the believer assists in casting out “every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us” (Heb. 12:1; cf. Rom. 8:1-11; Eph. 4:22-24).

## **The Branches**

As Jesus continues His discourse we see two different branches

distinguished; the fruitful branch and the fruitless branch.

### ***The Fruitful Branch***

The fruitful branch is a part of the Vine. “To be a branch of the vine is to live in fellowship with Jesus the True Vine and under the watchful care of the Father, the Vinedresser of his vineyard or people” (Filson 117). The branch is a connected fundamental part of the vine. “The branch is in fact the vine, being in it, and part of it...” (Coffman 346). A synergism occurs between the vine and the branch. The same life giving material that flows from the work of the Vinedresser pulled up through the roots of the vine is what feeds the branches and keeps them alive. Woods adds, “our spiritual life is wholly dependent on our connection with him who is the source of all life, both physical and spiritual” (323). In addition, the whole reason for the existence of the branch is to produce fruit, of which a lack of, would render the branch useless. Having all its branches not producing fruit would render the entire vine useless. “The vine is one of the noblest of all trees and produces the most abundant fruit; but it is one of its peculiarities that all its strength is spent on the fruit, and that its branches are utterly valueless for all other purposes” (Spence 269). H. A. Ironside points out that, “A vine is of very little use other than as a fruit bearer. You cannot build houses with the wood of a vine. You cannot make furniture from it. It is of very little use even as fuel, for when cast into the fire it flames up a moment or two, and then it is gone. A vine was intended to bear fruit” (363). Fruit from the branches is all that makes the plant purposeful.

Leon Morris states, “The ‘fruit’ is not defined here, but we need not doubt that qualities of Christian character are in mind as elsewhere in the New Testament” (595). To bear fruit is to increase in the fruit of the Spirit which Paul enumerates as; “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22). Not only that but to, “add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” And Peter continues, “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren

nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-8). Christians must bear fruit of spiritual growth.

To bear fruit in spiritual growth is, however, only one aspect of being a fruitful branch. Christians have been given the greatest of all tasks, “make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). For as vital as it is for a branch to produce fruit; it is vital that a disciple make other disciples. When Christians fail this great task precious souls are lost and the kingdom becomes smaller. Our task is to produce fruit, to grow spiritually, and to grow the Kingdom of God.

“Fruitfulness doubtless includes both the production of Christian character and the winning of others to follow Christ; it includes everything that results from vital union with Christ” (Morris 595). However, the branch must also be reminded that, “The fruit is never due to their own independent power” (Filson 118). Our own ability to grow spiritually as followers of the Messiah and to reach out to a lost world and make disciples is because of our connection to Christ the True Vine. All the disciples’ words and actions are to do nothing but to bring glory to God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). Paul states, “For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake...But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:5, 7).

Fruitful branches are pruned and cleansed. This pruning is to help the branch to produce more fruit. The purpose of the pruning is that the “husbandman aims at more fruit, more of meekness, gentleness, love, and faithfulness, in fact, all those fruits of the spirit” (Spence 268). The Christian can never nor should they ever feel they have “arrived.” All disciples, whether new or mature have a need to continue to grow, continue to learn, and continue to love more. The pruning, in whatever form it may come, is simply for the disciple’s personal benefit and for the ultimate benefit to God and His Kingdom. “Left to itself a vine will produce a good deal of unproductive growth. For maximum fruitfulness extensive pruning is essential” (Morris 594). Spence adds this sobering thought, “The branches which bear fruit never bring forth all they might produce; never realize their ideal. The pruning, cleansing process must pass over every soul that it may more adequately fulfill its destiny” (268).

The Christian may not find pleasure in the discipline of the Lord or in various trials but we must learn they are for our benefit (Heb. 12:11).

Jesus announces to his disciples that they “are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (v.3). John Gill believes that this verse means that the remaining eleven are now clean because of the recent removal of Judas from the group.

Though the ‘now’ seems to refer to the removal and taking away of that withered and unfruitful branch, Judas. Christ, in John 13:10, had told his disciples, that they ‘were clean, but not all’, because the betrayer was among them; but he being discovered by Christ, and ordered by him to be gone, went out from among them about his wicked design; and now Christ could say of them all, that they were clean. (np)

Of this verse, Woods says that:

The reference is to the spiritual state of the disciples. They were ‘clean’ from past sins, yet needed continuous ‘cleansing,’ to keep them justified...This cleansing was by means of the word, i.e., through the teaching of the word they were enabled to obtain forgiveness...[it is] the Father who forgives, but he does it on condition of faithful obedience to the word. (323)

Along this same thought, to which Coffman adds, “However, the idea persists that these words were spoken prophetically, the present tense being used for the future; because, actually, much pruning remained for the beloved Twelve...The word of God is the means and the Holy Spirit is the applicator...it is ‘Because of the word’ of God” (345). I believe all to be accurate in their own sense. The Apostles were cleansed from their past sins by following “the Word” there was one among them, Judas Iscariot who Satan entered and became unclean (Luke 22:3). He was removed as, in the days of the Mosaic Law, the leaven was removed from the camp (cf. Ex. 12:15,19). The remaining Apostles still had much growth and building up of their

faith to take place. Woods also adds, “Fruit-bearing branches of the Lord; his disciples are “cleansed” by discipline, teaching, training, and growth to produce more fruit” (Woods 322). As disciples, they are already clean being followers and believers, ones who are living by the words which Jesus spoke. Christians are cleaned through the washing of regeneration (Tit. 3:5) and by the word (Eph. 5:26); being saved by the blood (Rom. 5:9), by obedience buried in baptism (1 Peter 3:20-21).

Fruitful branches abide in the vine. Jesus states, “Abide in me” (v. 4), a request for the disciple to come and be a part of Him. He speaks to disciples, those already a part of Him, not to come, but an admonition to stay where they are currently. The term “meinate en emoi”, “Abide in me,” is, in its construction, aorist active imperative signifying that they already abide, past tense, but yet they are encouraged to remain in the state of which they find themselves. Woodson in his lecture states, “the vine is presented as ongoing in its strength and vigor; the branch, however driven by the wind or scorched by the blazing sun, must above all else preserve its unity with vine” (96). Christians need to look to the True Vine for strength and support in the midst of hardship and trials. We should not be as Peter in the early days walking on the water towards Jesus only to move his focus on the thundering ocean and the turbulent winds. The Apostle Paul encourages the Christian to, “consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12:3). Once “in Christ” the Christian needs to strive to maintain that relationship by “walking in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7).

The fruitful branch, however productive it may be, must ultimately realize the truth of its source of life. A branch may assist in supporting the weight of a newer younger branch; however, the life source only comes from the vine itself and not from the branch. Charles reminds the Christian:

We can no more be the nourishment of one another’s spiritual life than we can be its source, no more the Bread of life to each other than the true Vine. A wonderful help it is to remember this. It would keep us from being depressed

about ourselves and feeling drained out and powerless when we try to help others, by reminding us always that we can be only cisterns, or brooks, not springs; we need not, indeed, be broken cisterns, but we must continually need to be refilled from the exhaustless fountain. (19)

The job of a faithful Christian, in bringing the lost to Christ, is to bring them to the True Vine to become a branch grafted into the Vine; there they find all needs supplied. Our spiritual life source is that of Christ. We live and exist because of Him. Paul addressing the Areopagus states, “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Fruitful branches bring glory to God. Being a part of The Vine is, not only to grow and make disciples, but to glorify Jehovah. Of this necessity, Filson writes, “their fruitful lives will bring glory to God and their obedience will prove that they are loyal disciples of Jesus; obedience is the test of discipleship” (118). When Christians win souls, God receives the glory. When Christians grow in faith, hope, and love; God receives the glory. We need to be certain not to make the mistake of Herod and receive the praise, glory and honor due to God. (Acts 12:21-23). Filson explains well the connection between the union of the branch and vine and the blessings found therein:

We have said that in one way this is a sobering passage. It requires the disciples to accept discipline, to dedicate life to the fruitful doing of God’s will, to stay close to Jesus, to keep his words in mind and heart and live by them, to keep his commandments. His teaching is demanding. But it opens the way to joy, for they will find true satisfaction only by living touch with Jesus and by willing obedience to his teaching. Their joy will be like the joy of Christ who did his Father’s will; it will be a joy full and never to be regretted. (118)

### ***The Fruitless Branch***

Fruitless branches do not remain in the vine. They were at one

time part of the Vine and “in Christ” although they do not remain in connection with the Vine. Guy N. Woods explains this by noting:

These non-fruit bearing branches differ from the rest, not in the manner of their existence, nor in the source from which they draw their life, but in their failure to bear fruit. Some people, after obeying the gospel, are actively useful in the Lord’s service; others respond in exactly the same way, and are also added to the church, but like Demas, become unfaithful and are thus non-fruit bearing branches (322).

The fruitless branches are similar to the seed which fell on the stony places and those among the thorns (Matt. 13:4-7). Both of these types of Christians were at one time in the Vine, a disciple. However, due to circumstances, pruning, sinful desires, and tribulations they fail to grow fruit. Ironside expands by saying:

If instead of love there is bitterness, malice, unkindness; if instead of joy there is gloom; if instead of peace there is unrest; if instead of longsuffering there is impatience; if instead of gentleness there is harshness; if instead of goodness there is moral evil beginning to be manifested; if instead of faith, worry and lack of confidence; if instead of meekness, pride and haughtiness; if instead of temperance or self-control you are subject to the lusts of the flesh – then that tells the story that no matter what you profess, you are not living in fellowship with God. (365)

Not living in fellowship with God, is living against the True Vine, Christ. Living against Christ is not living in harmony, not abiding in Christ nor He abiding in you. Therefore, this type of branch is fruitless and will, if not already done so, be cut off from the Vine.

Fruitless branches are removed and burned. “The lifeless fruitless branches are chopped off and burned. So those who do not abide in Christ are severed from the vine and angels gather them at the last great day and cast them into the fire” (DeHoff 333). DeHoff pictures the cast off branches as being hewn into the fire by angels. I suppose DeHoff gathers this thought, not from these verses, but perhaps from Christ’s explanation of the ‘Parable of the Tares’ (Matt.



13:40-41). The Apostle Paul used this idea of removal from Christ in his letter to the church at Galatia. “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4, ASV). The fruitless branches are a rebuttal to the theology of the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, also known as “once saved always saved.” These branches were at one time part of the Vine and are now, due to being unfruitful, removed and burned. The Christian who fails to grow is in grave danger of being cast out from being “in Christ.” The Apostle Paul warned and rebuked a number of Christians who became stagnant in their faith (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:12).

Some have supposed that the fire here is the last judgment, which our Lord looks upon as come. But the present tense, following the two aorists, suggest the immediate consequence of such severance from Christ – the fiery trials, the fierce temptations, the terrible judgments, always overtaking the unfaithful and unfaithful servants. (Spence 269)

However, Spence’s statement does not always occur. At times the unfaithful of Christ can reap benefits and worldly treasures. Their lives do not immediately become difficult due to forsaking Christ, in fact some prosper or at least seem to prosper (cf. Ps. 73:3-9; Jer. 12:1). In either case, the hard truth remains that if a Christian fails to produce fruit he is in danger of eternal destruction. “This is a figurative description of the destiny of those who cease to be faithful to the Lord. So great is the danger of apostasy there are more than two thousand warnings of it in the scriptures” (Woods 324).

## **The Conclusion**

The spread of the Christian religion, as a general rule, has been co-extensive and synchronous with that of the vine. To almost every region where the Gospel had been preached the vine has extended” (Macmillan 17). Christ, the Master Teacher, so perfectly and eloquently used the allegory of the True Vine to encourage and admonish His disciples both then and now. Christ is the blessed genuine Vine in which all man-kind can find belonging and salvation;

the place where the Vine and the branches, Christ and His disciples, are tended to and nourished by the might hand of God; where the Christian has the most of all intimate relationships with the Savior; where obedience and love are coexistent; where the dead and unproductive are cast away; a beautiful depiction of heaven itself.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

David Deagel is a native of Moundsville, WV. Born March 9, 1979 to Edward and Cathy (Sole) Deagel. He is a graduate of West Liberty University and a 2011 graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has completed graduate work at West Virginia University and Ohio University. He currently serves as Minister at the Washington Church of Christ in Washington, PA. He and his wife Amanda (Rider) have three children, Hailey, Zechariah, and Alyvia Deagel.



# A Multitude Is Fed

*John 6:1-14*

*John Board*

## **Introduction**

John 20:30-31 states, “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”[All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] The text under consideration for this lecture is one of the narratives used by John to accomplish his purpose in writing. This wonderful miracle of Jesus allows for those who read it thousands of years later to marvel at Jesus, the Son of God. In this lecture consideration will be given to a summary of the text, an examination of select elements of the text, and the influence of the false philosophy of Naturalism upon the text.

## **Summary**

The record of a critical scene in Christ’s work in Galilee follows the record of the critical scene at Jerusalem. At Jerusalem Christ revealed Himself as the Giver of life; here He reveals Himself as the Support and Guide of life. In the former case the central teaching was upon the relation of the Son to the Father; in this case it is on the relation of Christ to the believer. Jesus will care for those who follow Him.

Part One (verses 1–26) consists of a miracle narrative expanded in the area of the reactions to the miracle. It includes a sign followed by misunderstanding. In this section, Jesus is portrayed as the One who nourishes the multitudes. Verses 1–4 provide the introductory setting: “After this, Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Tiberias.” A multitude followed Him because they saw the signs, which He did on those who were diseased (5:36; 4:45, 53; 2:23; 2:11). Jesus went into the hills and there sat down with His disciples. Is He portrayed as a Jewish rabbi ready to teach His

disciples? “Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand” (v. 4). It is at this time (Passover) when the Man, Jesus, is with His disciples and is ready to teach that a multitude was coming to Him (v. 5a).

The first part of the miracle of the feeding of the multitude is a statement of the problem (vv. 5–9). A multitude is coming to Jesus in the hills (v. 5a). Jesus tests Philip: “How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” (vv. 5b–6). Philip recognizes the financial impossibility: “Two hundred days’ wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little” (v. 7). Andrew points out the lack of their resources: “There is a lad here who has five loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?” (v. 9). The disciples recognize that their resources are not equal to the need of the multitude. Herein lies the problem.

The second component is a description of the miracle itself (vv. 10–13). The actual miracle is narrated in v. 11: “Jesus ... 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.” In Luke 9:16 Jesus gives the bread and fish to the disciples to set before the crowd; in Mark 6:41 Jesus gives the loaves to the disciples to set before the people, while He divides the two fish among them all; in John 6:11 Jesus distributes both the bread and the fish to the multitude (cf. v. 27). In the John’s Gospel account, Jesus Himself is the One who nourishes the people (cf. 4:14; 5:21). The disciples’ role is twofold: they make the people sit down (v. 10: i.e., they help prepare the people to receive from Jesus), and they gather up the remains (vv. 12–13 i.e., they tell of Jesus ability to supply above the needs of the people). Here, as elsewhere, the narrative makes a distinction between the role of Jesus and the roles of disciples (4:42; 3:29; 3:13; 1:15).

The two reactions to the miracle, together with Jesus’ responses, come in verses 14–26. The first reaction is given in verses 14–15a. When the people saw the sign of feeding, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world,” and they tried to make Him king by force. One memory, ingrained in Jewish consciousness, is that of the manna from heaven by which the people were fed in the wilderness (Ex. 16:1–36; Num. 11:4–9; 21:5; Deut. 8:3, 16; Josh.

5:12; Neh. 9:15, 20; Ps. 78:23–25; 105:40). Part of the eschatological hope in the Jewish mind is the expectation of the renewal of the manna from heaven. Later rabbinic tradition expresses it in terms of as the former redeemer caused manna to fall, so the latter redeemer will cause manna to descend. This form of the hope was associated with “the Prophet” (1:21, 25; cf. Deut. 18:15–19 for the origins of the expectation of a prophet like Moses; Acts 3:22–23 for Christian appropriation of it for Jesus; 1 Cor. 10:3). In John’s writings Christ and Prophet are closely associated (1:20–21, 25).

Jesus’ response to this reaction to His feeding is twofold. He withdraws again to the hills by Himself (verse 15b). He then goes to the other side of the sea (verses 16–21). Having misunderstood the sign of the feeding, the crowd responds inappropriately and Jesus withdraws first into the hills and then to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

The second response of the people to the feeding comes in vv. 22–25. When they cannot find Jesus, even though they do not know how He might have left, they get into the boats that have come from Tiberias and go to Capernaum, “seeking Jesus.” When they “found Him” on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” Jesus’ reaction is similar to that in 2:23–25.

### **Examination of Select Elements of the Text**

*After these things* ...this phrase does not convey a definite time. As much as half a year may have passed since the events of John chapter 5. *Jesus went over the sea of Galilee*...Most activity of the Jews occurred on the west side of the lake therefore the “other side” (Greek *πέραν paran*) of the lake normally was considered to be the east side. In OT times, the Sea of Galilee was referred to as Kinnereth, because it was shaped like a lyre (Hebrew, *kinnôr*). By the time of Jesus the name of the city Tiberias, which had been founded by Herod Antipas (around a.d. 17–18) and named in honor of Tiberius, had been also associated with the body of water. John perhaps records both names to avoid any confusion since the body of water was known by both names at the time of the writing of his account of the Gospel.

*Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the*

*signs which He performed on those who were diseased.* Morris notes that the verbs for “followed,” “saw,” and “performed” in 6:2 (ἠκολούθει, ἑθεώρουν, ἐποίει; *ēkolouthei, etheōroun, epoiei*) are all in the imperfect tense: people kept following Jesus and continually observed the signs that he habitually performed (302). Crowds were at hand when Jesus healed the lame man on the Sabbath (5:13). They were also present at various festivals in Jerusalem (7:12; 12:12) and at the raising of Lazarus (11:42; 12:9). The crowds did not understand Jesus’ miracles but they were nonetheless drawn to Him because of His miracles (2:24; 4:48).

*Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.* This is the second of three Passovers mentioned by John, and the only one that Jesus spent in Galilee. For the Jews Passover was a time of heightened zeal of anticipation of a Deliverer. Kruse notes that during Passover the Jews looked for one to provide manna from heaven the way Moses has done (161). The feeding that Jesus does on this occasion is not, as some think, tied to the Passover meal but the feeding of the multitude perhaps lends a background to Jesus’ claim of being the “bread of life.”

*Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward His, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* Does the Holy Spirit intentionally guide John to use ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς (having then lifted up His eyes) to remind his readers of Jesus statement in John 4:35 ἐπάρατε τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς (lift up your eyes)? At any rate, Jesus looks up and sees a large crowd coming toward Him. People apparently had walked the several miles around the (shorter) north side of the lake and caught up with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus’ question will be an example of Jesus’ use of a present situation to challenge.

*But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.* The verb πειράζω (*peirazō*, test) occurs only here in John and in the *Pericope Adulterae* 7:53–8:11). It has negative connotations elsewhere in the other accounts of the Gospel but seems to be used here in a neutral sense. Numbers 11:13 and 11:22 remind the reader of a similar situation in the life of the Prophet Moses. In the wilderness, Moses asked God a similar question: “Where can I get meat for all these people?” Jesus did not ask the question for His



own informational purposes; As Morris points out, Jesus use of the verb ἤδει (*ēdei*, He knew which indicates prior knowledge) indicates that He fully intended to perform a miracle from the start (304).

*Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone may have a little.”* Some translators have loosely conveyed the idea of two hundred denarii as “eight months wages.” This gives the general idea that it would take over a half a year’s pay to provide food to feed the crowd based upon the pay scale provided in Matthew 20:2 that one denarius was approximately one day’s pay. It is interesting that John records Philip’s statement that seems to anticipate, but definitely answers, one of Naturalism’s supposed explanations of the miracle (see section below).

*One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?”* What is known of Andrew from Scripture is outstanding. Here he offers a suggestion and in the beginning of John’s account of the Gospel he, upon finding Jesus, went to his brother Simon (Peter) and told him about Jesus. Much could be written about the boy and the lunch but it appears the emphasis is upon the humble lunch the boy has to use for such an awesome task (feeding the multitude). The bread here is noted to be bread made of barley, which was common for the poor in Jesus day and was a bread of less desirable taste.

*Then Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.* Wayne Jackson was the first to point out to this writer the way in which even minute detail in the text points to inspiration. The text has already revealed that the Passover was near; the fact that there was much green grass accords with the time of Passover, the spring of the year, before the summer heat would turn the grass brown. The number recorded only includes the men. Some have estimated the total to be as many as twenty thousand people that were fed on that day. Perhaps this could lead to the idea that if Jesus was subject to fall to Satan’s temptations, He not only was faced the one time with being presented with all the kingdoms of the world, but here too He could be being tempted to become King as the

people wanted, for His followers were many.

After noting that the text indicates that the people were given all the food that they wanted, it states, *So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost."* The teachings of various Rabbis indicated that no food should perish. The Jews were used to gathering food (the size of an olive or larger) that was left over.

*Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.* Like Matthew and Luke, John mentions only the loaves (and not the fish) as having been gathered. But notice the amount gathered. Can there be any doubt that a miracle has occurred? Again those attempts to explain away the miracles of Jesus fall short. The Greek again stresses the satisfaction that the meal provided (those who had eaten).

*Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world.* The miracle was powerful and the conclusion clear—Jesus was the Prophet who was to come. The men knew this from a knowledge of the Law of Moses (Deut. 18:15-18).

### **The Influence of the False Philosophy of Naturalism**

In an article entitled "Beware of Philosophy: A Warning to Biblical Scholars" Norman L. Geisler, dean at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte NC, noted as one philosophy that must be cautioned against is Naturalism. According to Geisler, Naturalism is the philosophy that denies that there are supernatural interventions in the world. It is at the root of modern negative biblical criticism, which began in earnest with the publication of Benedict Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in 1670" (4).

If naturalism is true according to the likes of Spinoza, then the miracles of Jesus must have an explanation as to how they could have occurred according to the universal laws of nature. If Jesus did not do miracles (things contrary to nature) then His teaching that He was the Son of God is lessened because it is not confirmed by miracles as John claims in his account of the Gospel (John 20:30-31). If Jesus did not perform miracles then His Deity is not confirmed.

Are there naturalist explanations to the miracles of Jesus or did Jesus as the Son of God manipulate or go above natural law? If one believes Jesus to be the Creator of all that is then the belief that He could perform miracles (things contrary to nature) should not be hard to believe. John writes that what is recorded in his account of the Gospel will indeed lead the honest heart to come to a belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This section of this lecture will examine a few examples of the miracles of Jesus from the text of John's account of the Gospel in order to suggest that Jesus as the Son of God anticipated and even refuted the false philosophy of naturalism.

