THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN (THE APOSTLE)

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As in all such works, this does not pretend to be exhaustive or authoritative. The author owes much to many teachers, most deceased, a few still living. The design is to help Sunday School teachers and students, as well as other small group facilitators (including Home School Teachers [like my daughter]), have a better understanding of the basics set forth in these wonderful "gospel words." May God be pleased to use these writings to help as many as may come across them in His Providence.

This was the latest of the gospels to be written, and it, like Matthew, was penned by one of the Apostles. Each gospel-writer had a different audience, and they portrayed Jesus for them thus:
Matthew - Jesus as King - Ezekiel 1:10 - Lion
Mark - Jesus as Servant - Ezekiel 1:10 - Ox
Luke - Jesus as Man - Ezekiel 1:10 - Human
John - Jesus as God - Ezekiel 1:10 - Eagle

The human author of this gospel is John, the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve. It was written at the close of the first century. It's theme was the Deity of Jesus Christ (John 20:30, 31). The purpose of the book was to help men have eternal life by believing in Jesus. The story is woven around seven miracles performed by Jesus as His Messianic credentials, that the Jews might believe He was the One Who was to come. There are also seven "I am" statements of Jesus that are highlights of the book.

SEVEN MIRACLES

Water changed to wine.....Chapter 2
Healing of nobleman's son.....Chapter 4
Lame man healed at Bethesda Pools.....Chapter 5
Feeding of the 5,000.....Chapter 6
Jesus walks on water.....Chapter 6
Jesus heals the blind man.....Chapter 9
Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave.....Chapter 11

SEVEN "I AM'S"

The Bread of Life.....Chapter 6 (verse 35)
The Light of the World.....Chapter 8 (verse 12 and 9:5)
The Door (Gate).....Chapter 10 (verse 7)
The Good Shepherd.....Chapter 10 (verse 11)
The Resurrection and the Life.....Chapter 11 (verse 25)
The Way, the Truth, and the Life.....Chapter 14 (verse 6)
The Vine.....Chapter 15 (verse 5)

JOHN, CHAPTER 1

THESIS - eternal pre-existence and deity of Christ

1), 2) This is Scripture's most ancient reference, reaching back before the dawn of time. Jesus is said here to be 1) God's message for man, 2) in a face-to-face relation of equality with God, 3) identified as God. Jesus did not ascend to this equality, but He held that position from eternity past. As the second Person of the trinity, God the Son, Jesus is co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with God the Father.

This gives the lie again to the claims of the cults that Jesus is a lesser deity, a demi-god, a created Being. He is God, very God of very God. See Phil 2:6 for more about His relationship with God, as well as His attitude in coming into the human family.

PARENTHESIS - the Work of the Pre-existent Christ

3) John now moves from the **person** of God in Christ to the **work** of God in Christ. The subject here is creation. The Trinitarian involvement in creation is seen in seed form in Genesis, “Let **us** make man in **our** image...” The declaration is that every created thing was made by Jesus Christ. John restates his proposition negatively to re-emphasize it - nothing was made that Jesus did not make. Compare Col 1:16, Heb 1:2. Jesus is Creator.

4) Light and life are inseparably linked, physically and spiritually. Physically, it takes light to have life, as through the process of photosynthesis plants produce food. Spiritually, it takes life to have light. Jesus is both light and life to us. "I am the light of the world,” 9:5. “I am the Bread of life,” 6:35. Remove Jesus, and you take away light and life.

5) Light and darkness are mutually exclusive. In Gen 1 God spoke physical light into existence, expelling the darkness. Here the light of heaven shines in upon the darkness of earth; darkness resists, but in the end, light prevails! Darkness cannot lay a hand on light. 2 Cor 4:6 compares physical light and spiritual light; both come from God.

Witness of the Forerunner, John the Baptist

6) To prepare the way for the Messiah, God sent an Elijah-like forerunner. He is clearly not deity - a "man" sent from God, this one was equipped by God and he was commissioned by God for a special ministry task - to introduce Messiah. He called for men to repent; he prepared the way of the Lord in men’s hearts, making straight paths. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not unto your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

7) Four centuries of silence (since Malachi wrote and spoke) from heaven were broken when John the Baptist began to preach. He bore witness to Jesus, the One coming after him. The law and the prophets had testified in writing of the Messiah. Now this last OT prophet appears to verbally remind Israel of Him Who was to come, and to point to the Light when It arrived. Like Elijah of old, John had seasons of strength and moments of despair.

8) Some mistook this bold wilderness preacher for Messiah, but John was quick to set the record straight. He spoke of not being worthy to loosen Jesus’ sandal straps; he said that Jesus must rise and himself decline. The Baptist was a light, but not THE LIGHT. He was the herald, not the King; the friend of the Bridegroom, not the Bridegroom Himself. He was a witness who sealed his testimony with his blood. His light pointed men to Jesus, then burned out quickly. Jesus would speak highly of John, but John never once gloried in himself.

Work of the Incarnate Christ

9) John's was a limited ministry, confined to Judaea and its environs. Jesus would send out a light that would encircle the earth. John’s was a Jewish ministry, but Christ’s was not just a Jewish gospel - it was for all men, for Christ's death was for all men in its provision. Every child of Adam has some light from God, and none will have excuses for not submitting to Him in faith. John the Baptist **spoke the truth**, but Jesus **was the truth**. In that He mirrored the Father - “Let God be true, and every man a liar,” and the Spirit - “the Spirit of truth.”

10) What an amazing thing - that the Creator would enter His creation and not be recognized by it! And this was not a fleeting glimpse; “He kept on being in the world...” He kept offering Himself, and in sin men rejected Him. How far-reaching are sin's effects! It is no gilded toy to be trifled with; this is a destructive evil to be repented of, turned from, and forsaken. “Sin is a monster of such frightful mein, that to be hated, needs only to be seen.”

11) Isaiah said that the ox knew his owner, and the donkey knew his masters corn crib, but Israel did not know her Lord. His question yet haunts, "Who hath believed our report?" Jesus came to His own

home and place (these reflect a neuter pronoun), and His own people (a masculine, personal pronoun) would not welcome Him.
12), 13) While most rejected Him (most still do), to the few who by faith received Him, He gave the authority to enter the family of God. What a privilege! To become God's child! Not a temporary, earthly kind of parent-child relationship, but an eternal relationship with a heavenly Father, by a spiritual birth! I did not become God's child by the decision of my parents to give me birth. I was born of God by faith in Jesus. What a wonder! That I should be a child of God for time and eternity. Nothing can sever that wondrous relationship, not even my sin. I am eternally secure in Christ. What a motivation to live for Him, walk with Him, make Him known to others!
THESIS - The Incarnate Christ, Full of Grace and Truth, Dwelled Among Us
14) "In beginning was the Word...and the Word was made flesh." Here is stated the incarnation, the fleshing of God to enter the human family. He became One of us, and He dwelled with us in a body of flesh. He permanently became a member of the human family! Even now there is a man in the glory - Jesus Christ! Through Him we beheld God's glory, and today He is in a glorified body, seated at the Father's right hand. What a Savior! "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; Hail th' incarnate Deity; Pleased as Man with men to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel."
PARENTHESIS - The Witness of the Forerunner, John the Baptist
15) In Judaism, the younger and later is almost always inferior to the older, earlier. John said Jesus was greater (though younger in time) because He actually preceded him. Here John refers to Jesus' eternal deity, that He didn't begin at conception and birth. He existed before, and He entered the human family after being with God for all eternity.
16), 17) Here are law and grace - two wondrous, inseparable truths. We need law to show us our need. It reveals to us our sin and condemns us for it. But that alone is not enough - we need help to deal with the problem of sin, to remove the condemnation of God upon us because of sin. That is where grace comes in. In grace, God justifies the believing sinner, brings him into the family, gives him position as a son, and fits him for heaven. The law came to Israel by Moses, and it was a blessing. Grace and truth came to all through Christ, and it was a greater blessing.
THESIS - Christ Has Made the Father Known to Us
18) While God has never been seen in His true essence as God, for human eyes have not that capacity, He has been pleased to make Himself known through His Son. Jesus came to us from the bosom of the Father to reveal the father to us. Seeing Him, we see what the Father is like, for He is the visible representation of the invisible God.
PARENTHESIS - Witness of the Forerunner, John the Baptist
19) John Baptist was creating such a stir in the region that Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent John's kinsmen, the priests and Levites, to find out who he was. The interrogation was no doubt because he was drawing crowds away from the traditional worship of Jerusalem. Much speculation about his identity was floating around.
20) One speculation was that John the Baptist was the Messiah. As a man of God, John quickly set the record straight. He was ***not*** the Christ, and he would not allow men to think even for a moment that he was. Undue praise is a dangerous thing for the people of God. We must be careful to deflect praise to Christ, to Whom it is due. He was indeed a humble prophet.
21) The interrogation then took another turn; they looked at two other OT possibilities. 1- They thought perhaps he was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Elijah coming before the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). 2- Deut 8:15 had promised what they here call "the prophet." "Are you he?" they asked. "No." John's answers were short, progressively shorter; he came to talk about Jesus, not himself. A true prophet, John ever and always pointed men to God.
22), 23) Quite frustrated by the humble unwillingness of John to talk about himself, they pressed him further, "Not who you aren't but who you are? We need an answer for our dispatchers." These self-

promoting infidels don't quite know what to do with John. He will not fall into the trap of pride, set by their apparent fascination with him and his ministry. He does refer them to the Scriptures, however, for his final word about his identity. He quotes Isa 40:3, calling himself therein only a voice in the desert. He had entered the desert of sin to call men to make a straight path for the coming of Messiah. This involved his message of repentance, men changing their minds!
24), 25) Finally the real vipers emerge from the brood - the Pharisees. They challenge John on the basis of his obvious humility, "If you aren't any of these important, prophesied people, why are you baptizing?" There is a hidden suggestion here that maybe John has a higher opinion of himself than he tells, demonstrated by his actions. Leave it to the devil's crowd to attack a good man for his goodness. In every generation, we see this at work, but never more than in Jesus' day and our day. We have recently seen in America the glorifying of those who have obviously committed grievous sins; equally sorrowful are the attacks on those in the political and religious arenas who would point out their sins. Satan has certainly turned things upside down in this insane world.
26), 27) Does not John here epitomize Paul's statement in 2 Cor 4:5, "we preach not ourselves, but *Christ Jesus the Lord?*" "You are so concerned with me; and all I do is minister an outward sign. You have sadly missed recognizing Him among you Who is far greater than I am. And if I have made a stir, this One will make more, for His greatness is such that I am not even worthy to loosen his sandal strap. You will have far more to deal with when He makes His appearance than you have with me. And while they made quick work of John the Baptist with a beheading, it would take a risky trial and public crucifixion to silence the Messiah, but that would not be the end.
28) Bible geography is one of my favorite studies - part of why I love visiting Israel. But it is in certain considerations an inexact science. Some things we know for certain, like the location of Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, and Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee. This particular Bethany (or Bethabara, as the old version calls it - not the Bethany on Olivet) is an unknown site.
29) What a grand scene! John is baptizing in Jordan; he looks up and sees Jesus coming. The Holy Spirit quickens his mind to recognize the Savior, and he interrupts one divine mission to embark on another. He declares the identity of God's Lamb - the One whose blood removes sin, not covers it like lambs of old. What a moment! Isaac had asked Abraham, "Where is the lamb?" (Gen 22:7) Now John answers the question with finality!
30) John refers back to his earlier testimony about Jesus as being "later, but greater," and yet somehow earlier? This is the mystery of Christ's eternal pre-existence. Six months younger than the Baptist, Jesus was still before him, because He existed as God before He came into the world as Man. God's final Sacrifice had come to man.
31) John continues, "While I did not know His personal identity, it was the purpose of my ministry to reveal Him to Israel. What a surprise! My younger Cousin is the Messiah! How could the people miss the truth of this fulfilled prophecy? And yet they did, and men today still miss the truth. Sadly, all who miss the truth will miss heaven.
32) On one trip to Israel, I had the joy of Baptizing 12 folks in the Jordan River - the very cold Jordan River. Those standing by with cameras caught on film a dove circling the scene. We were all reminded of this event 2,000 years ago when another Baptist was in Jordan and saw a dove - this one lighting on Jesus and sitting there. This was told to John by the Lord to be the identifying sign by which he would recognize the Messiah, and then he could tell others of His identity. Here also John mentions the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a work to be performed by Jesus upon men. God, Who had dispatched John with this primary mission of revealing Christ, gave him all he needed to do the job properly. And to all today who will trust and obey Him, God will clearly reveal His Son. He is not shrouded in mystery, but is clearly seen in the Word of God. Please know and trust Him!
35) On consecutive days, John the Baptist was working, now two of his disciples were with him. John was a wilderness preacher - a tireless worker for his Lord - one who drew a following.

36) Jesus came into view - John the Baptist pointed his followers to Jesus as the Lamb of God. This was of course a reference to Jesus being a Sacrifice for sins! There was no ministerial envy between these cousins in the Lord's work.
37) John the Baptist's disciples then followed Jesus. John's mission wasn't about John - it was about Jesus. When these followers of John became followers of Jesus, that was exactly what John had hoped for and come to do! True disciples must follow Him today, as well.
Work of Christ in Calling the Disciples
38) Jesus inquired as to their interest (perhaps their intentions). "Where are you staying?" they asked. "We wish to stay with you (as Ruth had pledged to Naomi), to confer with you." Was this what their question implied? John the Baptist had been their rabbi, but he had pointed them to their new Rabbi, Jesus.
39) He showed them and they spent the day with him. Jesus was always ready to receive believing followers - so often would He say, "Come."
40) Andrew identified as 1-Simon's brother; 2-John the Baptist's disciple who followed Jesus. He was a little-known one who brought the Pentecostal preacher, Peter, to Jesus.
41) Andrew's prompt, initial action was to find his brother Simon with news of their finding the Messiah. It is a blessed thing to have a burden for family, friends, to bring them to Christ. When that is coupled with the activity (the actual bringing), you have a source of real joy.
42) He brings him to Jesus (the same day); the Master changes Simon's name to Cephas, "Peter." So brief, this encounter, but what an impact it had on Peter, and on others through him.
43) Preparing to leave for Galilee, Jesus finds Philip and says, "follow me." This asking for a following is quite a boast, unless you are Jesus, Son of God. Men followed John the Baptist, but he sent them after Jesus.
44) Philip was a native of Bethsaida (like Andrew, Peter).
45) Philip's first action was to find Nathaniel with news of Jesus as being the Object the Law and the prophets - the One Who was to come! We, like Philip, should be telling men to follow Jesus.
46) Nathanael quotes a current proverb that looks down on the city where Jesus was raised, "can anything good come from Nazareth?" Unimpressed, Nathanael disparages Nazareth and its Rabbi. Philip gives the best possible response - "Why don't you check Him out for yourself."
47) Nathanael came anyway. Jesus said, "Here is a genuine, transparent Israelite." This man is no pretender; he speaks his mind for good or ill. He is what you see, a plain man.
48) Nathanael asks Jesus how He knew Him. Jesus speaks of Nathanael being under a fig tree when Philip came to him. "Puzzled at this accurate assessment, Nathanael asks Jesus how He knew. To dispel cynicism, Jesus adds to supernatural revelation. Psalm 139:1.
49) Nathanael promptly voices faith in Christ as God's Son, Israel's King. Had Nathanael just read Psalm 2? Certainly he was familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures - did he see Jesus in them?
50) ,51) Jesus, "You believe because of this simple revelation, you'll see greater than this! Stick around, Nathanael, and you'll see heaven opened, with angelic flight between heaven and earth."

JOHN, CHAPTER 2
John's gospel, the last to be written, is the gospel of the Deity of Jesus Christ. Seven miracles are selected by the Elder evangelist to demonstrate that Jesus is God. John records this as his method and purpose in 20:30, 31. The miracles of Jesus show His power and authority over all creation. Here at the outset of His ministry Jesus performs His first miracle near His hometown of Nazareth in a little village called "Cana." A church there today reminds us of this early display of Christ's power and authority.
CANA IN GALILEE
1), 2) A wedding was being held - a festive occasion then as now. Mary attended, perhaps serving as

what we call the “mistress of ceremonies.” Jesus and His disciples were also invited; perhaps a wedding participant was related to the family of Jesus. Since God created marriage, it is fitting that His Son honor it by His presence at a wedding. We do well today to invite Jesus to every wedding, to build every marriage upon Him. Cana was about 8 miles from Nazareth, in the tribal allotment of Asher. The time reference seems to mean the 3rd day after the calling of Philip and Nathanael. Notice John’s attention to detail - chronology, geography, invitees to the wedding. The holy record is not a collection of myths, but rather an accurately-detailed accounting of historical truth about Christ.

3) We infer that Mary had domestic responsibilities at the wedding because she brings to Jesus a report of a need that has arisen with the wedding feast - they have run out of wine. Some wrongly suggest that John here reveals some superiority of Mary over her Son. Such is not the case - she is His mother, but He is her Sovereign, as well as her Savior. Back to the narrative - would this poor family be embarrassed by the shortage of provisions? No. The God Who created water and grapes would have no trouble turning some water into wine.

4), 5) Here is an interesting and revealing verbal interchange with Jesus, Mary, and the servants at the wedding. Having been presented with the problem, Jesus speaks an idiom which basically means “what do you and I have in common?” Mary was thinking that her dependable, problem-solving Son had always been there to help; He would now reveal Himself quietly to His own as more than the Son of Mary - as the Son of God in power. It is not the time for Him to be revealed publicly to the masses, but He would strengthen the faith of this intimate group (and His mother) by performing this beginning of miracles for them. One is reminded of the works He performed and then told the viewers not to tell anyone what they had seen. Now comes one of Scripture’s short, simple, sublime statements, and it comes from the lips of Mary. She says to the servants, “Do whatever He tells you.” That was good advice then, and it remains so today. The person who follows this simple precept will enjoy the best life has to offer now and in the world to come. May we be so wise as to live thereby.

6), 7) Christ made no spectacle, such as having cups at the table suddenly filled with wine. He used common things that were at hand, performing His miracle more in private than in public. The servants followed the instruction to fill the water pots with water. The Jews would have balked at drinking wine from pots where they recently washed, but by His word, Christ sanctified and cleansed them. Jesus now proceeds to make 150 gallons of water into wine. The needs of the wedding feast will be amply met, and it appears that the young couple will have wine to use for time to come. Jesus blessed the ceremony not only by His presence, but by His powerful miracle. He showed that He had authority over the material creation, which He had made. “All things were made by Him...” John had declared it (1:3), and now he confirms it by the record of Christ’s first miracle.

8), 9), 10) The servants come into play again as they draw from the pots and present to the master of ceremonies of the feast. Note that not just the newly married couple, Jesus, Mary, and the master are important in these events. God has a place of vital service even for the lowliest who will come to Him. To be His servant is better than to be sovereign over a fading kingdom. The Psalmist had said, “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked” (Ps 84:10). John makes mention that the drinkers of the wine were unaware that it came from ceremonial washing pots, but that the servants knew. I wonder if they chuckled a little at the town’s finest citizens drinking beverage drawn from pots where they had washed their hands and feet not long before. If so, we see God having a sense of humor with men. By the way, Jesus makes only the best when He makes something. The master of the feast, no doubt a connoisseur of fine wine, remarked that this last wine was the best yet. Isn’t it always that way with Christ? Though He gives us good things all the time, He does indeed save the best for last. It’s like the young Christian said as he learned some of the glories of the Christian life, “All this, and heaven, too?!” And to that we say, “Amen!”

11) Miracles in Scripture were always primarily intended as authentication of a man and his message - from Moses and Joshua, to Elijah and Elisha, to Christ and His apostles (the three great waves of

miracles in the Bible). Until now Jesus had lived in relative seclusion, waiting for the time of His revelation to His people. Now the public ministry will take off. Miracles will show that He is God come among His people, just as Isaiah predicted (Isa 35). This first miracle will be followed by many others, each confirming that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, come to seek and to save sinful man. Welcome, Jesus.

12) On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum is over 600 feet below sea level; so it is right to say that they went "down" to Capernaum. This would later become the headquarters for Jesus' ministry, after His sad expulsion from Nazareth (Luke 4). Capernaum will figure largely in Jesus' ministry. On this occasion, He visits there until the time to go to Jerusalem for the Passover (2:13). Imagine, Christ our Passover celebrating the Passover!