One miracle that naturalists have tried to explain is the miracle of Jesus turning water to wine. Naturalist explanations would claim that the stone vessels that the water was contained in simply contained the sediment of wine in the bottom and when Mary filled them with water, the water mixed in with the sediment and became wine. However, this explanation does not hold up. In verse six the text reveals that these were stone water pots used exclusively for Jewish purification, meaning that they would never contain anything but water. There would be absolutely no reason for any sediment of wine to be in these vessels under any circumstances. As Richard Chenevix Trench put it in his work *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*,

They were vessels for water, not for wine; thus none could insinuate that probably some sediment of wine remained in them, which, lending a flavor to the water poured on it, formed thus the thinnest kind of wine; as every suggestion of the kind is excluded by the praise which the ruler of the feast bestows upon the new supply (ver. 10). (112)

As mentioned in the above source, even if these vessels did contain any amount of sediment, it would only be enough to make the weakest of wines. This is another fault in this explanation as we read very clearly in the text that the wine that Jesus presented was praised for its wonderful quality. As is clearly seen, this argument does not stand strong on any level.

Another miracle that naturalists attempt to explain is the miracle under study in this lecture, Jesus' feeding of the multitude. There are few possible explanations that the naturalists attempt to make. William Barclay, who believes that many of the Lord's miracles had perfectly logical naturalistic explanations, discusses two of these explanations in his commentary on the book of John. One of the explanations he suggests is that this was simply a sacramental meal. Though as noted above, such is probably a misunderstanding of the text, from this false idea or from simply an attempt to explain naturally what was a miracle of the Lord they claim that this meal is much the same as the Lord's Supper in that each member of the crowd only took a small piece and that God allowed the small crumb that they consumed to be something that richly nourished their bodies. Barclay writes,

It may be that this was really a sacramental meal. In the rest of the chapter, the language of Jesus is exactly that of the Last Supper, when he speaks about eating his flesh and drinking his blood. It could be that at this meal it was but a morsel, like the sacrament, that each person received; and that the thrill and wonder of the presence of Jesus and the reality of God turned the sacramental crumb into something which richly nourished their hearts and souls—as happens at every communion service to this day. (238)

However, the text states in verse thirteen that there were twelve baskets full of leftovers from this meal, way more than what Jesus originally started with. Even if every person in the crowd had only taken a small piece from the loaves, this is still no explanation as to how the food multiplied in quantity. Another explanation that Barclay discusses is as follows,

It is scarcely to be thought that the crowd left on a nine-mile expedition without making any preparations at all. If there were pilgrims with them, they would certainly possess supplies for the way. But it may be that they would not produce what they had, for they selfishly—and very—wished to keep

it all for themselves. It may then be that Jesus, with that rare smile of his, produced the little store that he and his disciples had; with sunny faith he thanked God for it and shared it out. Moved by his example, everyone who had anything did the same; and in the end there was enough, and more than enough, for all. (238)

This argument can be answered again by what is stated in the text; it states that the food was given to the disciples to pass out to the crowds. Why would they need to pass out the food that Jesus had just blessed and given to them if the crowds had all decided to share among themselves? Also, after the leftovers are collected and it is noticed that there is much more food than they began with, why would the crowd be astonished and called Him a Prophet if, as Barclay suggests, all that was done was each one share their own food? Why would the crowd be so marveled if all Jesus did in this situation was get them to share their food among themselves? Jesus obviously performed a miracle in this instance as He provided food for the entire multitude from only five loaves and two fish.

Another miracle that naturalists try to explain away is Jesus walking on the water. This miracle occurs in John's account of the Gospel immediately after the feeding of the multitude. Barclay also attempts to explain this miracle, and his theory is as follows,

They saw Jesus, as the Authorized Version and Revised Standard Version have it, walking on the sea. The Greek is *epi tēs thalassēs*, which is precisely the phrase used in John 21:1, where it means—it has never been questioned—that Jesus was walking on the seashore. That is what the phrase means in our passage, too. (243)

Even if Barclay's measurements are accurate, this argument still does not suffice. The text specifically states that they received Jesus into their boat and then they were immediately at the land to which they were traveling. If Jesus was walking on the seashore, there would be no reason to record that they would be able to suddenly be at the land to which they were going as soon as they received Him

into their boat. That simply does not explain the elements recorded by John nor does it make any sense. The text reveals that the disciples were miles out in the body of water when Jesus made His way to them. This information provided through inspiration explains why John would also include as a miraculous element the fact that while the disciples were in the middle of the body of water, and Jesus steps onto their boat, they were immediately to the shore of which they were attempting to row.

## Conclusion

Jesus' feeding of the multitude ought to thrill one for in this text the miraculous power of Jesus is displayed. His miraculous powers helped to confirm His message that He was, as He claimed, the Son of God. The text under consideration for this lecture is one of the narratives used by John to accomplish his purpose in writing (John 20:30-31). This wonderful miracle of Jesus allows for those who read it thousands of years later to marvel at Jesus, the Son of God.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Son of John D. and Margaret Board, John was married to the former Brenna S. Wiley of Fairmont, WV in 1991. John and Brenna have two daughters, Kayleigh (19) and Emaleigh (15). John received his secular education from Oak Glen High School (83) and WVU (83-85). He received his biblical instruction from the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV, Freed-Hardeman College (BS), Southern Christian University (M. A. in Biblical Studies & Masters of Divinity in Christian Ministry), and is currently pursuing his PhD at Amridge University. After FHC John began working with the Oakwood Road Church of Christ as an Associate minister with D. Gene West. In 1991 John and Brenna began working with the Church of Christ in Yreka, California with John serving as their minister. From 1993 to 2008 John and Brenna worked with the Church of Christ in Bridgeport, WV. Currently John is working with the church in Elizabethtown, Ky. John is an instructor in the Southern Kentucky Bible Institute. John has been blessed to be involved with WVCYC in various capacities, to be part of mission works in Merida and Cancun, Mexico and through the World Wide Web, and to be a past instructor at the West Virginia School of Preaching.





# Sinners Convicted - Disciples Comforted

*John 14:16-31; 15:18-16:33*

*Dr. Charles Aebi*

## **Introduction**

I am grateful for the existence of the West Virginia School of Preaching and for the privilege of teaching here and of having a part in this great lectureship. The topic assigned me on the theme of “Concerns of the Word” is “Sinners Convicted–Disciples Comforted.” The text is part of the farewell address of Jesus to His apostles after He instituted the Lord’s Supper and before He was betrayed and arrested in Gethsemane. It may be viewed as all the more important since it is very near the end of His earthly ministry, and outside of four interruptions by brief questions or comments of disciples, it is all Jesus’ own words.

The parts of John 14-16 that concern us here have to do with the work of the Helper (*Paraclete* in transliterated Greek) and it would be tempting to follow F. F. Bruce’s division of the Paraclete passages into five sections or “sayings” about the Paraclete (301-321): The Spirit as Helper (14:15-17); The Spirit as Interpreter (14:25,26); The Spirit as Witness (15:26-27); The Spirit as Prosecutor (16:4-11); and The Spirit as Revealer (16:12-15). However, our assignment is to deal with the work of the Paraclete in producing the Word that God has spoken through His Son in the New Testament and in converting people and comforting the people converted (including those disciples already following Jesus) through that Word. We therefore divide our topic into three sections: the Paraclete or Helper who produced the Word; the way the Paraclete works to convict sinners; and the way the Paraclete works to comfort disciples.

## ***The Paraclete, Producer of the Word***

Jesus said in John 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—

the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” [Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture in this lecture will be taken from the NKJV]. The word here translated “Helper” in the NKJV, NASB, and ESV is *paraklētos*, which is translated “Comforter” in the 1611 KJV and 1901 ASV, and “Counselor” in the NIV and RSV. While Arndt and Gingrich say, “In our literature the active sense *helper, intercessor* is suitable in all occurrences of the word” (624), Vine says *paraklētos*, which literally means

called to one’s side, i.e., to one’s aid, is primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defence, an advocate; then, generally, one who pleads another’s cause, an intercessor, advocate, as in I John 2:1, of the Lord Jesus. In the widest sense, it signifies a succourer, comforter. (208)

Pack wrote that “Translators of the English Bible and scholars have had difficulty with expressing the meanings of *paraklētos* in English since there is no one English word that covers the meanings of the Greek word” (178). McGarvey said, “The word ‘Comforter’ does not fully translate the Greek word *Paraclete*: no English word does. The word ‘Advocate’ may be used, and ‘Helper’ is as good if not better than ‘Comforter’ (663). The NKJV uses “Helper” in John 14-16 and “Advocate” in 1 John 2:1 where it refers to Jesus as our Mediator with the Father. Elsewhere in Scripture, the Paraclete is referred to as the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, and various other designations meaning the same things, but most often just “the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is as much God as are the Father and the Son; although we tend to think of God as the Father, all three persons in the Godhead are referred to as God. Jesus is called “God” in Hebrews 1:8, and the Holy Spirit is called “God” in Acts 5:3-4. We should not be surprised, then, to see that Jesus referred to both Himself and the Spirit as “Helpers” of the same kind when He said, “I will pray the

Father, and He will give you another Helper” (John 14:16).

It is to be noted that *Jesus* as well as the *Holy Spirit*, is represented as Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is to be *another* Paraclete, Note also that the word *another* is *allon*, and not *heteron*, which means different. The advocate who is to be sent is not different from Christ, but another similar to Himself. (Vincent 487)

In the Gospel of John,

the same things are often said about Jesus Christ as are said about the Holy Spirit. He is “another [one of the same kind] Counselor” as Jesus had been. While Jesus is “the truth” (14:6), the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth.” Jesus is “the Holy One of God” (6:69), and the Counselor is “the Holy Spirit” (14:26). As Jesus came forth from the Father (1:11; 5:43; 16:28; 18::37) into the world, so the Holy Spirit will come from the Father (15:26) into the world to abide in Jesus’ followers (14:16, 17). As the Father sent Jesus into the world (3:17), he will send the Holy Spirit in Jesus’ name (14:26). As the Father gave his Son (3:16), he will give the Holy Spirit when Jesus asks (14:16). (Pack 179)

For the three or so years of His ministry on earth, Jesus had been the Paraclete or Helper of His apostles; now He is about to leave them with another Helper who will both guide and comfort them as they go throughout their lives on the mission He will give them before He ascends back to the Father.

Why did Jesus say He had to leave so the Spirit would come? He said, “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 depart, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7). Could the Spirit not come and be here along with Jesus? Indeed the Spirit had been, at times and in some measure, present with the disciples while Jesus was with them. In the limited commission in Matthew 10:8 Jesus gave them authority to use the Spirit’s power to “Heal

the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, [and] cast out demons.” Even the seventy were able to use the Spirit’s power to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 10:9, 17). In both of these cases, Christ authorized the Spirit’s work (Luke 10:17).

McGarvey suggests one reason why Jesus had to leave before the Spirit could come and do His work as the Paraclete:

. . .the Lord’s departure. . .would result in the advent of the Holy Spirit. Space does not permit us to discuss why the Spirit could not come until the Lord had departed, but the verses which follow give us one good and sufficient reason, for they show that his work had to do with the conviction of human hearts thorough the preaching of a completed gospel, and the ascension or return of Christ to heaven, and his enthronement in glory there, are essential parts of that completed gospel. (673)

Johnson suggests that Christ as the reigning King must send the omnipresent Spirit (241), and He would not be reigning until after His ascension. Hendriksen makes the cross the whole reason:

the Son’s going away is a departure via *the cross*. By his going away he merits redemption for his people. Now the Holy Spirit is the One whose special task it is to apply the saving merits of Christ to the hearts and lives of believers (Rom. 8; Gal. 4:4-6). But the Spirit cannot apply these merits when there are no merits to apply. (323)

Morris comments likewise on John 16:7, “So now the implication is that the cross is critical. Before that, Jesus could not send the Spirit. Afterwards, He will send Him (cf. 15:26). It is the divine concern to bring about a full salvation for men” (697). Barnes agrees with McGarvey and Johnson that not only His crucifixion but also His ascension and coronation were necessary to a completed gospel, because while Jesus was physically present they could still entertain their erroneous view of a temporal kingdom on earth (345-346).

Until the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ

had occurred, and His mediatorial reign began, the Spirit had not completed Gospel with which to inspire the apostles. And we might add that while Jesus was still with them, the apostles did not have the same desperate need for the Spirit's guidance that they would have after Jesus went back to heaven. The Paraclete would guide them into all the truth of the Word, the full Gospel.

### ***The Paraclete, Convicter of Sinners Via the Word***

Jesus was a teacher and a preacher, and the mission He gave to the apostles was to be teachers and preachers. When Jesus had returned to the Father, They would send the Paraclete, the Helper, to teach the apostles and to help them have and remember the Truth of God and Christ. Jesus had taught them much of God's Truth. Jesus did not originate it on His own; He said to the apostles, "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*" and ". . .the Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14:10, 24). The same is true of the Spirit: "He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak" (John 16:13). What Jesus taught was the Father's Word, but the Son and the Father are so united that Jesus can claim it as His. Jesus said in John 16:12-15,

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

The apostles often did not fully understand what Jesus taught, but the Paraclete would cause them to remember all He had taught and would guide their comprehension so they could speak all of God's Truth to those who would hear them. It would be all God's Truth, because "The Spirit's understanding is not limited and partial. It is full, and it includes the correct relating of each truth with every

other truth. . .The truth delivered by the Spirit is the ‘whole truth’ and ‘nothing but the truth,’ not rising from self but from objective reality” (Foster 42).

The apostles would desperately need the Helper to guide them, for we know from Acts 2 and Acts 10 that even when the Spirit guided the apostles into preaching the truth, they did not always fully understand what they were inspired to say. It took Peter some years and a special revelation and demonstration from God before he understood what he himself had said when he quoted the prophet Joel to the effect “That whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). The Paraclete would guide them into all Truth because He is the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17) who in both Testaments inspired God’s servants to speak God’s Word, which Jesus said is Truth (John 17:17).

Jesus said in John 15:26-27, “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” An example of both these things happening can be found in Acts 2 where Peter cited two proofs that Jesus was the Christ—the Spirit’s testimony through prophets Joel (16-21) and David (25-28 and 34-35) and also the eyewitness testimony of the apostles (“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses,” verse 32). The Spirit’s guidance of Peter’s preaching convicted his hearers of their guilt of having had a part in crucifying Jesus (36), and some 3,000 of them repented and were baptized that day (38-41).

When Jesus departed, He would send the Paraclete. He said in John 16:7-11,

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 depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

“Convict” is the verb used in NKJV, ESV, NASB, and NIV; the KJV uses “reprove” and RSV uses “convince.” Arndt and Gingrich define this verb (*elegxei*) as to “bring to light, expose, or set forth. . .convict or convince someone of something. . .reprove or correct. . .” (248-249). F. F. Bruce translates it, “And he, when he comes, will expose the world’s error” and comments, “The Spirit’s prosecuting ministry is here expressed by the verb *elencho*, meaning (according to the context) expose, refute, convince, or convict” (318-319).

This verb has several meanings. *Elegxei* means “to bring to light, to expose, to convict, to prove some one wrong.” Perhaps the best understanding of its meaning here is to think of bringing the truth to bear on the error and wrong of the world and thus proving to the world its guilt. The Counselor [Paraclete] acts as a prosecutor toward the world to convict the world. While the world cannot receive the Counselor or the Holy Spirit directly (14:17), the world can receive the message or word of the Spirit through the preaching of the apostles. (Pack 87)

Hendriksen gives a table in which he compares the meaning of *elegxei* in all seventeen instances of its use in the New Testament by comparing its translation in the KJV, ASV, and RSV, showing that its sense in some cases is to convict or “to prove guilty, without implying that the person whose guilt is proved is ready to admit and confess his guilt,” and in other cases to convince or “to awaken to consciousness of guilt,” implying repentance (324-325). He says that the first meaning above is the usual one with the world: “By and large, the wicked *world* continues in open hostility to God, his Christ, and his people. . .Though its guilt has been *exposed* or *proved* (hence, though in that sense it has been *convicted*), it does not repent” (324). *Alford’s Greek Testament* says, “It is difficult to give in one word the deep meaning: ‘convince’ approaches perhaps the nearest to it, but does not express the double sense of *elegxein*, which is manifestly here intended—of a *convincing* unto salvation, and a *convicting* unto condemnation” (866).

The Helper is to *convict the world*, meaning wicked people, not the earth itself, of sin and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8). Had He stopped here, we would understand the meaning to be only a general application to the world of all time, but Jesus goes on to make a more specific application in verses 9-11. The specific sin in verse 9 is not believing in Christ, and it might be applied generally to all who do not believe in Jesus, but verse 10-11 says the Helper would “convict the world. . .of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” How would Jesus’ resurrection and ascension convict the world of righteousness? Whose righteousness? Not the righteousness of the unbelievers, for they didn’t have any; they would be convicted of their sin of not believing in Jesus. It is the righteousness of Jesus that they did not believe in but that would be demonstrated by Jesus’ resurrection and ascension when those events were proved true by the apostles’ preaching inspired by the Spirit, the Helper, the Paraclete in Acts. Some examples of this interpretation of John 16:8-12 may be helpful:

Who are the sinners? **Sin** refers to the basic sin of unbelief, the stubborn rejection of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The world is primarily focused in the first part of this chapter on the unbelieving Jewish world, but secondarily includes the entire unbelieving world. . .While those who condemned Jesus to die on the cross did not believe in Jesus, they were the forerunners of those in every age who reject him. **Righteousness** is a forensic term meaning to be vindicated in court and thus acquitted. . .The world will condemn Jesus as worthy of death by convicting him of charges in their courts and kill him as a criminal, but God the supreme judge will acquit him, reversing their condemnation or **judgment**, and Jesus will be vindicated as “the Holy and Righteous one in God’s court through being raised from the dead and being exalted to God’s throne (Acts 2:23, 24, 33; 3:14, 15; 5:30, 31; 7:52, 56; 1 Tim. 3:16). His exaltation after his humiliation will reverse the condemnation in the human courts of this world (Phil. 2:5-11). **Because I go to the Father** proves



his vindication, for no one can stand in the presence of the holy God who is not himself holy. . .Satan, **the ruler of this world**, won no victory in Jesus' death on the cross, but was condemned, defeated, and his power over men broken (Heb. 2:14). Jesus' death was not his own defeat but Satan's defeat (12:31-32). (Pack 87)

A careful reading of this will show that Pack believes John 16:8-11 to initially refer to Christ as the righteous One who is condemned and killed by unbelievers but resurrected and exalted by God, but is generalized to refer to all sinners who disbelieve in Christ but later repent and come to believe in and obey Christ as the Son of God. Hendriksen agrees with Pack, saying that after accusing Jesus and treating Him as an evildoer (not observing the Sabbath, eating with sinners, and disregarding their traditions), they killed him but were proved wrong by God. He said,

Summing up, it has become evident that through the preaching of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit helps the Church, and that he does this by convicting the world with respect to *its own sin* of not believing in Christ, with respect to *the righteousness of Christ*, who by his going to the Father is fully vindicated, and with respect to *the judgment of God* pronounced on the prince of the world. (326)

McGarvey and Pendleton wrote,

It would be the work of the Holy Spirit to take the truths respecting Christ, and, using the apostles as mouthpieces (Acts ii.1-37), to convince the world as to these truths. This convincing work was entirely in relation to Christ, the sin of disbelieving him, the righteousness revealed in him, and the power of judgment conferred upon him. (673)

F. F. Bruce says the Spirit as Prosecutor will show by His followers' preaching that the unbelief of the world in condemning and killing Jesus is rejected by God, who vindicates and exalts Jesus,

demonstrating Christ's righteousness, but showing Satan's downfall.  
Christ's

return to the Father is the demonstration of his righteousness. . . Behind the men who acted as Jesus' prosecutors and judges stood the adversary-in-chief, the 'ruler of this world' who, as Jesus said, 'is coming' but 'has nothing to lay hold of in me' (John 14:30). Jesus had foretold his imminent expulsion . . . 'Now it is this world's judgment,' he said; 'now the ruler of this world is to be cast out (John 12:31). The presence of the Spirit is the token that this prediction has been fulfilled: judgment in the supreme court has been given for the Son of Man and against the world; and the world's spirit-ruler, in consequence of that adverse judgment, has been deposed. (319-320)

Alford, like Pack and Hendriksen, thinks John 16:8-11 refers to Christ's righteousness being proven by His resurrection and ascension, but that it also applies to all preaching to try to convince men (867). Reynolds thinks it was not so much the righteousness of Jesus as it was God's ideal of righteousness that is meant in verse 10; he says that Christ's

exaltation to the right hand of the Father would exhibit God's ideal of righteousness; and by the aid of the Holy Spirit working through the word of the apostles. . . the world would be utterly silenced, convicted of being utterly wrong in its idea of righteousness as well as in its judgment on the nature of sins. (302)

Most other commentators think the work of the Spirit in these verses refers to the preaching of the Gospel down through the ages. It is logical to conclude with McGarvey, Pack, and Hendriksen that the righteousness in John 16:8-10 is both the righteousness that Jesus was shown to have and the righteousness that He was to make possible for all who would believe in Christ, repent of their sins, and obey and live by the Gospel. This is all the more

certain when we read the rest of the Helper passages in John 14-16. The Helper would be the Spirit of truth, dwelling not in the world but in the disciples (14:16-18); He would teach them all things and cause them to remember all that Jesus had taught (14:26); He would testify of Jesus and enable the apostles to testify of Jesus (15:26-27); He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:7-11); He would guide the apostles into all truth, including what they were unable to understand at that time and things to come in the future (16:12-13); He would declare to the apostles all that the Father had given Jesus to teach (16:14-15). “The Holy Spirit was not to be the originator of truth, but the revealer of the truth received from the Father and taught by the Son. No new doctrine was to be taught” (Woods 343).

The world that most immediately rejected Jesus was the Jews, especially the Jewish religious leaders. But we must not forget that Gentiles also had a part in crucifying Jesus, which had been prophesied in Psalm 2:1-2, as interpreted in the disciples’ prayer in Acts 4:27-28—“For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your purpose determined before to be done.” As it is today (and has been for nearly 2,000 years), the vast majority of the people of the world are unbelievers, rejecting Christ. Jesus preached only to the lost sheep of Israel, but the Holy Spirit has inspired the Word of God to be preached across the globe, and most reject it. And in spite of all our technology, we have not proclaimed it as widely as Jesus instructed. By our teaching of the Gospel the Helper who produced that Gospel is convicting the world of *sin* (John 16:8-9).

The Holy Spirit will come and convict the world of sin because of its rejection of the Savior. A man is not convicted of sin until he is convinced there is a standard between right and wrong. . . So the Holy Spirit, working through the Word, oral and written, when the deity of Jesus is preached—when the divine standard is preached, convicts men of their sin. . . Unbelief in Christ is the greatest of all sin for such unbelief leaves men dead in their sins. (Butler 300)

The world did not believe in Jesus, so the Spirit would inspire the apostles to teach the people of the world about Jesus so they would (or at least could) believe, for faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

The Paraclete was to convict the world not only of sin, but also of *righteousness*. If decrying sin is negative teaching, then declaring righteousness must be positive teaching, for the Spirit does both, and righteousness is the opposite of sin. One kind of righteousness is right living, doing what God commands, and so being right with God; it includes (but is not limited to) prayer, giving, and fasting (Matt. 6). Another kind of righteousness is in the Gospel, God's power unto salvation. This is the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16-17), which is usually understood to be the righteousness granted or imputed by God to one who believes and obeys the Gospel.

All responsible people sin (Rom. 3:23), so all must be forgiven by God—declared righteous when they are not so by their own lives; this is called justification. When the Spirit's Word is spoken by God's people, it proves people of the world wrong, and if they accept that proof, repent, and obey the Gospel, they are justified—declared righteous by God. This righteousness is made possible by the blood of the cross that enables God to be just and at the same time be the justifier of sinners (Rom. 3:26). The Helper's work in this has been the same down through the centuries—using the Word to convict and convince sinners to believe and obey the Gospel. At first it was the inspired Word orally delivered, then since the writing of it by the Helper's inspiration was completed, it has been the written Word through which righteousness has been disseminated.

### ***The Paraclete, Comforter of Disciples Via the Word***

Jesus said in John 14:16-18,

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

Jesus said He was going away, but he would not leave them orphans, deserted, not provided for. The Paraclete would be with them, and spiritually, both the Son and the Father would be with them if they loved Him and kept His commandments. (John 14:18-23). “**With (meth’)** **you forever** shows that Jesus was speaking not only to the apostles but also to his followers through the ages” (Pack 64). This teaching is implied in John 7:39, where John said Jesus’ statement about living waters reflected it: “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” The Spirit’s abiding in them would be after Jesus went back to heaven—after He came in Acts 2. Whatever may be the *modus operandi* of the Spirit indwelling the disciples, there is no question that He did and does indwell them individually (Acts 5:32; 1 Cor. 6:19) and collectively as the church (1 Cor. 3:16).

The apostles had fears, for they could anticipate to some extent what was certain to happen; Jesus had foretold on different occasions persecution by the world as well as his coming arrest and death and resurrection (Luke 9:22; 18:32-33). When he saw Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem where death awaited him, Thomas said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). The world hated Jesus and it would hate His disciples and persecute them (John 15:19-20). His farewell speech to them had words of comfort as well as predictions of persecution: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:1, 27). But He knew they would be afraid, and He predicted that Judas would betray Him, Peter would deny Him, and the disciples would be scattered (John 13:21-26, 38; Mark 14:27). This was a hard night for both Jesus and his disciples. Peter was armed with a sword, but Jesus did not permit him to try to use it to prevent His arrest, and he later denied Jesus over and over again; he was physically brave but was a moral coward that night. Truly the disciples needed a Helper, or, as the KJV and ASV have it, a Comforter. Jesus said the Paraclete would come, but not until He had been glorified. In the meantime, Jesus was, as He had been throughout His ministry, their

Paraclete. He had stilled the storm to keep them from drowning; He had not allowed Peter to sink when he was afraid; He had defended their eating grain without washing their hands; even when He was arrested, He urged the officers and troops to let the disciples go and take only Him (John 18:8-9).

When Jesus first mentioned the Helper's coming in John 14:16-18, He said that he would not leave them orphans. The context immediately preceding this is the promise of the Helper dwelling with them and in them, so He was saying He would be with them in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Then He said, "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (14:19-20). He must be referring to the time after his burial when He says the world would see Him no more, and by "but you will see me" to the time after the resurrection when He appears to His apostles and other disciples. We have no record of Him appearing visibly to the world unless we count his appearing to Saul of Tarsus, but that was an appearing in glory brighter than the noonday sun, so bright as to blind him (Acts 22:6-11). McGarvey comments, ". . .the next day the world crucified him and sealed him in the tomb, and since then has seen him no more" (664). ". . .nevertheless his apostles and others including over five hundred disciples would see him after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:5-8). . . Though all the verbs here except the last are in the present tense, they actually express a future meaning" (Pack 64).

When He said He was going away in John 16:5, he promised that the Helper would come and guide them in speaking and testifying, but there He was talking about His ascension to Heaven. In 16:16, He said, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father." He had spoken of "a little while" once in 14:19; here he uses the expression twice, and the disciples are confused (16:17-19). Perhaps we are, too? Verse 20 was intended to comfort them by clarifying what he meant: "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy." The first "little while" in 16:16 is the time between his speech then and his entombment; the second is the time

between his resurrection and ascension. During the first little while the world would rejoice (at Jesus' execution) but the disciples would weep and lament; in the second little while the disciples would see their sorrow turned into joy at His resurrection (16:20).

Hendriksen puts a different slant on the second "little while" with his paraphrase of 16:16 as

A little while—a few more hours!—, and I will be taken away from you, for I will be put to death and buried. Hence, you will observe me no longer. But I will not remain away from you. Rising gloriously on the third day, I will usher in the dispensation of the Spirit. In and by means of the mighty works which he will perform on earth, you will see me. (331)

When we filter out Hendriksen's Calvinism, he seems to be saying that the second little while begins with Christ's resurrection and doesn't end because they see Christ for the rest of their lives by the Spirit abiding in them. This writer finds himself more in line with the following:

It is not surprising that these words of Jesus proved a difficulty to the men in the upper room. They have puzzled Christians ever since. The main problem concerns the meaning of the coming again of which Jesus speaks. Does He mean that He will come again in the person and work of the Holy Spirit? Or is He referring to the post-resurrection appearances? Or even to the ascension and the parousia [second coming—CJA]? Great names can be urged in support of each of these views. . . it seems to me that the language accords better with a reference to Jesus' death and then to the post resurrection appearances than to anything else (though this is not to deny that, as often, there may also be a secondary meaning as well). (Morris 702)

Since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God, it is in some ways impossible to separate them—to have one is to have all three—yet they are separate persons and do not have exactly the same roles.

In a sense to have the presence of the Spirit is to have the presence of Christ and God the Father, but they would not physically see and feel Jesus after He ascended, so I agree with Morris, Pack, and McGarvey that Jesus' primary reference here is to appearances between His resurrection and ascension.

The world, especially the Jewish world, hated Jesus because they envied Him (Matt. 27:18); He did not fulfill their materialistic Messianic expectations; He criticized their traditions and hypocrisy; and they saw Him as a threat to their religious and political positions. The world would also hate His disciples (John 15:18-16:4) for some of the same reasons and because they were His disciples. In this context Jesus gives them several promises of the Paraclete, the Helper who would guide them to remember and help them to testify and inspire them with all truth with which to convict the world, which was soon expanded to include both Jews and Gentiles. They would preach the Word that came from God through the Spirit, and that same Word would assure them of God's and of Christ's spiritual blessing and support of their work. Indeed, in more situations than we can imagine, the Spirit would be their Helper to enable them to so teach and preach that Paul could say in Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:5-6 that the Word of the Truth of the Gospel had gone to all the earth, to the ends of the world. In all of that work and in the many sorrows and fears they felt, the Helper comforted them as through them He convicted the world through the inspired Word. Their need for comfort would not end with Christ's resurrection, but would extend throughout their ministries as they encountered persecution and most of the apostles and many others were martyred.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the gospel in 1949 and began preaching in early 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University. Charles has served as minister for churches in Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Texas. He has preached, held workshops, and preached gospel meetings in several states and foreign countries.

He has served as an elder for several years each in three congregations. He currently serves as a minister and an elder for the Barlow-Vincent Church of Christ in Vincent OH, which he helped start in February, 2003, and which built a new meetinghouse in 2006 and now has attendance in the 80's. He taught Bible for 34 years at Ohio Valley College (now University), serving 15 years as

academic dean and vice-president, and 6 years as chairman of the Bible Department. He retired from the college in 1998 and since 1999 has taught at the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has authored eight books and has written chapters in several others. He writes for the West Virginia Christian, the Gospel Advocate, and some other brotherhood papers.

Charles and his wife Imogene have four children—Ruth, Joy, Mark, and Mary—, twelve grandchildren, and one great grandson. All of the children, grandchildren, and their spouses are faithful Christians. All of the men in the family preach; all of the men and women teach Bible classes. Six of the grandchildren are now in college, and six are married.



# His Vicarious Death

*John 11:47-12:43; 18:1-32; 19:17-37*

*Andy Robison*

The resurrection of Lazarus, the pinnacle of Christ's Deity-proving miracles in John's Gospel next to the resurrection of Himself, was undeniable. Obliquely predicted (John 11:24-25, 32-33, 38-46), witnessed by on-site and subsequent testifiers, and even attested by the chief priest's plot to rid the community of the evidence by putting Lazarus to death again (12:9-11), it was simply undeniable. The Prince of Life (Acts 3:14-15) had proven Himself by His works (cf. John 5:36). Modern charlatans claiming to be miracle-workers cannot raise the dead. This was proof positive of Deity in their midst. All rationality cried out, "accept Jesus as the Son of God!"

Rationality would not prevail in that temporal scene. Admitting the signs Jesus did, the council of the Jews sought another course—any other course!—of action (John 11:47). Fearful of political unrest (11:48), Caiaphas, the current high priest, notably uttered a proclamation with an unintended double meaning: "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish" (11:49-50). [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] Some background to the political expediency advocated by Caiaphas is necessary.

The Jews were quite fearful of the loss of what freedom they had left under Roman oppression. From the time of Herod the Great nationalist sensibilities, promulgated most significantly by the Nationalist (Zealot) party, had been suppressed particularly in the political manipulation of the high priesthood (Edersheim 1: 240). This God-ordained spiritual office had become a political slap in the face to God-fearing Jews. Herod filled it with non-Palestinians (Edersheim 1: 240). Later, when the Roman procurators took over the appointments ("Roman Rule"), the politicking continued. The priesthood God had designed (Ex. 28-29) had become a sham.

This explains the apparent tension between the Bible's mention of two concurrent high priests. Luke 3:2 joins Annas and Caiaphas in the office. Acts 4:6 refers to Annas as the High Priest, and other Scriptures (John 11:49; 18:24) ascribe this office to Caiaphas. Annas had been appointed by Quirinius, but was deposed after nine years. Following him, three others succeeded before the office was bestowed upon his son-in-law, Caiaphas (Edersheim 1: 263). Many of the Jews probably still viewed Annas as the rightful officeholder, and he likely was maneuvering his own puppet picks into the position. These priests then, as power-holders are wont to do, turned an office of sacred responsibility into one of sordid rapaciousness. Those characters are remembered by history as leaders of "gross self-indulgence, violence, luxury, and even public indecency" (Edersheim 1: 263). Interestingly, Annas' house is charged with the sin of "'whispering'—or hissing like vipers—which seems to refer to the private influence on the judges in their administration of justice, whereby 'morals were corrupted, judgment perverted, and the Shekhinah withdrawn from Israel'", says Edersheim, citing Talmudic sources (1: 263).

With the whole corrupt Sanhedrin council under the influence of the high priest serving as President (Edersheim 1:240), the high priesthood, politically speaking, served the role of protecting the selfish interests of the hypocritical power-mongers (cf. Matt. 23:3-9), who felt themselves the elitist guardians of the best interests of all the Jewish people. This explains their paranoid fear regarding Jesus, "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48).

Thus, Caiaphas sought utilitarian expediency. Kill Jesus, and save the people. Sacrifice one rabble-rouser (never mind His shows of goodness and power) to preserve the political status quo. After all, such talent of peace-keeping with Roman ends in mind was likely how Caiaphas got the job.

Nonetheless, the office still belonged to God, and He marvelously proved He owned it. For Caiaphas meant one thing by His self-serving words, but God inspired Him to mean quite another. "Now this he did not say on his own authority, but being high priest that

year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad” (John 11:51-52). God habitually used even those against His will to accomplish His will. The boasting king of Assyria thought “to destroy, and cut off not a few nations” (Isa. 10:7), but He was really just a rod in the Almighty’s wielding hand (Isa. 10:5-6). Balaam was hired to curse the people of Israel. Later actions show he really wanted to do so, but God turned the curse into a blessing (Num. 22-24; 31:16; Deut. 23:4-5; Josh. 24:9-10; Neh. 13:2; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). God even made Balaam’s donkey talk (Num. 22:28-30). The double-meaning of Caiaphas’ statement is awe-inspiring, but it ought not be surprising.

The high priest did not speak these words by himself alone but was influenced by divine guidance to utter a prophecy of the vicarious and sacrificial death of Jesus as the Messiah. His motive was mean and vicious and wholly void of love for the Lord and the people, but the Lord, whom he treated with contempt, caused his words to be clothed with a sentiment his perversity and hardness of heart prevented him from originating. (Woods 248)

The outlandish becomes the norm with Jehovah at the controls. “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’” (Rom. 11:33-34).

More so, both meanings of the statement would come true. The Jews would tenuously preserve their temporal peace for another three and one-half decades, until their revolt in A.D. 66 spurred the events that would bring out their predicted (Matt. 24) ruin in A.D. 70. Spiritually, eternally,

Not only would the Lord die for the nation of the Jews, but he would also bring together into one body the scattered children of God. This was a prophecy of the coming together of Jew and Gentile into one body, the church. (Eph. 1:19-23;

As promised to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, the Seed would bless all nations (Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:16). Many would come from east and west and sit down in the rule of God with those Jewish greats (Matt. 8:11-12). The wild olive tree would be grafted into the natural (Rom. 11). The death would not be for political benefit, but for the establishment of a prophesied kingdom “not of this world” (Dan. 2:44; John 18:36).

The contrast of understanding between the political and the prophetic is highlighted in two personalities at the beginning of John 12. In Bethany, Jesus joined siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus for a dinner. Mary shows her understanding of the spiritual sacrifice of the Savior, anointing His feet with costly oil and wiping His feet with her hair (12:1-3). Also present was one harboring a political, profit-motivated understanding of following Jesus. Infamous Judas Iscariot objected that the money was not sold so that the poor could be served. His real motive was not hidden from the Holy Spirit, Who inspired John to comment, “This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it” (12:6).

Judas thought of Jesus as a convenient leader who allowed him profit. Caiaphas thought of Jesus as an inconvenient problem who could be removed for political gain. God prophesied through Caiaphas’ ill-intended words that Jesus was much more. Mary understood to the core of her soul.

The contrasts of understanding continue. John 12:9-11 records the plot of the malevolently stubborn priests. Refusing to believe in Jesus, they sought to rid believers of their most recent evidence for faith in Him—they wanted to kill Lazarus. Political expediency unchecked by morality knows no boundaries of evil.

In stark contradistinction is the record of the Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people showed their love for Jesus. They shouted His praises, employing prophesies previously made concerning Him (12:12-19). “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!” they shout, from Psalm 118:25-26. Finding Jesus on the young donkey, they



cite Zech. 9:9 in John 12:15: “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.” The testimony of Lazarus’ walking, formerly dead body was still resonating in the hearts turned toward belief, much to the chagrin of the politicians (12:17-19). R.C. Foster speculates as to the thinking of the crowd:

All roads always led to Jerusalem at the Passover. But this Passover was different. All roads now possessed a mysterious compulsion which drew to the capital excited, expectant multitudes (John 11:55, 56). Would He come? Would He dare to come? Who could prevent Him? Who could withstand Him? Not the rabble-rousing hypocrites of temple and synogogue (sic). But they were deeply entrenched; they had arms and soldiers; they would with shrewd cunning seek the support of Rome. If only He would declare Himself and use His miraculous power to destroy His enemies. What a day of glory that would be! But, if not—what then? The storm clouds were menacing. The tension of suppressed excitement was fast approaching the inevitable point of explosion. Verily, this thing was not done in a corner. (1067)

A portion of those “scattered abroad” (11:52), some Greeks, were curious enough to seek Jesus “among those who came up to worship at the feast” (12:20). They found Philip, who found Andrew, and the two of them told the Lord. Whether or not these Greeks actually got to see the Lord is left to speculation, but Jesus uses the incident for an opportunity to teach. His lesson says something, albeit indirectly, about the vicarious nature of His impending death.

“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:23-24). Jesus’ words appeal to every culture with any root at all in agriculture (and what culture doesn’t have some such root? For food is necessary).

Jesus’ being glorified is closely bound up with his refusal to

seek his own glory (John 8:50, 54); far from seeking this, he is willing to be utterly expended that God's purpose may be fulfilled, to disappear from sight as completely as the grain of wheat when the earth covers it over, to die in order that new life may spring up. Some appreciation of this principle, manifested in the recurring sequence of seed-time and harvest, underlies the fertility cults of the dying and rising god, so familiar in the ancient Near East and elsewhere. But there is more contrast than resemblance between the repeated process of nature, mythologized and enacted year by year in a ritual designed to ensure its perpetuation, and the Son of Man's historical self-dedication, accomplished once for all and eternal in its efficacy. (Bruce 264)

In those fertility cults Bruce mentions, perverted pagans performed such rituals in an effort to identify with the god and/or goddess whom they deemed powerful enough to control the vegetation cycle. They felt they had life only through the participation in this god's affairs. This hints at the meaning of vicarious. In Jesus' analogy, a single grain of wheat sacrifices itself so that much more "fruit" can come and many others be blessed. The wheat lives because of the seed's sacrifice. People live because they eat the wheat, and it is all traced back to the seed's sacrifice. It is a contemplation of vicarious living.

Dictionary definitions for *vicarious* also inspire interest. One is "felt or enjoyed through imagined participation in the experience of others: a *vicarious thrill*" ("Vicarious"). Sinfully, that is what those pagans get in identification with their supposed god. Less harmfully illustrating the point are modern movie-goers who seek thrills of speed, persistence, victory, and even horror through the characters on the screen. Another definition is "noting or pertaining to a situation in which one organ performs part of the functions normally performed by another" ("Vicarious"). Indeed, this sometimes happens: *Vicarious hypertrophy* is defined as "hypertrophy of an organ following failure of another organ to which it is functionally related" (Vicarious Hypertrophy). An incapable organ's functions are done through another. How appropriate this analogy is to sinners incapable of naught but death, living through their Savior. That,

then, is the primary dictionary definition: “performed, exercised, received, or suffered in place of another: vicarious punishment (“Vicarious”). This, of course, is the meaning concerning the Christ.

The old law, the tutor toward Christ (Gal. 3:24-25) is fraught with examples of *vicarious punishment*. Particularly, the Old Testament system of sacrifices taught the substitution of one living thing (animal) for another (the human who, with freewill, sinned). In Leviticus,

...the sacrifices are divided into *burnt-offerings* with the accompanying *meal-offerings*, *peace-offerings*, *sin-offerings* for sins of ignorance, and *trespass-offerings* for various legal violations. The three former were of the nature of *gifts*, the two latter of *propitiatory* sacrifices; but even in the gift, as coming from a sinful man, there was present the idea of propitiation by the blood of the victim, and it was always preceded by a sin-offering. (Smith, Fields 228, emph. in orig.)

*Propitiation*, then, becomes the idea in queue. Wuest suggests that *propitiation* is a less acceptable translation of the Greek word *hilasterion*, used in Rom. 3:25. Rather, “an expiatory satisfaction” is his preference (Wuest 1: 61). In painting the picture of its meaning, he reminds that the Septuagint so translates the word in Leviticus 16:14 “to refer to the golden cover on the Ark of the Covenant... Before the Ark stood the High Priest representing the people. When the sacrificial blood is sprinkled on this cover, it ceases to be a place of judgment and becomes a place of mercy. The blood comes between the violated law and the violaters, the people” (Wuest 1: 61). Thus, the animal’s life was sacrificed when the life of the sinner was the one deserving of the penalty. In this fashion, the sinner’s life got to continue *vicariously* through the slain life of the beast. This understanding points, of course, to the Christ, as the Hebrews writer repeatedly illuminates, Who replaced animal sacrifices by dying “once for all” (Heb. 9:11-14; 10:11-12; 13:11-12). Although the word *vicarious* does not appear in most English translations, the idea pervades all the work of the Savior. As the seed gives its life so

many others can live, so the Christ did for us. (Then, He demands the same kind of selflessness from his followers—John 12:25-26).

Troubled, the world's only true vicar (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5) was tempted to seek relief from His suffering (John 12:27; Matt. 26:36-46). Strengthened, He spoke of His lifting up and drawing all peoples to Himself, another reference to His vicarious death (John 12:30-33). Already, the parallel to Moses' lifting up the serpent in the wilderness had been employed (John 3:14; Num. 21:5-9). This verb for "lifting up" is "a verb of double meaning..." "...it can signify not only literal elevation (as on a cross) but also exaltation (in rank or honour). It is used in this latter sense in the Septuagint of Isa. 52:13, where 'he (the Servant) shall be exalted'" (Bruce 267).

Christ would be lifted up physically—this would fulfill Caiaphas' maliciously intended political meaning. He would be exalted—this would fulfill the message and the purpose of God.

Still, stubbornness caused the expelling of believers from the fellowship of the stiff-necked (12:42-43). This was all according to prophecy (12:37-41; Isa. 53:1; 6:9-10). Darkness rebelled against the light (12:35-36; cf. 3:19-21). Some people would have none of Christ's vicarious death. They were receiving the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6:1).

That, indeed, is possible. Though He died for all men (Heb. 2:9), and the grace of God appeared to all men (Titus 2:11), not everyone is accepting of the benefits of the vicarious nature of Christ's death. Yet, He died for all, even while all still wallowed in their sin (Rom. 5:8ff.).

He died for "Judas, who betrayed Him" (John 18:2). Yet, Judas' selfishness, greed, and cowardice combined to ensure Him a disgusting temporal fate and a desperate eternal one (Acts 1:18-19; Mark 14:21). He died for the Jews and the Romans who came to arrest Him (John 18:3). Bruce and Woods agree that soldiers from both camps were involved in the arrest as recorded in John 18:1-11.