JESUS IN JUDEA, JERUSALEM

It is the early days of Jesus' ministry. He makes His first ministry trip to Jerusalem in connection with celebrating the Passover, one of Israel's most holy days. Several more times Jesus will visit this holy city as part of His Mission to His people Israel. The final trip will conclude with His being crucified, buried, and rising again from the dead. But this first trip had its own significance. These verses speak of three major crises in the life and ministry of the Savior. Let us examine them with the seriousness they deserve, remembering they, too, are part of the inspired, sacred Scriptures.

13) There were three pilgrim feasts in Jewish religious life (Ex 23:14 ff, Deut 16:16) for the observance of which all males must go up to Jerusalem. The Passover was one of them, a holy day mentioned by name 76 times in the Scriptures. We assume Jesus went there every year of his life, for Luke 2:41 relates that His parents went annually. Luke goes on to record that at age 12 Jesus tarried behind when His parents left, setting up that scene where He was in the Temple debating with the teachers. Here Jesus up heads to the Holy City again. The fact that there are three such feasts attended by our Lord in the record (here, John 6:4, and chs 11-13) that help us mark the rough length of Jesus' ministry as three years. He was faithful to obey the law in all points.

14) Good and acceptable things often turn into evil things, condemned by God. God created sex; man perverted it into promiscuity and all other manner of sin. God made us to need food, but we pervert that into gluttony. A provision was given in the law for people who lived far from Jerusalem, who would have difficulty bringing their offerings to the temple. They could turn their offering into money, much more portable, and then use that money to buy offerings in Jerusalem. Here we see how man perverted that provision, using it as an opportunity to make lots of easy money. Jesus saw the abuses, and His heart was no doubt grieved. He will show His disdain, not just walk away.

15) This action by Jesus shows His zeal for the purity of worship at the Temple. He fashions a scourge of cords to use to start a small stampede. Scurrying to leave the temple courts are sheep, oxen, and their keepers. I have often wondered why they feared this normally meek Man from Galilee. Clearly His "presence" was powerful, and men fled from before Him. Can you see Him overturning the tables where moments ago sat greedy merchants who were profiting from the needs of others? Watch Him in your mind's eye as He scatters their coins around!

16) Now the aroused and angry Savior speaks - He addresses the sellers of doves, telling them to clear their "market place" out of the Temple courts. These men were perhaps the worst offenders of all, making a profit at the expense of the poor, and desacralizing God's house in the process. Moses provided (Lev 5:7) that the indigent make an affordable sacrifice of less expensive birds. Wicked men were using this provision to fleece them. Jesus was grieved and offended, and He ran them out of the place, to which he referred as "my Father's house."

17) How blessed that the behavior of Jesus reminds the disciples, having only now been with Him a very short time, of prophetic texts from Scripture! Psalm 69 is Messianic, taken from David's experience of real and felt persecution. Men opposed him just as they would his greater Son. The people of Israel must also have felt opposition from those who made money off their backs with this

greedy money-changing and gouging, selling of animals for the sacrifices. Even in church life today, people sometimes feel the pressure of “spiritual” leadership gone awry.
18) Much truth is here! 1st, the fact that just because something has become a convention, a tradition, does not mean that it is right. Nor is something to be cast aside simply because it is a tradition. 2nd, the primary purpose for miracles (here called “signs”) is authentication of the Sign-worker; the Jews clearly understood this, and many Scriptures declare the fact. 3rd, it was peculiarly the Jew who sought for those signs, for which compare 1 Cor 1:22.
19) Jesus frequently responded to the questions or challenges of His detractors with puzzling retorts. Sometimes His reply was another question; on occasion He would employ a parable to answer them. On this occasion He issued His own challenge, “Tear down this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days.” They really missed His meaning, and the disciples did not grasp it until after the resurrection (22). This interchange was later used to accuse Jesus, though it was greatly distorted (Mt 26:61), and it was also twisted in prosecuting Stephen (Acts 6:14).
20) The small temple of Zerubbabel was not grand enough for Herod. He built a retaining wall around its knoll, and when he filled it in, there was a 35-acre platform for the glorious structure he would build. The “western wall,” or “wailing wall” in the lower, larger, 7 courses of framed stones are part of this 1st century Herodian wall. This massive construction project, started by Herod the Great, was finished by others, taking 46 total years to build.
21) What significance this statement has! The Temple was the place of the presence of God and the only place where sacrifices could be offered. So here we have God incarnate, deity in human flesh, at the place of the presence of God with man! Did not one of His names, Emmanuel, mean “God with us?” And in less now than three years He would become the final Sacrifice for sins! This was greater by far than the simple building of an earthly structure.
22) The sign the Jews had requested earlier was later performed by Jesus, when He walked out of the tomb under His own power. His right to command men, to call men to Himself, His claims to deity and to be the fulfilment of many prophecies, all were validated on the third day following the crucifixion. Hallelujah, Christ arose!
23) It is often said that Jesus ministered for about three years. One of the date tags to help determine that is the number of Passover celebrations occurring during His ministry. Here is the first one, its mention helping us to determine the duration of His earthly work. The credentials of His Messianic identity were the signs, the miracles He performed.
24), 25) While many professed trust in Him, Jesus did not entrust His cause to all of them. Why? Because He knew their hearts, and He could distinguish who were the true from who were false. For entrusting people with responsibility in ministry, the rest of us have to “inspect fruit,” because we cannot see hearts.

JOHN, CHAPTER 3

Certainly the best-known chapter in the gospels, the account of Jesus’ interview with Nicodemus is legendary for soul-winners to use in sharing our faith! Jesus’ famous words, “You must be born again,” echo down the corridor of time. Many other seekers than Nicodemus have heard these words and been converted when believing in Jesus as the crucified, risen, Son of God-Savior!

DIALOGUE WITH NICODEMUS

1) We meet here a singular character in the gospels, Nicodemus. His religion was fundamentalist separatism. His sect, the Pharisees, fancied themselves the meticulous custodians of the oral law. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus would have believed in the supernatural, and he would have a miraculous exchange with Jesus this night! He also belonged to the Sanhedrin, Jews who helped with civil rule in their Suzerainty under Rome.
2) He approached Jesus in the quiet night hours. A great teacher of the law, Nicodemus knew that the

miracles of Jesus were His credentials as on a mission from God (the primary purpose of miracles was always to provide credentials for the miracle-worker as being sent by God and his message as being a word from God). But he had until now missed the real truth that Jesus was God in human flesh. I believe he got the message on this night (see chapter 19).
3) It seems that Jesus interrupts Nicodemus. Had he come to offer an alliance with his group in what he hoped would be their mutual efforts against Rome? The Pharisees had the political clout, and Jesus carried popular support. Together they might accomplish great things - why they might even rid Israel of the hated Roman occupation. Jesus lifts the discourse to a higher plane - let's talk about God's kingdom (not men's), but first you must experience the new birth.
4) Nicodemus changes subjects, but not planes. He asks about the new birth in terms of the natural, physical realm. He is inquisitive, as any good student should be, but he is still thinking in the natural, as a Sadducee might. He needs to “don” his Pharisee-supernaturalist thinking cap.
5) "Nicodemus, there is a birth after the physical birth (the water birth) that you must experience, or you cannot enter God's kingdom. This birth to which I refer is a spiritual birth, not a physical one; it is from above - from heaven - not from earth. It is a begetting of the life of the ages in sinful, mortal man, equipping him to live beyond his threescore and ten years.
6) The "water birth" mentioned in vs 5, I believe, is explained here as the physical, fleshly birth (though some believe the water refers to the Word). This birth is from a man and a woman. The Holy Spirit provides a 2nd birth that is spiritual. The soul that is dead in sin (separated from God) is made alive in Christ (restored to relationship with God).
7) Jesus responds to Nicodemus' being puzzled at this subject. "This should not amaze you! You didn’t think, did you, that you could enter heaven in your present sinful condition? God is absolutely holy and could not allow such an entry. Some radical change must occur, and it is called the new birth. So don't be surprised at what you hear.”
8) The Master Teacher had already used the illustration of fleshly birth to teach this truth; now He compares it in its mystery to the wind, using the known to teach the unknown. As the wind is unknown in its origin and destination, so is the new birth mysterious. But as it is known by its effects, so may the new birth be seen.
9) Not so strangely, Nicodemus now asks the method of this new birth - "How?" he asks! This is new territory for him to travel, and he asks for a road map. Constructing this model in his mind calls for an instruction booklet. And like a good student should, he asks for what he doesn't know. God had put in him a desire to know this truth.
10) “Nicodemus, have you not discovered the truth of regeneration in your Hebrew Scriptures? Did not Ezekiel teach about replacing stony hearts with hearts of flesh (36:26)? Had not God's Spirit changed Saul into another man (1 Sam 10:6)? You are, after all, recognized as perhaps the leading teacher in Israel. Do you know your own Bible?”
DISCOURSE ON ETERNAL LIFE
11) Men wanted, needed a word from heaven. Jesus came to bring and to BE that word. He spoke of things only He had seen and come to earth to testify. He taught with authority, because He knew the truth. How sad it is that those who reject His teaching will suffer eternal consequences. He spoke not alone, but God confirmed His word.
11) Men wanted, needed a word from heaven. Jesus came to bring and to BE that word. He spoke of things only He had seen and come to earth to testify. He taught with authority, because He knew the truth, and He was the Truth. How sad it is that those who reject His teaching will suffer eternal consequences. He spoke not alone, but God confirmed His word. Don’t be among those who reject the words of Jesus and spend eternity in the lake of fire.
12) How dull men can be to spiritual truth. This intelligent man, this well-known and respected teacher in Israel, had the truth of regeneration illustrated to him in terms of two earthly metaphors, and he still

did not grasp it. How could he expect to eat the meat of the Word if he choked on the milk? Never fear, not only is Jesus a great Teacher, He is also extremely patient. He will not give up on Nicodemus, and He will not give up on you.
13) Jesus now explains to Nicodemus how He has this truth from heaven. The reason is that He is God. He came to earth from heaven to tell men of earth truth about heaven, and to bring us there by His death, burial, and resurrection. He was and is God, and in Him God became Man. As the living Word, Jesus is God's Message to mankind. He is the visible Representation of the invisible God. He is God, fleshed out so man could see Him.
14), 15) Now Jesus takes Nicodemus into familiar ground - the Hebrew Scriptures, where Nicodemus was an expert. From Numbers 21 He refers to the account of the fiery snakes in the desert. These snakes were sent as a judgment by God, and they bit people who would die unless they looked in faith upon another snake, made of brass, lifted up on a wooden pole. How clear is the symbolism! Men have been bitten by the serpent of sin, and all will die who refuse to look in faith to the One lifted up on the cross! Sin slew us and Jesus became sin for us. Snakes brought death, and Moses made a snake for life. Sin brought death, and Jesus was made sin to bring life. Works could not save in the Old Testament era, nor can ought but faith save now. Believe, Nicodemus, believe and be saved! And the cry goes out to you - trust Jesus today, look upon Him and live.
16) How simply is the plan of life stated here. Near the middle of the verse is the word "Son." Before that word come other words about what God has done to save us. He loved us with a love that almost defies description. He chose to pursue our welfare, not counting the cost, and without regard for getting anything in return. That is the love we call "Agape" love. It is the highest kind of love, completely selfless and consumed with the good of the object loved. Because He loved us, He gave His Son! What a declaration - He gave His Son! The sacrifice of all sacrifices. After the word "Son" come instructions about our involvement in the plan. Believe on the Son and escape damnation; only believe, and you will have life! No weakness of body can stop your having life. No shortfall of intellect can bar you from heaven. Not even bankruptcy can slam heaven's door in your face. God's love is the source, God's Son is the Agent. The gift is free, paid for by His blood. Take the gift today! And the gift is eternal life - something you cannot lose. He said you would NEVER perish, and you can take Him at His word. You can be saved today by trusting Jesus Christ, and you will be secure for all eternity!
17) It is true, as Jesus will teach in John 5, that **He will be Judge over all the earth**. But God's purpose for sending Him was not that men might be condemned, but that they might be saved by trusting Him. What blessed love that God would send His beloved Son into this sinful world! Let that love grip your heart, and let God's Son save you. You and I get to choose; Jesus can be our Savior if we will bow before Him in faith, calling upon Him to save us. Or, He can be our Judge, before Whom every knee will one day bow anyway. So do it now - Believe!
18) Jesus makes it abundantly clear that salvation comes to those who believe in the Son of God; no vague, general, non-specific faith can save. It must be faith in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. Condemnation came because of sin, and we are all under that condemnation until Jesus comes to us. Unbelief will perpetuate that state of condemnation, but, as Paul says, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."

19) He Who will be Judge of all the earth declares the verdict: Men reject the Light that God has sent into the world in order to cling to their sins. It is not the lack of education, information, or even understanding that keeps men from Christ. It is rather a love for sin that binds men in darkness. There is enough light in creation (Rom 1) to help mankind see that there is a God. If they respond to that light, God will see that they get the saving Light of Jesus Christ.
20) I am fond of stating that "actions have consequences," a clear Biblical truth. It is also true that actions demonstrate character (and also spiritual condition). When a man refuses to come into the

light of the gospel, he makes it clear that he is an evildoer who does not want his deeds exposed. Over 50 years now, in the public arena, our nation has been closing the Bible; the real reason for this is to not risk exposing the sins of our nation, private or public.
21) When a person knows they have nothing to hide, they do not object to inspection. Even if a believer has sinned, he welcomes the revealing of that sin so that he may confess it and be cleansed. When gospel truth captures us, it not only changes our minds (repentance), it also directs our lives. The indwelling Holy Spirit guides us in new patterns of living, right living - righteousness. O, that men would come to Jesus and begin the journey of truth.
DEPARTURE FROM JERUSALEM
22) Jesus and these several disciples left the city of Jerusalem and moved east toward the Jordan, into the Judean wilderness. The two final verbs in this verse are imperfect, meaning ongoing action in the past. He “kept on spending” time with them - a thing which is vital to discipling individuals in the faith. And He “kept on baptizing;” as long as people were coming to faith, people were being baptized.
23), 24) Until his ministry was interrupted by incarceration, John also was baptizing. He did this at a named place where there was much water - clearly suggesting immersion. He remained popular as the herald of the King, and people “kept on coming” to him and “kept on being baptized” (also both imperfect verbs).
25) First-century Israel there were found many “mikvehs” for ceremonial washings. A good many Jews, especially the Essenes, frequently observed these washings for cleansing. One such Jewish man argued with John’s followers about this matter; why should they add one more dunking to their already rigorous cleansing routines?
26) Some of John’s disciples seemed to be jealous of what was happening with Jesus - it seems more people were following Him than were now coming after John. Jesus was no doubt baptizing larger numbers of people than was John. These envious men go and present their concern to the Baptist.
27) John’s response began with the declaration that what Jesus had was His from heaven. God had made clear to John that Jesus was the promised One. He was in no way jealous of the Messiah.
28) He went on, “You all remember that I told you I was not the Messiah. Rather, I am the one who was sent before Him to declare His coming and prepare the way for Him in men’s hearts.”
29) “The bride (new believers) is going to her Bridegroom (Jesus). I am just a groomsman at the wedding, and I rejoice that He has the bride. My mission and the joy it brings are now complete, for He is the One to Whom I was to point men.”
30) The humility of John the Baptist is climaxed in this great statement. How wonderful if we could all wish to disappear into the background while bringing Jesus into the foreground. When I was a younger preacher, I would often see brass plates on pulpits where only the speaker could see, and they said, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” God make it so in all our lives.
31) These remaining verses seem to be editorial narration by the Apostle John, not a continuation of the direct address of the Baptist. This greatest of all Teachers is not limited as we earthly teachers are; He is from heaven and is above all others. He not only brought a message from God, He was (and is) the greatest message from God. “...hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2).
32) Jesus told us of the things He had seen and heard from the Father in heaven. He alone had been there and come to tell us about God, but few believed Him. He was largely rejected (John 1:11).
33) When the few do believe the message of Jesus, they testify that God is telling the truth. When men disbelieve Jesus, and the message about Him, they claim that God is a liar - “The one who does not believe God has made Him a liar” (1 John 5:10).
34) When the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures wrote, they experienced the temporary presence and power of the Holy Spirit through inspiration. Jesus was One with the Spirit, having no limit of measure of His presence and power. There was the uninterrupted communion of the Spirit with Jesus as He spoke and lived God’s message to mankind.

35) Jesus, in the great commission, declared that all authority was given to Him (Matthew 28:18). The intimate love relationship between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity places all that is the Father's into the almighty and capable hands of the Son. Jesus will do all of and only God's will.
36) Here believing in the Son and obeying the Son are seen as the same. We obey the gospel (Romans 10:16) when we believe the gospel. To trust Christ as Savior is the first matter of obedience. To do that is to be blessed with eternal life. To disbelieve Him is to become the object of God's eternal wrath. Ours it to help people believe and have life.

JOHN, CHAPTER 4

THE PATH JESUS TOOK
1), 2), 3) News of the exceeding popularity of Jesus had reached the religious Pharisees' party. This would place them in opposition to Jesus, and it would begin their untiring effort to get rid of Him. Their "clout" with Rome included that they helped keep the people in line. With these popular preachers stirring people up to nationalistic ideals (so they thought), that task might be made more difficult. Though Jesus had the supernatural ability to protect Himself from adversaries (as He demonstrated on several occasions), here He chooses to use the natural over the supernatural. He simply leaves Judea, where the Pharisees are based in Jerusalem, and heads to Galilee.
4) While travel from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north would be shorter in miles if through Samaria, it was not the normal route taken. There was the matter of terrain: Samaria was a hilly country, making travel more difficult. The larger issue, however, was not topography, but bigotry. Jews traveling between Judea and Galilee would, therefore, go through the Jordan Valley. When Assyria conquered Israel (the northern kingdom), they deported many Jews and replaced them with some of their own people. Those Assyrians often married the left-behind Jews, and their offspring were hated racial adversaries of the Jews. I love the KJV translation here, "And He must needs go through Samaria." This is the oxymoronic "Divine Imperative." Here He would teach His disciples lessons about bigotry (racial and sexual). And here He would capture the heart of a woman who would capture the hearts of a city for Christ. He showed us that the trip can be as important as the destination. This is a memorable meeting in what the media today mistakenly calls the "West Bank." It is really no more than ancient Biblical Judea and Samaria. One day the world will be forced to recognize that it belongs completely to Israel.
THE PLACE JESUS WENT
5), 6) Walking with His disciples, Jesus approaches and arrives at the town of Sychar, near a field that Jacob had bequeathed to Joseph. Jacob, the well-digger, had dug a well here that was still in use, a millennium and a half later. Here is another oxymoron - ***Omnipotence becomes weary***. We must remember that in the incarnation Jesus subjected himself to the weaknesses of human existence, except for the propensity to sin, of course. He experienced hunger, thirst, fatigue, pain, just like we do. He understands our hurts, both physical and emotional. He is a faithful High Priest (Hebrews 4:15).
7), 8) On their journey north, the troupe came to Jacob's well. Jesus sat to rest, and the disciples went into town to get some food. In Jesus' day, men did not speak to strange women in public, and Jews certainly did not converse with Samaritans. These were the "half-breeds" left over from the days of the exile. Again, some Jews had remained in the land and intermarried with the Gentiles who settled there. In times of conflict these half-breeds were ***for*** or ***against*** Israel, depending on what was most expedient for them. You can see why they didn't get along too well. To this well comes this woman to draw water, and Jesus not only speaks to her, he asks her for a drink of water! He is going to drink with and from the hand of a Samaritan woman! The weary, resting Savior made good use even of His leisure moments to bless others and for His kingdom's work.
9) Is this surprise or sarcasm? Her response to Jesus shows that the Samaritans understand bigotry

as well as do the Jews. Maybe they were victims of it, and maybe they practiced it in reverse. “Will *you* converse with *me*? Will *you* drink with *me*? Will *yo*u drink from *my* vessel,” felt by Jews to be unclean because a Samaritan had drunk from it? The word she used here gives us our word “synchronize.” Jews and Samaritans didn’t synchronize.

THE PROBLEM JESUS FACED

10) Now Jesus lifts the conversation to a higher plane. He talks about a greater difference than Jew and Samaritan. He is Creator-Savior; she is creature-sinner. Now ***there's*** a chasm to be bridged! “I ask you for a drink of water. If you only knew I am prepared to quench your spiritual thirst for all eternity. If you would only recognize me and ask. If you saw more than a weary traveling Jew, a poor man seeking water, you could find eternal life in Me.”

11) Jesus speaks of a spiritual drink; she still thinks on a physical plane. Is this honest inquiry, or is it tongue-in-cheek sarcasm? “It is obvious you have no bucket or pot; how are you going to fetch water without the proper tools?”

12) She knows her Jewish history; and she claims to share in that history as a descendant of Jacob. Here she drops that big name - Jacob, well-digger, father of the tribes - the nation is named for him! “Are you greater than he?”

13), 14) Jesus says that a person can go on drinking (present tense) this earthly water, and he will always thirst again. But if a man takes a drink (aorist tense) of my water, he will never thirst again. Thirst-quenching with well water is temporal. Meeting of spiritual needs is forever! One drinking from Jesus' fountain will have his own thirst quenched and will become a supplier of this life-giving water by means of an internal, God-given spring.

15) She listened with her ears, but did not hear with her mind. She must rise up in her thinking, shift from the natural to the spiritual plane, to grasp the truth from heaven that this Messenger from heaven brings to her. John 6:35 - faith in Jesus quenches spiritual thirst forever.

THE PERSISTENCE JESUS HAD

16) Knowing what is in the mind, heart, and life of this woman, Jesus asks her to do the impossible - to call her husband (when she has none). This is to open a conversation that will give her a sense of her sin. She cannot turn in repentance from her sin until she acknowledges it. Jesus will see to that.

17), 18) The omniscient Savior knows all about this lady. Her response of being presently unmarried does not surprise Him. Then He surprises her by telling her she is correct, but that she has had 5 husbands! What a record of marital failure; and what’s more, He lets her know that He knows she is currently living with a man to whom she is not married! Surely His knowledge of her circumstance confounds her! How does He know all this? But will she look inward and see her sin yet? We’ll see.

19) She quickly acknowledges that Jesus is at least a prophet. This is a step in the right direction, for He was indeed a prophet. She does not get sensitive, and she doesn’t lash back at His charge. Her silence on the subject is an acknowledgment of guilt. But rather than listen to the prophet’s words more, she initiates a religious debate.

20) Reluctant to face her sin, she argues the geography of worship: Gerizim, or Zion, which is the proper place for worship? She returns to a Jew-Samaritan controversy. She would rather discuss a regional conflict than think about or deal with her sin. It is much easier to engage a person in a dispute about worship styles than it is to get them to talk about holiness of life, or their personal devotions, or their recent witnessing adventures, or any serious personal spiritual discussion.

21) Jesus downplays geography, and so should we. Which is more important: where we meet to worship on a certain night, or that we do so in genuineness, building relationships with other godly people? The trifles of man keep us all too often from dealing with and enjoying the great blessings of God. After Pentecost, when the church was born, no mountain in Judea or Samaria had a claim as an exclusive place of worship. Worship is possible anywhere!

22) He indicates that the object of worship transcends the place. But in her debate, the Jews had the

upper hand, for they knew from Scripture what they worshiped. What is more, it was through them that God was bringing His salvation into the world of men. Though it was **from** the Jews, it was not just **for** the Jews, but for everyone!
23), 24) What an emphasis Jesus here places on worship. How wonderful if all voices of mankind would lift together the strains of worship to God! Alas, even some who **think** they worship miss the mark. They are tied to locations, buildings, art, ritual, ceremony, tradition, and more. Worship is not with the senses, it is from the heart of man to the heart of God. So much that is done is for **men** to see; true worship is unto **God**. **He** is the Audience, and true worship is only concerned that it be pleasing and acceptable to **Him**. True worshipers honor God in spirit and in truth. Spirit: inward, heart (not ceremony); truth: to one true God according to Word.
25) It appears that the Samaritans had a Messianic hope, as did the Jews. Thousands of Jews received Jesus as their Messiah, while the religious establishment refused Him. Later, through her testimony, a multitude of the residents of Samaria would also believe in Him. It is vital that **you** see Jesus as the Redeemer to be saved!
26) There are those who teach that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah. Obviously, they must **reject**, **re-interpret**, or **ignore** this statement of Jesus. There could be no more clear claim of Messianic identity than this. What those wags believe or doubt is not **your** issue; what **you** believe is! Are **you** trusting Him as **your** Savior!?
27) The returning disciples discover this strange conversation with a Samaritan and a woman. They have learned enough not to intrude to challenge her or to question Jesus. We can only hope they also looked beyond the externals.
28), 29), 30) The woman ran into town and told the people about Jesus. She used good psychology to get them to come out and see Him. She first told them that He knew everything about her, which probably included some things about some of them. She added that **He** told **her** the information. Finally, she adds a question designed to call out a negative answer - “This man couldn't be the Messiah, could He?” Now many are intrigued - those who have been involved with her, those who think this One has prophetic gift, and those interested in the Messianic hope. Her "Come see a man..." alone would not have sufficed to draw these away from their pursuits. But her Spirit-guided commentary on the scene stimulated their interest and they left immediately and could be seen making their way out to Jacob's well to investigate. Her witness has done its work, now Christ will do His work.
31) There was a break in the conversation, and the disciples having returned with food now took the opportunity to urge Jesus to take nourishment. They “kept on urging Him,” according to the grammar.
32) It was not only the Samaritan woman who was earthbound in her thinking. Jesus would try to lift the minds of His followers from physical food to spiritual activity. “I have food to eat that you don’t know about,” means “There are more important things going on here than having a temporal meal! Eternal issues are at stake. The spiritual is always infinitely more important than the physical.”
33) How is that the disciples of Jesus could be as slow to move from the physical to the spiritual as was this adulterous Samaritan woman? At our best, even we who know the Lord are slow students of what really matters in life! Let us get our minds off the earth-bound and think heavenly thoughts. As Paul wrote to Colosse (3:2), “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth!”
34) Most of us enjoy food, getting great satisfaction from a good meal. This is how Jesus felt about doing God’s will, the things He was sent to do. They gave Him joy and satisfaction. The word rendered “accomplish” here is the same verb Jesus will use from the cross to declare that “it is finished.”
35) Jesus illustrates from the schedule of harvest - He spoke of the soon-coming harvest, then told them to look up from the fields to the lives of men. There is a harvest waiting to be gathered into God’s heavenly barn - a harvest of souls! The men who were coming out from the town to the well to see this man - were they dressed in white? What an image that would have made as Jesus spoke!

36), 37), 38) In the soul harvest, as well as in the agricultural harvest, there is planting time, and there is reaping time. Generally one farmer does both, but we find in the realm of the spiritual that we often reap where another has sown. Recall Paul's words from 1 Cor 3:6, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." A number of people were involved in my being brought to Christ - parents and grandparents, Sunday School teachers, even public school teachers - but Terry Taylor was there the day the fruit ripened and fell from the branch. He caught it, and I was saved! Having lived much of my life in farming areas, I have learned the joy of the harvest. As one serving God by serving people, I have also entered into the thrill of the soul harvest! There is just nothing like it! It is its own reward!

THE PROFIT JESUS OFFERS

39), 40) Here are some great truths. God used this woman as a servant to testify in spite of the nature of her past. It mattered not that she had not been through any course of study; she had a well of water springing up inside her, and she would burst if she did not give some of it away! It is not a great testimony that is needed, it is testimony about a great Savior! Oh, that it could be said of us that "many believed because of our word." These new converts prevailed upon Jesus to spend some time with them, and He did - two whole days! Again, may it be true of us that we desire the presence of Christ - to drink in His Word, to sit at His feet and learn. God blessed Samaria that special day.

41), 42) The woman's personal testimony drew the men out to the well. The message of life from the lips of Jesus drew them into the family of God. They came to a physical well, and they drank living water. They had heard for themselves, and they came to the believing conclusion that Jesus was the Savior of the world. John 1:9 spoke of universal light. His work of redemption is sufficient for the world, and it is efficient for those who believe. In this male-dominant society, were they reminding her that it was a man that actually saved them? She could care less - people had come to Christ, and she had played a part. That was what mattered.

PARADOXES OF PLACE

43) Jesus had spent two days in Sychar at the request of the Samaritan believers. Now he moves further north into lower Galilee, where His hometown of Nazareth was. Galilee was always more friendly to Him than was Judea. The religious leaders in the south made it difficult for Him to minister, prompted, no doubt, by their jealousy of the popularity of this unlettered young Rabbi. Even Samaria was more accepting of him than were those scribes, priests, and pharisees.

44) Matthew (13:57) and Mark (6:4) each recorded for us that Jesus said this very thing when He ministered in the region of Nazareth and was looked askance at because of their familiarity with His family and with him. How wonderful that later some of His own siblings did come to trust Him, and how we rejoice when those dear to us come to the Savior. While the synoptic writers clearly spoke of rejection in Nazareth, it appears that John intended for us to understand Christ's words, "his own country" in a larger sense, that is, Jerusalem and Judea, where Christ was generally unwelcome.

45) How strange this scene, that the presumably less-well-educated Galileans saw in the works of Jesus the prophesied credentials of Messiah, while those who should have known best, the highly-educated Torah experts in Judea, missed it! None is so blind as one who will not see. The problem was not the mind, it was the will. They chose not to welcome their Messiah, but to remain in their sins. The cost of swallowing pride and sacrificing position was too great for them to pay.

PARADOXES OF POSITION

46) This is the gospel of the deity of Jesus Christ. John proves that Jesus is God by relating seven select miracles to serve as His credentials. This second miracle has the same geographical scene as the first - Cana of Galilee, today called *Kfar Kana.* About 20 miles away, as the crow flies, is the fishing village of Capernaum, site of so many Gospel events. Here dwelled one called a "royal official," or "nobleman." Clearly this was a man of wealth and high position - he owned multiple household slaves. Since possessions and position cannot insure health, we read that his son was sick. The verb suggests this illness had been afflicting him for quite some time. Another aspect of the original

language tells us this was probably his only son. All who are parents know the grief this man must have been bearing; our worst pains are our children's pains.
47) The verb tenses here are so picturesque! If I may attempt to translate their coloring, ***"As soon as he heard that Jesus is coming into Galilee, he immediately went to Him and kept on asking Him to come (quickly) and heal his son; because he had for some time been about to die!"*** Not only had the illness been long-standing, but for a good bit of that time, the boy had been near death. And wise was this father who took the need of his son to the great Meeter of needs, Jesus of Nazareth. The reputation of Jesus was already widespread; in so short a time, and in an era without mass media outlets, the country was a-buzz with word of His miraculous exploits. What was fodder for negative conversation for many was a source of hope to this hurting father.
48) The response of Jesus seems strange - He looks at and speaks "toward" the beseeching dad. But His words are for the crowd, as He reminds us of the Biblical principle that "the Jews require a sign." He is not criticizing this father, but is rather using his present, single request as an opportunity to address the multitude concerning their unending quest for the supernatural to be shown them. As far as this man is concerned, Jesus seems to be testing him. Will he persist in his request to show the Savior that his visit is not about "sign-seeking," but rather about getting help for his beloved child?
49) He passed the test, in the strongest possible terms urging Jesus to come to Capernaum before his son passes away. It is clear that he believes Jesus can do this thing he asks. He does not, like the intelligentsia in Jerusalem, dare to argue with Jesus, defending himself and his quest. He simply repeats his entreaty. The man was without interest in creed at this point; his crisis was the thing on his mind.
50) And now the great principle - Jesus speaks and the man believes. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ." There was a ***command*** - "Be going on your way!!" and there was a ***consolation*** - "Your son keeps on living." The imperative was to be obeyed, and the indicative was to be believed. And so the man did believe the Word of Christ, and he did obey the command of the Savior. Jesus told him to "be going," and John tells us that he "kept on going."
51) By Providential design, at the same time good news and hope leave Cana, good news sets out on a journey from Capernaum. Unable to delay sharing the word of the boy's cure, the royal official's slaves rush toward Cana to give him the news. To their surprise, he meets them on the way. Not at all to his surprise, they tell him that his son lives. By faith he had already received that news from Jesus, using exactly the same verb. He had been as much as dead, and now he was so improved that they felt as if he was "alive from the dead!"
52), 53) The miracle of his son's becoming well includes a miracle of timing. He asked the what time the improvement began, and they replied "at the seventh hour." Now whether that means 1:00 PM as by Jewish reckoning, or 7:00 PM as by Roman reckoning, it was at the exact hour that Jesus made the promise of healing to the dad! The faith he earlier expressed, perhaps small, now grows in a large way. And the greatest joy of it is that his entire household also comes to trust Jesus! This is better than the healing, for it is eternal! One wonders if this includes the slaves who helped him discover the miracle of the timing. Surely they ***would*** be influenced by the faith of their master.
54) John has recorded and described the earlier miracle of Jesus changing the water to wine at Cana. Then (2:23) he mentions as a group many miracles done by Christ in Judea, but does not describe even one of them. What a compliment to the Samaritans that without a single miracle, many of them believed in Jesus! How blessed that this man believed even before a miracle, and that his faith grew when the miracle came. What a condemnation on the inhabitants of Judea that they had many miracles done before them, but generally they disbelieved in the Messiah! In Judea, they saw and believed not; in Samaria, they saw not and believed; in Galilee, he believed, and then he saw the miracle.

JOHN, CHAPTER 5

LAME MAN HEALED

1) One of the three pilgrim feasts (Deut 16:16) came, and Jesus, obedient to the Law, as an adult male went to Jerusalem. John 6:4 tells us it was the Passover - the second one Jesus has attended since beginning His public ministry.

2) In today's Old City of Jerusalem, the area described here is just inside the Lion's Gate, also called St. Stephen's Gate. It is just north of the closed Eastern Gate in the eastern wall of the Old City. The name "Bethesda" is a compound word that means "house of mercy." It was an Aramaic word, but was close in form and meaning to a Hebrew compound that would have the same meaning. These roofed colonnades, or "porches," as the old version called them, would resemble what we call a gazebo. They were shaded resting places near the pools of Bethesda.

3), 4) There is dispute about the last part of verse three and all of verse four as to whether they belong in the text or not. Suffice it to say, there may have been a legend about the stirring of the waters that brought healing power to them. Verse seven would seem to confirm this. So whether the words are in the original text or not, they do not in any way contradict what we know to be the text.

5) The man that Jesus focused on is said to have been infirm for 38 years. The nature of his malady will be revealed in the context.

6) Jesus never asked a question to get information - He was omniscient. But He did ask questions, and to the casual observer, this may have seemed to be an unnecessary one. He asked the long-time infirm man if he desired to be healed (this last word gives us our English word "hygiene"). Since this man would need to be transported, his presence at the place where a legend of healing existed implies that someone wanted him well.

7) The nature of the man's problem begins to be clear - "I have no one to put me in the water when it is stirred, and while I try to get there, someone runs in ahead of me." Obviously he was lame to some degree, and therefore unable to walk.

8) With three imperative verbs John records Jesus' next words to the unnamed lame man. "Start getting up;" "grab your bedroll," and "keep on walking." Strange words He spoke to a man who had not walked for 38 years! But no stranger than saying to a dead person to get up, which He also did at other times and in other places! Omnipotence can say things that other men would be cruel to say, because He has the power to make them happen!

9) Obeying by faith, the man "was at once made sound" ("hygiene" again). He "grabbed his bedroll," and he "kept on walking." These translations represent the action called for by the respective commands Jesus gave. And John adds, almost as an afterthought, that it was Shabbat - the Sabbath Day when this healing miracle occurred.

LAME MAN HARASSED

10) Jesus, the perfect, sinless One, would never have bidden someone to break the law. Since He had commanded the once-lame man to grab his mat and start walking, doing so could not have been a law-violation. These strict legalists had placed Rabbinic interpretations above the law, and they sought to enforce their views on the life of this gloriously healed man. What sad religionists they were!

11) The man replied to their censure of his activity that the One Who healed him had told him to do it. I would much rather comply with One Who helped me than those who would hinder and accuse!

12) The guns will now be turned in another direction - if the Jews can ascertain the identity of this Healer Who bids men violate their Sabbath-rules! And so they inquire.

13) Apparently the area around Bethesda was crowded with people - people wanting to be healed, people trying to help their friends take advantage of the legend of the healing waters. Jesus Had slipped away into that crowd, and the man couldn't find Him to point Him out.

14) It seems Jesus sought out the once-lame man to finish the job He began at Bethesda. One should consult John 9:3 here. Jesus was NOT saying that this man's 38-year malady came because he

committed a sin or sins (though all grief in the world is here because sin is in the world). His intent seemed more to be like this, “You have been healed from a physical misery. Now let’s address your spirit. Turn from sin lest you spend eternity in hell, which is far worse than 38 years of being lame!”
15), 16) While we do not know for sure, I see this man as running with gladness of heart to tell his earlier accusers Who it was that had healed Him. Had he taken Jesus’ advice and repented? Did he want everyone to know what this Man could do? I prefer to see him in this light than cast him poorly. So the Jews, not taking this news gladly, “kept on persecuting” Jesus because He didn’t follow their strict, legalistic ideas about Shabbat - the Sabbath. They should have seen in this miracle Messianic credentials, and they should have sought Jesus out to follow Him!
ANTAGONISM TOWARD THE LORD
There seemed to be no end to the conflict some of the Jewish leaders had with Jesus, Who, I remind you, was a Jew Himself. This time it was precipitated by Jesus healing a lame man by the pool of Bethesda, a good work by any standard, but considered evil because He did it on the Sabbath. When confronted by them about what they considered His breaking of the Sabbath, Jesus angered them even more by calling God “His Father.” They knew this meant that Jesus was equal with God, a thing they considered blasphemy. And it would have been blasphemy if Jesus were not equal to God, but you don’t have to worry about that “if.” Jesus was, is, and always will be God.
17), 18) Here is an extraordinary thing! The language of the original strongly suggests that Jesus is telling the Jews that God never stops working! Even though God ceased His creative activity on the first Sabbath, His work of sustaining the material universe (Colossians 1:16) never stopped. Jesus would imply that it is never wrong to do good on Shabbat (Luke 6:19). The next marvelous thing is that Jesus called God “My Father” - not “your” or “our.” His meaning was not lost on these detractors. They understood this for what it was - a claim to Deity by Jesus! He did indeed claim equality with God (also see John 1:1-3). They misunderstood the concept of the Trinity, and they therefore imagined Him to be promoting multiple Deities. Formerly they sought to persecute Jesus; now their pursuit was to kill Him! They could not and would not accept His claims here, for they did not know God!
19) Here Jesus responds to their disagreement with His claims by revealing the close bond between Himself and the Father. His works are not, cannot be, done independent of the Father. This is not a lack of power in the Son, but rather a union of the wills of the Father with the Son. If He is right, and He is, then His detractors are not only challenging this young Rabbi, they are challenging the Father in heaven! Never could they admit this.
20) The Greek word *phileo* is a love that sees something of worth in the one loved. It is usually, if not universally, a horizontal love. When the NT speaks of God “loving,” it most always uses *agapao*, a higher word by far. This may be the only NT case where the Father loves someone with *phileo* love. He loves an equal when He loves the Son. This is why He works on earth through the Son; this is why greater works are to follow these.
21) Please see 2 Kings 5:7 for an illustration, explanation of Who has the power over life in this world. When my own Mother suddenly and unexpectedly slipped away to heaven in her sleep, our consolation was found in the loving will of a sovereign God. He gave; He took away - blessed be His name. When on earth Jesus restored life to the dead, He showed He was equal with and working with the Father. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God had restored three people to life from the dead. In the gospels, we read of the Son doing just the same!
22), 23) When we address an earthly judge, we say, “Your Honor.” Even more so, the eternal Judge is to receive all the honor man can give. There are several end-time judgments described in Scripture, and Jesus declares that He will be the Judge in each of those. This prerogative has been entrusted to Him by the Father. Since He is the Judge we will face, we should give Him honor. Jesus goes so far as to say that those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father. To disrespect the designated Agent and Representative of the King is to disrespect the King. How wonderful it is that He Who loved

us so much as to suffer the horrors of the crucifixion is also our Judge! How terrible that some will stand before Him having rejected Him as Savior!

AN ADDRESS ON LIFE

24) Eternal life is not something that we look forward to in some far off tomorrow. Scripture says in more than one place that those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior have eternal life as a present possession. This is one of those places. Additionally, such a believer needs fear no future condemnation either (see also Rom 8:1). When one comes in faith to Jesus, he crosses a great divide - passing from death to life (see also 1 Jn 3:14).

25) The presence of Jesus in the world meant that the time of calling men to life by faith in Christ has begun. It has now continued for nearly two millennia. Just as Lazarus (Jn 11), the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8), and the widow's son in Nain (Luke7) heard His voice from beyond and lived, so we can hear His voice now and live. Dear Listener, I ask you, have you heard His voice and trusted Him? Your eternal destiny depends on it.