Nowhere is John's independence of the Synoptic narrative more apparent than in his unambiguous statement that Roman soldiers, in addition to temple police, were involved in the arrest of Jesus. Unfortunately many of our standard

translations do not bring this out clearly enough. In the AV and (surprisingly) RSV the reader would naturally suppose that the ‘band of soldiers’ as well as the ‘officers’ were procured from the chief priests and Pharisees. The distinction between the two is made a little clearer in the RV because of its precise punctuation, but the retention of the colourless word ‘band (of soldiers)’ to represent Gk. *speira*, which is the technical equivalent of Lat. *cohors*, obscures the fact that Roman soldiers are meant. The NEB is more explicit, although it prefers ‘detachment’ to the technical term ‘cohort’: ‘So Judas took a detachment of soldiers, and police provided by the chief priests and the Pharisees, equipped with lanterns, torches and weapons, and made his way to the garden.’ Here the ‘detachment’ of soldiers is clearly distinguished from the police (members of the temple guard, as in 7:32) provided by the Sanhedrin (called ‘the chief priests and the Pharisees’ as in 11:57, etc.). An auxiliary cohort, such as garrisoned the Antonia fortress north-west of the temple area, comprised a paper strength of 1,000 men (760 infantry and 240 cavalry); it was commanded by a military tribune (Gk. *chiliarchos*, lit. ‘commander of a thousand’), like Claudius Lysias, who occupied this post twenty-seven years later, at the time of Paul’s arrest (Acts 21:31 ff.). We need not suppose that every member of the cohort was called out on the present occasion, but evidently a sufficiently large detachment was sent to warrant the presence of the officer commanding the whole garrison (verse 12). The fact that Roman troops were there as well as temple police implies that the Jewish authorities had already approached the military command, probably indicating that they expected armed resistance to be offered. That it was the Jewish authorities and not the Romans who took the initiative is shown by the fact that, after the arrest, the Jewish authorities were allowed to take Jesus into their custody. When Judas is described as ‘taking’ the cohort and the police to the place, all that is meant is that he acted as their guide. (Bruce 340)

The “band of soldiers” was the Roman cohort stationed in Judaea as an army of occupation, the land then being subject to the Roman empire. They were quartered at the tower of Antonia. The cohort ranged in number from three hundred to six hundred men, though it is unlikely that the full guard was present on this occasion. They were there at the instigation of the Jewish council for the purpose of arresting Jesus. The “officers” who accompanied the soldiers were members of the temple guard and under direct orders of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court. (Woods 369)

How ironic it is that those from all the nations for whom Jesus would die (Jew & Gentile—John 11:51-52) would conspire against Him to bring about the combined expedient death (as per Caiaphas) and the expiatory sacrifice (as per God) (cf. Acts 4:24-28; Psalm 2:1-2). When they sought to arrest Him, they were taken aback and fell back at the force of His forthright admittance of identity and declaration of Deity, “I am He” (John 18:4-6).

His reply, ‘I am he’ (Gk. *ego eimi*), can be understood on two levels, and this is probably the Evangelist’s intention. On one level, it simply means ‘I am he’ in the ordinary sense, such as any man might use in similar circumstances. But in an appropriate setting *ego eimi* is more than that; it is a word of power, the equivalent of the God of Israel’s self-identifying affirmation ‘I am He’. On the lips of Jesus it has already had something approaching this force in the Gospel of John (cf. 8:24, 28); and that it has this force here is plain from the retreat and prostration of those addressed. (Bruce 341)

He died for the disciples, whom He tried to free from His arrest in the Garden; those who all eventually forsook Him and fled (John 18:8-9; Mark 14:50). He died for the disciple who got Peter in to Caiaphas’ courtyard (18:15), “generally understood to be John” (Lipscomb 278-279). He died for Peter, who boldly tried to fight soldiers at the first (John 18:10-11), but then covered before a girl

and her peers at the last (John 18:15-18; 25-27). He died for the girl, and for all those offended accusers berating Peter's knowledge of the Lord.

The first to accuse Peter was "the servant girl who kept the door" (18:15; Matt. 26:69). Apparently, the word of Peter's association with Jesus spread. According to John, "they" questioned him. According to Matthew, it was "another" with "girl" added in the English (Matt. 26:71 NKJV). It makes sense, because, according to Mark, the first servant girl had reported it to the others (Mark 16:69). Luke's account agrees that one of them, "another" leveled the floating charge, "You also are one of them" (Luke 22:58). The third accuser is more specifically recognized by John's Gospel. Whereas Matthew records that "those who stood by" were the accusers (Matt. 26:73), and Mark agrees verbatim (Mark 14:69), Luke narrows it down again to "another" (Luke 22:59). John identifies this mouthpiece of the crowd as "one of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off" (John 18:26). This individual asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" And Peter "denied again" (18:26-27).

He died so that Annas could have lived (John 18:12-13, 24). He died so that Caiaphas, who predicted His death, might be afforded the opportunity of enjoying the real meaning of His prophecy (11:49-52; 18:14). He died for the first (John 18:22) and then for all who struck Him (Matt. 26:66-68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-65). He died for all the Jews.

Jesus died so that Romans could live. The illegal all-night Jewish trials (see Edersheim 2: 553-558; cf. Isa. 53:8; Acts 8:33), led to the Christ's appearance before the procurator Pontius Pilate (John 18:28ff.) (with an interlude to Herod's court [Luke 23:6-12]). Pilate, a coward for much of His career, who resorted to irrational, temperamental violence on occasion (Bruce 349-350), tried to let Jesus go (18:24-19:16). Finally, though, his cowardice won out (John 19:16; Matt. 27:24). Jesus died for him. And Jesus died for Barabbas, the robber, zealot, and murderer whom Pilate released in His place (John 18:39-40; Mark 15:7).

Upon Pilate's capitulation to the will of the people, Jesus went, "bearing His cross" to the place "where they crucified Him" (John



19:17-18). Crucifixion was designed to be as barbarous, heinous, and painful as possible. It was a deterrent of potential future rebels as much as it was a punishment. “Lifted up” between heaven and earth, Rome’s subjects could view the agonizing breaths and wretched cries of a man tugging against the nails in his flesh just to try to get his next breath. Sometimes, the cross was even tilted slightly forward to make this breathing all the more difficult (Foster 1273). Sometimes, a rough piece of wood served as a sort of a seat on which the victim might set his weight, but this was not a merciful move; it was done to prolong the agony (Bruce 367-368). There is no indication of such in Jesus’ case, but the historical practice illustrates the thoughtfully contemplated cruelty with which the Roman forces operated. Cicero, F.F. Bruce reports, called crucifixion “the cruellest (sic) and foulest of punishments” (367).

The violence of mankind in judicial executions has never been more pronounced. Every effort was made to inflict as much pain for as long as possible, making modern means of execution—from hanging to electric chair to lethal injection—seem incredibly humane and compassionate. Indeed, it is magnificent to note that God, foreknowing all things, and foreordaining the Christ (Isa. 46:10; 1 Pet. 1:20) could have had Christ come at a time when things might not have been so excruciating. But God had Him come just when He wanted Him to, “in the fullness of the dispensation of the times” (Eph. 1:10; cf. Gal. 4:4). The time was right for the Christ to come during the days of the Romans due to the kingdom prophecies (Daniel 2, 7) and a host of other considerations. One of those considerations was surely to make sure the suffering of the Christ could never be subjected to criticisms of it not involving enough suffering to identify with the plight of mankind.

Pilate got in one last jab at the people with the sign above the cross declaring Jesus to be the “King of the Jews.” They didn’t like it, but he wouldn’t relent (John 19:19-22). Jesus died so those on both sides of this controversy could have the opportunity for eternal life. Soldiers, according to prophecy (Psalm 22:18), divided Jesus’ garments among them and cast lots for the seamless piece (19:23-24). Jesus suffered the plight that should have been these soldiers’.

Tenderly, while in gross agony, Jesus made provisions for his



mothers' care by ascribing familial responsibility to "the disciple whom He loved" (traditionally John) (19:25-27). Jesus died for that apostle of love and for the other women at the cross. He died for His precious mother, as she had a sword figuratively piercing her own soul (cf. Luke 2:35).

With the utterance, "It is finished!" Jesus "gave up His spirit" (John 19:28-30). Soldiers trained in the gruesome art of death came to break the legs of the three (John 19:18) sufferers on Golgotha. This move weakened the ability to lift the body's weight and gasp for breath, thus hastening death. "But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs" (19:33). Instead, the certainty of His spirit's departure from His body (cf. Jas .2:26) was ensured with the spear's thrust into His side, from whence came blood and water (19:34). Jesus died for those brutal men.

It was a Jewish leader's utilitarian wish that Jesus die (John 11:49-50; 18:14). His malicious wish was granted. Yet, Caiaphas had no concept of what Jesus' death really meant. He had sacrificed His life for the nation of the Jews, but not so they could continue in peaceful semi-self-rule under the Roman Empire. The Jewish nation and way of life as he knew it would end in A.D. 70. The Roman Empire would eventually crumble. Those rulers and their respective political entities that "gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ" (cf. Acts 4:24-28) would go the way of every nation as controlled by the Almighty (Acts 17:26). Jesus' death was not for their temporal, selfish, greedy, power-mongering ends. It was for their souls.

All those who maliciously plotted against the Christ could have their sins forgiven and live eternally, no matter what their nation of origin (11:51-52; 12:32). Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross, the people who cried for His crucifixion—all these could benefit eternally from the One who died for the people.

History records that some of the unnamed mobs did. On Pentecost, 3,000 repented of this guilt and were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:36-38). Many priests became obedient to the faith in the early days of the church (Acts 6:7). The

Gospel quickly (as a mustard seed—Matt. 13:31, 32) spread through “Jerusalem...Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Wherever people “called on the name of the Lord,” whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 10:12-13), in the appropriate manner (Acts 22:16), they contacted the blood of Christ shed in His death (John 19:32-34; Rom. 6:4-6). They identified with their Savior, the true Word of God, who was with God, and was God (John 1:1-3). This vicarious living was no pagan illusion imagined by the ignorant. It was real. It was historical. It was promising. It provided hope.

All nations of men on earth need to appropriate the grace of this vicarious death. It is out there for all to benefit from it. It requires conditions of obedience and faithfulness. When those are met, one can echo the lyrical sentiments of the apostle Paul: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Do you live vicariously through the Christ? And does He live in you?

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Andy Robison was raised in Moundsville, WV. He is a graduate of Ohio Valley College (now University), Parkersburg, WV and Harding University, Searcy, AR, receiving his B.A. in Bible and Vocal Music in 1987. Andy has completed 33 hours of graduate study through Harding University Graduate School of Religion (now Harding School of Theology), as well as returning to Harding for Teacher Certification in 1993-1994. He has been associate preacher for the Pennsboro, WV, and Camden Ave., Parkersburg, WV congregations of the Lord's church. He has served as pulpit minister for the Oakhurst church of Christ, Farmington, WV, the Hopewell church of Christ, Washington, WV, and the Harrisville, WV church of Christ. Andy taught Bible and directed the choruses at Jackson, TN Christian School for two years. He has written and co-written several hymns, as well as produced several CDs of a cappella singing for West Virginia Christian Youth Camp. He serves on the board of directors for that camp, and is a co-director of their annual Singing Emphasis Week. He manages the website churchofchristsons.com, which contains many of his compositions, along with other originals. He has been with West Virginia School of Preaching since 2011, serving as director since 2012. He is married to the former Marsha Giesler of Rolla, MO. They are the parents of one daughter, Hannah, and a son, Andrew.



# The King

## *John 18:33-19:16*

*Aaron Burch*

### **Background to the Text**

After an exhausting night of unlawful trials, unmerited beatings, and unwarranted mockery, the Jewish leaders finally handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66). By that point, Jesus had already appeared before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin (John 18:12-24). With insufficient reason and contrived charges, they had found Jesus guilty, worthy even of death. Yet, they themselves could not administer the death penalty (John 18:31) (McGarvey and Pendleton 704) – that required the Roman governor’s sanction. So, to Pontus Pilate, the Jews led Jesus.

Tiberius Caesar appointed Pilate *prefect* of Judea in 26 AD (Ferguson 8064). He served Rome in that capacity until 36 or 37 AD. Archeological evidence has corroborated the truthfulness of the biblical account in regard to Pilate’s existence and rule. In 1961, archeologists discovered an inscription in Caesarea bearing the name of Pilate as well as his title (Ferguson 8091; Roper 654, 668). Pilate’s tenure as *prefect* was rather tumultuous (Ferguson 8064-86; Bell 73; Roper 652-53). He incited hatred from both the Jews and the Samaritans and was ultimately recalled to Rome at the end of Tiberius’ reign. By the time Jesus appeared before the governor, Pilate had already quelled the instigations of several revolutionaries. Certainly, he was accustomed to trying claimant “kings,” but never before had the Son of God appeared in his presence. Indeed, for the first time, the true Davidic heir, the rightful King of Israel, stood before him.

As part of his investigation, Pilate calmly asked Jesus, “Are You King of the Jews?” (John 18:33 NKJV). [All Scripture references are from the NKJV of the Bible unless otherwise noted.] The term

“king” (*basileus*) dominates the text of John 18:33–19:16. From John 18:28–19:22, the term “king” occurs twelve times. In addition, Jesus Himself uses the term “kingdom” (*basileia*) three times in John 18:36. From an ancient Hellenistic perspective, the “king” was the supreme potentate, one of “unquestioned authority” (Arndt, et al. 169). In Rome, Caesar never accepted the title “king,” but in the ancient Near Eastern he did (Bell 59–60). He alone was “king.”

## Survey of the Text

### A Question of Kingship (John 18:33–38a)

After asking the Jews what “accusation” (John 18:29) they brought against Jesus, Pilate returned to the “Praetorium” and summoned Him (v. 33). The Praetorium was Pilate’s “official residence” in Jerusalem, probably the former palace of Herod the Great or the fortress Antonia or less likely the former “Hasmonean royal palace” (for more detailed arguments, see: Arndt 859; Keener; NET; Roper 480; Carson 587). Because of the Gentile presence in the Praetorium, the Jews considered the place unclean (John 18:28).

### *Pilate’s Question (v. 33)*

When Jesus came to Pilate, the governor asked him: “Are You the King of the Jews?” Why did Pilate ask Jesus about kingship? According to John’s account, the Jews had initially stated that Jesus was an “evildoer” (i.e., a “criminal” [NET]) who had, they implied, committed a crime worthy of death (vv. 30, 31b). The lack of a specific charge, at first, betrayed the insufficiency of their evidence and the duplicity of their motive. However, according to Luke, “[T]hey,” then, “began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King’” (Luke 23:2). Concerning the total fabrication of this charge, McGarvey and Pendleton noted:

They say “We found,” thereby asserting that the things which they stated to Pilate were the things for which they had condemned Jesus. Their assertion was utterly false, for the three things which they now mentioned had formed no part whatever of the evidence against Jesus in their trial of

him. The first charge, that Jesus was a perverter or seducer of the people, was extremely vague. The second, that he taught to withhold tribute from Caesar, was a deliberate falsehood. See p. 599. The third, that he claimed to be king, was true, but this third charge, coupled with the other two, was intended to convey a sense which was maliciously false. Jesus was a spiritual King, and claimed to be such, and as such was no offender against the Roman government. But the rulers intended that Pilate should regard him as claiming to be a political king, which he had constantly refused to do—John 6:15. (705)

Pilate, therefore, asked Jesus if He was the “King of the Jews” because that was the accusation the Jews brought against Him (Beasley-Murray 329). As in McGarvey’s note above, accusing Jesus of claiming to be King was a politically motivated charge. Caesar is king. If Jesus claims to be King in the same sense, then He is an enemy of Caesar, and, if He is an enemy of Caesar, then Pilate must execute Him.

### ***Jesus’ Kingship and Kingdom (vv. 34-38)***

In v. 34, Jesus responded by asking about the source of and reason for Pilate’s question: “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?” The source, according to Pilate, was the Jews (v. 35). Jesus then began to answer the question: “Are You the King of the Jews?” He affirmed His kingship first by stating that He had a “kingdom,” although not such a kingdom as Pilate might have expected. Jesus’ kingdom was “not of this world” and “not from here” (v. 36). Furthermore, Pilate had no cause to worry about a revolutionary movement. Jesus’ servants would not “fight” to deliver Him. In other words, His “kingdom” was not physical or political, but spiritual.

When Pilate reiterated his question, “Are You a King then?” Jesus affirmed His kingship a second time, stating: “You say *rightly* that I am a king” (v. 37) (Carson 594; Beasley-Murray 331). In fact, Jesus’ kingship was the “truth” and He could speak nothing but the truth. God had sent Him to speak truth. When Jesus said, “For this cause

I was born, and for this cause I have come,” He was not referring to His kingship but to His divine mission of truth-speaking. McGarvey and Pendleton noted: “For the purpose of thus bearing witness to and revealing truth Jesus had been born” (707). Technically, the prepositional phrases are probably postcedent, anticipating the following “that” (*hina*) clause (Wallace 333-35). However, part of the truth Jesus came to reveal was His kingly nature; Carson notes: “the exercise of his saving kingship is virtually indistinguishable from his testifying to the truth” (595; also Beasley-Murray 331-32).

Nevertheless, Jesus also made clear that He was not a King in the same sense as Caesar. His servants would not fight and His kingdom was not of this world. His kingdom “made no use of physical power even for purposes of defense. Such a kingdom could cause no trouble to Rome” (McGarvey 707; cf., also Beasley-Murray 331, 332).

### **A Quest for Release (John 18:38b-19:7)**

#### ***An Innocent Man (vv. 38b-39; 19:1-4)***

Although possibly irritated by the reference to “truth,” Pilate was at the least satisfied with Jesus’ answer in regard to His kingship; “he understood Jesus’ answer well enough to grasp that the formal ‘Yes, I am a king’ really meant ‘No, I am not a king in any merely political sense, a king who might endanger the Empire’” (Carson 595). So, returning to the Jews, Pilate declared, “I find no fault in Him” (v. 38b). In essence, Pilate pronounced his verdict – Jesus was innocent and certainly not worthy of death! A few months before Jesus had issued the challenge to the Jews: “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46). Despite their best efforts, even before Pilate, the Jews could not convict Jesus of sin (cf., Heb. 4:15). In fact, three times Pilate bore witness to Jesus’ innocence: “I find no fault in Him” (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). At first, Pilate tried to release Jesus based on custom (John 18:38) and, then, again, by having Jesus “scourged” (John 19:1-4; cf., Luke 23:16) (Beasley-Murray 334).

Some commentators suggest that the scourging in verse 1 is a lesser type of beating than that normally administered immediately before crucifixion (see Keener; Carson 597-98; Beasley-Murray 335). If that is the case, then Jesus received two beatings: the one recorded here and another just before His crucifixion. However,



Pilate appears to beat Jesus at this point to show His weakness and harmlessness (McGarvey and Pendleton 713; Carson 598; Tasker 202). Nothing could do that more completely than a full scourging, to which the verb, “scourging” (mastigoo), also seems to point (NET). Scourging “was carried out with a whip that had fragments of bone or pieces of metal bound into the tips” (NET). J. W. Shepard described the gruesome nature of such a beating:

Stripped of His clothes, His hands tied to a column or stake with His back bent, the victim was lashed with the [whips] by six [executioners], who plied these instruments of torture with severity almost to the point of death of the prisoner. Each stroke cut into the quivering flesh, until the veins and sometimes the entrails were laid bare. Often the scourge struck the face and knocked out the eyes and teeth. Scourging almost always ended in fainting and sometimes even in death. (qtd. from Roper 489)

### ***An Insatiable Mob (vv. 40; 19:5-7)***

Yet, nothing, not even a ruthless, barbaric scourging, could quench the blood-thirst of the Jews. Indeed, they became even more persistent, yelling, “Not this Man, but Barabbas” (John 18:40) and “Crucify Him, crucify Him” (John 19:6). According to John, “Barabbas was a robber” (lestes) (John 18:40). However, he had committed much more than simple thievery. Barabbas had been involved in an insurrection that resulted in murder (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19). The Jews, thus, chose a murderer over the Messiah, a rebel over the Redeemer, a sinner over the Savior. Still resilient Pilate declared Jesus’ innocence the third time, but the Jews shouted all the more: “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (John 19:7).

### **A Question of Origin (John 19:8-11)**

#### ***Pilate’s Question (vv. 8-9)***

The Jews’ statement that Jesus claimed to be “the Son of God” made Pilate “more afraid” (John 19:8). As Tasker suggests, Pilate’s fear was:

[P]ossibly a superstitious fear that, for all appearances to the contrary, he might be in the presence of a supernatural figure with all the sinister consequences that might involve, but more probably a fear that, in spite of the lack of evidence, here was one who really was claiming for himself the title to which the Roman emperor laid claim, *divi filius* [i.e., Son of God]. (203)

Although in verse 7 the Jews probably alluded to a charge of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16; cf., John 5:18; 10:33), the crime for which the Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus (Matt. 26:63-66), the phrase would have meant treason to Pilate (NET; contra Carson 600).

### ***Pilate's Power (vv. 10-11)***

Returning to the Praetorium, Pilate asked Jesus, "Where are You from?" but Jesus did not "answer" (John 19:9). Pilate already had all the information he needed to acquit Jesus; his question was probably just a pragmatic attempt to determine whether he should defend Jesus or appease the Jews (McGarvey and Pendleton 715-16; Carson 600). Pilate, then, tried to intimidate Jesus into answering by reminding Him that he had the "power to crucify" and the "power to release" (John 19:10). "Power" (*exousia*) in this context refers to Pilate's "official power" or "authority" (Arndt 353). As governor, he had the authority of life and death. Yet, Jesus reminded Pilate that his "power" (*exousia*) came "from above" (i.e., from God; cf., Rom. 13:1-7). Ironically, in view of John 1:1-3, Pilate's authority originated with Jesus. Apparently, Jesus' response satisfied Pilate again, for John says, "From then on Pilate sought to release Him" (John 19:12).

### **A Quest for Crucifixion (John 19:12-22)**

#### ***The Jews' Ploy (vv. 12, 15)***

Although Pilate had determined to release Jesus, the Jews would not be dissuaded. They shrieked: "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar" (John 19:12) and "We have no king but Caesar!" (John

19:15). David Roper noted:

If we ever needed proof that hatred clouds the mind and destroys judgment, here is a perfect example: “No king but Caesar”? Was not God the Ruler of Israel (Ps. 10:16; Mt. 5:35)? Did they not look forward to the coming of the Messiah, who would be their King (Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:5)? Consumed by their malice, the Jewish hierarchy abandoned sacred truths held for thousands of years. (494)

However, with this statement the Jews did not just reject Jesus as King, they rejected every possible Messianic King. Beasley-Murray added:

[I]t [i.e., the Jews’ statement] is nothing less than the abandonment of the messianic hope of Israel. For it is not Jesus alone whom they reject; any claimant to the messianic office is excluded on the basis of the slogan, “No king but Caesar.” Their repudiation of Jesus in the name of a pretended loyalty to the emperor entailed their repudiation of the promise of the kingdom of God, with which the gift of the Messiah is inseparably bound in Jewish faith. (343)

### ***Pilate’s Predicament (vv. 13-14, 16)***

The two statements of the Jews in verses 12 and 15 were calculated attempts to force Pilate into crucifying Jesus. According to Keener, “the emperor Tiberius was suspicious of the least talk of treason, and a delegation to Rome providing the slightest evidence that Pilate had supported a self-proclaimed king could lead to Pilate’s beheading” (cf., also Carson 602; Beasley-Murray 340). In other words, the Jews had placed Pilate between the proverbial “Rock and a hard place.”