26), 27) God was not granted life from elsewhere; He has life in Himself. The same is true of the Son. The Hebrew Scripture name Yahweh suggests that God is self-existent. He depends upon nothing outside Himself for identity or existence. He is, after all, God, the uncaused First Cause. Because Christ is also God, whatever may be said of the Father may be said of Him. Thus, He, too, has life in Himself. Unique in the Godhead, Jesus has entered the human family by virgin birth and the incarnation. His title "Son of Man" implies His humanity, and this humanity is part of why God entrusted judgment to the Son. Having lived here as one of us, He is very qualified to be our Judge. He has learned by experience, like one who works his way up through the ranks in a business. No child of Adam can ever allege that Jesus doesn't understand what it's like to be human.

28), 29) The things Jesus has just said are quite amazing, and yet He tells His hearers to "stop marveling" at them. No one should be taken aback at high claims if they are made by Him Who is from on high! It is as if He says, "You haven't heard anything yet!" And then He tells of a coming time when His voice will call all men from the grave. Two types of people will have died - the saved and the lost. The saved are so because they have believed in Jesus (John 3:16, 36; 5:24). They are characterized as those who have "done good." Men are lost because they have not believed in Jesus (John 3:18). They are characterized as having practiced "foul deeds." The first will be resurrected to life, because their judgment is past. The latter will be resurrected to judgment, because they rejected the work of Christ, which included taking their judgment on Himself. How very sad!

WITNESSES TO JESUS

GOD'S SERVANT, JOHN THE BAPTIST

30) The complete unity and intimacy of will and action in the Trinity prevented the Son from doing any independent acts. There was and is absolute harmony among the members of the Trinity. Because He always seeks and does the will of the Father, Christ's judgment is just.

31) The testimony to the Messianic office of Jesus is not by Himself alone - else it would not be in harmony with the Law's requirements (Deut 19:15) of multiple witnesses. There must be corroboration to His claim to be Messiah (John 4:25, 26) by other reputable, credible sources.

32), 33) So Jesus offers another witness, one whose testimony is known to be true - John the Baptist. The Jews had sent inquiry to John, and He had told them about Jesus. He had called Jesus "the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." He had spoken of One Who came after him Who was before Him, Whose sandals John was not worthy to unloose.

34), 35) Though John was human, and Jesus' witness was not just from men, still his testimony was true. God had told John how to recognize the Messiah when He came - "the One on Whom he would see the Spirit descend like a dove." He saw it, and he bore witness to it - the witness actually, then, coming from heaven! Those who heard and believed John's witness found salvation in Jesus! John was the lamp that would show forth Him Who was the Light! People were drawn to the light that John

brought, even Herod Antipas (Mark 6:20), but the ultimate purpose was that John draw people to Jesus. Then his mission would be successful, and it was indeed.

GOD'S SIGNS - THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

36) So we have the testimony of Jesus, the witness of John the Baptist, and now we have the added witness of the miracles He performed. Always remember that the primary purpose of miracles is to give credentials for the miracle worker as God's man with God's message. It was true of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and for Jesus and the Apostles - the Bible's three great waves of miracles.

GOD WHO IS SPIRIT

37), 38) Finally, in addition to the three witnesses already set forth, Jesus now declares that the Father witnessed concerning Him as well. When Jesus was being baptized by John, God spoke from the heavens to confirm His pleasure in this, His Son (Matthew 3:17). The proof that the Jews who opposed Jesus did not have the Word of the Father abiding in them was that they rejected Him! As Dr. Walter Hughes said so often, "You cannot think right in the rest, unless you think right in Him."

GOD'S SCRIPTURES

39), 40) The word rendered "search" is in a form that can be either indicative (statement of fact) or imperative (command). It seems best to take it as a statement of fact. They were already searching the Word; that was their life. In fact they thought their life came from searching the Word. The truth is that the Word point us to Jesus, in Whom we can find life. If we miss Him, the Word does us no good at all! They were guilty of missing the main message of Scripture - Jesus! They would not come to Him, proving their approach to the Word was all wrong!

41) Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 6:1, 2) and Paul declared (1 Thess 2:6) that he and his co-workers were not to seek glory from men. The fact that the Jewish religious leaders did not praise Jesus for His teaching and His works was not a problem for Him - He did not seek that.

42) Omniscience can see into the hearts of men, and no matter what they claimed, Jesus knew they did not have God's love in their hearts. And love is the essence of the law (Romans 13:10), for it honors God and does no harm to men.

43) What a contrast - Jesus came in the Father's name and was rejected by those who should have recognized and received Him! They had the prophetic advance notices of Messiah, and they still missed Him! But when Antichrist comes, and he will come in his own name, more Jews will follow him than followed Jesus! If Jesus hadn't said it, we would declare it could not be true. But He did, and it is!

44) Ours is not the first generation to be plagued with "glory-seekers." The men to whom Jesus spoke claimed to believe in God, yet they sought not His glory, but their own - and from each other! Paul would refute (Romans 2:29) that these were even real Jews, sons of faithful Father Abraham.

45), 46), 47) His summation is a real knockout punch for these religionists without faith. They claimed to believe Moses, but Moses had written of the Messiah Whom they had rejected! If they had indeed believed Moses, they would have believed and received Jesus. So Moses rises up as their accuser in that he pointed to Jesus - **Galatians 3:24** *"Therefore the Law has become our tutor* ***to lead us to Christ****, that we may be justified by faith."* These detractors of Jesus did not really believe the words of Moses, nor did they believe those of Jesus. One who really believes the Hebrew Scriptures cannot reject Jesus Christ, the object of the prophecies and pictures in those very Scriptures!

JOHN, CHAPTER 6

The geography of chapter six is the beautiful Sea of Galilee. Actually a fresh-water lake, 650 feet below sea level, this place was the scene of much of Christ's ministry. This chapter will find Him on and around it, performing miracles and preaching the truth of God.

THE MIRACLES

FEEDING THE 5,000

1), 2) Men do not always respond properly to the overtures of God. Jesus was performing the signs

the prophets had predicted would identify the Messiah. Instead of falling at His feet in worship and faith, they were following Him around to “see the show.” It seemed more important for them to get help with illness or infirmity than it was to properly honor the King!
3) We are probably about a year before the cross; Jesus has vigorously traveled, preached, and ministered for two years. Weariness was part of the incarnation experience for Jesus, and He sought (often in vain) for solitude and rest. Here He does seem to find a break with just the twelve.
4) Here is another time marker - the Passover - the second one mentioned since Jesus began His public ministry. He is approximately two years into that ministry. The next Passover will be His last on earth, and He will be the Passover Lamb sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).
5), 6) The solitude is about to end, and the opportunity for the 4th of the 7 signs that John records is upon them. Here comes the crowd, and they will be hungry. Jesus directs a question to Philip, “Where shall we procure bread for this crowd to eat?” Remember, Jesus never asks a question to get information. This was a test for the disciple; Jesus already had a plan, but was involving Philip in the situation. Philip hailed from Bethsaida, a nearby town; he would know more than the others about the local situation.
7) Looking over the size of the approaching crowd and doing a little calculating in his head, Philip replied that even if they had 200 denarii (about 8 months wages for a laborer - see Matthew 20:2), they could not purchase enough bread for each one in this mass of people to have a bite!
8), 9) Simon Peter’s brother, Andrew, presented a boy to Jesus who had a small lunch consisting of five barley loaves and two small pieces of fish. His words do not demonstrate faith, “But what are they among so many?” We can never calculate the mighty power of God. As we look back over the years of our marriage and ministry, we are amazed at the provision and blessing of God. From where we began to where we are, no calculator can figure how God has done this; and we marvel at Him! Let’s observe in the next verses how Jesus will do what He has done so often - miraculously provide!
10) John's gospel was written around 7 miracles of Jesus and was designed to prove the deity of Christ by those miracles. This was the fourth - the feeding of 5,000. Jesus had compassion on the hungry disciples, learners.
11) Andrew had found a lad with a lunch of 5 loaves and 2 small fish. Jesus received them, prayed over them, and then began to pass out the food, everyone eating as much as they wanted. Like salvation, it all came from the hand of Jesus, was ministered to others through men, and all who would receive it were completely satisfied with it.
12), 13) My heart goes out to those whose God is so small that He cannot perform this miracle just as it is described here. They have the little boy's example of generosity stimulating others to follow, and so they all get out their lunches and share with one another. No such thing happened here. The God of creation multiplied loaves and fishes and fed a multitude of thousands. At a place called Tabgha, on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, a church marks the spot where this miracle was done. The fact that thousands ate, and 12 baskets full were left over dismisses any other view than the truth.
14) Would the people acknowledge Jesus as a prophet (or desire to make Him King) if He had only prompted them to generosity? Certainly not! They knew credentials of divine mission when they saw them. But they stopped short of recognizing Jesus as God’s promised Messiah.
15) How they misunderstood all this! Jesus showed His credentials as Messiah, and they saw a grocery shelf that never ran out of bread! If they could have done so, they would have crowned Him as King right then, and then they would have sat back waiting for the bread to flow. Knowing this, Jesus slipped away privately into the upper confines of the mountain.

WALKING ON THE WATER

16), 17) See Mark 6:45-48 for a parallel (synoptic) view. According to Mark, Jesus instructed them to enter a boat and sail without Him to a place on the shore closer to Bethsaida. They did so that evening, as the sun went down behind the mountains on the west side of the Sea.

18) John records now that a storm arose on the Sea; Mark told us that the praying Jesus was also watching them struggle against the storm. He knew how to “watch and pray,” even as He told them to do on occasion.
19) It was in the wee hours of the morning when the strangest thing happened - Jesus came to them, walking on the water! I imagine I would have been as frightened as they were to see such a sight.
20), 21) Jesus calmed their fears by identifying Himself. We need never fear when Jesus is near - “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.” The presence of Jesus dispels fear and brings peace. The fear of the disciples turned to gladness when Jesus entered the boat - the miracle was complete as they found themselves suddenly and safely at the shore. ***“No water can swallow the ship where lies the Master of ocean and earth and skies.”*** Not only was the boat ashore, it was ashore at the very place where they were headed!
THE MESSAGE
22) On the eastern shore of the Galilee Jesus had fed 5,000 men plus women and children with 5 loaves and 2 small fish. That public miracle was followed by a private one, Jesus walking on the water. Now Jesus and the disciples were at Capernaum, but the crowd from the previous day’s miracle feeding were looking for Him.
23) It appears that some entrepreneurial boat owners came across the lake and offered transportation services to the crowd. The distance from one side to the other is about 8 miles. If you have never sailed on the Galilee, you have missed a marvelous experience. It is one of my favorite places in all the world because of all its history.
24), 25) What a winsome Character Jesus must have been. People sought Him and loved to be where He was. His kind and gentle manner drew the great crowds. His plain and simple teaching had an appeal and authority lacking in the religious leaders of the day. While He was spiritually worlds above them, He was also among them as a shepherd is among his sheep. That was so different from the Pharisees, whose very name implied separation - those who looked down their noses at people they felt were inferior to them. Is it any wonder that they flocked into the ferry boats and sailed the five or so miles to Capernaum to be with Jesus? The crowd was mystified as to how Jesus got across the northern side of the lake from where He had been. The disciples had sailed off without Jesus, and there was no other boat for Him to use. So they asked about the details of His journey.
26) Here is a frightening truth: Christ not only knows ***what*** we do, but He knows ***why*** we do it? These who ate did not recognize the spiritual implications of His miracle - No! They only cared that this Rabbi could keep them in food. Dear friend, He knows our motives as well; and He will scrutinize us for reward or loss in part on the basis of **why** we do **what** we do. Let us ask God to enable us to keep our motives for serving Him pure.
27) Just as the woman at the well learned that there were 2 kinds of water, so these learn of 2 kinds of food. In each case, the physical is temporary, the spiritual is eternal. While God made us to work, and we must "eat to live" - He did not want us to "live to eat." Satisfying spiritual appetites comes ahead of physical. God set His seal to this in the life and ministry of Jesus, Who spoke of having “food to eat (spiritual food) that you know not of.”
28) Jesus just having mentioned working for God and God’s seal of approval, it is natural for them to ask this question. If, though, as seems to be the case, they thought that by doing some work, they would obtain eternal life, they had clearly missed His point. It is not about the law; it is about the One God has sent to bring eternal life. Paul would write later in the Roman epistle, **“...**by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”
29) So Jesus lays it out for them in the clearest possible terms. God’s work is that you believe on the One He has sent. O, how many miss this blessed truth! God made it possible for anyone to be forgiven, because anyone can trust. A little child can trust; a penniless beggar can believe; a person who cannot lift their hand from their bed can rely on Christ. Here are a few of the many “faith” texts

about salvation: Jn 3:16; Acts 16:31; Rom 3:28; Eph 2:8.
30), 31) Paul would write to Corinth, “The Jews require a sign,” meaning that Abraham’s children were accustomed to having those sent from God demonstrate the credentials of miracles, signs, and wonders. It was true of Moses and Joshua, of Elijah and Elisha, and of Jesus and the apostles (the three great Bible waves of miracles). The sincerity of this crowd is highly questionable - only a day before they saw him turn a couple of fish sandwiches into a buffet for thousands! What more miracle did they need!? They suggested that Moses’ miracle credentials were greater than a single meal; what an affront to the Son of God! Did they seek a sideshow or a meal ticket?
32), 33) Jesus had to clarify 2 things for them. First, Moses didn’t give their fathers the manna, God did. Moses was just an instrument, a mouthpiece for God. Second, they needed to forget about their stomachs and start thinking about their souls! It is not bread to consume and satisfy a physical need that is the greatest issue. They needed the “Bread from heaven” that stood before them and spoke to them - they needed faith in Jesus for cleansing from their sins. Still today people spend more time, effort, and money to gain things that perish than they spend looking to God for the life that is eternal. Not much has changed in 2,000 years, only the packaging of man’s unbelief.
34) The Samaritan woman had said, “Sir, give me this water.” These Galilean hearers say, “Sir, give us this bread.” She may have been an outcast, but their understanding was no better than hers. They wanted a perpetual meal; she sought an ever-flowing water source!
35) No different from the outcast Samaritan woman, they wanted bread that would forever prevent hunger. "Give us this bread!" they cried. Jesus replied that He was the Bread of life. It was faith, not food, they needed. They wanted the sensational, he offered the spiritual. They were making the mistake of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, and of countless millions today who seek after perishing bread and stagnant water, when Jesus is so very near.
36), 37) They had asked for another miracle that they might believe. It was not so, for they had seen miracles, and had not believed. Now comes the great separation - those who believe, and those who reject. Some, given to him by the Father, would come to him and would believe. He would in no way say "No" to them. He welcomes those who come in simple childlike faith. He pities those who come and say, “Put on a show for us.” Such are not His.
38), 39), 40) God is sovereign in this universe. As His servants, our wills should be consumed in His. Actually, we should have no will but our Master's will. This was the mission of Jesus - to do the Father's will. That will included the absolute final salvation of all who believe. It is impossible for any who trust the Lord Jesus to ever be lost. Each and every believer in Christ will go to heaven upon death, and they will rise from the grave when Jesus returns in the Father's plan. John the Baptist had said, "Look, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus now adds that all who look to Him in faith will indeed be saved, be the possessors of eternal life. And part of that package is the resurrection. Jesus has promised to raise from the dead those who trust in Him. Daniel spoke of it in 12:2; Jesus in John 5:28, 29. Death is not the end for the believer - it is just another step in the glorious plan of God for His own. He will reverse death one day for us all - just as He did for His Son in the grave at Jerusalem.
41) The claims of Christ are a stumbling block to the unbelieving heart - and so it was here. The opening words of Christ’s claim, “I am,” were a profession of Deity, and these Jewish religious leaders knew but would not accept that. So they grumbled (the word is onomatopoeia, sounding in its pronunciation like the noise it describes).
42) Familiarity had bred contempt. Because they knew Him as being from Nazareth, and they assumed Him to have been naturally born of the two parents whom they knew, they could not accept His claim to have come down from heaven. But there was so much they did not know! Though He came from Mary’s womb, Joseph was not His father - God was! And the living Bread from heaven came through Bethlehem, whose name means “the house of bread.” What poetic irony.

43), 44) How nice a polite interchange of ideas would have been between Jesus and the Jews. They would rather grumble questions among themselves, however, than just ask Him for clarification. He rebuked their grumbling, adding that the reason they didn't get it was they did not follow the drawing that the Father was giving to all men (John 12:32). Those who do come to Jesus in faith will be part of His resurrection plans for the last days - that includes us who are His followers today!
45), 46) God works on the hearts of men through the Holy Spirit; He has done so since the beginning. Now He has sent His Son to be the final Message from God to men. While men have received teaching and prompting and convicting from God, none had ever seen God until they saw Him in the Person of Jesus. Jesus in the incarnation was the visible representation of the invisible God (Col 1:15). He was the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Heb 1:3). Later in this gospel He will say, "He that has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).
47) Eternal life is not a future possession to be received at or after death, NO! It is a present possession, held by those who believe. "Has" is a present tense verb. In the epistle, John would say, "He that has the Son has life" (5:12). Assurance of salvation would be impossible if life was not yet ours. And yet WE CAN KNOW (1 John 5:13).
48), 49), 50) Seven times in the gospel of John Jesus said ***"I am... "*** light of the world; door; good shepherd; resurrection and life; way, truth and life; vine; and here, "I am the bread of life." Manna came from heaven each morning in the wilderness. The Israelites ate it, and while it sustained them physically for a time, they still died. If one will by faith partake of this Bread, death will never conquer him. Jesus came down from heaven not just to sustain physical life, but to impart and sustain eternal spiritual life. Born in a town in Judea called "Bethlehem" - the "house of bread" - this One speaking to them and to us is truly the Bread of eternal life. Partake of Him by faith today!
51) The spiritual is always infinitely more important than the physical. The eternal, than the temporal. Our world has its focus on things that do not, cannot last. We make a grave error when we join in that focus. With the indwelling Holy Spirit as our Teacher, and with 20/20 hindsight, we know Jesus was not talking about literally eating His flesh. He was speaking of a faith relationship where we receive Him as Savior as a person receives bread for nourishment of the physical life.
52) So often the words of Jesus are misunderstood as men think on the human, the physical plane, when He is using human, physical things to illustrate spiritual truths. The Jewish hearers, absent faith and the Spirit's work, were focused on the literal and not on the symbolic use of language that Jesus employed. Again, instead of asking what He meant, they assumed the wrong thing.
53), 54), 55), 56) Moses' law forbad the consumption of blood (Lev 17:10); Jesus would not have required or even suggested such a thing. This was symbolic language for receiving Him and His words by faith. Those who hold to transubstantiation (that the elements of communion actually become blood and flesh), or even consubstantiation (that the "real presence" of Christ is in the elements), often refer to this passage. They miss the reality that the Lord's Supper was not even established until at least a year later! This can have no connection to that! No faith in Christ - no eternal life. Believe in Jesus - have eternal life (and get raised up in the resurrection). As eating and drinking help sustain physical life, so faith in Jesus gives and sustains spiritual, eternal life.
57), 58) Jesus makes reference to the manna in the wilderness. Like Him, it was bread that came down from heaven. Unlike Him, those who received the manna lived for a time, but ultimately all died. Those who believe in Jesus will never die (spiritually that is). Those in Christ who do die will rise again, and in the meantime they live above with God, the elect angels, and the saints who have gone before us.
59) This long interchange with the Jews and discourse by Jesus took place in the Capernaum synagogue. The remains of that synagogue's foundation can still be seen today. A fourth-century synagogue was built over that foundation, and its remains are there today as well.
60) Even some in the larger circle of disciples (beyond the twelve) struggled with what Jesus was

saying. Recall after the miraculous feeding that they were ready for a coronation ceremony? Surely this Healer, this Water-Walker could subdue Rome and liberate Israel. Bu this was not His message; He rather called on men to receive Him, to believe in Him for spiritual freedom and life, not political.
61), 62) Omniscience never misses anything. Jesus knew their grumbling. Paul would write about the Jews taking offense at Jesus - 1 Cor 1:23 - “we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a ‘stumbling block’” (same word as “offense” here). One day they will stand on the Mount of Olives and watch Jesus ascend to heaven (from whence He came). On that day they will not take offense, but they will see their courage rise with danger to face the adversaries of the gospel.
63) Spirit is often contrasted with flesh, and in matters of the soul, spirit always wins. The Holy Spirit is the author of spiritual life. When we are born again, we are born of the Spirit. There is no help for the soul in the flesh - does He refer to the sinful nature as Paul does later? Or does He simply mean the physical flesh has nothing to offer the soul?
64) Being a child of Abraham in the flesh will not make one a child of God. Circumcision has no profit without faith. Every individual, Jew or Gentile, must find faith in the Lord Jesus and His finished work on the cross to become a member of the family of God! Only Jesus could look at a crowd and identify the true believers. He sadly even knew who the traitor was, knowledge that surely broke His heart.
65) Here is a hard saying - “No one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.” Always there are two parallel lines of truth, running side-by-side forever, neither contradicting the other or seemingly agreeing with each other. God is sovereign and man is responsible. I cannot explain how both things are true, but the Scriptures teach both. Try to fully understand this and you may lose your mind. Deny either, and you may lose your soul.
66) Fish sandwiches, calmed storms, and healed bodies draw a crowd. Hard sayings send away those who were only along for the show. So it is here; many turned back - probably to their perdition.
67), 68), 69) We don’t know how many beyond the twelve survived this filtering, but Jesus now turns and asks them if they wouldn’t like to leave as well. Wonderfully, His question is grammatically framed to require a negative answer - “You don’t want to leave also, do you?” What a sterling moment for Peter! His answer is rock-solid. “Where can we go? Only You have the words of life!” Let me literally, as best I can, translate the next sentence from Peter: “WE, while others have doubted, WE have come to a settled faith in You. And we have come to a settled knowledge that YOU and no other are the Holy One of God.” This is a great statement of faith, rivaling the one Peter gave at Caesarea-Philippi (Matthew 16:16).
70), 71) Simon Peter used the first person plural, “we,” but Jesus knew that even among His chosen few there was one who would betray Him. Not even the twelve would all remain faithful to their Master. This “choosing” that Jesus spoke of was not election to salvation, but rather to service (like John 15:16 would mention). Jesus uses the word “diabolos” to describe Judas Iscariot (though He does not identify him here). One of the twelve was a “devil.” In another year Judas would hand Jesus over to the authorities to die - he would do this for money! This betrayal was indeed “diabolical.” How it must have broken the heart of Jesus to think of this - to talk of this.