If Pilate now failed to convict Jesus the Jewish authorities could complain to Rome that Pilate had released a traitor. This possibility carried more weight with Pilate than might at first be evident: (1) Pilate’s record as governor was not

entirely above reproach; (2) Tiberius, who lived away from Rome as a virtual recluse on the island of Capri, was known for his suspicious nature, especially toward rivals or those who posed a political threat; and (3) worst of all, Pilate's patron in Rome, Sejanus, had recently come under suspicion of plotting to seize the imperial succession for himself. Sejanus was deposed in October of a.d. 31. It may have been to Sejanus that Pilate owed his appointment in Judea. Pilate was now in a very delicate position. The Jewish authorities may have known something of this and deliberately used it as leverage against him. (NET)

Sejanus may or may not have fallen out of favor with the emperor before Jesus stood in the presence of Pilate, but, in either case, Pilate had certainly placed himself in a compromised position (Carson 607; Beasley-Murray 340-41). And, because of that, the Jews succeeded. Pilate, despite his threefold declaration of Jesus' innocence and his determination to release Him, handed Jesus, the rightful King of the Jews, over "to be crucified" (John 19:16).

### **Confessions in the Text**

A survey of the text demonstrates the Word's confession of His kingship and the cost of that confession. Indeed, the Word (John 1:1, 14), despite all affliction and cost, confessed, before the earthly tribunal, that He was king! His confession of truth, kingship, and authority, however, came in the face of and led to horrendous suffering and terrible death. At the same time, His confession stands in stark contrast to others in this text.

At least four confessions from different persons or groups occur in these few verses. 1) The confession of the caricaturists, the Roman soldiers, was a confession of mockery (18.38b-19.3). They portrayed Jesus as King, placing a "crown" on His head, a "purple robe" on His shoulders, and a reed scepter in His hands, and stating, "Hail, King of the Jews," a royal greeting similar to the greeting used for Caesar (NET). Yet, their confession was far from earnest. Their actions displayed no compassion, only contempt. 2) The confession of Pilate fared slightly better. His confession in court was a confession

of honesty, “I find no fault in Him” (18:38; 19:4-14), but it was mixed with animosity, “Behold your King” (19:14-15) and “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews” (19:17-22), and spineless caprice. Carson stated: “If Pilate had been stamped with integrity, his verdict would have ended the matter: Jesus would have been released, and the Jewish authorities dismissed” (595). But, with Pilate, integrity was lacking. 3) The dishonest confession of the crowd and the chief priests, however, was the most despicable. The Jews argued time and time again: He is a “criminal” (18:40), a “blasphemer” (19:6-7 – “made Himself the Son of God”), an imposter (19:15 – “We have no king but Caesar”), and a liar (19:21 – “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’”). Yet, they were the criminals, the blasphemers, the imposters, and the liars. 4) In contrast to all of these, Jesus’ confession before the court was the affirmation of truth and authority (18:33-38; 19:8-11). The Word is the King of the Jews and the Son of God!

## **Conclusion**

Jesus’ example calls for our own confession. His confession challenges us to proclaim His kingship in the world and in our lives (cf., Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33). Indeed, each of us daily confesses something about the authority and rule of Jesus. Either He reigns over us as King or we like the Jews make a confession of dishonesty or like the soldiers a confession of mockery or like Pilate a confession of animosity and cowardice. Instead, Jesus’ own example compels us to make the same confession of honesty and authority: Jesus is King! Many years after Jesus’ own confession the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to remember his confession of Christ and to live out that confession:

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Tim. 6:12-14; cf., also

Heb. 4:14; 10:23)

Jesus' confession demands that we live for Him.

But, Jesus' example does much more than simply call upon us to confess His kingship. His confession challenges us to make that confession in the face of great cost – Jesus made His confession knowing that it would lead to scourging, crucifixion, and ultimately death (cf., Matt. 20:19)! When we face the earthly tribunals of life, whether of friends, family, or foes, what confession will proceed from our lips? The confession of dishonesty – “He’s not the King”? The confession of mockery – “He’s the King, but not really”? The confession of cowardice – “He’s the King, but I won’t say it”? The confession of animosity – “He’s the King, if it gets me what I want”? Or the “good confession” of honesty and truth – “He is the King”? Which crown will we place on Jesus’ brow?

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Aaron Burch is the son of Eugene and Rita Burch of Salem, Ohio. He is married to the former Kathryn Langeman. They have three daughters, Esther, Hannah, and Lydia. Since 2010, they have been working with the Beaver St. church of Christ in Lisbon, Ohio. Aaron is a graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching (2007) and Freed-Hardeman University (B.A. in Biblical Studies 2009) and is presently working on a Masters degree at Freed-Hardeman University. During the 1st quarter, he teaches "The Life of Christ" at the West Virginia School of Preaching.





# Restoration and a Penitent

## Apostle

*John 21:1-25*

*John Board*

### **Introduction**

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory...Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ... who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that *your* faith and hope are in God...and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 1:3, 7-8, 13, 21b, 4). [All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

The words in the above paragraph were written by the apostle Peter approximately 33-37 years after the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him after he had, only a few days earlier, denied Jesus. How much of the above inspired words from Peter’s first epistle would be impacted by that day, thirty some odd years ago, when Jesus reached out and re-established Peter as one fit for service in His kingdom, perhaps one may never be certain. It is true that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead made a difference to Peter—without such he would have had to live with having denied his Lord. Peter was definitely familiar with fire—especially a charcoal fire. Does his reference to being tested by fire, though a completely different Greek word, remind him of his own test and restoration by the charcoal fires? Did his praise to the recipients of his epistle for their

love of the Lord and belief in the Lord though they had not seen Him remind Peter of his own struggle to learn to love the Lord and believe as he should have done thirty some years ago? When he encouraged his readers to *rest their hope fully upon the grace* that was revealed to them through the revelation of Jesus Christ and to put their faith and hope in God was Peter reminded of his own need not to trust in himself but to trust in God? At the time of the writing of 1 Peter with Peter being a shepherd himself, was he reminded of the time that the Chief Shepherd appeared to him and the great joy that was the result? One may never know for certain, but these thoughts may cross through one's mind as they read what Peter later wrote and study the passage assigned for this lecture.

### **Nachtrag: John Issues the Final Challenge to Faith**

Though one might refer to the twenty-first chapter of John as a Nachtrag (supplement or postscript), such does not necessitate that it was not an original part of the gospel account of John nor that someone other than John was the author. Though Lenski seems quite confident when he writes, "It is quite impossible to regard the last two verses of Chapter 20 as anything but the formal and proper conclusion of John's Gospel. The impression made on us is that, when John penned or dictated these final verses, he intended to add nothing further"(1399), this writer is not so convinced such a strong, dogmatic statement is necessitated or substantiated. Perhaps the concept is more along the lines of what Mark S. Krause writes in his section of the College Press NIV commentary on John. He writes,

Not allowing the author to make additional comments after the conclusion of 20:30–31 is an inappropriate application of modern standards to an ancient writing. This also misses what seems to me to be the intended presentation scheme of John. He clearly states his purpose of bringing the reader to faith at the end of chapter 20, but chapter 21 serves to issue the final challenge to faith, "Follow me!" For this reason, we conclude that it is an intended part of the original composition of the Apostle John. (Logos Bible Software np)

Couple the thought above with the fact that there is no manuscript evidence or tradition that the Fourth Gospel (John) ever existed without chapter 21, and the evidence is quite strong that chapter 21 was not only not a later edition, but was also written through inspiration by John. Westcott also notes that chapter 21 was written by John. He states, “The style and the general character of the language alike lead to this conclusion” (299). The passage for this study then need not be ascribed to anyone other than the writer of the rest of the account of the Gospel. One can view it as an intended supplement with a purpose that fits the Holy Spirit’s original design.

### **General Outline and Summation of John 21**

The chapter falls into three parts: verses 1–14; 15–19; and 20–24, to which a conclusion is added (verse 25). The first part of the chapter records a Galilean appearance of the resurrected Lord. The word ἐφανερώσεν (an expression of John) from φανερόω (*phaneroō*, reveal) designates the subsequent appearance of the risen Lord as a “revelatory act.” Westcott notes “The same word (φανερόω) is used of the appearances of the Lord after the Resurrection in the conclusion of St Mark’s Gospel, 16:12, 16:14. The active form, which occurs in this verse only (contrast v. 14), marks the appearance as depending on the Lord’s will. He was so pleased to reveal Himself” (299). In the previous chapter all the appearances of the Lord took place in or around Jerusalem. The second part (15-19), loosely attached to the first, relates a dialogue between Jesus and Peter. The last part concerns the fate of the disciple, whom Jesus loved (verse 20). It is followed by a brief conclusion.

The resurrection narrative in vv. 1–24 belongs to that type of appearance story that not only shows Jesus is alive, but also allows Him to give further instruction to disciples (as, e.g., in Lk 24:36–49; Matt 28:16–20). This appearance story falls into two parts: vv. 1–14 and vv. 15–24.

The first part (vv. 1–14) is held together by an *inclusio* (Jesus revealed Himself, v. 1; Jesus was revealed, v. 14). Verse 1 introduces the story: After this Jesus revealed Himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias. As in Matthew 28, the location of Jesus’ appearances moves from Jerusalem to Galilee. As in Luke 24:15, 30,

Jesus revealed Himself by coming, taking, giving (v. 13), that is, in the context of a meal (remember 6:11). Seven disciples are together (v. 2), one of whom is Peter. When he says he is going fishing, the others go with him (v. 3a). This behavior on the part of the seven disciples is entirely appropriate within the context of John's account of the Gospel. So far, their instruction has been to be a believer of Jesus (13–17); it has not necessarily been to leave their occupations and to go make disciples. Here in 21:3–14 will they learn of their task to be Jesus' fishers of men.

They fish all night (a common occurrence since then they could sell a fresh catch the next morning) but catch nothing. At daybreak, Jesus stands on the beach, unrecognized, and asks, "Children, do you have anything to eat?" "No," they reply. "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." When they do as Jesus has directed, they are "not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish." The beloved disciple recognizes Jesus: "It is the Lord." He has the discernment. Peter has the devotion: "he put on his clothes ... and sprang into the sea." The other disciples come in the boat, "dragging the net full of fish." They do their duty. When they reach land, there is a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread for breakfast. Jesus asks them to bring some of their catch, which numbers 153 fish. In spite of the great number of fish, the net is not torn. Jesus invites them to eat. They know it is Jesus. Jesus came, and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to the disciples after He was raised from the dead (v. 14; remember 20:19–23, 26–29). Just as Jesus was recognized in 20:20, 27 by His wounds, so here He is recognized by His role as One Who nourishes His people (remember 6:4–14 see this writer's lecture earlier in the book). It is the same Jesus, only now raised from the dead.

In this first part of the resurrection appearance narrative the focus seems to be not only on whom Jesus is (one who nourishes the people) but also on what the disciples are to do (follow Jesus' directions in their fishing). The presence of symbolism is often noted—the 153 fish and the nets not being torn. Perhaps the idea is that when one follows the commands of Jesus the results are unimaginable. This is true in physical fishing or in the obedience of His command to

become fishers of men (spiritual fishing). Now, at last, the disciples as a group have spelled out for them what it means to be sent by Jesus (20:21b; 17:18). It means fishing, at Jesus' command, for all kinds of people. The first part of the resurrection appearance story revolves around the symbolism of fish and fishing. This symbolism points to the responsibility of disciples to reach those who were not yet followers of Christ.

The second part of the resurrection appearance (vv. 15–23) is a dialogue between Jesus and Peter. Verses 15–17 function to rehabilitate Peter after his denials. Just as Peter's denial took place in three stages (18:17, 25, 27), so his rehabilitation occurs in three steps (vv. 15, 16, 17). After breakfast Jesus asks Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love (*agapas*) me more than these?" Peter says, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love (*philō*) you." Jesus says, "Feed my lambs." A second time Jesus asks, "Simon, son of John, do you love (*agapas*) me?" Peter replies, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love (*philō*) you." Jesus says, "Tend my sheep." A third time Jesus asks, "Simon, son of John, do you love [*phileis*] me?" Peter is grieved and says, "Lord, you know everything (e.g., 1:47–48; 2:25; 4:17–19; 6:64–65; 11:4; 13:1, 11, 38; 16:32); you know that I love [*philō*] you." Jesus says, "Feed my sheep." Many volumes have been written about this exchange.

The alternating between two forms of the word "love" is noted as a stylistic element of John's writings. In Johannine literature, both verbs are used for God's love for humans (*agapan*, 3:16; 14:23; 17:23; 1 John 4:10, 19; *philein*, 16:27; Rev 3:19); both are used of the Father's love for the Son (*agapan*, 3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23, 24, 26; *philein*, 5:20); both are used of Jesus' love for humans (*agapan*, 11:5; 13:1, 23, 24; 14:21; 15:9; 19:26; 21:7; *philein*, 11:3, 36; 20:2); both are used of love of humans for other humans (*agapan*, 13:34; 15:12, 17; 1 John 2:10; 3:10, 14, 23; 4:7, 20; *philein*, 15:19); both are used of humans' love for Jesus (*agapan*, 8:42; 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 28; *philein*, 16:27). As a matter of style, the Fourth Gospel varies Greek words where the same meaning is intended (e.g., three different words are used for "to go away" in 16:5–10; three for "grieve" in 16:20–22; two for "ear" in 18:10, 26; two for "keep" in 17:12).

In like manner, the one who is the Good Shepherd now says as

He rehabilitates Peter, “Feed/tend my lambs/sheep.” If the disciples in general are given the task of fishing for men, Peter’s role is additionally to care for the flock.

Rehabilitation completed, Jesus now prophesies Peter’s death (vv. 18–19a) and asks for his assent to it (v. 19b). These verses pick up the theme of 13:36–38 (Peter cannot follow Jesus now, but afterward he will). Jesus predicts, “When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” The expression “stretch out the hands” is used in the first century for crucifixion. This is, then, as v. 19a indicates, a prophecy of Peter’s death by crucifixion. Jesus then says to Peter, “Follow me” (v. 19b). This command also echoes 13:36–38. In this context, to follow Jesus means to follow Him in death. Jesus calls Peter to agree to the content of the prophecy. Peter will die a martyr’s death, a vocation to which he is asked to commit himself.

In verses 20–23, the subject addresses the matter of the beloved disciple’s death. The reference to this disciple employs an allusion to 13:25, where he has a preferential position with Jesus. Peter, for whom martyrdom has been prophesied, asks about this other disciple’s destiny: “Lord, what about this man?” Jesus replies, “If I wish him to remain until I come [i.e., the *Parousia*; cf. 14:1–3; 1 John 2:28; 3:2], what is that to you? Follow me.” Whatever is assigned to the beloved disciple does not affect Peter’s destiny. Peter is to follow Jesus in a death by crucifixion.

Later some interpreted the saying to mean that the beloved disciple would not die (v. 23a). This requires clarification: “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?” (v. 23b).

Peter and the beloved disciple stand side by side in John 21 (as in 13:23–25; 18:15–16; 20:2–10), each with his own specific ministry and destiny. Evangelistic outreach belongs to the disciples as a whole, in some sense care of the flock is given to Peter and the role of prophetic witness is given to the beloved disciple, John. The general commission of 20:21b (“As the Father has sent me, even so I send you”) now takes on specific shapes for different individuals. Some

things in the work everyone shares; other expressions of mission vary, depending on the particular role assigned to an individual by the risen, authoritative Jesus.

The Fourth Gospel concludes with a statement of amazement: “And there are also many other things that Jesus did; were if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” The chapter speaks more than time and space allow to be examined.

### **Select Studies of John 21: Vocabulary Employed by John**

The first select study of John 21 involves a study of Johannine vocabulary. Especially important to the passage under consideration is John’s use of synonyms throughout his writings. The dialogue in the Fourth Gospel between our Lord and Peter, after the Resurrection, interchanged the words “love (ἀγαπᾶν)” and “like (φιλεῖν)” in a manner hardly capable of being briefly and literally expressed in any English Version, and not expressed by most standard translations except by a marginal note stating that the two Greek words for “love” are different. The whole of John’s account of the Gospel is filled with distinctions of thought, represented by subtle distinctions of word or phrase—words and phrases so far alike that at first the reader may take the thought to be the same. In examining the way John uses the word “trust” or “believe,” for example, it appeared that “trust to the name of,” “trust to,” and “trust,” signified different things. Again, the word “authority” means a different thing in most of the passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s accounts of the Gospel from what it means in John’s account of the Gospel; and, even in John, Pilate uses it in one sense and our Lord in another. If the writer thus emphasizes the various shades of meaning in the same words (“trust” and “authority”) we must anticipate that he will do the same thing in using different (though synonymous) words, and that his play upon “loving” and “liking” will have many parallels in his Gospel.

Some of these will be hard to detect. For example, the word φιλέω, or “take as a friend,” which is for the most part is taken to be a lower word than ἀγαπάω, is applied by our Lord Himself (on the very first occasion on which it occurs in this Gospel) to the love



of the Father for the Son (5:20). “For the Father *takes as a friend* (*jfb*) the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does....” Codex D and a few other authorities alter this to “loveth.” But if we compare what Christ says later on where He declares that henceforth He will call His disciples “friends” because He intends to tell them all His secrets, we shall find that the meaning is, not that the Father “loveth” the Son (which is assumed) but that the Son, to speak in metaphor, is of age to be a fellow-counselor with the Father, *who treats Him as a friend*. Kostenberger states the case as follows,

The fact that there are two different verbs for “love” used in the present passage has led some to believe that ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*) and φιλέω (*phileō*) are distinct in meaning, but this is doubtful for at least two reasons: (1) the fact that the word ἀγαπάω, said to convey the notion of divine love, is used with reference to human love—and evil humans at that—in texts such as 3:19 and 12:43, and that φιλέω, said to connote human love, is used for God the Father in 5:20 (where he is said to love the Son) and 16:27 (where he is said to love the disciples); (2) the presence of other close synonyms in the same section, such as the use of two words for “know” (γινώσκω, *ginōskō*; οἶδα, *oida*), and stylistic variants of “tend/shepherd” (βόσκω, *boskō*; ποιμαίνω, *poimainō*) “my sheep/lambs” (ἀρνία, *arnia*; πρόβατα, *probata*) in 21:15–17. (596)

Based upon all of this information, one perhaps may not want to be as dogmatic about the reason John records Jesus and Peter using two different Greek words in their dialogue in John 21:15ff. By such a statement the intent is to avoid dogmatism either way. Perhaps the case is not as strong regarding Peter’s unwillingness to raise himself to “the high love” that Jesus demands. Some would even argue that Jesus and Peter were speaking Aramaic so the distinction that is found in the Greek, in at least writings outside of John, would not be as clear in Aramaic. Again Kostenberger may have something when he writes, “Peter’s response, “Lord, you know all things,” rather than pointing to actions of his own that prove his loyalty, defers to



Jesus' knowledge of him: "If Jesus does not know that Peter loves him, what can Peter say to assure him?" (598). Perhaps finally Peter has learned that he cannot follow Jesus in his own strength and has realized the vanity of affirming his own loyalty in a way that relies more on his own power of will than on the power Jesus supplies.

Or maybe it is as simple as, though men have found interesting thoughts in examining the John's use of synonyms, perhaps they cannot be sure that what is going on in Chapter 21 is John's use of synonyms or simply John recording Jesus and Peter's dialogue where indeed Jesus used *ἀγαπάω* and Peter replied with *φιλέω* and such does have some significance. After all how would John record the conversation if the words used, were used, for the purpose of drawing a distinction—it would appear to have to be the very way that he did such. And if as some object by noting that Jesus and Peter would have been speaking Aramaic, how does one explain John's use of different Greek words? But here again, style cannot simply be cast aside.

Each one will be responsible for their own study. To aid in that study the passages listed below may help. The Greek words for love are italicized. One can turn to the passage in their English translations and compare.

### **Some Examples of Love in the Gospel of John: The Synonymous Use of *ἀγαπάω* and *φιλέω***

**John 3:16** οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

**John 3:19** αὕτη δέ ἐστιν ἡ κρίσις ὅτι τὸ φῶς ἐλήλυθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς· ἦν γὰρ αὐτῶν πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα.

**John 3:35** ὁ πατὴρ ἀγαπᾷ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δέδωκεν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ.

**John 5:20** ὁ γὰρ πατὴρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἃ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ, καὶ μείζονα τούτων δείξει αὐτῷ ἔργα, ἵνα ὑμεῖς

θαυμάζητε.

**John 11:3** ἀπέστειλαν οὖν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσαι· κύριε, ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ.

**John 11:5** ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον.

**John 16:27** αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ φιλεῖ ὑμᾶς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς ἐμὲ πεφιλήκατε καὶ πεπιστεύκατε ὅτι ἐγὼ παρὰ [τοῦ] θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον.

**John 21:15-17** Ὅτε οὖν ἠρίστησαν λέγει τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρῳ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με πλεον τούτων; λέγει αὐτῷ· ναὶ κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ· βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου. 16 λέγει αὐτῷ πάλιν δευτερον· Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με; λέγει αὐτῷ· ναὶ κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ· ποιῶμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου. 17 λέγει αὐτῷ τὸ τρίτον· Σίμων Ἰωάννου, φιλεῖς με; ἐλυπήθη ὁ Πέτρος ὅτι εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ τρίτον· φιλεῖς με; καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ [ὁ Ἰησοῦς]· βόσκει τὰ πρόβατά μου.

**John 13:23** ἦν ἀνακείμενος εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς.

**John 19:26** Ἰησοῦς οὖν ἰδὼν τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν παρεστῶτα ὃν ἠγάπα, λέγει τῇ μητρί· γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου.

**John 20:2** τρέχει οὖν καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἦραν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

### Select Studies of John 21: Ezekiel 34, John 10, and John 21

Another select study is found in comparing the shepherd motif of Ezekiel 34 with John 10 and John 21. A very fascinating study that this writer would encourage is an examination of the strong parallels seen between Ezekiel 34 and John 10. Here the parallel phrases demonstrate Jesus' connection to God and Davidic line.

In Ezekiel 34 God rebukes the shepherds of Israel and promises to rise up a new Shepherd, “David.” It seems that in John 10, John is drawing strongly from the imagery of Ezekiel 34.

Although the parallel between Ezekiel 34 and John 10 seems clear, many will attempt to carry that imagery further on into John chapter 21. But this writer does not think such a case can be made. Though the parallel between Ezekiel 34 and John 10 appears strong, the parallel between Ezekiel 34 and John 21 is not very strong. Even if one tried to argue based on linguistics alone, the only parallel words in Ezekiel 34 (from the LXX) and John 21 are βόσκω, ποιμαίνω, πρόβατον. It would be difficult to speak about shepherding without using at least ποιμαίνω and πρόβατον. In addition, the parallel words do not have similar roles in the two passages. The verses quoted in Ezekiel (in the LXX) describe God’s resolution to take care of His people and appoint a new shepherd; in John, Jesus is telling Peter to take care of the people. Here, there is little suggestion that Peter is fulfilling any expectation from Ezekiel 34. Any links to Ezekiel’s shepherd imagery are implicit at best, and mediated through the shepherd discourse of John 10.