JOHN, CHAPTER 7

CHRIST AND HIS RELATIVES

1) While Jesus was certainly under the protective care of the Father, He also used common-sense carefulness in matters of danger and safety. Since the Judean Jews were seeking to kill Him, it made sense to hang out in Galilee for a time. When His hour approached, He would venture south. From Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) was about six months.
2) The Law prescribed three “pilgrim feasts” in Israel’s Holy Days calendar (Deut 16:16). They were Passover (Pesach and the Feast of Unleavened Bread), Pentecost (Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks), and The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). John mentions here the last of these as approaching.

3), 4) There appears to be sarcasm in the suggestion by His siblings that Jesus go up to Jerusalem for the feast. “You don’t want to keep your works a secret, do You? Only in the public arena of Jerusalem will they be best seen and known. Don’t stay here; go on up - make Aliyah!”
5) So far His brothers had not come to faith in Jesus - familiarity had perhaps bred contempt. James and Jude would follow Him later, each writing a letter that became part of the Church’s New Testament Scripture.
6), 7), 8), 9) The general lesson here is that God’s timetable and man’s schedule are rarely the same. This lesson grew out of an interchange between Jesus and His male siblings. Jesus said, “It isn’t my time yet (because I wait on my Father); time is of no consequence to you (because you set your own schedules in life, not considering the Father).” Jesus often said that His time had not yet come; then as the time for the cross did approach, He would say, “The hour ***has*** come.” Further in the dialogue, Jesus said, “You can go ahead to Jerusalem without fear, for the world doesn’t hate you; I cannot go yet because it hates Me. It does so because I point out its sin.” In verse 8 the words “you” and “I” have great emphasis - Jesus again showing some difference between Him and His siblings. He added, “My time has not ***fully*** come.” May we infer that it was getting closer? I think so.
10) The mocking brothers then did go ahead and leave for the feast. Jesus followed them, but in a covert, private way - rather than in an open, public appearance. One can think of a number of natural things Jesus could have done to prevent His arrival from being public - not to mention supernatural.
CHRIST AND THE RULERS
11) The hostile Jewish leaders expected to find Jesus at the feast, since all males were required by Moses to attend. The verbs are imperfect, best translated “kept on seeking,” and “kept on saying.” Don’t forget, they were trying to find a way to kill Him (5:18, 7:25).
12), 13) If John 7 were written today, it might be said that on Twitter that discussion about Jesus was “trending.” There were a good many conversations being had related to Him, but most of them were Hush-hush because people feared the Jewish leaders who wanted Him dead. The opinions about Jesus ranged from favorable to quite unfavorable. And so it is in every age. Make sure you are on the “favorable” side of the discussion - your eternity depends on it!
14) This feast lasts for 7 days, and Jesus let some time lapse before He made any public appearance. So maybe on day 4 He made His way to the Temple and began to teach. The records we have of His teaching are so phenomenal, I wish we had all His teaching in print!
15) His teaching was so profound that people who knew He had not trained publicly marveled at Him. You will recall that when Jesus was only 12 He was in the Temple discoursing with Law-teachers. “Those who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers” (Luke 2:47). How much more now might this Teacher of all teachers amaze people with His wisdom! See also Mark 1:22.
16), 17) The question as to where He got His understanding was not directed ***to*** Jesus, but it was directed ***at*** Him. He answered it decisively, “I got what I teach from God, Who sent me.” A prerequisite for you understanding it is a willingness to do God’s will; in doing God’s will, we come to understand that Jesus came from God. Of course God’s will is that men believe in Jesus, Whom He sent (6:29).
18) If a teacher speaks on his own authority, he is seeking to glorify himself. Is this what they were accusing Jesus of doing? Jesus taught us to let men see our works to glorify our Father in heaven (Matt 5:16); this is exactly what His teaching did - it glorified God! Therefore Jesus spoke truth, with no shade of unrighteousness in His teaching at all.
19) O how often the detractors of Jesus leaned back on Moses for their actions. And yet in direct contradiction of Moses’ commandments they were seeking to murder Him! “Why do you want to murder me if indeed Moses means so much to you?”
20) What is this? He knows their intentions - He knows their hearts. They are trying to kill Him, and He calls them out about it! Seeing that He knew their thoughts, they should have fallen in repentance and sought His forgiveness. Instead, they deny they were seeking to kill Him - breaking another

commandment by “bearing false witness.”
21) It seems the “one work” Jesus mentions here is the miracle of healing the lame man, recorded in John 5. They marveled at it, but they made more of the fact that He did it on the Sabbath, a violation of the law in their eyes. They had also charged the healed man with breaking the law by carrying his bed-roll. The glory scene of a man’s life forever changed was overshadowed by their strict view of the law!
22), 23) Jesus raises the issue of circumcision being done on Shabbat to prove their hypocritical inconsistency. God gave circumcision to Abraham as a sign of the covenant, several generations before Moses incorporated it into the law. The Jews always circumcised on the eighth day, even if that fell on Shabbat. So if the “mohel” can cut the body on Shabbat, what is wrong with my making a body whole on Shabbat?
24) They were guilty of looking at outward appearances rather than inward realities, the thing against which God cautioned Samuel (1 Sam 16:7). They needed to pursue righteous judgment, not draw superficial conclusions.
THE FOURTH DAY OF THE EAST (25-36)
REASONINGS OF THE PEOPLE
25), 26) So here is Jesus speaking and teaching in the open, at the Temple. It was widely known (despite their recent denial) that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus. The anomaly is, if that is so, then why isn’t He hiding? Why is He exposing Himself to the danger of assassination? Furthermore, if, as we know, they want to kill Him, why do they just talk? Why don’t they seize Him and execute Him? They don’t think that He really is the Messiah, do they? The question demands a negative answer.
27) It is hard to know why the Jews expressed that when Messiah comes, He would just appear from no one knows where! I know of no Hebrew Scripture that teaches such a thing. In reality the prophets spelled out exactly the background of the Christ - Humanity (Gen 3:15), from Israel (Gen 12:3), from Judah’s tribe (Gen 49:10), of David’s family (2 Sam 7:16), born of a virgin (Isa 7:14), born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). And all this is the pedigree of Jesus! How could they conclude that Messiah would just appear?
RESPONSE OF CHRIST
28), 29) Becoming less private and more public, less secretive and more noticeable, Jesus “cries out” in the Temple, “So, you think you know Me and where I am from? Well, I didn’t come on my own initiative; the Father sent Me. You don’t even know Him, but I do! He is the One Who sent Me!” Remember that Jesus is nearly shouting this - He cried out! This must surely get the dander up of the Jewish leaders. If they wanted to kill Him before, they want to do so even more now!
RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE
30), 31) O, what contrasts between how different people see Jesus! They “kept on seeking” to arrest Him. But they sought in vain, because God has a schedule on which things will happen. These men will not rush God’s timing at all. And while they are plotting against Him, others are believing in Him! They knew that the signs Jesus did were the fulfillment of prophecies such as Isaiah 35. And they asked a question that demanded a negative answer - “If this isn’t Messiah, when He does come, will He do more signs than this Jesus has done? He won’t will He?”
32) While they should be acclaiming Jesus as Israel’s long-awaited Messiah, these leaders quickly confer and agree to seize Him in arrest rather than in acclamation. What prompts this action is their hearing many of the people expressing faith in Him as the Messiah. These people must be wrong, since the religious muckety-mucks don’t accept Him - and they must be right! NOT!
RIDDLE OF CHRIST
33), 34) No doubt Jesus knows their plan of action; and He knows the nation has to make a choice. He therefore continues teaching, but adds a note of urgency with the mention of His soon departure. After Elijah’s translation, there were those who went out looking for him; when Jesus would return to the Father, men might seek for Him, but with the same negative result. And the only way to follow Him

there is through death - thus “you cannot come.”

REASONINGS OF THE PEOPLE

35), 36) The above-discussed words of Christ were spoken not just to the twelve, but publicly in the Temple courts. There was no doubt a mixed crowd as relates to faith and understanding. Some of them missed His meaning entirely, asking if Jesus meant He would leave Israel and go out into the *Diaspora* and teach the Gentiles? Surely not, they must think. “What, then did He mean?” they queried.

THE FINAL DAY OF THE FEAST (37-53)

CLAIMS OF CHRIST

37) Jesus, in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles, stands up on the 7th day of that Feats and declares: "Are you thirsty? Come to me!" He came where people were - spoke to crowds! This was a bold claim, as was Matthew 11:28.

38) "The one believing in me will become a source of living water (so says the Scripture - Jn 4:14)." Faith brings salvation and its security, and receiving the water of life produces a river! Then the living water flows from us to quench the thirst of others.

39) This referenced the Holy Spirit, not yet given while Jesus was on earth, but awaiting Christ's glorification. Therefore Pentecost was when the new ministries of the Spirit would begin. Christ's return to heaven’s glory must precede the advent of the Holy Spirit into the Church!

CONFUSION OF THE PEOPLE

40) Some acclaimed Him to be the Prophet (Deut. 18:15). This was good, but it did not go far enough. People were impressed with Christ’s miracle ministry.

41), 42) Some ascribed to Him Messiahship, but others said “No” because Jesus came from Galilee. Some were moved near the truth, but they were not fully convinced. This is an issue because of Christ's Davidic, Bethlehemite heritage. They knew Jesus came from Galilee, but they failed to recognize that He was Messiah, David's Son, Who had indeed been born in Bethlehem.

43) So opinions about Jesus divided the people. Arguments like this often produce much heat and little light; the people were now split in their conclusions about Jesus.

44) Some praised Jesus, others sought to seize Him, but no one could lay a hand on Him. Some of them believe - others were incensed enough to kill Him. Jesus is always the watershed; things rise or fall from Him.

CONCEIT OF THE PHARISEES

45) The Temple guards returned without Jesus. They were then chided by the priests and Pharisees, "Why didn’t you bring Him?" Agitated Pharisees badger and interrogate the guards.

46) Guards reply, "No one ever spoke as did this man?" Empty-handed captors explain marvel at Christ’s speaking ability. Won’t it be wonderful in heaven not to have to imagine how He spoke, but to be able to hear and see Him face to face!?

47) The Pharisees asked, "Has He tricked you, too?" The leaders mock the soldiers - “how ignorant can you be?”

48) "No one with any standing has believed in Him." Well, yes, in fact we will hear from one of them very soon. The experts wouldn't fall for His line, they thought; but they were wrong.

49) “The rabble, the law-ignorant mob has been cursed! You stupid crowd - you are blinded by the curse of ignorance! You are completely devoid of spiritual discernment.”

CALMING BY NICODEMUS

50), 51) One of their own, Nicodemus, the nocturnal visitor to Jesus, asked a legitimate question. The one Jesus called “The Teacher in Israel” poses a question exposing their ignorance. “...Doesn't our law give a hearing before it condemns?” Is ignorance worse than unwillingness to hear the facts? See here the courage of Nicodemus.

52) Nicodemus is ridiculed by his peers, “Are you, too, from Galilee? Investigate the matter if you will;

all prophets come from Judea. No prophet can come out of Galilee!" Where truth and reason cannot answer - ridicule, *ad hominem* attacks come forth. Their error: Jonah, and perhaps Hosea and Nahum were prophets from Galilee.
53) This statement goes better with chapter 8, which see next.

JOHN, CHAPTER 8
CRAFT OF THE ADVERSARIES
1) The last verse of the preceding chapter and these first 11 verses of chapter 8 are greatly disputed as to their textual authority. The vast majority of the oldest manuscripts do not include them. Again, the last verse of chapter 7 is better connected here, as it is a location reference. It states that those with Jesus went to their homes, but that Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. It was customary for those from His area of Galilee, when visiting Jerusalem, to lodge there in Bethany. Perhaps this is where and how Jesus became good friends with the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.
2) I like that Jesus was an early riser; I love to get up before the sun, watch the sky change colors as the sunrise approaches, and listen to the "critters" in our woods make their beautiful sounds. Jesus went to the Temple, and He was not alone there, for many people gathered to listen to His teaching. Now I would love to have added that to my morning routine! And yet I do, as an open Bible and a cup of coffee help me begin my day so often!
3), 4) Oblivious to the great opportunity to listen to the wonderful words of the greatest Teacher Who ever lived, the hypocritical Pharisees brought a woman-of-the-night to the Temple courts to accuse her before Jesus. It has been said not a few times that the Pharisees failed to bring the adulterous partner of this woman to Jesus! It takes two to commit adultery, and one can only wonder why they let her partner go? Was he a Pharisee, a member of their own group? Were they protecting him while shaming her? So many questions come to mind!
5) They clearly were attempting to put Jesus at odds with Moses, giving them something else about which to accuse Him. They reminded Jesus, as if Omniscience needs to be reminded of anything, that Moses commanded that the adulterer should be stoned. Then they asked Him what He had to say about this particular situation. If He said "stone her," the Romans would forbid their Suzerain, Israel, to execute a capital felon (that is why they had to take Jesus to Pilate for execution). If He said to let her go, then they would have Him in conflict with Moses. How smart they think they are; but they have more than met their match in Jesus!
CHALLENGE OF HIS ANSWER
6) All ready to accuse Him no matter how He answered, they stood by, thinking they have captured Him on the "horns of a dilemma." Jesus gives no quick answer, but He stoops down and begins writing on the ground with His finger. What might He have written? We know not. What might be racing through their minds as He silently wrote? We know not.
7), 8) Not willing to wait for an answer. They kept on asking Him what He had to say. He stood briefly and answered this, "Those among you without sin may begin casting stones." Then He stooped again and went on writing as He had before. How masterful! He had not been pricked by either of the dilemma's horns, nor had He given the woman an unjust pass for her wrong. These accusers have nothing on Jesus at all!
9) Is there a small remnant of conscience among this crowd? The older (and wiser) are the first to leave; they are followed by the younger, and no one casts a stone! The scene changes as now the sinful woman is left alone with the sinless, the Holy Christ. What is next for her?
CHARGE TO THE ADVERSARIES
10) Jesus stops writing, stands, and confronts the woman. "Where are they?" He asks. "Are there no accusers left here?"
11) Her humble (is it nearly muted) reply is - "No one, Master." She will never forget His words that

followed. They neither whitewashed nor condemned her. They challenged her to a life of sexual purity with the promise of a changed end for a changed life. “I don’t condemn you either. Go and stop your life of sinning.”

While this passage may not have been in the original manuscript of John, it may very well record an event that really happened. Nothing here conflicts with what we know about the character and actions of any of the players in the encounter. It certainly shows us the mercy and holiness of Jesus, as well as the sinfulness of mankind.

SCORN OF THE PHARISEES

12) Jesus is ministering in Judea, and as was His custom, He spends the night on the Mt of Olives. He returns at dawn and is faced by the Pharisees. He makes here one of his 7 "I am" claims - this time the ***Light of the World***. He came to dispel sin's darkness, and those who follow Him walk in light and have life. Are you walking in the light?

13) They refer to Deuteronomy 19:15, about the evidence of two or three witnesses confirming a matter. Here is how they miss the truth. First, even if Jesus testified alone, that did not mean what He said was untrue. Second, Jesus had multiple confirming witnesses, including the Father and the miracles that He performed, exactly the ones Isaiah said the Messiah would do as His credentials. Who He was certainly had ample attestation.

14) They challenged - He responded. Place emphasis in reading on the pronouns **“I”** and **“you.”** Jesus is contrasting Himself with the Pharisees. The validity of His testimony, even if it did stand alone, is unassailable because He alone knew from whence He came and where He was going (though He did reveal it to us in this gospel). **They**, on the other hand, were clueless about His origin and His destiny, making **their** judgments about Him invalid.

15) He really wears out His opponents. They don’t know the Father (19); their testimony is invalid (14); and now He says their evaluations are not in the realm of the Spirit, but are made in the flesh (what a man is and has before he is saved - the old nature). He adds that just now (present tense) He is judging no one. His judgment bar, before which all men shall stand, will come in the future. This time He came not to judge, but to save (12:47).

16) He goes on, “Even if **I** (emphasis again) do judge, I do it right. I am not alone, but I am with the Father Who sent me.” A country might disown a captured spy, leaving Him all alone in a foreign land. Jesus was only alone at Calvary, but otherwise enjoyed the presence and confirmation of the Father. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17). “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mt 17:5).

17), 18) These men put great stock in Moses - Jesus would use Moses in His defense. He refers to Deut 17:6 and 19:15, about the confirming authority of additional witnesses. They would agree. Then He introduces His second witness, God the Father. In addition to the voice of God from heaven, He is most likely referring to God’s confirming of His Messianic claims by the miracles of Jesus. Please note that the primary purpose of miracles was always to credentialize the miracle worker and his message as coming form God. In each of the three waves of miracles in Scripture, we find proof of this. Wave #1- Moses and Joshua - see Ex 4:1-5 and Josh 3:7-17; wave #2 - Elijah and Elisha - see 1 Kings 17:17-24; wave #3 - Jesus and the Apostles - see Acts 2:22 and Heb 2:3,4. While miracles met human needs, their primary purpose was always to bear witness to men as spokesmen sent from God, in whose mouths was the Word of God (notice Nicodemus’ comments in Jn 3:1,2).

19) Later in this chapter (vs 41) the Pharisees clearly implied their opinion that the birth of Jesus was illegitimate. They said, “**WE** were not born of fornication,” implying that He was. It seems rather natural to interpret their question here, “Where is your Father?” as a similar innuendo. His reply makes it equally clear that they are spiritually illegitimate. They don’t know the Father or the Son, for to know One is to know the Other. They are just lost!

20) While the “emptying” of Jesus described in Philippians 2:5-8 included that He didn’t go around

always flashing His deity, on occasions like this one we do get a glimpse of His being God. John 7:30 showed an earlier time when men wished to kill Jesus, but mysteriously had no power to do so. The fact that they wished Him harm in this setting tells us that He had really offended them with His words. The words of Jesus make men glad or mad!

SCOFFING OF THE PHARISEES

21) What terrible words are these! Because they attacked rather than accepted Him, He promises them judgment. And a sore judgment it is - "One day you will seek to Me in vain, unable to find Me, you will die in sin. In so doing, you will go to a destination that is other than where I will be." Seek the Lord while He may be found!

22) Oh, how dull they were in understanding. They could not get below the surface appearance of His words. They thought He was threatening suicide! He would soon suffer death, but at their hands, not His own.

23), 24) Scripture says the natural man cannot understand spiritual things. So it was here. These men's thoughts of mockery for Jesus showed their link with hell. No wonder they could not receive His truth - they only spoke the language of the evil one. They were hell-bound earthlings; He was heaven-sent and heaven-bound, so they spoke two different languages. The truth here is simple - Jesus is the Sin-bearer, and if you believe in Him, you are saved. Those who reject Him will die in their sin with none to blame but themselves. Choose well.