John 21:15–17 should therefore be treated as a resumption of John’s shepherd symbolism, not as an allusion to any OT passage. Jesus had denounced the leaders of Israel as hirelings who flee at any sign of danger. Jesus is now calling Peter to be a good shepherd in contrast to the leaders of Israel. Jesus’ restoration of Peter thus deals with the various elements of Peter’s denial before the cross, and his continued failure after the resurrection. Peter’s reason for attempting to follow Jesus into the high priest’s courtyard had been love for Jesus (John 13:36–37); now Jesus ties that love to service rather than martyrdom. Peter’s fear had caused him to deny Jesus; now Jesus calls him to be the sort of fearless shepherd who will not abandon God’s people.

### **Select Studies of John 21: Peter as Pope**

Is Jesus making a specific, special call to Peter through which He expects Peter to assume a role of chief shepherd of Jesus’ Church? No, the passage is not addressing such. Kostenberger again has some excellent thoughts in which he also quotes Carson and Ridderbos:

Predictably, Roman Catholic interpreters tend to see in John 21:15ff evidence for Petrine primacy. But nothing in the present passage suggests “a distinctive authority for Peter. ... These verses deal with Peter’s reinstatement to service, not with his elevation to primacy” (Carson 679). Peter is neither charged to serve as “Jesus’ earthly vicar” nor appointed as the “chief shepherd to whom all the other shepherds are subordinate” (Ridderbos, 666). In fact, in his first epistle, Peter pointedly calls Jesus “the chief shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4) and places himself as “fellow elder” alongside other shepherds of God’s flock 1 Pet. 5:1–2. (596)

One must be careful in attributing something to a biblical text that is not taught. As always context must be examined before any conclusions may be drawn.

### **Select Studies of John 21: The Charcoal Fire**

Only two times (both in the account of the Gospel written by John) will one read of a *charcoal fire*. One reading is found in the passage being studied, John 21, and the other time is John 18:18. In the first reading of John’s account of the Gospel the *charcoal fire* is a sad time for Peter as it is the record of Peter’s denial of his Lord. The second time there is a *charcoal fire* is the restoration of Peter back to the Lord. Lincoln notes, “The charcoal fire recalls the scene of Peter’s denial in the high priest’s courtyard, where he had stood warming himself at a *charcoal fire* (18:18, 25). Peter’s threefold avowal of love and recommissioning in the scene that follows in 21:15–19 will have the same stage prop as his earlier threefold denial” (512). Borchert notes, “Although the earlier fire marked the symbol of an uninviting situation of cold, hostile questioning, this second fire with its fish and bread must be seen as an inviting setting of a new round of penetrating questions that are the complete opposite of hostility and are aimed at providing a new commissioning for Peter”(329).

What an amazing tie between 18:18 and 21:9. Only two times is the phrase *charcoal fire* used in all the Bible. Both times it is in

sections of John's account of the Gospel. Perhaps such a fact helps to confirm that John is the writer of both sections. Whether it does or not, Peter was blessed that there was more than one *charcoal fire*.

## Conclusion

When one considers the later writings of Peter an interesting connection is formed. How much of a connection perhaps depends upon one's willingness to speculate some. What one does not have to speculate about is how blessed Peter was that he had a second charcoal fire in his life. Jesus would restore a fallen follower. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead made a difference to Peter—without such he would have had to live with the knowledge that he had denied his Lord.

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# The Good Shepherd

*John 10:11-21*

*Justin Odom*

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the elders of the Lord's church at Hillview Terrace for their oversight of this lectureship. I also must express my gratitude to the lectureship committee for inviting me to speak and be a part of this great study on the claims of Jesus. In John 10:11 Jesus claimed, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep."

When an individual makes a claim, they necessarily need to substantiate the claim. A professional athlete may make the claim early in their career they are the greatest to ever play their sport. Time and performance will determine the validity to the claim. If they do not live up to the expectations they made for themselves, they cannot be the greatest to ever play. A claim therefore carries a certain amount of weight. Is this person able to perform up to the standard they have set for themselves?

One definition of the word "claim" from *Dictionary.com* is "to assert and demand the recognition of." When Jesus makes the claim that He is the Good Shepherd, was He able to back that claim up by His actions? Did He have the right to assert or demand recognition as the Good Shepherd? What expectations should we have from the Good Shepherd? Is there a part we play as the sheep, needing the Good Shepherd? These are a few questions that will be examined in this lesson.

## **The Nature of Sheep and Shepherds**

I have heard men over the years that raise sheep talk about the amount of time and effort that goes into being a "shepherd" for the sheep. The nature of sheep requires that there be a shepherd to watch over them. Having never raised sheep myself, a little research on the subject is helpful at this point. Susan Schoenian describes them in her article, *Sheep 101 and 201*:

Sheep are best known for their strong flocking and following instinct. They will run from what frightens them and band together in large groups for protection. When one sheep moves, the rest will follow, even if it is not a good idea. The flocking and following instinct of sheep is so strong that it has caused the death of 400 sheep in 2006 in eastern Turkey. The sheep plunged to their death after one of the sheep tried to cross a 15-meter deep ravine, and the rest of the flock followed.

Sheep are a very social animal. In a grazing situation, they need to see other sheep. In fact, ensuring that sheep always have visual contact with other sheep will prevent excess stress when moving or handling them.

Sheep have excellent hearing. They can amplify and pinpoint sound with their ears. In fact, sound arrives at each ear at a different time. Sheep are frightened by sudden loud noises.

Shepherds have a tremendous responsibility to the sheep. The following is an example of the shepherd's relationship to the sheep according to *Bible-history.com*:

The shepherd is deeply interested in every single one of his flock. Some of them may be given pet names because of incidents connected with them. They are usually counted each evening as they enter the fold, but sometimes the shepherd dispenses with the counting, for he is able to feel the absence of anyone of his sheep. With one sheep gone, something is felt to be missing from the appearance of the entire flock. One shepherd in the Lebanon district was asked if he always counted his sheep each evening. He replied in the negative, and then was asked how then he knew if all his sheep were present. This was his reply: "Master, if you were to put a cloth over my eyes, and bring me any sheep and only let me put hands on its face, I



could tell in a moment if it was mine or not.” When H. R. P. Dickson visited the desert Arabs, he witnessed an event that revealed the amazing knowledge which some of them have of their sheep. One evening, shortly after dark, an Arab shepherd began to call out one by one the names of his fifty-one mother sheep, and was able to pick out each one’s lamb, and restore it to its mother to suckle. To do this in the light would be a feat for many shepherds, but this was done in complete darkness, and in the midst of the noise coming from the ewes crying for their lambs, and the lambs crying for their mothers.

The shepherd differs from the hireling. A shepherd usually takes care of fifty to one hundred sheep. A flock of considerable size would often require the shepherd to hire another to care for some of the sheep. The hireling, however, does not have the same personal interest in the sheep that the shepherd does. As explained by Jesus in John 10:12, “But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.”

Is it any surprise than when we read in the Psalms, “You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron” (77:20), “So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever; we will show forth Your praise to all generations” (79:12), “For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (95:7), “Know that the Lord, He is God: it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (100:3).

The description of us as sheep is fitting as explained by the prophets, “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those who are with young” (Isa. 40:11), “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord had laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6), “For thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day

he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day” (Ezek. 34:11-12).

As the creation of God, we are sheep in need of a shepherd. As Jesus went about preaching and healing in the cities and villages, “He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). We need a Good Shepherd that can make us to lie down in green pastures, lead us beside the still waters, restore our soul, lead us in the paths of righteousness, and fear no evil (Psa. 23).

As the sheep, there are certain responsibilities we have. First, we must make sure it is really the Lord who is our Shepherd, “The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them” (Ezek. 34:4). So many people are allowing others to shepherd them when in fact, they need to turn to the Lord, “I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel” (Ezek. 34:14).

Second, we must be sensitive to the shepherd’s voice. “The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind the sheep of his presence. They know his voice and follow on; but if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and if it is repeated they turn and flee” (McClintock and Strong 640). When the shepherd speaks, we must listen, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19).

Third, we must obey the commands of the shepherd, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). There are times when the sheep may be in danger and not even be aware. The sheep may be headed for food that is harmful to the sheep. Woods writes, “This teaching of our Lord much of the religious world ignores. It sets up its own standards of obedience, passes judgment on the validity of the Lords commandments, and legislates its own grounds of salvation. Those who thus do, do so to their own ruin (310).

Fourth, we must have fellowship with other sheep, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25). Banding together is often the only protection the sheep may have from predators. It is harder for a predator to pick a sheep out of a group. As Satan is walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), the flock of God can make it harder for Satan to destroy us.

Finally, we must rest in security provided by the shepherd, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Sheep that have been provided lush pasture to fill their bellies in serenity and peace ought not to wander off from the sheepfold. How many over the years have relinquished their eternal security for the temptations of this life? “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

### **Jesus: the Good Shepherd**

Jesus has made the claim. He is the Good Shepherd. The question is has Jesus lived up to the claim? Is Jesus truly the Good Shepherd or another false shepherd?

Jesus took over the picture of the shepherd and made it the picture of himself. He is the shepherd who goes out to the mountains and the hill, the valleys and the ravines, the cliffs and the crags to seek and to find the sheep which is lost (Matt. 18.12; Luke 15.4)...The picture reaches its completest for in John 10, where Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who knows each of his sheep by name, whom the sheep will follow, who is for them a door of protection from danger and entrance into safety, who, unlike the hireling who flees at the first threat of danger, is ready and willing to give his life for the sheep. (Barclay 190)

### ***Physical Interest of the Sheep***

From the physical side, sheep constantly need the daily

provisions of life. As stated previously, sheep cannot be left to their own devices to provide for themselves, lest they perish and lead others with them. How many times have we heard false shepherds promising great wealth and ease of life if we only invest in their ministry financially? The false shepherd has no interest in the physical well-being of the sheep, as seen in the leaders Israel once had:

All you beasts of the field, come to devour, all you beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory. "Come," one says, "I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant." (Isa. 56:9-12)

Young says of these verses, "The invitation is to utter debauchery, involving a complete blotting out of any concern or thought for the welfare of Israel" (397). Times have not changed.

We know the Good Shepherd has an interest in the physical needs of His sheep, "Therefore I say unto you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matt. 6:25, 32). The Psalmist declared, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (37:25).

We know the Good Shepherd will provide the basic necessities of life but it is entirely up to the sheep to accept what He has provided, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need" (Eph. 4:28), "Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2

Thess. 3:12), “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8).

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will not fail us! He will ever provide for His sheep!

### ***Spiritual Interest of the Sheep***

Millions are listening to false shepherds as they blaspheme the Word of God, believing their spiritual condition to be secure, when in reality, they are being condemned. False shepherds “turn the grace of our God into lewdness” (Jude 4). They are taking the grace of God and turning it into an excuse to sin! Paul wrote that we are to not continue in sin thinking that grace may abound (Rom. 6:1-2), yet false shepherds are telling people it’s acceptable to sin because grace is greater than sin.

We know the Good Shepherd has a tremendous interest in us spiritually, as evidenced by His statement to Nicodemus in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

We know the Good Shepherd does not want any to perish spiritually, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “God has no delight in the death of sinners: as the punishment of sinners is a torment to his creatures, a merciful God does not take pleasure in it” (Henry).

We know the Good Shepherd will meet our spiritual needs, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Meyer writes, “The source of all we are, and have, and hope to be, so far as salvation is concerned, is the will of God for us; but the stream flows to us through our Lord, and the end to which all things are moving is the summing-up of all in Christ. As He was the Alpha, so He will be the Omega” (e-sword).

We know the Good Shepherd will provide the spiritual nourishment we desperately need, “But whoever drinks of the

water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14), “I am the bread of life” (John 6:48). Interestingly, appetite is another strong indicator of health in fleshly sheep. They are almost always hungry and they will over eat if the shepherd lets them. “Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6).

We know the Good Shepherd will cleanse us from sin, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). According to Psalm 23:5, if a sheep were cut, oil would be poured on the injury to soothe, protect, and promote healing. How often can we come to the Good Shepherd and find healing for our broken hearts? Hearts that are crimson with sin are made white as snow (Isa. 1:18).

### ***The Value of the Sheep***

“Therefore My Father loves me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father” (John 10:17-18).

Sheep in the ancient world were a valuable commodity. We see from Scripture, Abraham having much sheep (Gen. 12:16), the patriarch Job was one with great wealth, including sheep (Job 42:12). When David tried to persuade Saul to allow him to fight Goliath, he explained how he rescued Jesse’s sheep (1 Sam. 17:32-36). The sheep could provide wool to keep warm and milk and meat to keep full. Brother Woods makes an interesting comment here:

Not one moment may the shepherd relax his care for the sheep and on his vigilance their lives depend. Driving snow, in the winter; blinding dust and burning sands in the summer, long lonely hours each day the shepherd patiently endures for the welfare of the flock. Palestine shepherds were not infrequently subjected to grave danger, some losing their lives. (209)

Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, said He was willing to lay down His life for the sake of the sheep. Our Lord explained the value of the sheep on several occasions. “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26), “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they” (Matt. 6:26).

Jesus understood the value of the soul, the value of the sheep, and He was willing to die for us, to bring us into one fold, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). The *Believer’s Bible Commentary* makes an interesting point on this verse:

In the latter part of the verse there is the very important change from the fold of Judaism to the flock of Christianity. This verse gives a little preview of the fact that in Christ, Jew and Gentile would be made one, and that the former distinctions between these peoples would disappear.

The death of the Good Shepherd for the sheep brought us together, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and had broken down the middle wall of separation” (Eph. 2:13-14).

## **Conclusion**

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has lived up to the claims He made to lay down his life for the sheep, protect the sheep, care for the sheep, and maintain the sheep (John 10:11-14; 17-18). As the sheep that has gone astray, we must heed the voice of the Good Shepherd, be obedient to the Good Shepherd, have fellowship with other sheep that belong to the Good Shepherd, and rest in the eternal security provided by the Good Shepherd!

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### **Biographical Sketch**

Justin Odom grew up in Reader, West Virginia and is married to the former Kristina Deagel of Moundsville, West Virginia. They have three children, Ben (16), Jenny (15), and Hannah (13). Justin is a 1997 graduate of West Virginia School of Preaching and is currently working on his Master's Degree in Bible from Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. After graduation from WVSOP in 1997, Justin preached for the Pennsville church of Christ in Pennsville, Ohio, then with the Rt. 38 church of Christ in Washington Court House, Ohio. He has been working with the church in Fairfield, Illinois since 2006.



# You Shall Know the Truth

*John 8:31-55*

*Ben Jones*

The Gospel of the beloved disciple has become beloved in its own right as a masterpiece of Christian apologetics. The Book of John's simple yet profound theme is well stated in 20:30-31.

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”  
[All Scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.]

Unlike the narrative approach of the Synoptic writers, John chose to highlight the Divine claims of Jesus and the amazing evidence that corroborated such claims. The first section of the book detailed Jesus' revelation to, and rejection by, the world; the second section detailed Jesus' revelation to, and reception by, His apostles. The above thesis statement serves as both conclusion and introduction, challenging new readers to consider these claims again and again

While Jesus often spoke about Himself or the Father, the text under consideration in this lecture centers on His disciples. “And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). These words contain the power to infuse believers with confidence and hope. Yet for the original audience, the result proved quite the opposite. The dialogue recorded in this chapter occurred during a transitional period in the public ministry of Jesus. Following the miracle of feeding the five thousand, many nominal disciples “went back and walked with Him no more” (John 6:66). By the time Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, his enemies were seeking an opportunity to take His life (7:1). Despite the opposition, John wrote that many believed in Him because of His powerful teaching (8:30). However, their faith quickly turned to anger and

they joined in an attempt on His life (8:59). Oddly, the catalyst for these drastic changes was truth.

### **The Reception of Truth**

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed’” (John 8:31). Belief in Jesus is the result of reasonable evidence. Not all those who heard His words believed, but all who believed had accepted the truthfulness of His claims. In his book, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, R.C. Foster observed,

Many people believed on him because of the majesty of His Person and the profound nature of His teaching, as well as His miracles. The following claims are made in this sermon: (1) His declaration of His Messiahship with absolute assurance: ‘I am he’; (2) His deity (vv. 23, 29); (3) His sinlessness (v. 29); (4) His foreknowledge of His death (v. 28); (5) His assurance of the power of the gospel to bring faith after He had been crucified (v. 28). (814)

The commitment of their faith is called into question, both by Jesus’ own words and their subsequent attempt to stone Him. A common explanation for this fickle behavior has been to identify two different groups of Jews within the audience. William Hendriksen has summarized four major views concerning these alleged differences on pages 50-51 of his commentary. The first three involve a transition between genuine believers described in verse 30 and unbelieving Jews referenced in later verses. The first view distinguishes between those who “believed *in Him*” (John 8:30) and those who merely “believed *Him*” (John 8:31). Guy N. Woods wrote “to believe ‘on’ the Lord was to trust him as a person, merely to believe him was to accept his words as true without necessarily submitting to his will” (172). A second view holds that there is essentially no difference between those mentioned in verses 30 and 31, but that unbelieving Jews began to voice objections at verse 33. Similarly, a third view places the transition from believers to unbelievers between verses 36 and 37. The final view differs entirely from the previous three,

making no distinctions among the audience. Hendriksen wrote,

There is, indeed, a transition; but it is not from one group to a totally different group. The transition is from one attitude to another attitude within the same group of people. That transition is very clear. It is, in fact, a striking change. As soon as Jesus shows these people that mere mental acceptance (as to Jesus being the Messiah of their dreams, for instance) is not enough, but that they must surrender themselves to him as their personal Deliverer from bondage to Satan and to sin, they become furious and no longer believe in him in any sense. (52)

With deference to the comments of Woods, the final view may best fit with the context of the passage. Jesus said “if you *abide* in My word, you are My disciples *indeed*.” In whatever sense these Jews had believed, they were not yet disciples indeed, and consequently, they were not yet free indeed. Faith requires more than an intellectual understanding of facts; faith involves an active response to the implications of those facts. “True discipleship is not by profession but by action; it is a life one lives and not simply or solely a doctrine to which one subscribes” (Woods 172). To abide in the word of Christ is to abide in Christ Himself. This requires submitting to His will and sacrificing everything else. There is no practical difference between one who rejects the truth of Jesus and one who does not act upon that truth.

### **The Reality of Truth**

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Jesus’ words were more than a mere truism about the power of knowledge. The truth that sets men free is grounded specifically in the person and work of Jesus Christ. However, His words imply several important principles worthy of observation. Truth is absolute. Truth is knowable. Truth has definite consequences. “The truth shall make you free” was once a mantra of academia, celebrating the empowerment of education. While the slogan itself may still be found in institutions of higher learning, the sentiment has

all but been abandoned. The mantra of Postmodernism might well be “we are free from the truth.” Or perhaps, “we are free to pursue our own truth.” Absolute truth, we are told, does not exist. Each person’s “truth” is shaped by his or her own subjective experiences, and, as a result, all versions of “truth” must be considered equally valid. The only truth that can be rejected is the belief that there is only one truth.

Undoubtedly, cultural influences and human desires do shape individual perceptions of truth. According to Jesus, knowledge of *the* truth results from abiding in His word. As the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Word is certainly qualified to reveal truth to man. Unfortunately, sinful men are not always prepared to receive Divine instruction. Just as light dispels darkness from a room, truth necessarily dispels error from the heart. This demanding characteristic of truth was illustrated by the exchange between Jesus and the Jews.

Jesus made use of the future tense in His promise to these potential disciples – you *shall know* the truth. The Jews understood the implication of these words and bristled at the suggestion that they might not know the truth, or be truly free. Their attempted rebuttal consisted of misplaced confidence and gross exaggeration. “They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone’” (John 8:33).

The absurdity of such a statement would almost rule out a literal interpretation. Coffman supposed that “it merely meant that they had never willingly consented to any such servitude” (235). Regardless of the intent of their words, Jesus corrected their mistaken logic. “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever” (John 8:34-35). Sin enslaves men even while it offers the deluded promise of freedom. A slave could daydream about life in a fine house, but he had no right to partake in its luxuries, and no real access to them. They would remain ever beyond his reach, taunting him, until he was ushered out of the house and those memories faded from his mind. The metaphor, while universal in application, held a specific warning for the confident Jews. William Hendriksen commented,

The old dispensation with its special privileges for Israel has ended. Abraham's true children will remain in his household (the new covenant) and enjoy its privileges permanently, but Abraham's slaves (think of Hagar) will be driven out. Only a son enjoys freedom. If therefore the Son of God will make them free, they will be free indeed. (53-54)

The repetition of the adverb "indeed" is noteworthy. Jesus had previously said "if you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed." Now He stated "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). True freedom is only available for the true disciple. In the world, perception is reality; in Christ, perception must ultimately yield to reality.

### **The Responsibility of Truth**

"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you" (John 8:37). These Jews had laid claim to an inheritance by means of Abraham. While they were in fact the physical descendants of the patriarch, Abraham's spiritual children were born of faith (Gal. 3:7). They failed to comprehend the true significance of the promise and Jesus rebuked them with their own words. God's covenant with Abraham involved both privileges and responsibilities, yet these Jews trusted in the former even as they neglected the latter. Jesus Christ was the one true Seed of Abraham and the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation (Gal. 3:16-18), but instead of obeying Christ, these men sought to kill Him. In the parable of the wicked vinedressers, the Jews were pictured as rebellious tenants who killed the true heir in order to steal his inheritance (Matt. 21:33-46). Any attempt to claim salvation apart from Christ is equally villainous and futile.

The underlying motive behind such plots was a blatant rejection of the word. Lenski explained "in believers the word, having entered, must remain; in these unbelievers it has found no entrance at all" (638). At this point Jesus introduced a new thought to explain such malicious behavior. "I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father" (John 8:38). Jesus

now implied what He would later state explicitly, that the Jews were the spiritual descendants of the devil. His argument was based on the premise that children reflect the character of their father. First, while Abraham was their physical ancestor, he could not be their spiritual father. “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). He trusted in the promises of God, which were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. If they were really Abraham’s children, they would not be plotting to kill Jesus. Second, God could not be their true Father, because Jesus came from heaven to do God’s will. If they were really the children of God, they would love Jesus and listen to His word, which was from God. Their sinful behavior demonstrated their parentage. “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do” (John 8:44).