25) This question is in derision, and intended to make light of Jesus as though He were a nobody. How oft must He tell them Who He is and verify it by signs? There is no need for new information; what they must now do is process what they have and decide on which side they wish to be. "Choose you this day whom you will serve.."

26) These pretended to judge Jesus, but He makes it clear that He is the Judge, and they are the ones being judged. Yes, judgment is heaven's work, but that is where Jesus originated. And, what's more, He has the approval of God on His work, including the work of judgment. He minces no words in putting them in their place.

27) How much clearer can He make it?! And yet it goes right over their heads, for they are not equipped to receive spiritual truth. None is so blind as he that will not see. Faith opens the eyes to see the things of God. Willful unbelief darkens the spiritual vision. "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

STINGING WORDS OF JESUS

28), 29) It was pre-known to Jesus what these men would do to Him. They were going to crucify Him, which He referred to as "lifting up." Once they had done this, it would become clear to all who would see it that He was exactly What and Who He claimed to be. His relation with the Father as the Sent One Who pleased the Father and operated under His approval would be apparent. This did not mean the Jews would all be saved; it did mean that one day, perhaps and probably too late, they would realize that He spoke the truth and that He was the truth. "Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

30), 31), 32) In the midst of perverseness, hostility, blindness, we find some who believe and are saved. It is not the soil, but the seed that makes the difference. God can save the greatest wretch who ever lived, and that simply requires that the wretch put his faith in God's crucified, risen Son. How does one recognize whether he is seeing real, Spirit-born fruit or not? Perseverance is a key characteristic of true believers. Born into the family, they begin to look like the Father, walk with the Son, be led by the Spirit. This is no passing fancy, but a life-changing reality. Those who hold on to the truth of Christ's teaching prove themselves to really belong to Him. While others who only pretend to trust remain in bondage to the elements of this world, the true believer finds in the Word of God the strength to be set free from the power of sin. Paul said that sin should not have dominion over us - and Jesus declares the same here. His sheep hear His voice, and they follow Him. Are you following Him?

33) Can you imagine the hypocrisy of this group to reply to Jesus that they (and by implication all Israel) had never been in bondage to anyone? Israel had been slaves in Egypt, captives in Assyria and Babylon, and were now under the imperial thumb of Rome. And yet these hypocrites chafed at the suggestion that they needed to be set free.
34) Again, we find a parallel in Romans 6:15 ff., where the Apostle reminds us that to obey sin is to be its slave, and to obey righteousness is to be its servant. Jesus wasn't talking to them about national, political freedoms; He was speaking about personal freedom from sin by faith in the Son of God. Is this a freedom you enjoy?
35) The Roman family may have owned any number of slaves - such was a common practice in the first century. That slave may have been born in the house, may have been loved and valued; but he was not part of the family. He was just a slave. Oh, but a son! A son was part of the family. He belonged! He was an heir! He had standing!
36) The issue was and is, not physical genealogy (Ishmael, son of the slave woman had that); it is spiritual kinship. And you and I can enjoy that in Christ Jesus. He has made me a part of heaven's family. I belong! I am an heir! The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed. Sin is no longer my master. I have a new Master, and His name is Jesus!
37) They had claimed kinship with Abraham (vs 33), and here Jesus acknowledges their physical relationship. He also demonstrates that it is only racial, not spiritual, because they were seeking to kill Him. Clearly the Word of Christ was not at home in them, or they would not have such homicidal desires. See Romans 2:28, 29, 9:6,8.
38) Jesus now marks the differences between Him and the Pharisees who opposed Him. They clearly have different sources. Jesus got His message from the Father. Their deeds reflect the heart of their father (Satan, vs 44).
39), 40) Jesus referred to their respective fathers in verse 38; they respond by identifying their father as Abraham. John the Baptist (Luke 3:8) had cautioned against claiming Abraham as father for spiritual privilege. Here Jesus flatly denies that they are Abraham's children (spiritually, that is) because they do not follow the pattern of works set by their progenitor. Abraham had not sought to murder anyone; but they sought to kill Him for simply telling them the truth - truth He got from God!
41) When Jesus charged them with doing the works of their father, they challenged the legitimacy of His birth. "WE were not born of fornication (implication - we know that You were)." Then they stepped up their pious claim - "We only have one Father - God." The irony here is that they had each had two fathers (a human father and Satan), neither of them God. Jesus on the other hand, only had one Father, and it was God!
42) Once again the lie is given to their claims to belong to God. Jesus makes it clear that all those who belong to God love Him. He came from the God, was sent by the God they claimed to know. Yet they rejected the very One He sent. No, they did not belong to God, as they proved by rejecting His Son.
43) O, they listened to what He said, but they did not hear it with spiritual ears. Paul would later declare that "natural men (those without the Spirit) could not grasp the things of God." Jesus sets forth that same truth to these men.
44) Satan's character as a liar and a murderer is reflected in those whom Jesus now calls Satan's offspring. As liars they rejected Christ's truth; as murderers, they sought to kill Him to silence Him. But they would never put out the light (John 1:5).
45) Jesus spoke the truth, and for that very reason these liars, sons of the great liar, would not accept as true what He said. They would not let His message change their lives.
46), 47) The closest examination of the life of Jesus reveals no trace of sin. Not one of them could rebuke Him for one misstep. His life in the flesh stands up to the greatest scrutiny. He adds, "Since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe Me?" The answer is simple - they do not have their source in God, for whoever does come from God hears the Word of God spoken by Jesus. Spiritual

truth is spiritually discerned. It takes a spiritual receiver to tune in to truth. That only comes from a relationship with God through faith is His Son, Jesus!
48) The nuances of the original language point out two very special things here: 1) Their question demands a positive answer (they are affirming, not really asking); and 2) there is emphasis on the word **"YOU,"** suggesting their charge is about Jesus and not even remotely true of them. They deride him while complimenting themselves.
49) Jesus sets the record straight - He does not have a demon - and He shows a contrast between Himself and these Pharisees - He values, honors, glorifies the Father; they do the opposite to the Son Whom the Father has sent.
50) He further declares that He is not seeking His own glory. There is, however, One Who is seeking it for Him (that is the Father), and He is also the One Who is judging. It matters little to Jesus that these men speak ill of Him (except for their condemnation); it is more important what the true Judge of the universe will say about Him.
51) Jesus uses here one of many expressions meaning trusting obedience, which results in eternal life. Others are to "abide in my teaching," or to "hear his Word." They all mean to have a faith that shows up in a changed life.
52), 53) The Pharisees stagger at His declaration! They refer back to Abraham and the prophets, venerated by all who hold to the Hebrew Scriptures. "These worthy men lived, believed in God, and they died. Who do you think you are to allege that men who keep your word will never die?! Your statement puts you above Father Abraham!" They were now convinced that Jesus had a demon, and they would be right if He were any less than Messiah.
54) Jesus calls their assertion of relation to God a "claim," clearly implying that they are not His children. He also says that that same God, His Father, will vindicate Him in the end. Therefore Jesus does not have to glorify Himself.
55) Jesus now sets in contrast their knowledge of the Father with His own. They do not even know God by experience, while Jesus knows Him intuitively, inherently. Should He deny this deep personal knowledge of His own Father, He would become a liar like they are liars! He not only knows the father, He also keeps His Word.
56), 57) One is caused here to wonder how clearly and thoroughly the patriarchs understood the Messianic hope. Jesus does say that Abraham got excited about the coming of Jesus. Was that while he was on earth? Or was it from his enlightened vantage point in Paradise? Did Abraham see it prophetically, or did he see it from Paradise? Not surprisingly, His Jewish hearers were earthbound in their thinking. They imagined Jesus referred to His being old enough that He was on earth when Abraham was - a thing they ridiculed. They could not imagine Abraham seeing with the eye of prophecy; nor could they envisage him looking over the parapets of Paradise to see events transpiring on earth. They just did not get it! What about you, do you get it?
STONING ATTEMPTED
58), 59) What an interchange happens now! With those who reject Him, Jesus is a catalyst for trouble, even as He can give peace to those who receive Him. He claims preexistence, to have been alive before Abraham was alive. His use of "I Am" is most offensive, for in it He claims for Himself not only priority over Abraham, but equality with God! If this is not true, He blasphemes. But don't worry about that "if." It is true, as Paul would later write in Phil. 2:5ff. They tried to stone Him, but He flashed His deity once again and disappeared from their view. He is God!

JOHN, CHAPTER 9
MIRACLE BY CHRIST (1-12)
TEACHING
1) So much is here: sin is in the world and, therefore, so is misery. Jesus came into the world to

remove the cause of misery in saving us from sin. The busy Christ takes time to notice the plight of one poor sinner in His path. The man's physical blindness is symbolic of our own spiritual blindness. As Jesus came to him, so He comes to us.
2) As many today who mistake the racial connection of sin and misery for a personal connection, these asked Jesus "who" (not what) was responsible for this man's malady: did his parents sin, or did he? They were asking the wrong question.
3) Jesus didn't mean that neither had sinned in an absolute sense, "For all have sinned..." His Word declares. He meant only that it was not their personal sins that resulted in his blindness. A higher, nobler purpose was there - that God would be glorified in him! May we be so blessed as to glorify God by our lives. It is part of His design.
4), 5) Day here represents the time allotted for serving the Lord. Jesus had His earthly time, and we have ours. Night is the time when work will be over. This miracle of letting the light back into this man's eyes and life is illustrative of Christ, the Light of the world, doing the same for the souls of men. Since He has returned to heaven, we are His lights in the world. How is your light shining? Is your globe clean to let the light through? All around us people sit in darkness, dying for lack of light. Our responsibilities include turning on the light in this dark world of ours.

TRANSFORMATION

6), 7) Jesus did His miracles in a host of different ways. No way is above another. Sometimes He spoke a word, at other times He touched with His hand, once He was touched by a sick woman. Here He's more elaborate than usual. He makes a dirt-saliva compound, applies it to the man's eyes, and tells the sick man to wash in a certain pool. It was located at the southeast corner of the city, where today there is a village called "Silwan." O, that today Jesus would touch our eyes that we might see - see wondrous things out of His Word, and see His will for us!

TESTIMONY

8), 9) There is a brief dispute over the identity of the man. If he truly is the man born blind, then a great miracle with Messianic implications has happened. The division was between those who said he **was** the man and others who said he **only looked like the man**. No doubt their unwillingness to believe Jesus had performed a miracle kept them from admitting the reality before them. They were no less blind in spirit than this man had been in body! Since (in Jewish legal matters) in the mouth of two witnesses a matter is established, when the man declared that was indeed his identity, he settled the matter then and there. Jesus demonstrated that He was and is the Messiah!
10), 11), 12) This is such an interesting interchange between the man formerly blind and the Jewish skeptics. When they should have marveled at the great miracle, they sought information to discredit and destroy Jesus. Isaiah had made it clear (ch 35) that when Messiah came, such miracles as they had never seen would happen. So Jesus worked the miracles, not only to relieve human suffering, but more importantly to flash His Messianic credentials. So instead of seeking to validate the Messianic identity of Jesus, they were scurrying to attempt to invalidate the miracle. Today, when men should be seeking to God about how to save their souls, they are caught up in silly questions like "where did Cain get his wife," or "how did a whale swallow Jonah?" They asked how the man could now see. He gave them the data as he knew it (remember, he didn't ***see*** any of what happened, though he did experience it). When they asked where Jesus went, he withheld sarcasm. He could have said, "How should I know? I was blind when He left!"

MURMURING OF THE PHARISEES (13-25)

DISBELIEF AND DIVISION

13) The motives for bringing this man before the Pharisees is unclear. They were the strictest sect of the Jews, and perhaps it was customary to bring hard questions for them to interpret. Since the Pharisees had threatened to, and later did, cast out of the synagogue anyone who owned Jesus as Messiah (9:22,34), this certainly distressed the family.

14) The Pharisees often ridiculed Jesus for what they called Sabbath violations. Of course, Jesus never broke the least of Moses' laws, He only ever violated the rabbinical straightjacket that religious leaders had crafted which enslaved the people. To make a little clay, rub it on a man's eyes, and heal him of his blindness is a good work on any day of the week!
15) Interrogated as though he were himself a criminal, the once-blind man described the process Jesus used to heal him. Instead of seeing here the credentials of the long-awaited Messiah, the Pharisees accused Jesus of wrongdoing!
16) One Pharisee, Nicodemus by name, had said to Jesus that they knew He came from God, because no man could do the works He did unless God was with Him (3:2). ***This*** crowd, however, missed that altogether and said He was **not** from God! How blind men can be when they will not see the truth. Have you seen the truth and trusted Him?

DOUBTING THE MIRACLE'S VALIDITY

17) The Pharisees, for reasons I cannot fathom, ask the healed man to take sides. "What do you say about Him? they asked. That is the question on which eternity hangs for each of us, "What think ye of Christ?" I implore you today to see Him as God's Answer for your problem of sin. He alone is the Redeemer, Savior. Make Him yours today!
18), 19) Rejecting the miracle of Jesus, the Jewish leaders called for the parents of the man who could now see. Their questions are framed with their doubt, challenging whether the man was even born blind at all. They then asked them, "If that were true, how is that he now sees?"
20) Without hesitation, the couple confirmed that this was indeed their son, adding that he was certainly born blind. These things they can affirm without fear.
21), 22), 23) Beyond that, however, they were not willing to go on the record. The Jewish leaders had made it known that anyone confessing Jesus to be Messiah would be excommunicated from the synagogue. To acknowledge that Jesus had healed their son would be to say that He performed one of the marks of Messianic identity. They were not willing to do this, so they passed the buck to their grown son, saying, "Ask him; he is of age." This couple is a picture of many who know some truth about Jesus but are unwilling to confess Him. They fear the censure of men more than they wish to glorify the God Who has done great things for them. Let us not be named among them.

DECLARATION BY THE MAN WHO WAS HEALED

24) So, as the parents suggested, the detractors engaged the man who had been healed again. They charged him to "Give glory to God." This is reminiscent of Joshua's charge to Achan (Joshua 7:19), which was tantamount to saying, "Admit your guilt, and change your testimony. Don't give credence to this Jesus; we know Him to be a sinner!"
25) What a statement, "I was blind, but now I see." Was it the inspiration for the similar line from John Newton's *"Amazing Grace?"* The healed man prefaced this by saying he didn't know if the One Who healed him was a sinner or not.

MALICE OF THE PHARISEES (26-41)

IGNORANCE OF THE PHARISEES

26) Not satisfied with the answer, which they could not contradict, they asked him to repeat the events that occurred - were they looking for some detail on which they could accuse Jesus? No doubt they were. Unbelief will stop at nothing to put out the light!
27) His answer must have raised their anger. "I already told you everything; and you wouldn't listen. Do you want to hear it again because your hearts are changing? Are you ready to become His disciples?" This man has a good sense of logic and irony - almost sarcasm! He may not have until recently had his sight, but nothing was wrong with his mind.
28), 29) The emphasis in the first sentence is on the personal pronouns: "YOU are His disciple; WE are followers of Moses. We know God talked to Moses, but we don't even know where this fellow is from?" Their tradition was strong - they followed Moses (so they said). But in 5:46, Jesus had said, "If

you believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me." It is strange that they would believe something that happened 1500 years before they were born, but reject something that is right before their eyes!

INTELLIGENCE OF THE MAN WHO WAS HEALED

30), 31), 32), 33) It appears that even though this man was without sight all his life until now, he had still been taught the things of God in Hebrew school. He states clearly certain principles, perhaps even hinting at the Messianic identity of Jesus. He ridicules his critics, saying "It is a marvelous thing that this Man has worked this miracle, and you don't know where He is from?" He further stated that God would not have responded to Jesus if He were not a true Worshiper, adding that this miracle was a brand new thing in the world of men! Then the blind man says Jesus would not have been heard by God if He did not come from God.

34) Unable to answer his solid arguments, these Jewish leaders kicked him out of the synagogue, charging that this man was born in sin and had no right to try to teach them. Their *ad hominem* attack showed their failure to prove their point.

INSTRUCTION BY CHRIST

35), 36) Jesus heard that the man had defended Him and was thrown out of the synagogue for it. So He sought him out. He found the healed man and asked him whether he believed in the Son of Man. His reply shows faith and gratitude toward Jesus. "You tell me Who He is and I'll trust Him, alright." And why shouldn't he have confidence in and gratitude to Jesus? He had delivered him from the malady of lifelong physical blindness!

37), 38) Jesus told him plainly that He was the One. This was another strong claim by Jesus. The man immediately expressed faith in Jesus, calling Him "Lord." To his newfound physical sight was added spiritual sight, as well.

39) Jesus speaks here of those who are blind and those who see. The blind are those who are willing to see Him by faith and embrace eternal life. Those who see (who "think they see") are the ones really blinded by their own unbelief. They have condemned themselves by that lack of faith (John 3:18).

40), 41) It was the claims of the Pharisees to have spiritual insight that condemned them - they would not see the true light because they were blinded by a belief-system that held them (willingly) in its stranglehold! If they would admit their lost condition and flee to Jesus for help, they could be saved! Yet they chose to hold on to a perverted system of Judaic teaching that excluded the possibility that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Until they relinquish that (as Nicodemus seems to have done), they will remain in the guilt of willful spiritual blindness.

JOHN, CHAPTER 10

I AM THE DOOR (1-10)

LEADERS

1), 2) The comparison of men to sheep has its roots in the Hebrew Scripture Psalms and prophets. Christ uses this metaphor to teach some lessons in our text. He refers to the enemy and his underhanded entrance into the sheep pen where he has no right to be. By contrast, proper entrance by the gate indicates that one is the genuine Shepherd. The thief must enter by stealth at night to do his evil work. The Shepherd may enter freely at any time, for His is good and true work, and He belongs in the Sheepfold. The two are Jesus and Satan - a true Shepherd and a false.

3) Now see we mutual recognition - the shepherd gains entrance to the fold, for the door-keeper knows Him. When He speaks, the sheep recognize His voice and follow, and He recognizes them individually by name. So is it with the Christian and Christ, we know each other well. His entrance is welcome, and His call is obeyed.

4), 5) Now we see the walk of those who are His. He comes to the pen and calls for His own; they all exit the pen and He searches for grazing pasture for them. Recognizing His voice, they follow Him.

Jesus does not drive them like cattle; He leads them as sheep. Any dangers in the path must go through Him to get to them. The false shepherd would lead them into danger, but they will not follow him, for they recognize not his voice..

LESSON

6) The spiritually blind Pharisees **could not** understand because they **would not** understand. Their rejection of the Teacher led to their missing of the teaching. Though teachers, they didn't know the real teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures.

THE LORD

7) As access to the Father is only by Jesus (Jn 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me"), so access to the sheep in the fold is only by Him. No sheep can get out, and no predator can get in. The Shepherd places Himself in the doorway of the sheepfold. His watchful eye and His guarding hand keep us secure. Even while I rest in the night seasons, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps."

8) He speaks of the current religious leaders who rejected Him because He sought not their approval. They sought as thieves to take the people for themselves, and if necessary, they resorted to threats of violence as the robbers that they were. Again, their great grief was that the masses did not follow them, flock to them, obey them. As false Christs and false prophets abounded then, so we have many today attempting to gain a following.

9) Now He enlarges the gate (door) figure; He is the entrance into life for sheep, meaning that faith in His finished work is how a person enters God's family. To be saved means to be delivered from sin and its penalty, to have been given eternal life through Christ. Through Christ the Door we also go in and out to find pasture, to be nourished. As is fitting in a "Shepherd" text, we are reminded again of Psalm 23 "green pastures, still waters."

10) Jesus, the Good Shepherd, contrasts Himself with evil shepherds. They are thieves, feeding themselves at the expense of the flock. Jesus feeds the flock at His own expense. He provides full and free life to all who will believe. The false take life; the True gives life, and that to the full. Choose carefully the shepherd you follow. O, what fullness of life we find when we follow the True Shepherd, Jesus. And we must follow no other!

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD (11-18)

OFFICE

11) "I, and no other, am the Good Shepherd." This is another of His "I am" statements. Here we find the crowning proof of the love and goodness of Christ as a Shepherd: He **gives His life** for the sheep. The supreme sacrifice! Jesus said (John 15:13), *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."* "Good" here means "excellent in character." It is strange that the death (pouring out of His soul - see Isa 53:12) of this Shepherd meant life for the sheep!

OPPOSITION

12), 13) Jesus owns the sheep, feeds them, cares for them, dies for them. The false shepherd is a hireling who has no deep interest in the sheep, only in his paycheck, his life, his comforts. When caring for the sheep puts him at risk, he flees. Ask him not to look danger in the face! Life and limb are too important to him to risk them on mere sheep. And when he flees in cowardice, the flock is scattered abroad. More than a few cases of idol shepherds may be seen in churches around today. I have recently seen a severe case of it in a church dear to my heart. The flock needs a shepherd who will remain with them in difficult times, lovingly guiding them through the rough places to the still waters and green pastures. God give us such pastors in churches today!

OUTREACH

14), 15) As the Good Shepherd, Jesus has intimate knowledge of His sheep. They belong to Him - "my sheep." True sheep are also getting to know the Shepherd - "My sheep know me." This reciprocal intimacy is patterned for us by the Father and the Son. Jesus further repeats His sacrifice for us - "I lay

down my life for the sheep." This great work on the cross is the foundation of all that we know, believe, and act upon. It is the great essential of the Christian life and walk. No preacher, no teacher, no Christian can ever make too much of the cross. Paul retained it as his sole basis for boasting - *"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ."*

16) Jesus looks ahead to the birth of His church, which would reach out to and take in people from all nations. Israel was His dear people, but the gospel was too explosive to be confined to one nation. Men of every race under heaven were included in the cross-work of Christ, and His work and Word must reach them. Our task is to "make disciples of all nations." I am one of those "other sheep" of which the Savior spoke, and I'm so very glad He did!

Offering

17), 18) Jesus returns to the theme of His death, adding the truth of His resurrection. Four times (11, 15, 17, 18) He mentions His death. He tells of a special love from the Father for this willing sacrifice. He adds that He will take His life up again - He will rise! No one can take His life; He lays it down. He went to the cross out of love and a good will toward man - you and me. His willing sacrifice made sure of victory for Him (and us), and it procured defeat for His and our enemies. He and we, not Satan and his minions, won at the cross. Victory is in Jesus alone, by faith alone. Have you, dear reader, trusted Him and entered into that glorious victory? Please do.

I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE (19-30)

DIVISION

19), 20), 21) Jesus has always been a polarizing Figure. Those who believe Him and believe in Him move in one direction - toward righteousness and life in heaven. Those who reject His teaching and reject Him continue on the default setting direction for lost mankind - in sin and toward eternal separation from God and all that is good in hell. It is no wonder that people were divided over Him; some claimed He had a demon, while others saw in His credentializing miracles the work of God.

DESIRE

22), 23) This was almost certainly the Feast of Chanukah, which falls close to our Christmas. It is also called the Festival of Lights. The celebration commemorates the defeat of the Greco-Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes around 165 B.C., by Judah Maccabee. Antiochus had scattered swine's blood in the Temple, and there was a cleansing necessary. There was only enough of the special oil for the lamp stand to burn one day, but it is said that it miraculously burned for eight days. So there is annually an eight-day celebration remembering these events which brought in a 100-year independent Jewish commonwealth until the conquest of the Mediterranean world by Rome. Jesus happened to be in Jerusalem for the celebration, and He was strolling in the Temple courts as He often did when there.

24) A group of Jews surrounded Him and peppered Him with questions as to His Messianic identity.

DECLARATION

25), 26) His response began with recalling that He has already told them, several times, no doubt, and that they did not believe Him. His Messianic identity should have been clear to them because He did the works foretold by the prophets. These particular men did not believe His testimony or God's miraculous confirmation because they were not of His flock. Jesus likened Himself here to a Shepherd and the people as sheep. May we infer from this that He was calling this other group "goats?"

27) These men did not recognize Jesus because they did not know God. Those who were of His flock, His own sheep, recognized Him because they did know the Father. When they heard His voice, they knew it to be the voice of their Shepherd, and they followed Him. They knew Him, and He knew them.

28), 29) These two verses are classics on the subject of the eternal security of the believer. "I give them eternal life." This life is a gift received, not a reward earned, so it cannot be "unearned." And it is "eternal life;" it is not something temporary to be lost when one sins. Jesus states further, "And they shall never perish." He said in verse 27 "I know them." To the perishing He will say, "I never knew you." How could He Who is the Living Truth say one moment "I know them," and then later say, "I

never knew you?" It is not to be! We are saved eternally! He caps off this segment by referring to us as being in His hand and in the Father's hand. Omnipotence will never relax its grip on me, and nothing in the universe is powerful enough to rip me out of these hands - I certainly cannot do it myself! Hallelujah! I am saved and safe forever!
30) If we are confused about being in Jesus' hand AND in God's hand at the same time, never fear, for He and the Father are ONE! There is a unity in the Trinity that is beyond our comprehension; yet we believe it. Father, Son, and Spirit are One; yet they are three distinct Persons.
I AM THE SON OF GOD (31-42)
ANGER OF THE JEWS
31) Once again the plan to kill Him comes into play. They would stone Him, but this is not the time nor the prophesied method of His death, so it cannot happen.
ANSWER OF JESUS
32) Jesus poses to them an intriguing question: "I have done many GOOD works from the Father; for which one of these do wish to stone Me?" Clearly, His miracles have divine origin and power; can they then still determine to kill Him? The works Jesus did were good; He did not slay enemies or strike down those who opposed Him. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised the dead. Do such works merit death? Certainly they must think twice now about hurling the stones in their hands.
33) The claims of Jesus to Deity were not lost on the Jewish hearers, though some (wrongly) say He never claimed to be God. They said they would stone Him, not for good works, but for what they deemed blasphemy - which claiming to be God would be, unless His claim were true!
34), 35), 36) Jesus has been accused of falsely making Himself God. He answers with an argument based on the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically Psalm 82:6. In that place Asaph, the psalmist, portrayed God as calling men "gods." It was indeed the word "Elohim," but in this case it is God the ***Judge***, Who has appointed men to serve as ***judges***, reflecting on them as "gods" because they judge in His stead. It is like believers being called "Christians," though we are not the "Christ." The true God referring to men as "gods" in no way speaks of those men possessing Deity. It means that they represent God, they derive their authority from God - not that they are God. However, since God does refer to mere humans with high rank as "gods" (the lesser thing), it is certainly right for Him Who is the only-begotten Son of God to make Himself equal with God. Bishop Ryle said it so well, "If princes, who are merely men, are called gods, He Who was the eternal Son of the Father could surely not be justly chargeable with blasphemy for calling Himself the 'Son of God.'"
37), 38) Jesus concluded that if He were not doing God's works, His detractors were right not to believe Him. Nicodemus had it right when he said that a man could not do what Jesus did if God were not with him. Jesus had borne witness to Himself, and they might not accept His own witness. They should not. However, reject God's witness of Him through the works (miracles) that He performed.
ABSENCE OF JESUS
39) Another time comes when they tried to seize Jesus, but He escaped their grasp. He could not be taken in hand to try and execute until His hour actually came - and it had not come yet!
40), 41), 42) Jesus retreated east to what we call Perea (ancient Gilead), beyond the Jordan. The preaching of John the Baptist there had resulted in many people believing in and following Jesus. John is long-since dead, but his influence lingers. What a contrast between the people of Perea who saw no miracles but believed the words of the Baptist, and the people of Judea, who saw many of the miracles of Jesus, but still did not believe in Him. The same sun rays that soften butter harden clay. May God give us hearts that melt before His Word like butter before the sun.

JOHN, CHAPTER 11
THE MESSAGE COMES (1-16)
ILLNESS OF LAZARUS

1) A most pleasant place in Christ's traveling was the home of 3 friends who lived in Bethany. On the eastern slopes of the Mt of Olives, Bethany catches the 1st rays of morning sun, even earlier than the city of Jerusalem.
2) The three were Martha, the busy housekeeper, Mary, the worshipful contemplater, and Lazarus, their brother, who now was quite ill. John further identifies Mary from her worship of Jesus by pouring the expensive perfume on Him. Mark's full account of this in chapter 14 of his gospel reminds us of the sacredness of her extravagance
3) We learn a great deal from this. They have a close relationship with Jesus - Lazarus is called "the one you love." They are in touch with Jesus enough to know where He is so they could send Him a message. They make no demand, or even request; their friendship is enough that they know Jesus will respond. Last, note their sisterly concern.
4) Wherever Jesus was when the message came, there were people with Him, and He spoke these words for their learning and growth. Lazarus' sickness had a purpose, but bringing death was not the end. The conclusion of this matter was to be that men might see God's power manifested and give Him glory for His works.

INSTRUCTION BY CHRIST

5), 6), 7) May I translate this afresh for you? "Jesus had kept on loving" these three. It was Agape love, not just the love of friendship. He cared for them and wished and worked always what was in their best interest, even when they did not understand it as such. So His tarrying two days after receiving the message was no hint of disfavor or disinterest. He had a plan, and that plan was perfect. That has not changed in 2000 years, has it? On the third day after receiving word that Lazarus was gravely ill, Jesus and His troupe head south, to Judea, where Bethany was located. Sickness and death preceded Him, but He will arrive in power with the last word.
8) Jesus' companions were alert to the religio-political opposition He faced from leaders, especially in Judea. They weren't sure going back where men recently attempted to stone Him was a good idea - so they asked this cautionary question.
9), 10) Christ's answer is somewhat veiled - He speaks of walking in daylight to be safe and not in the dark, lest one does stumble. Perhaps He hints that the daylight of His ministry is nearly over, that is, maybe "His hour has come." They have observed that men could not seize or stone Him against His will, and they can now conclude that He is safe until God is ready for Him to be taken by His enemies. There is also the possibility that Jesus is commenting on seizing opportunity while it is available, that is, the chance now to go and bless Lazarus and his family, and show Bethany a great miracle.
11) At great personal risk humanly speaking, but safe in the care of the Father, Jesus heads to the place where men recently tried to kill Him. As they travel, Jesus tells the group that Lazarus is asleep (a euphemism for death). He adds His intention to wake him upon arrival.
12), 13) Thinking yet on a physical plane, the disciples misunderstand His meaning. They suggest perhaps Jesus should let him sleep, since resting in sleep might make him better sooner. We are still often dull to what God is saying to us. Would we not do better to listen more and suggest less? Those who listen attentively to what God is saying have a better understanding of life, as well as of what God wants to accomplish in our own lives. Let us not forget that the ratio of ears to mouth is 2 to 1. Let's increase our listening, and decrease our talking.
14), 15) Our Lord is ever gentle with His children. He broke the news of Lazarus' death to them gradually and gently. He desires that our faith grow in strength, and so He tells them the plain truth about why He delayed the trip to Bethany. So often in life we wonder why God doesn't act in keeping with our schedule and our wishes. Yet His plan is for our good, not our pain or harm. If we could see as God sees, there would be no room to grow or learn or trust. So He allows us enough light to see a step ahead on the path, and He extends His hand for us to hold in faith as we walk the path of His appointment, not in understanding, but in growing faith. Are you walking in faith, holding His hand?

16) I would rather observe than criticize Thomas here. Some speak well of his “despondency and devotion.” The “twin” does seem to see the blacker side of things, here thinking that if Jesus goes to Judea He will die. But to his credit, Thomas adds, “Let’s go with Him, and (if need be) we will die with Him.” His devotion to Jesus is a plus for the man often called “the doubter.”

THE MASTER GOES (17-37)

MASTER HEADS TO BETHANY

17) It was no accident that Jesus delayed His arrival until Lazarus had died, nor that it was the fourth day following his death. This text with Ps 16:10, a prophecy of Christ’s resurrection, demonstrates that God predicted the 3rd-day resurrection of Jesus. He would rise before corruption set in. This is another marvel of Bible inspiration.

MOURNERS COME FROM JERUSALEM

18), 19) The deaths of my own Father and Mother with the outpourings of sympathy and the manifold expressions of love from God’s people equipped me to envision these crowds of mourners. People came in huge numbers to share our grief and to honor our parents’ memories, and as a family, we were very gratified. As they were well-known and well-loved, so must Lazarus have been. The proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem made it easier for people to visit their home and join them in mourning. Many would have come in deep respect, others in social courtesy. The one face that they would most like to have seen was Jesus, the One Who could have prevented their brother’s death. Alas, He arrived too late, or so it seemed to the sisters. We shall find they were wrong.

MARTHA’S FAITH CONFIRMED

20) Here we are introduced to the difference between the two sisters at Bethany. Martha, ever the active “doer,” going out to meet Jesus as soon as she knows He has come, while Mary, more contemplative, stays in the house. There is advantage and difficulty with each temperament. Jesus did relate, however, in Luke 10:41-45, that Mary had chosen the better part. Let us not in our busy-ness fail to sit in quiet contemplation before the Lord.

21), 22) Martha displays no lack of faith for her lack of quiet contemplation. Her words may seem to express complaint that Jesus had not sooner come. They seem, rather, to declare faith in His power with God - had He come earlier or would He call on God now for her brother. She calls Him “Lord,” for He is in charge in every situation He enters. It is a blessing in life to have friends that have demonstrated power in prayer. Each of us should cultivate relationships with men and women of prayer. I know that I sure miss being able to call my Mother with urgent prayer needs, and I am grateful for other people God has placed in my life for just such times of need.

23) Notice the scene - Mary sits weeping in the house. Martha has run out to meet Jesus. The mourners fill the house, perhaps the crowd overflowing into the courtyard. In the midst of running, weeping mourning, there stands the unperturbed, ever-calm Jesus. Without fanfare, He brings peace to the scene, “Your brother will rise again.”

24) The teaching of Hebrew Scripture-writers included over and over that fact of the conquest of death in resurrection. Some such passages are Ps 17:15, Isa 25:8, and Dan 12:2. Though Martha was a busy lady, somewhere along the way, she had learned the truth of resurrection. But would she have to wait until the last day for this?

25), 26) Here is one of the seven “I am’s” of the gospel of John. These words of Jesus have been a comfort to more grieving survivors than anyone can imagine. This One she called “Lord” is Master even over death, the last great conqueror in the human experience. Job had raised the question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” Jesus provides a clear and certain answer - “Yes, if he believes in the Lord of life!” Eternal life is all about faith in the crucified, risen Son of God, Jesus Christ. Dear Reader, nothing is more important than for you to know that your sins are forgiven and you are headed for heaven through faith in Jesus Christ. Do you know this?

27) Martha understood things others often missed. She grasped that Jesus was the Messiah, the One

the prophets had promised would come into the world. She believed that Jesus was the Lord of life. So many students and teachers of the Hebrew Scriptures had missed and still miss what this busy lady from Bethany understood.

MARY OVERCOME WITH GRIEF

28), 29) Martha returned to the house full of mourners, and she called Mary away from them to tell her that Jesus was here and wanted to see her. It was unusual for a Jewish Rabbi to instruct a woman. Jesus was never One to let the customs of the day prevent Him from doing what He came to do. So He taught Martha, and now He waits to instruct Mary. She who had sat at His feet before now rushes to Him for comfort and help. John had told us that Jesus purposely delayed two days after He heard Lazarus was sick before He began His journey to Bethany. The contemplative Mary had been thinking now for days. What would she say, what would she ask?

30) Jesus stayed outside the town, either to avoid conflict with His antagonists or to have the ladies come where they could consult quietly, away from the crowd. In any case, now Mary runs to meet her beloved Friend, Jesus.

31) The mourners would spoil the private meeting by following Mary, thinking she was going to the grave to weep. It is sometimes best to give grieving people a little space so they can spend some time with their Comforter.

32) How often in death do we say, “If only...” We cannot change the past, but we can let Jesus bless the present and the future for us. Martha and Mary would see a great miracle in a few moments. It’s good to know Jesus.

MASTER WEEPS - SYMPATHY AND SORROW

33) Part of the humanity and personality of Jesus was that He experienced emotion. Two words here describe what goes on inside Jesus when He sees Mary and her consolers weeping. The first could almost depict anger - is it anger at sin’s dominion, exhibited in the death of His friend? The second word bespeaks a “troubled” heart. Jesus was no Stranger to grief. Isaiah 53:3 depicted Him as “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Jesus felt deeply for the loss of His friend and the grief of the two sisters.

34) Jesus gets them to lead Him to the grave, no doubt a limestone cave outside the village. Many a grieving footstep had entered into and departed from that place of death. Today it would be different.

35) English Bibles’ shortest verse (1 Thessalonians 5:16 is shorter in Greek). The verb speaks of a burst of weeping, not a protracted season of crying. We have seen this illustrated many times. His grief here may have been on several accounts. The loss experienced by these two sisters, the true sympathy of the crowd, the thought of Lazarus having to return to this place of tears, pain, and death - so many things may have brought Him to tears.

36) Love begets tears. In the few months prior to this writing I have buried several friends whom I loved dearly. Their eulogies came hard because of emotion. I know not what others thought as I spoke and prayed through tears, but I felt deep love and great loss. Here we see what people thought as they saw Jesus weep about this circumstance.

MIRACLES REMEMBERED

37) If this were people who admired Jesus asserting that He could indeed have prevented the death of Lazarus, good. If it is the typical wags doubting His power and authority, evidencing it by the death of Lazarus, as though Jesus was unable to prevent it, than stand back, for He will do something stronger than prevent death - He will reverse it! I am reminded of the cross, from which Jesus refused to come down, even though challenged to do so. He did something better three days later - He came up from the grave, which is better than coming down from the cross!

MIRACLE PERFORMED (38-57)

POWER OF CHRIST DISPLAYED

38) Burial in the east in those days was quite different from our customs. First, a Jew was buried right

away (even today, a funeral immediately follows death). Also, a corpse was laid in a tomb, where it would decompose and then the bones would be collected in a sarcophagus, and the cave would be used again. Jesus comes to the cave weeping, groaning in His spirit. Is His grief for the mourning sisters, or the man coming back from Paradise?
39) In front of the opening of the limestone cave would have been chiseled a groove for a disc-shaped stone to be rolled as a door for the tomb. Jesus commanded the removal of the stone. Martha discourages this for fear of the foul odor a 4-day corpse would have. She is ever practical, but should have been more trusting of Him
40) While the word “you” can be singular or plural, this is clearly just for Martha. He encourages her in trusting Him, promising a vision of the glory of God. It is not “see and then believe;” it is rather “believe, and you will see.”
41), 42) Several observations need to be made here. One, Jesus was a Man of prayer. He was and is God, but in His humanity He left us the greatest example of prayer. Two, He was in perfect harmony with God’s will, and so He knew the prayer would be answered as He prayed it, so He gave thanks in advance. Three, the purpose of miracles in Scripture is again seen to be the authenticating of the miracle-Worker as One sent from God, with a message to be believed and obeyed. Jesus, above all of God’s servants, was such a Man. Trust Him!
43), 44) Once it was said, ”Even the wind and the waves obey him!" Now it may be added, “Even the dead hear and obey His voice!” Jesus called the name of His friend so that only Lazarus might rise. He instructed those standing by to take from him the graveclothes, for he is no longer dead. Then they are to let him go, for the cemetery is no place for the living to hang out. Have you taken off the world’s graveclothes? Have you left the cemetery? Does your life reflect the behavior of one who is spiritually alive from the dead? Let us not live like dead men.
45), 46) People get to choose how they react to the works and Word of God. Thankfully, many hearts come to faith, setting feet on a path to heaven. Other feet flee, prompted by hearts of doubt, to relate events to those who will detract from their true meaning, who will seek to put out the light of God’s Word and works. Both are seen here.

PLOT OF THE PHARISEES DEVISED

47), 48) There seems to have been some “under-the-table” agreement between the local Roman authorities and the Jewish religious leaders. Position seems to have been allowed the Jews as long as they led the people and kept them in line. So now, these so-called “shepherds” were more concerned about their power than their sheep! They should have been saying. “How can we help the most people see that this is Messiah to be trusted and followed.” Instead they were trying to figure out how to stop Him from flashing His credentials, causing more people to follow Him. Why? Because this might result in the loss of their own position of authority and power! What false shepherds they were!
49), 50) We will meet this man Caiaphas again later, as he will be involved in the religious trials of Jesus once He allows Himself to be arrested for trial. What he seems to have meant was that they needed to kill Jesus to spare the nation as they knew it from the ire of Rome. As High Priest, though, Caiaphas spoke prophetically (unbeknownst to him), saying by the Spirit that the death of the Lamb of God was the only way of true salvation for the nation, or for the world for that matter.
51), 52) Again, Caiaphas was the mouthpiece of heaven in the Spirit while being the spokesman for hell in the flesh. John appends that the death of Christ was not just for Israel, though it included them (“the Jew first”), but the sins of all mankind were paid for by this sacrifice (“and also to the Greek”).
53), 54) While small groups had from time to time determined their desire to slay Jesus, it now became the official policy of the recognized Jewish religious authority - the Sanhedrin (see 11:47). Once again it became prudent and advisable for Jesus to absent Himself temporarily from the precinct of Jerusalem, where the plan was focused, and where He would die later. The village called “Ephraim,” about 15 miles to the north, would provide a good place for Jesus to find seclusion and

await the approach of “His hour.”
55) This is the third Passover mentioned by John (first, John 2:23; second John 5:1 with 6:4). So we are clearly nearing the end of Christ’s 3-year public, earthly ministry. As a pilgrim feast (Deuteronomy 16:16), Passover saw all obedient adult males in Israel (and perhaps the *diaspora*) gather in Jerusalem. Included in the observation would no doubt be purification rituals in the *mikvot* (Hebrew for ritual baths) around the Temple. Many of these can still be seen on the southern side today.
56) In these three years now Jesus had become the topic of much conversation. It was no different as men gathered in the Holy City for this great feast. Many were talking about Him, speculating as to whether He would appear in Jerusalem for the celebration. Had it become common knowledge that there was a “shoot-on-sight” order from the Sanhedrin for Jesus? Would this have been part of the discussion? So many questions surround these final events of Christ’s earthly life and ministry!
57) John now advises us that the word WAS out about the plans of the Sanhedrin. No bounty is mentioned here, but Judas collected one later for identifying Jesus under the cover of night in the privacy of Gethsemane, where wicked men could do their work without any uproar from the people, with whom Jesus was quite popular. And so the clock winds down as we approach “midnight.”