A witness in a court of law must swear to speak “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” This common phrase illustrates both the exclusive and inclusive nature of truth itself. Likewise, Christians must believe the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Jesus had seen the Father. He reflected the Father’s glory and revealed the Father’s will to men. Therefore, to accept the Father was to accept the Son; to reject the Son was to reject the Father as well. The Jews had boasted “we were not born of fornication; we have one Father- God” (John 8:41). However, a true relationship with God is not established by heredity, but by faith in Christ.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal. 3:26-29)

God is the author of truth and His true children are those who will accept and obey that truth. Jesus said “he who is of God hears God’s words” (John 8:47). The devil, by contrast, “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44). His children



are those who live by their desires, which work against the truth. R.V.G. Tasker explained,

To refuse to understand and come under the influence of the truth, which was God's truth, spoken by Him who was sent from God to proclaim it, is in fact to give unmistakable evidence of spiritual descent from him whose very nature is falsehood, and whose entire object is to deceive the human heart – the devil himself. (119)

Jesus described the devil as a murderer, although the original word literally means manslayer. Lenski noted that the term “attributes to the devil far more than the physical murders that are committed by men; it charges him with bringing death in all its destructive power upon the whole of mankind” (650). Jesus also called the devil a liar and the father of lies. In fact, the devil is a murderer by means of his lies. The Jews concocted numerous lies about Jesus, including charges that He was a Samaritan and had a demon (John 8:48). As a result, Jesus posed the question “which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?” (John 8:46). The Jews rejected Jesus on the basis of their own false charges, yet they could not produce any evidence to substantiate these claims. Careful examination would reveal that Jesus was not only blameless, but sinless. Therefore, His teaching must be accepted as truth. Honest hearts would be compelled by the evidence, but these men were content to believe lies. The truth was not in their spiritual father, and it found no dwelling place in them.

### **The Ridicule of Truth**

“Then the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’” (John 8:48). The fact that truth can be known does not prevent it from being opposed. Coffman appropriately observed that “for evil persons, no reason on their part is required for rejecting the truth, except for the fact of its being so. Evil cannot love righteousness” (239). Unable to challenge Jesus' words directly, opponents often resorted to attacks on His character. They called Him a glutton and winebibber (Matt. 11:19),

a sinner (John 9:24), a Sabbath breaker (Mark 2:24), a deceiver (Matt. 27:63) and a traitor to Rome (Luke 23:2). The charge that Jesus was a Samaritan was baseless and intended as an insult. The indignant Jews seemed to be saying “would you dare to accuse us of not being the children of Abraham? You are the one born of spiritual fornication, as we have suspected all along.” In fact, they argued that His shocking words had proven their charge of demon possession. This was not the only time the Jews alleged such demonic influence, and it involved more than the suggestion that Jesus was merely a raving madman. The Pharisees had witnessed Jesus’ healing of the blind and mute demoniac. Since they could not deny the reality of His miracle, they attempted to attribute His power to the ruler of demons (Matt. 12:24). When men are comfortable living with lies, the truth becomes an unwelcome visitor. Concerning their response, R.C. Foster wrote,

“The truth which Jesus revealed to them was so unwelcome to them that they closed their minds against it. He had condemned their sins, uncovered their hypocrisy, and proved the falsity of their whole system. His revelation of His deity in this sermon, as in preceding declarations, confirmed the absolute truth of His indictment of their whole system. Therefore the more clearly He revealed the truth to them the more they determined in their wicked hearts not to believe on Him. (817)

“Jesus answered ‘I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me’” (John 8:49). Jesus did not reply to the first charge, as it was neither believable nor inherently derogatory. The second charge, however, warranted a response “since this insinuation would negate all that he claimed to be” (Woods 178). Jesus did not spew the twisted whispers of demons; He spoke the pure words of God. The Jews claimed God as their Father, but only Jesus paid Him the proper honor as a faithful and obedient son. By rejecting Jesus, the Jews had dishonored both the Father and the Son. When men ridicule the truth of God’s word, they ultimately ridicule God Himself. “And I do not seek My own glory; there is

One who seeks and judges” (John 8:50). The apostle Peter wrote that when Jesus was reviled, He did not revile in return (1 Peter 2:23). The proud Jews had been offended by the truth and hurled insults at God’s messenger. Jesus, however, was only concerned with His Divine mission and did not seek personal vindication. The superficial judgments of men would soon give way to the righteous judgment of God. These skeptics could deny Christ His rightful honor temporarily, but it would be unmistakable in His resurrection and inescapable in the Day of Judgment.

### **The Reward of Truth**

“Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word he shall never see death” (John 8:51). Eternal life is the great promise offered to those who would be disciples indeed. Having answered the objections of His critics, Jesus returned to His theme of spiritual freedom. Such freedom can only be understood, realized, and fully experienced in Christ. William Hendriksen described it as freedom plus.

When an accused man is declared not guilty, he is free. Likewise when a slave has been emancipated, he is free. But the judge or the emancipator does not, as a rule, adopt the freed individual as his own son. But when the Son makes one free, he will be free indeed, rejoicing in the glorious freedom of sonship. (54)

“The truth shall make you free” is the equivalent of “you shall never see death.” These two phrases express the same blessing, first positively and then negatively. The condition of the blessing is obedience to Christ, as conveyed by the parallel requirements “abide in My word” and “keeps My word.” Jesus twice promised eternal life to his true disciples, and the Jews twice rejected His offer without consideration. They interpreted his words literally, and complained that He was speaking nonsense. “Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?” (John 8:53). Abraham and the prophets were righteous men and faithful servants of God, yet they

still died in the same way as all men. The Jews marveled that an apparent upstart from Galilee would claim such a power that even the fathers had not possessed. However, this was more than a simple misunderstanding of Jesus' words; it was a rejection of His identity. A few verses later Jesus would make the great statement "before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58) and the Jews would respond by trying to kill Him.

Jesus is indeed greater than Abraham. He did not claim such an honor through pretense; rather it was bestowed upon Him by the Father. "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God" (John 8:54). God honored Jesus "by enabling the Son to perform mighty works, by causing his virtues to stand out in connection with his suffering and rewarding him for it, and at times even by a direct voice from heaven" (63). Jesus, like Abraham, would pass through physical death, but His glorious resurrection would secure the final victory over death (1 Cor. 15:57). Jesus would soon tell Martha "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25). In Christ, the slaves can now be set free from sin and the guilty can be made just in the sight of God. The promise of life was not only eternal in duration, but also universal scope. The pronoun "anyone" was an invitation to all men everywhere. The Jews trusted in their bloodlines and birthrights, but truth is no respecter of persons. Peter would later proclaim in reference to Cornelius "but in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35).

### **You Shall Know The Truth**

"Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him" (John 8:55). The Jews had claimed God as their Father, but their actions exposed their words as lies. In fact, Jesus said that they did not even know the Father. Lenski provided the following explanation.

He means that they do not realize who God really is although he has revealed himself to them through his Word. The negation does not imply that the Jews followed idols instead of the true God but that their conceptions of the true God are

in conflict with the revelation God made of himself in his Word. They have only a caricature of God. (666)

In order to know God, one must know Jesus. The Jews had seen His miracles and heard His voice, but they struggled to submit to His will. They did not understand the work of Christ because they could not see their own spiritual need. Establishing the proper relationship with God requires one to know the truth about Jesus and about self. This demands the one who would be a disciple *indeed* to accept the implications of being truly free, practice the discipline to truly believe, and eliminate everything that is not truly truth. To say that one can know the truth is not to say that what one knows is the truth. Jesus offers eternal life to all who would abide in His word, yet many “believers” are dwelling in a spiritual house built on the sands of opinion, false teaching, and superficial faith. Jesus’ great claim “you shall know the truth” serves as both a statement of purpose and a standard of conduct for the Christian. God’s word is the all sufficient source of truth and the true disciple will use it wisely to build a faithful life.

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- Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the *New King James Version*.  
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### **Biographical Sketch**

Ben Jones preaches for the University Church of Christ in Morgantown, WV. He received a B.A. in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University in 1998. He previously worked with churches in Ravenswood and St. Marys, WV. He teaches classes on the Prison Epistles and the New Testament Church at the West Virginia School of Preaching. Ben is married to Stephanie (formerly Yoho) of Mannington, WV.

# A Blind Man Sees

*John 9:1-41*

*Glenn Hawkins*

I want to thank the elders of this congregation and brother Andy Robison for the gracious invitation extended me to be one of the speakers on this lectureship. I continue to appreciate the good work being done here to prepare men to preach the Gospel. The theme of this hour's lecture is "Confirmation of the Word." These lectures have to do with some of the miracles or signs that Jesus performed, as recorded by John. In John's account of the life of Jesus, he records seven miracles that Jesus performed.

The seven miracles are (1) the changing of water to wine in John 2, (2) healing the officer's son in John 4, (3) healing the cripple in John 5, (4) feeding the 5,000 in John 6, (5) walking on the sea in John 6, (6) healing the blind man in John 9, and (7) raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11.

John tells us why he recorded these miracles. In John 20:30-31, we read, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." [All scripture references are from KJV unless otherwise noted.] Or as Nicodemus said, "... Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

I believe that it is significant that John chose to use the term "signs" to highlight the purpose of writing this book. As we think of the word "sign" today, we think of a message that is displayed publicly for all to see. Signs point to a person, place, thing or idea.

The signs Jesus performed pointed to who He really was – the Son of God. The sign was not the significant thing to John, but rather to Whom the sign pointed – Jesus. We see this in the story of the sign in John 9, the healing of the man born blind.

In the work, *The Outline Bible*, Harold Willmington (572-573) offers the major outline points of John 9.

- I. INCONSIDERATION! THE DISCIPLES AND THE BLIND MAN (9:1-5)
- II. DEMONSTRATION! THE SAVIOR AND THE BLIND MAN (9:6-7)
- III. SPECULATION! THE NEIGHBORS AND THE BLIND MAN (9:8-12)
- IV. INTERROGATION! THE PHARISEES AND THE BLIND MAN (9:13-23)
- V. CASTIGATION! THE PHARISEES AND THE BLIND MAN (9:24-34)
- VI. SUMMATION! JESUS AND THE BLIND MAN (9:35-41)

The question raised by Jesus' disciples on seeing the blind man is an interesting one, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2).

This question revealed the fact that, like many in Jesus' day, the disciples believed that such things as blindness and other diseases were caused by some specific sin on the part of the individual or the parents, as in this case. This was the view held by Job's friends and was a faulty view.

While people may suffer consequences of their sins and even the sins of the parents, these things are not the penalties or punishment for sins.

Jesus answered by saying, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest ..." (John 9:3). Of course, Jesus did not mean that the blind man or his parents were sinless, but only that the blindness was not brought about by any particular sin. This blindness would be a means by



which God would be glorified, and that not only would the man's physical blindness be cured, but that he would have spiritual sight and salvation.

The account of the miracle is very straightforward. "When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:6-7).

Surely, we can see that the command to go wash in the Pool of Siloam was a test of the blind man's faith. Had he not gone, he would not have been healed. If we are to receive salvation from our sins, there are certainly commands which we must obey.

The effect of this miracle was electric. The blind man's neighbors were shocked that this man could see. Some thought he was someone else, but the blind man simply said, "I am he!" "The verb 'saw' (in verse 8) translates a Greek word that is really stronger than this English word. It is the present active participle of *theooreo*, which means to scrutinize minutely, to look at intently" (Woods 187).

Once sure of who the blind man was, the next question was how this happened. The blind man responded, "...A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." (John 9:11).

Perhaps because this healing took place on a sabbath day, the man previously blind was brought before the Pharisees. The discussion became very heated among the Pharisees, the blind man, and his parents. Because Jesus was gaining the attention of the multitudes, the Pharisees decided to do what we might call "damage control."

I would like to note some of the steps taken by the Pharisees in dealing with this incident. This wasn't the first time or the last time the enemies of truth have tried to suppress it.

The first thing the Pharisees tried to do was to discredit the source of the miracle, since they could not deny one had taken place (Orbison). Notice John 9:16a, "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day ..."

If you don't like the message, attack or kill the messenger. But others of the Pharisees said, "... How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them" (John 9:16b).

The second thing the Pharisees attempted to do was to deny the truthfulness of what the blind man said (Orbison). Notice John 9:18-19, "But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?" Some people today simply will not accept the truth of God about salvation or the church even when the facts are presented to them. I may call a four-legged horse a cow, but that does not change the fact that it's still a horse.

The third thing the Pharisees tried was to engage in some very faulty reasoning (Orbison). To reason correctly, one should only draw conclusions based on the evidence. The Jews said, "We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (John 9:29). They are immediately corrected by the blind man, who replies, "... Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9:30, 32-33). Even one of the Pharisees, Nicodemus, recognized this when he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

The healed blind man goes on to show that the conclusion the Jews had drawn about Jesus was not logical or even scriptural. He says to the Jews, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9:31-33). The logic here is irresistible. Scriptures, both old and new, teach that the alien sinner cannot call upon God as Father. How could a person like Jesus, who the Pharisees considered a sinner and violator of the Sabbath, heal a man blind from birth when that had never been done?

John 9:33 clinches the argument. If Jesus was not from God, He could do nothing. Woods says, “It was the same conclusion the more reasonable and fair-minded among the Pharisees had drawn (verse 16). It put an end to all reasoned effort to convince people that Jesus was not of God” (198).

No one ever turns against reason until reason turns against him. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees learned this lesson the hard way in their confrontations with Jesus.

The fourth and final thing the Pharisees did was simply to close their ears and minds to further investigation (Orbison). Notice John 9:34, “They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.” In other words, “don’t confuse us with the facts; our minds are made up.”

Stephen experienced the same reaction after his sermon in Acts 7. Notice, “Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord” (Acts 7:57).

When people today are confronted with certain Biblical truths they don’t like or don’t believe, they often end the discussion with, “that’s just your interpretation” or, they may say, “that’s just negative preaching or teaching.”

One of the outstanding features of this miracle is to see the progression of the blind man’s faith. In John 9:10, he simply refers to Jesus the “the man.” Later on, after perhaps a bit of reflection, in John 9:17, he says, “He is a prophet.” Finally, when he encounters Jesus after being cast out of the synagogue, Jesus asks him, “... Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him” (John 9:35-38).

As bad as physical blindness may be, spiritual blindness is even worse. Notice the words of Jesus in John 9:39-41, which were overheard by the Pharisees, “And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.”

Just as Jesus gave physical sight to this blind man, He wanted him also to have spiritual sight, which the blind man received because he accepted Him as the Son of God. On the other hand were the Pharisees who thought they were already in the spiritual light but were in spiritual darkness.

Their question to Jesus in John 9:40, “Are we blind also?” according to Woods, “shows that they expected a negative answer; in their arrogant minds, they could not imagine anyone thinking that they were spiritually blind” (209). Jesus would refer to the Pharisees in these terms found in Matthew 15:13-14, “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” Jesus also referred to Pharisees as “blind guides” in Matthew 23:16.

We must constantly be on guard against spiritual blindness. We must never shut our eyes or close our ears to the truth of God’s Word. If we are rebuked by the truth, let us learn from it and change our ways. Let us never deny the truth that frees us. To reject the truth places us in the same boat as the ancient Pharisees and modern denominations.

Let us who walk in the light of God’s Word continually point those in the darkness of sin to Him who is the light of the world.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

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# The Lord's Prayer

*John 17:1-26*

*Terry Jones*

## **Introduction**

In our study of The Gospel of John, as we come to chapter 17 we have before us one of the most sublime portions of Holy Writ. What makes it such is that it is a prayer uttered by our Lord on the night of His betrayal and arrest. To this point, Lenski makes a beautiful observation.

Jesus does not pray with the disciples, does not ask them to lift up their hearts and to join him in prayer as we do at times when saying farewell. This prayer lies on a plane that is so exalted that no disciple can join in its utterance. Jesus prays before his disciples, they can only witness this prayer. Its serenity, its majesty, and its authority befit only the heart and the lips of him who is the Son. Before this prayer all our prayers fade like tapers in the sun. (1114)

A study of the Gospel reveals that Jesus utilized and relied upon prayer throughout His earthly ministry. Luke 6:12 records an occasion when “He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” [All scripture references are from NKJV unless otherwise noted.] Matthew provides an account of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (26:39ff).

Matthew 6:9-13 is often referred to as *the Lord's Prayer*, but it is actually the model prayer. John 17:1-26 is truly “the Lord's Prayer” and that is the assignment for this particular study. As we turn our attention to the text, we will observe that Jesus prays for three things: 1) His Current Dilemma; 2) His Chosen Disciples; and 3) His Christian Disciples.

## **Jesus Prays For His Current Dilemma (John 17:1-5)**

The Lord had just observed the Passover feast with His disciples

in the upper room, the Lord's Supper had been instituted, and Judas had departed to betray Jesus (John 13). Following a lengthy discourse to prepare the disciples for His death, Jesus informed them that, "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (16:33). Before departing, the Lord "lifted up His eyes to heaven" (1a), and prayed in the hearing of His disciples. In the first part of this prayer Jesus petitioned the Father concerning the horrible events that would begin to unfold during the night. He addressed three things in that regard.

***Reciprocal Glorification (1).*** Jesus began His prayer to the Father by stating that "the hour has come." In John 13:1 the record says, "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father..." This was the hour for which Jesus had come into the world.

It is clear from the context that Jesus was thinking of the hour of his *death* not only but of the entire consummation of his earthly ministry: *death, resurrection, ascension, and coronation*, his entire *going to the Father...* Christ's death was of such a character that his resurrection, ascension, and coronation *had to follow*; hence, *the hour* refers to all four. (Hendriksen 348)

His "hour" having come, Jesus' petition to the Father was, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." It was Jesus' desire that He be glorified so that through Him the Father would be glorified. "The time has come for two reciprocal acts: for the Father to glorify the Son that the Son may glorify him" (Lenski 1115).

***Redemption Given (2-4).*** Beginning with Adam and Eve, sin had separated man from God (Isa. 59:1-2) leaving humanity under eternal condemnation (Rom. 6:23). Jesus came into the world to redeem man back to God (Titus 2:14) and to give eternal life (John 3:36). As Jesus continued His prayer, He mentioned three significant things involved in man's salvation. First, there is the *authority of Jesus (2a)*. Jesus prayed, "as You have given Him authority over



all flesh...” Our Lord declared that, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mat. 28:18). He had received that authority from the Father and, therefore, had the power to offer salvation to all men on His conditions (Mark. 16:15-16). Second, there is the *gift of Jesus (2b-3)*. He used His authority to “give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” In verse three we learn that eternal life is conditioned upon knowing God and His Son Jesus Christ.

The verb “should know” is present active subjunctive, literally, should keep on knowing, and thus involves continuous conformity to the will of the Lord to the end of life after which eternal life, in actuality, is bestowed. Those who truly come to “know” God, appropriate his nature; and, in consequence, he will eventually bestow eternal life upon them. This bestowal is conditioned on faithfulness and undeviating obedience to his will. (Woods 354)

Third, there is the *work of Jesus (4)*. He declared, “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Jesus had not yet endured the cross but He was so certain that He would complete it that He spoke of it as if it were already finished.

***Restored Glory (5)***. With crucifixion directly in front of Him, Jesus prays, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” That Jesus willingly left His place in glory to condescend to this low sinful world is beyond human comprehension. I would not have done it, you would not have done it, no one would have done it, but the Son of God willingly did it! Paul said, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8). Having brought eternal life into the world, Jesus now petitions the Father to restore Him to His previous glory. Woods provides some valuable clarity to this.

That he was indeed restored to that position Paul confidently affirms (Phil. 2:5-11). This was far, far more than a simple return to a pre-existent state; it involved the restoration of that complete fellowship he enjoyed with the Father in the eternity which preceded his advent into the world (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1-4). Here is to be found the answer to those incidents noted by his biographers that the Lord was in an inferior position to the Father; this he voluntarily assumed as a condition precedent to his work here, but which was terminated when he was restored to a position of full equality on his return to his heavenly home (John 14:2). (355)

### **Jesus Prays For His Chosen Disciples (John 17:6-19)**

*The People For Whom He Prayed (6-10).* Having spent the first part of this prayer focused upon Himself and His current distress, Jesus now turns His attention toward the apostles He had chosen. Let us observe three things about Jesus' chosen disciples. First, we see them *heeding Jesus (6)*. To the Father Jesus declared, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." What greater thing could the Lord have said of His disciples than that they had kept the Word of God? To keep God's Word is to obey what He says and that has always been required by God. "And God said to Abraham: 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations'" (Gen. 17:9). Following the Exodus, God said to Israel, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you" (Exo. 15:26). The Apostle John wrote, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). Revelation 1:3 declares, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." Jesus affirmed that His disciples had kept God's Word.

Second, we see them *hearing Jesus (7-8)*. Jesus said, "For I

have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them..." They were receptive to the things that Jesus said. The disciples could not heed the words of Jesus unless they were willing to hear the words of Jesus. Jesus had said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mat. 11:15)! The Bereans were certainly a wonderful example of hearing and receiving the Word of God. "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). James emphasized the importance of both hearing and heeding God's Word. "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (1:21-22).

Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount by stressing the same important principle.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall. (Matt. 7:24-27)

Third, we see them *honoring Jesus (9-10)*. Here Jesus prays specifically for His chosen disciples and says, "I am glorified in them." Woods states, "He was glorified in his disciples because they had accepted his mission and believed that he came forth from the Father" (357). Whenever folks hear and heed God's Word the Lord is honored. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mat. 5:16). Peter and John glorified God by their bold defense before the Sanhedrin. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they

marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

***The Particulars For Which He Prayed (11-19).*** Having identified the people for whom Jesus prayed, let us now observe the particular things for which He prayed. First, Jesus prayed for *their protection (11)*. “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.” In this verse, and the ones that follow, it is apparent that Jesus was concerned about the protection of His disciples. So, naturally, He prays that the Father would keep them. At least four things can be identified in this prayer that relate to their protection. 1) *Enduring Unity (11b)*. Jesus prayed that they “be one.” There would be many efforts to divide the apostles as a means of destroying Christianity. Jesus knew that if His disciples were to be successful they would have to maintain a unity that would endure those threats. 2) *Enmity of the World (14)*. Jesus said to the Father, “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.” There is a distinct difference between the citizens of the kingdom and the world. The Apostle John warned, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). Jesus had already warned the disciples that they would be victimized by the enmity of the world.

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 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 keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. (John 15:18-21)

William Barclay said, “The world acutely dislikes people whose lives are a condemnation of it. It is in fact dangerous to be good .

. . It is dangerous to practice a higher standard than the standard of the world. Nowadays a man can be persecuted even for working too hard or too long” (185-86). 3) *Evil One (15)*. “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.” It was not the Lord’s design that His disciples should be taken out of the world. Rather, it is His intention that the Christian life is to be lived in the midst of the world and gain ultimate victory over it.

The first essential is to note that Jesus did not pray that his disciples should be taken out of this world. He never prayed that they might find escape; he prayed that they might find victory. The kind of Christianity which buries itself in a monastery or a convent would not have seemed Christianity to Jesus at all. The kind of Christianity which finds its essence in prayer and meditation and in a life withdrawn from the world, would have seemed to him a sadly truncated version of the faith he died to bring. He insisted that it was in the rough and tumble of life that a man must live out his Christianity. (Barclay 215)

With His disciples in the world, Jesus prayed for their protection from “the evil one.” Paul said, “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one” (2 Thes. 3:3). The Lord equips His people with spiritual armor to protect them from the evil one.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having

shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. (Eph. 6:10-18)

Christians must ever be on guard against the attacks of the devil. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). 4) *Even As Jesus Protected Them (12)*. Jesus prayed, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Wayne Jackson has provided an excellent explanation of this verse.

Surveying his ministry, Christ says that while he and the disciples were together, he “guarded” them and was able to “keep” them spiritually safe. There was one tragic exception – him called “the son of perdition,” meaning one who is so corrupt in action as to be deserving of hell. The culprit was Judas. In view of the descriptive in verses six through eight, it is impossible to deny that Judas was at one time a saved person (as Calvinists attempt to do). The apostate’s defection was foretold in Old Testament Scripture (cf. 13:18; Psa. 41:9; 69:25; 109:8). It must be emphasized that, ultimately, Judas took responsibility for his own sin (cf. Mt. 27:3-4). (*Commentary* 187)

Second, Jesus prayed for *their possession of joy (13)*. While the torture of the cross loomed over Him, Jesus is praying that His disciples “may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” This is interesting in light of Hebrew 12:2 which says, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the

right hand of the throne of God.” His death, resurrection, ascension, and all that culminated in completing the plan of redemption represented His joy. His prayer was that the disciples would be filled with His joy. Albert Barnes states that, “The expression ‘my joy’ here probably refers to the joy of the apostles respecting the Saviour - the joy which would result from his resurrection, ascension, and intercession in heaven” (356).

Third, Jesus prays for *their purification (16-19)*. Having just prayed for the disciples to be kept from the evil one (15), Jesus now focuses on their purification. In verses 16-19 there are three elements of their purification that can be identified. 1) *Separation (16)*. “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” He had already made mention of this fact back in verse fourteen. Paul had asserted the same thing in Philippians 3:20 when he said, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” 2) *Sanctification (17, 19)*. “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” *Sanctify* comes from the Greek *hagiason* and means, “To consecrate or set apart persons or things to God” (Robertson 279). That which sanctifies is truth. Jesus clarified that the “truth” is the Word of God. Jackson explained that “God sanctifies (sets apart as holy) those who respond to his truth (Jn. 17:17) in obedience to the gospel” (*Bible Words* 162). The Apostle Paul, speaking of the sacrifice Christ made for the church said, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:26).

Here we see the vital role that the Scriptures play in the saving and safe-keeping of the Lord’s people. “There are no instances, not even in the case of the apostles, of persons going on unto a more perfect state of sanctification without the constant necessity of their remaining under the tutelage of the revealed will of God; and that seems to be the very point of this verse. (Coffman 410)

3) *Sending (18)*. “As you have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.” Marvin Weir explained this precisely:

Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). This was His mission and purpose. In the same manner, Christ sent His apostles into the world. The Lord charged them, saying: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat. 28:19-2). The Savior’s mission now becomes the apostle’s mission. (280)

### **Jesus Prays For His Christian Disciples (John 17:20-26)**

In the third and final section of this prayer Jesus turns His attention to future believers. As the Lord prayed for them, He revealed three specific desires that He has for them.

*A Perfect Oneness among Them (20-23).* That thing in particular that was on the Lord’s mind at this point was unity among those who would believe on Him. It ought to be the purpose of every disciple of Christ to strive for the kind of unity for which Jesus prayed. To do so, let us observe four things about that unity from these words of Jesus. 1) *The people in unity (20a).* “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” Not only did Jesus pray for His apostles, but He also prayed for future believers as well. If we believe in Jesus through the word of the apostles, then Jesus was praying for us also. Often we think about the fact that we are privileged to pray to the Father through the Son. Here, we contemplate the grand thought that Jesus prayed for us. Tom Holland asked, “Can you imagine a greater honor than the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ praying for you” (176)? Woods stirs our emotions with his beautiful comments:

This has been called, and not improperly, an eternal intercession. In it, the Lord looked across the mighty span of the years reaching to eternity, and breathed a prayer for all of those who would be led to believe through the preaching of the word initially delivered to the apostles. This includes us all; all of us who preach the word and all of us who believe the word, since the word we preach and believe came to us



from the apostles. How immeasurable is our debt to him and to them! It embodies for us assurance of the richest blessings of earth and of heaven. It should thrill our hearts and prompt us all to the fullest measure of loyalty, love and faithfulness to him whose concern for us is so great. If the apostles needed the grace to sustain them this petition implies, so do we; and we may be greatly strengthened in the realization that every one of us, it matters not how poor, how uninformed, how little esteemed by the world about us we may be, are the objects of this prayer by him whose petitions always reach the throne of grace. Should not all of us daily reflect upon this fact, and to ourselves utter these words: *“The Lord prayed FOR ME when death for him was but a few hours away.”* (363)

2) *The platform of unity (20b)*. In order for unity to exist and be maintained there must be an agreed upon standard of authority that serves as a platform upon which that unity may rest. Jesus identified the word of the apostle’s as the only acceptable standard for unity.

Thoughtful men know that the only feasible, workable and acceptable basis for unity is the teaching of the New Testament. When men come to respect God’s word as they ought agreement on the basis of its teaching is easy; but, it will never be possible to unite on the doctrines and commandments of men. (Woods 364)

If the disciples of Christ are going to be “one,” then there can be only one standard by which that oneness may be achieved. Butler makes a valid observation of this point.

Verse 20 is one of those verses of the New Testament which is a veritable treasurehouse. Its simplicity leaves no question as to the agency for making men Christians – it is the word of the apostles. Jesus knows no other method but the preaching of the apostolic doctrine in order to bring men to faith. Neither are there any other doctrines or philosophies

approved by Christ to bring about unity of all who believe on Him. (339-40)

Concerning the first members of the church of Christ, the Bible says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The apostles preached that which they had received from the Lord. "It is 'their' Word, not as though they originated it but only as being the special agents for its dissemination and transmission" (Lenski 1154).

3) *The pattern for unity (21a)*. "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us..." The religious world today claims to practice a unity that amounts to nothing more than a cheap imitation of that for which Jesus prayed and demands among true believers. The unity practiced among us must be of the same quality as that which exists between the Father and the Son!

Between the Father and the Son (and we are free to add the Spirit) a wonderful, incomprehensible interpenetration exists, called the perichoresis essentialis by the dogmaticians. This is absolutely the highest type of oneness known. This and nothing less is to be the model and pattern for the oneness of believers. . . Here, too, we see that our oneness is not merely placed beside the oneness of the divine Persons as though all that exists between them is a likeness. The two are vitally connected; this is why they have the resemblance of which Jesus speaks. We believers can be one with each other only by each of us and all of us being one with the Father and Jesus. Union with God and with Christ makes us a unit in ourselves. (Lenski 1155-56)

The Father and the Son never disagreed. That is the pattern for believers today who must be united, and that unity is achieved by all agreeing upon the Biblical standard.

4) *The perfection in unity (22-23)*. In verse 23 Jesus said, "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one..."

Division, sectarianism and denominationalism, by their very nature, represent that which is broken. Jesus desired a perfection in the church that could only be attained by unity. “The perfect unity flows out of perfect submission to the total will of God in Christ, resulting in ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc.’ (Eph. 4:4f). God’s love of Christ means God’s love of Christ’s body, which is his church” (Coffman 412).

***A Powerful Observation of Them (21b).*** “...that the world may believe that You sent Me.” The kind of unity in the church for which Jesus prayed would be so powerful that it would produce faith in those who did not believe. In John 13:35 Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The love and unity existing among the disciples of Christ would be a grand demonstration that Christianity is from God and not men.

***A Paradise Opportunity for Them (24-26).*** In these final three verses that contain the concluding thoughts of Jesus’ prayer, three outstanding things can be observed. 1) *A heavenly desire (24).* At this point Jesus prays, “Father, I desire...” When the Lord reveals His desires we certainly ought to take note of it. As we analyze the Lord’s desire in this verse we see three things. First, we notice the *people in the desire*. “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me...” Again, His focus, His prayer, and His desire is for His disciples. This reminds us of the words of Paul in Romans 10:1 when he said, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.” In verse nine Jesus said, “I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me...” He has in mind all of His disciples, both present and future. Second, we notice the *place in the desire*. “...may be with Me where I am...” The Lord’s greatest desire was to have His disciples with Him in heaven. “Prophetically, Jesus was already at home with the Father when this prayer was uttered” (Coffman 412). He had already comforted the hearts of the disciples by saying, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3). “Jesus, then, has prayed first for the original disciples (verses 9-18), then for the church on earth throughout the

ages (verses 20-23), and now for the glorified church of the future, united with him in the place which he is going to prepare for it (verse 24; cf. John 14:3)” (Bruce 336). Third, we notice the *purpose of the desire*. “...that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” Christ’s Deity and eternity are once again affirmed by His assertion of the Father’s love “before the foundation of the world.” Jesus was about to return to the glory that was once His, and His desire is that His disciples may participate in the blessings of that glory. McGarvey and Pendleton eloquently address that thought:

The glory of Christ is his Sonship, and the love which accompanies that relationship. To behold this is the height of spiritual exaltation. To know God is life eternal, and to behold God is joy ineffable. God is truly beheld subjectively. We must be like him to see him as he is (I. John iii. 2). The second petition of Jesus, therefore, in no way savors of a vainglorious desire that his disciples may behold him to lead them to admire him, but a wish that they may participate in the heavenly state, and know the Sonship of Jesus and all its attendant blessedness by, in some measure, participating in it. (684)

2) *Honoring Deity (25)*. “O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.” Jesus declares that the world does not know God, but the disciples do know God. It is not that the world could not know God. Rather, the world chooses not to know God. In Romans chapter one, the Apostle Paul described them as those, “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (18), “and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...” (28). The disciples, however, know God because they believe Jesus. Nicodemus said to Jesus, “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” (John 3:2).

3) *A holy declaration (26)*. “And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” Because the disciples had known

the Father, Jesus declared to them His holy name. Wayne Jackson provides us with an excellent explanation of this verse.

Jesus had taught them about his Father and his “name” (the authority behind his revealed will). The Lord pledges to continue instructing them. He will do this after his ascension by means of the Holy Spirit (14:16-18; 15:26; 16:13). The ultimate objective is that the love which he forever has shared with the Father may be resident in his people and that he may abide in them. The sweetness of this descriptive is beyond human appreciation. (*Commentary* 189)

## Conclusion

It was in the shadow of the cross that Jesus offered this prayer. He uttered it in the hearing of His disciples that it may be impressed upon their mind. By inspiration, John recorded it in his Gospel that it may make an impression upon us as well. May we carefully absorb every word that we may fulfill our Lord’s desire that we live in love, unity and faithfulness.

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### **Biographical Sketch**

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# His Victorious Resurrection

*John 2:13-22; 19:38-20:31*

*Neal Pollard*

The apostle John first alludes to the resurrection of Christ in the second chapter of his Gospel. When Jesus cleansed the temple of the moneychangers, this is recorded: “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” Only after Jesus had risen from the dead did His disciples understand what He meant (John 2:22).

James I. Packer, in response to the Habermas-Flew debate on the resurrection, summarizes very well what is at stake.

When Christians are asked to make good their claim that this scheme is truth, they point to Jesus’ resurrection. [This event], so they affirm, demonstrated Jesus’ deity; validated his teaching; attested the completion of his work of atonement for sin; confirms his present cosmic dominion and his coming reappearance as Judge; assures us that his personal pardon, presence, and power in people’s lives today is fact; and guarantees each believer’s own reembodiment by resurrection in the world to come. (xi)

Paul said very similar things in a different way in 1 Corinthians 15, saying that our faith is useless if the resurrection of Christ is not true (14,17). In that great chapter, Paul alleges that since Jesus is raised up from the dead, it benefits us if we take possession and hold on tight to this claim (1-2), it is news meant to be shared (3), it is good news based on facts and evidence (3-9), and it has the power to transform lives, including our own (10).

The whole New Testament is built around the fact of the resurrection of Christ. The closing words of the Bible point to the fact of it, where Jesus three times says “yes, I am coming soon.”

That is only possible because the stone was rolled away and Jesus walked out of that grave alive again!

The Gospel of John tells us about the victorious resurrection of Christ. It is said that during a particularly difficult time in his life, Martin Luther was seen tracing two words with his fingers over and over again—“*Vivit! Vivit!*” (“He lives! He lives!”). On this point, Luther was right. Jesus lives! That fact should impact how *we* live, too.

Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb, and she ran and told Peter and John. They raced to the tomb and saw for themselves. Thereafter, Mary is still at the tomb and she encounters the risen Lord (John 20:9-17). Jesus calls her name and she is elated to see the crucified One victorious over death. His simple words to her and that singular encounter was transforming. It turned a dirge into a delight, mourning into magnificence, and pain into praise.

Looking particularly at the end of John 19 through the end of John 20, we see the victorious resurrection of Christ and can draw three important conclusions.

### **The Resurrection of Christ Is as Scripture Said It Would Be (20:9)**

John 20:9 says the disciples did not yet know the Scripture, that Christ should rise again. Is John referring to a specific Scripture or the whole of the Old Testament? Inasmuch as there is not a recognizable quotation of the Old Testament in the context, it would seem that John is referencing the Old Testament in general. While some, like Tenney (30ff), see a great many allusions to the resurrection in the Old Testament, others, like Geisler (179), Sparrow-Simpson (232-233), Gresham (24ff), et al, emphasize that the concept of resurrection was not very developed in the minds of Old Testament Jews. It would seem that both ideas are true. While the Jews did not understand their significance, the Scripture apparently does allude to the resurrection of our Lord with some frequency.

Luke testifies to this fact in one of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances. Luke 24:44-46 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and

the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.’” So, which Scriptures reveal Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?

What about in the Law of Moses? What is said in the books of law and history about Christ’s resurrection? There is Genesis 3:15, the so-called “Protoevangelium” or “first Gospel.” Moses writes, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” This is spoken to the serpent, and it is seen by many as the first Messianic prophesy—concerning Satan’s victory in Jesus’ crucifixion and Jesus’ much greater victory in rising again. Many translations so understand the passage by capitalizing the personal pronoun when referring to the seed of woman in the passage. In the second century, Irenaeus of Lyons—one of the early church fathers—was the first to make this connection (Coxe, ed.). He and many others after him emphasize the significance of the idea of the seed and its connection to the promise of redemption in passages like Galatians 3:16, 29. The same general context says, “But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Gal. 4:4). The feast of the first fruits (Lev. 23:10ff) can be said to “prefigure” (be an early indication of) the resurrection, as Jesus is called “the first fruits of them that are asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20).

What about in the prophets? Isaiah 53:8-12 reveals Jesus’ defeat in death but also sees a seeming victory. This passage is undoubtedly Messianic—Philip says so in Acts 8—but it implies the resurrection. Tenney sees a possible allusion to the resurrection in Hosea 6:1-2, as well, basing this on the nation being spoken of as if a singular person (Hos. 11).

What about in the Psalms? In the collection of Old Testament books we recognize as the books of poetry, there is the clearest predictive writings about the Messiah rising again. In Acts 13:32-33, Paul, as he preaches, says, “And we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in

the second Psalm: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’” Paul applies this “begetting” not to His birth but to His resurrection. Then, Peter (Acts 2:25) and Paul (Acts 13:35) apply Psalm 16 to the resurrection of Christ. Verse 10 especially predicts it, as David declares, “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”

It was there in the Old Testament Scripture all along for discerning, spiritual ones to see. The disciples needed the time and guidance to see these facts, “For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). But they saw it with their own eyes and many of them would give up their very lives proclaiming this truth to others.

### **The Resurrection of Christ Is as the Evidence Exhibits It to Have Been**

Josh McDowell, in his book *The Resurrection Factor*, points to the overwhelming testimony of history to the resurrection of the dead. He cites a Roman history scholar, a textual critic, a professor of ancient history, legal authorities, lawyers, and literary experts, all of whom agree that no historic incident is better or more obviously supported than the resurrection (10ff). Thomas Arnold, author of the 23-volume *History of Rome*, is quoted as saying, “I have been used for many yrs to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God has given us that X died and rose again from the dead” (ibid.). John presents at least two major types of evidence in John 20.

First, John presents *material evidence*. He lays out the evidence for us to consider in this context. John 19:33 reveals the Roman soldiers finding Jesus dead upon the cross. Then, Joseph of Arimathea, along with Nicodemus, are allowed by Pilate to take the body of Jesus. They arrange His burial. They take the body of Jesus and bind it in strips of linen with spices (19:40). Then, they bury His body in the tomb (19:41-42). Then, on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene arrives early in the morning and sees immediately

that something has happened. The stone was rolled away (1). The burial clothes were there, but not His body (4). The handkerchief that had been around His head was folded inside the tomb (7).

This evidence was continuously presented to the Jews, including the very ones responsible for killing Christ. Yet, they never disputed the claim of resurrection. In fact, these events and the subsequent preaching of them led many of the Jews to become disciples of Jesus. This evidence was presented before the Romans—particularly Paul in the latter part of the book of Acts. This still powerful nation had the power and might to challenge and rebut the evidence. There is no record anywhere of them ever doing so.

Second, John presents *eyewitness testimony*. John, along with other New Testament writers, gives an abundance of this. The resurrected Christ did not first appear to a prominent male disciple like Peter or John, but to a woman. Norman Geisler remarks of this that “it is an unmistakable sign of the authenticity of the Gospel record that in a male-dominated culture, the risen Jesus appeared first to a woman.” The text says she saw Him with her own two eyes (20:14). She also heard the Lord speak (20:16), and then she touched Christ’s resurrected body (20:17). In fact, it says she clung to Him. The word translated “clinging” means to fasten a hold of and not let go; to wrap up (Arndt, et al, n. pag.). In a court of law, a witness who sees, hears, and touches someone would be seen as ironclad in giving testimony about that one.

Passages in Mark, John, and 1 Corinthians confirm Peter as an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. He saw and heard Him, plus John 20:6-7 tells us that Peter saw the empty tomb as well as the grave clothes sans the body of Christ. He would go on to live with an undaunted hope because He had seen the resurrected Lord (1 Pet. 1:3). He writes in both his epistles anticipating the second coming of Christ, the living Savior.

John 20:19-31 shows us that Jesus appeared to the rest of the apostles after He arose. He actually appears twice. Thomas is not with the rest of the apostles the first time Jesus appears to them. The disciples heard Him (20:19), saw Him (20:20), and touched Him (20:27). Luke records Jesus’ exhortation, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not

have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (24:39). In that same context, Jesus eats a piece of fish (24:43).

Added to this testimony are the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff). Then, there is Paul’s powerful testimony in 1 Corinthians. He writes that Jesus “...was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

Near the end of his life, Antony Flew changed his worldview from atheism to at least deism. Some of his writings would lead the reader to think he was even a theist. He wrote about his former atheistic brethren, saying, “I have been denounced by my fellow unbelievers for stupidity, betrayal, senility and everything you can think of and none of them have read a word that I have ever written” (Wavell). He seemed genuinely shocked at their sudden hostility. Flew was by no means a friend of Christianity or actual believer in the resurrection, but when he died he told Habernas, his friend and the same man with whom he had the debate of the resurrection of Christ, “The evidence for the resurrection is better than for claimed miracles in any other religion. It’s outstandingly different in quality and quantity” ([www.deism.com](http://www.deism.com)).

The evidence is clearly there. It is understandable why it makes unbelievers hostile. Admitting the truth of the resurrection makes them aware of their accountability to God. Luke says Jesus showed Himself alive again by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3), if we allow our hearts to be open and not hardened to the facts.

### **The Resurrection of Christ Is as Faith Finds It Must Be**

We are now some 20 centuries removed from the writing of the New Testament. The events recorded therein, perhaps especially regarding a subject like the resurrection of Christ, can seem far removed from us today. Yet, even for those contemporary with these events, there was a decision of faith.

Many of the Jews refused to believe the message about Christ, including the resurrection. Even the Pharisees, who believed in the

physical resurrection of man, opposed Christianity. It was not due to lack of evidence, but it was the implication of the Gospel message and the change it called for. In several places, Paul preached among the Gentiles on his missionary journeys. The Gentiles often refused to admit the plausibility of Jesus being raised from the dead. Paul in Athens is an excellent case in point. At the end of his remarkable sermon on Mars' Hill, Paul concludes, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, Because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.’ Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, & others said, ‘We shall hear you again concerning this’” (Acts 17:30-32).

John emphasizes the role of faith in the power of the resurrection. John saw the empty tomb and *believed* that Jesus was risen (20:8). When the other apostles told Thomas they saw Christ, he wanted more proof (20:25). Without proof, Thomas said, “I will not believe.” At the second appearance eight days later, Jesus furnishes Thomas with proof, admonishing him not to be *unbelieving* but *believing* (20:27). Then, Jesus looks across the ages and sees people like you and me and says, “‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’ Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:29-31).

The “sign” of the resurrection is presented to us, and we decide whether or not to believe. Yet, it is not a leap in the dark nor is it merely a glimmer of elusive hope. Hebrews 11:1 calls faith something based on substance and evidence. Each of us must decide which explanation makes the most sense to who we are and why we are here on this earth. Is it random chance with no explanation of design, morality, or purpose on this earth? Or is it the explanation of a Creator who made us and everything around us while giving us profound purpose?

Without the resurrection, we have no hope to solve our greatest

problem, the dilemma most men know deep down they fight. Truly, the resurrection is pivotal to our soul's salvation. No resurrection equals no hope (1 Cor. 15:19).

Earlier this year, I attended a very touching funeral. It was for a 95-year-old World War II veteran, a man who also was a pioneer in the NASA space program. The man's grandson, who is in the media industry in Denver, produced an incredibly powerful and touching tribute to the man's life. The video included the 1940s hit song, "We'll Meet Again," as well as the modern Carrie Underwood song, "I'll See You Again." Even if one is not at a religious funeral or hears people merely speak of death, the idea that we live on after death permeates their thoughts—not just the thoughts of the religious, but those who live secularly. What an incredible testimony to mankind's belief in the resurrection! There is no controversy about whether or not you and I will die. The question is, "How will we live?" Will we live believing in the Gospel message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, or will we walk on in darkness, despair, and perplexity?

When I was a freshman at Faulkner University in 1988, it was my privilege to hear Rex Turner, Sr., address the subject, "The Resurrection Of My Lord Makes All The Difference." As he wove his masterful sermon like a master craftsman, the very preaching of Scripture touched one's soul and fired one's imagination. As daily, we are surrounded by the consequences of sin in a fallen world, we look to the empty tomb and we see victory. Jesus' victory enables us to gain the victory!

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