JOHN, CHAPTER 12
FRIENDS RECEIVE HIM (1-11)
HOUR HAD COME
1) What we have come to call “Passion Week” is now upon us. Jesus had removed from the city for a while and gone to Ephraim, to the north of Jerusalem. He returns now to the vicinity, Bethany being just over the slope of Mt Olivet from the eastern side of Jerusalem.
HONOR RECEIVED
2) Lazarus is reclining at the table in the home of Simon the leper with Jesus and other male guests, as the men ate first and separate from the women and children. Dutiful, busy Martha was serving as usual. Aren’t we glad for the “Marthas” in the family of God? What a blessing they are to the rest of us!
3) See Matthew 26 and Mark 14 for parallel accounts of this event. The synoptic gospels tell us Mary poured perfume on Christ’s head, while John records the same about His feet. No doubt she did both. John adds two other details, one that she wiped the excess with her hair, and also that the fragrance filled the house. This was an act of love from a dear friend, probably since childhood.
HOSTILITY EXPRESSED
4), 5) The greed of Iscariot shows here as he chides Mary for what he considers waste. He makes it sound a little noble as he suggests the value of the perfume could have fed the poor. John notes that Judas was “about to betray Him,” so we can rest assured that his ever-wicked heart was being wicked here, as well. The unfolding text will make it clear.
6) You recall that John is writing decades after the events, and he has learned that Judas did not handle the treasury honestly. He alone of the writers tells us that Judas cared for the money bag, and that he was accustomed to helping himself whenever he chose. Not satisfied to just embezzle, Judas would betray his Lord for more money still!
7), 8) Two great themes here are set forth: 1- Mary, the quiet listener, had come to understand what the apostolic theologians had yet missed - Jesus was about to die, and she would anoint His body for burial. What an insightful and loving act this was! Perhaps they all wished they had thought of and done it themselves; I know I would have wished it so for me. 2- Judas spoke of helping the poor; they would be around as long as there is society, and opportunities to help them will never end. Not so with the Incarnate Christ! He will soon leave for heaven by way of the cross. Mary must do this now or miss her chance. We have learned in America that you cannot get rid of poverty. Trillions of dollars in the “Great Society” programs have only served to institutionalize and subsidize poverty, giving us more of it than before. Jesus was always right, including here, “The poor you always have with you.”

9), 10), 11) The assassination plot expands now, as a large group of people gathered in Bethany, apparently coming out from Jerusalem. The religious leaders never liked it when anyone besides themselves drew a crowd. Now people were not only coming to see Jesus, but they also wanted a glimpse of the one famously raised from the dead by Jesus, Lazarus. Many who saw him alive came to believe on Jesus, and so the chief priests began to devise a plan for killing Lazarus as well as Jesus! Defenders of the Law indeed! They were more like offenders than defenders - murderers!

FEAST ATTENDED(12-19)

PEOPLE'S HONOR

12), 13) One of the joys of a visit to Jerusalem is going to the crest of the Mt of Olives and doing what we call "the Palm Sunday Walk." It is abbreviated, for it doesn't begin in Bethany, nor does it take us into the Temple. But we do think of Jesus and the palm-branch crowd as we descend the western slope of Olivet, stopping twice at the teardrop church and the Garden of Gethsemane. Each of these affords a great worship experience recalling the "Man of Sorrows," as He wept over Jerusalem and as He prayed in the Garden, sweating as it were great drops of blood.

PROPHECIES FULFILLED

14), 15) The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 is fulfilled here as Jesus mounts a young donkey colt, one never having been ridden before. But this colt knows his Master, and makes no effort to dislodge Him as He rode. I often wonder if the colt was white, like the horse on which He will descend from heaven one day? Other dignitaries had been known to ride on white donkeys (Judges 5).

16) With 60 years of hindsight John recalls that he and the other disciples didn't get all of this at the time, but that things came together for them after the ascension of Jesus. No doubt the indwelling Holy Spirit after Pentecost enhanced their memory and their understanding.

PHARISEES PROVOKED

17), 18), 19) John now editorializes about the following of Jesus and the response of the Pharisees. A good many people had been present when Jesus raised Lazarus; they kept on telling others about Him. The crowd gathered for this "Triumphal Entry" was a result of people telling others about Jesus. The Pharisees were telling each other that they were losing ground, with hyperbole saying that the "whole world was following Jesus!" O, that it were so! And one day every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, so wrote Paul to Philippi.

FOREIGNERS APPROACH CHRIST (20-26)

DOOR OPENED TO GENTILES

20), 21), 22) Passover attracted more than just Jews from Israel and the *Diaspora.* In this case some Greeks had joined in the pilgrimage to worship God. When they heard of Jesus, they presented themselves to Philip and requested to see Jesus. What a wonderful thing! I am convinced that when men want to know God, He will reveal Himself to them, He will even get the gospel to them through some means. May God make many sinners into seekers, and may He make His children into those who will bring people to Jesus like Philip and Andrew!

DEATH, THE WAY OF LIFE

23) This "hour" may relate to either or both of two things: 1- the arrival of Gentiles seeking Him - as the message of Christ reaches out in a larger sphere, more glory is His; 2- the shadow of the cross - in addition to humiliation for Him, Christ's death was cause for glory. This was because of the far-reaching effects of the cross among men.

24) Christ's analogy needs little, if any, comment. In His death, He is not unlike a seed being planted in the earth. This is the only way it can bring forth other kernels of grain, and so His death begets our life! A harvest of souls is still being reaped from this one dying Seed.

25) A man's devotion to the things of God should be so great that by comparison, all other loves appear as hate. To be devoted to self is to love one's life. In the end, such a one is a loser. When one chooses Christ, he wins, forever. When one chooses self, as is the custom in our day and our culture,

he loses, eternally. Choose Christ, and become an eternal victor!
26) Three marvelous things are seen here: 1- the Pursuit of Christ - to serve Him is to follow him; 2- the Presence of Christ - His spiritual presence here, and His personal presence hereafter; 3- Praise with Christ - to be with Him on the *dais* when the contest is over is to hear the cheer of the crowd, for His side is the one that will win.
FORETELLING OF THE CROSS (27-34)
"MUST" OF CALVARY
27), 28) A lesser than Christ here would revolt at His destined suffering and run away. His human heart recoiled at death, and His deity recoiled from being made sin for us. While Jesus shrank at the thoughts of the twofold suffering, He never tried to escape God's will. He came to accomplish something, and He would not stop short. So Jesus cries out a prayer to heaven, "Father, glorify thy name!" It was the Father's will and glory that the Son sought, not His own comfort. Heaven resounded with the answer, "Your life of holiness, teaching, miracles, and more have glorified me already. and your death and resurrection will glorify me even more" - this will be an answered prayer!
MESSAGE OF THE FATHER
29), 30 Luke records a similar circumstance in Paul's experience in Acts 9 (Paul retells it in Acts 22); a voice from heaven was heard by some as only a noise, by Paul as a voice. Here, Jesus discerns the voice of God speaking of His past and future glory, while the crowd thinks it was either thunder or an angelic utterance. Jesus remarked that the voice spoke for the benefit of the crowd, not for His own profit or help. This is seen as true in that it came from above, of heavenly origin, and that it came at the precise moment Jesus prayed that the Father would be glorified in the Son. Heaven hears the prayers of its fairest Child, and it responds that men may know.
MODE OF HIS DEATH
31) Jesus is coming to the cross - the pinnacle of history, the crisis event in the story of man. Not many days hence, Jesus would be dragged before the judges of the earth, but it is they who were being judged. How they and we respond to the claims of Christ determines our eternal destiny. While it appeared briefly that Satan was winning, even he is put down in this cross-work of Christ. Now the prince of this world, but soon captive in hell!
32), 33) Here Jesus speaks primarily of two things: 1- the manner of His death, and 2- the impartiality of His offer of salvation. Each of these was somewhat strange to the Jewish mind. First, the manner of execution by Jews was stoning (and they've certainly got the ammunition in Israel for that task!). But His death would be on the cross, a death in which He would be lifted up. This was because the Romans would execute Him, and not the Jews. While religious Jews were very clannish about faith, Jesus was indicating that the offer of salvation would be extended also to Gentiles. John mentions "lifting up" in relation to Christ's death also in 3:14 and in 8:28.
MYSTERY OF HIS DEATH
34) We see here both the knowledge and ignorance of Christ's detractors. They knew that One called the "Son of Man" would be the Messiah (Dan 7:13,14). They knew He would live and reign forever. They did not understand that He would die and rise.
FOLLY OF THE HEARERS (35-43)
TEACHING OF THE LIGHT
35), 36) Here is a strange and wonderful thing. These are His antagonists and would-be executioners, and He is giving them sound spiritual advice. His concern for their souls leads Him to tell them to trust in the light and walk in the light while they have the light with them. He speaks of Himself here. Soon He would be gone physically, night would come, and they would not be able to find their way. As the risen Savior, He is still the "Light of the World," please believe in and follow Him!
TURNING AWAY OF THE HEARERS
37) Isaiah had said, "Who hath believed our report...?" And Jesus sees his prophecy fulfilled. There is

more than ample evidence of His claims to deity, Messiahship, but they ***will*** not believe. How sad for them to live and walk in the days of Jesus' earthly pilgrimage, see Him so often, and yet fail to make it to heaven because of their unbelief!
38) Of course this came as no surprise to the Omniscient God! He had foreseen it and written about it over 700 years earlier in Isaiah's prophecy - 53:1 - "Who has believed our report...?"
39), 40), 41) When men reject the Word and works (verse 37) of God so long and so often, He sometimes aids them in their chosen disbelief by hardening their hearts in it. He did this with Pharaoh in the days of the Exodus, and He did the same with the wicked men of the pre-flood world as described in Romans 1.
42), 43) Here we find the age-old conflict between the power of the Word and the power of the world. Many Jews were convinced in their hearts that Jesus was Who He said He was, but they would not openly confess their faith because they feared their peers. Were such men true believers? God knows - I cannot say. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were such "secret disciples" of the Lord. They hid their faith for a time, but when the chips were down, they stood up for Christ! Perhaps this is the answer to the reality check. Real believers will sooner or later show their faith by their actions. If this describes you, make it sooner, rather than later.
FINAL STATEMENT (44-50)
REPRESENTATION OF THE FATHER - PART 1
44), 45) Jesus comes out into public from His place of seclusion, and He shouts, probably in the Temple courts. The message is His oneness with the Father and that He was sent by the Father. Seeing Jesus is seeing the Father; believing in Jesus is believing in the Father.
46) Jesus had declared in chapters 8 and 9 that He was the Light of the world. He shone the light of truth in a world of the darkness of Satan's deceit. Some received the light, believing in Him, and no longer remained in darkness!
REBUKE OF THE FAITHLESS
47), 48) Christ's desired purpose was to save men, not condemn them. And yet some are condemned because they reject the Word of God. God's Word reveals to us that we are sinners, and we must accept that truth. It further unveils the way of life out of sin's death, and we must also accept that. If we think we can earn heaven by our merit, we are sadly mistaken. Salvation is all of grace and must be received simply by faith. To reject that message is to place oneself in the position of being judged!
REPRESENTATION OF THE FATHER - PART 2
49), 50) Sin brought death to the human race. Jesus came to reverse that by bringing life. Man believed Satan's lie and was plunged as a race into sin and death. Now he must believe Jesus' truth to find righteousness and life. Jesus repeatedly reminds us that this did not originate with Him, but this was the command given Him by the Father to give to us. All that He spoke agrees in every way with the Hebrew Scriptures. He is in perfect harmony with them. The Law showed us our sin and pointed us to the Sin-Bearer, Jesus. Now all that remains is to trust Him to be saved.

JOHN, CHAPTER 13

EXAMPLE OF HUMBLE SERVICE (1-20)
DIRE CONTRAST BETWEEN JESUS AND JUDAS
1) Here we find Jesus and the disciples at *erev pesach*, the "Eve of the Passover." The coming events of betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion, were no surprise to Jesus - He knew them from all eternity. Soon He would leave earth for His heavenly home. Now He would show the depth of His love by the sacrifice He would make for those He loved.
2) The sun has set on Thursday; the disciples are being served the evening meal. In the midst of this glory scene, one is serving Satan in his heart already. The wheels of betrayal are set in motion, and Judas is the willing traitor.
DUAL ILLUSTRATION - HUMILITY AND CLEANSING

3), 4) 5) Here is evident the great contrast between Christ and even the best of men. They recently debated about who should be the greatest in the kingdom, showing how deeply pride had sunk into their hearts. None of these ambitious would-be-throne-sitters will do the servants' work of foot-washing. They are above that. Not so, Jesus. This One Who came from heaven and was returning there, this One Who alone was aware of the greatness of His own power, adorned Himself as a servant, took the basin and towel, and set about to wash the disciples' feet. We see here lived out what Paul would later describe eloquently in Phil 2:5ff. God's Son, equal with His Father in every way, became a Servant to men - men who would not even serve one another! John the Baptist considered himself unworthy to loose Jesus' sandals, but Jesus stooped to remove those of the 12 and to wash their street-dusty feet. May we learn true servanthood from the greatest Servant Who ever lived - the Lord Jesus Christ!
6) It is good that there was a Simon among the 12. This one so human, so real, teaches many lessons by his mistakes, and by the correction of those mistakes. Peter was shocked! "Do ***you***, Lord, wash ***my*** feet?"
7) Jesus uses 2 different words here for knowing. “Peter, you don't ‘intuitively know’ what I do now, but later you will ‘experientially understand’ it.” Peter had grasped servanthood when he later wrote about submission and humility in chapter 5 of his 1st epistle, "Humble yourselves...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."
8) Using the most powerful language available, John describes Peter's refusal to let Jesus wash his feet. Jesus responds that if Peter rejects the service, he has no part with the Servant. What was true of the foot-washing for Peter is true of the cross for all. If we reject the sacrifice of Christ, we have no part in His salvation. They are intimately connected, and to reject Jesus is to reject His salvation.
9) As is his impulsive custom, Peter then inserts his foot into his mouth. "Don't just cleanse me from my recent defilement caused by the walk here from Bethany by washing my feet - bathe me all over." Oh, Peter! Be still and quiet. Listen and learn.
10) Jesus explains the illustration of the washing. The bath is like getting saved; after that we are clean, not needing to repeat it. But in our walk, we get defiled as we commit sins, like feet get dirty from the dust of the path. This we must remove by the washing of the feet. This is like the believer confessing and receiving forgiveness for his sins; it is for cleansing from defilement, not for salvation.
11) Jesus declared that the disciples were already clean, not needing the bath of salvation. But He did it with the caveat that not all were clean. John now explains that Jesus referred to Judas Iscariot, who was never a true believer. I've often wondered what the disciples thought about this apparent riddle Jesus set before them. Did they get it?

DIVINE ILLUMINATION

12) What an illustration! The Rabbi, Master, Teacher had disrobed Himself and done for them the part of a Servant. His work accomplished, He took back His garments and returned to His proper place! "Do you see it?" He asked, and still asks today. Do you see that all are called upon to serve, to look about the needs of their fellows, to stoop?
13), 14) Jesus then gives the explanation of the acts he has performed. First He notes their proper recognition of His identity. They referred to Him as a Teacher with authority, and rightly so, for that He was. Now, if He in such a high position as that would stoop to wash feet, that is, serve in a menial task for others, certainly they who were of lower rank could minister to each other in the office of servants. We do not hold that the command is binding upon Christians in all ages to wash feet, making it an ordinance of the church. Remember, an ordinance is a symbolic rite that sets forth some central truth of the gospel - communion: death; baptism: resurrection. This was simply an illustration of service.
15) That Christ is our supreme example is the repeated teaching of Scripture. Two who sat through this object lesson later wrote about it in their epistles - Peter in 1 Pet 2:21, and John in 1 John 2:6. I think, however, that the greatest discussion of Christ's example of Servanthood is found in Paul's

discourse in Philippians 2:5-11. Take a good long look at those verses.
16) God is the Sender, Christ, the Messenger. Jesus did what the Father did, and what He sent Him to do. Christ is the Lord, we are the servants. We must do as He did, and do what He sends us to do. To follow His example and obey His command will find us in the place of a servant more often than in some high place, looking down.
17) In a society that degraded sacrifice and service, both from the Greek and Roman cultures, Jesus dignified these two things by His actions at every turn. We can rise no higher than when we stoop to serve another. Knowledge of this will bring blessing to the life if action based on the knowledge follows. Practice being a servant, and you will surely be blessed!
18) Again Judas is referred to. According to Psalm 41:9, the betrayer would play the friend, eating with the Betrayed as though they were partners. Jesus says that Judas fulfilled that Scripture by turning against His Rabbi and Friend.
19) The fulfilling of His prophecy would authenticate His person and mission. Compare John 14:29. "Don't be surprised or disheartened at the coming events. Just keep trusting Me, for I am the One Who was promised to you."
20) Jesus has the Father's authority, and when He sends us out, we then evangelize in His authority. To receive us (our message) is to receive Christ, and to receive Christ is to receive God. This is a great claim and commission.
EXCLUSION OF JUDAS (21-30)
CRIME OF JUDAS
21) The humanity of Jesus must have recoiled at what He knew was coming. His Deity also must have cringed at being made sin so God could judge our sins in Him. No wonder His spirit was troubled as He reflected that one sitting at that very Passover table would be the betrayer!
CURIOSITY OF PETER
22) Matthew (26:22) tells us that all 12 asked, "Surely not I, Lord?" John only mentions here their uncertainty of who would be the betrayer. Since we can never trust the human nature, it is good that they doubted themselves. It shows a proper humility and sense of sinful weakness.
23), 24) Here is another interesting aspect of human nature - curiosity. Peter wanted to know who it would be (and perhaps the others did, too, but Peter is often first to act on his impulses). So he motions to John, who was sitting next to Jesus, to ask the Master for the identity of the betrayer. We have no idea what he planned to do with the information - knowing Peter, he would probably try to intervene, as he did with the sword later in the Garden of Gethsemane!
25), 26) John complies with Peter's request and leans close to Jesus to ask Him about the betrayer. Without saying a name, Jesus tells John to watch for whom He hands the bread after dipping it. Then He dips it and hands it to Judas Iscariot. It was prophesied that there would be a betrayer who ate bread with the Messiah (Psalm 41:9), and this is the fulfillment of that prophecy.
CONFIRMATION BY CHRIST
27) What an awful description of a man's complicity with Satan's work - "Satan entered into him." Judas did not resist, or the devil would have fled from him (James 4:7). Let us feed the new nature we have in Christ, and let us resist Satan at every turn. Satan nor Judas are really in control - Jesus is! He commands Judas to act quickly, controlling the timetable that Satan had tried on several occasions to rush, but could not!
28), 29) John makes an editorial note here about the others at the table not knowing what Jesus meant by His instructions to Judas. They assumed two possibilities: 1- that Jesus wanted the treasurer to purchase things necessary for the feast, or even 2- that Judas should provide some alms for the poor. It is to the credit of the other 11 that they attributed good motives to Judas up until now.
30) Jesus had bidden Judas to act quickly, and after he received the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. This was his final parting from the society of the apostles. It may be more than just a time-of-

day note when John says, “And it was night.” Surely Judas left the light of the presence of Jesus and entered the night of betrayal and sealing his perdition. This is history’s worst exit!

EXPLANATION OF COMING CHANGE (31-38)

CROSS OF GLORY

31), 32) Another stage of the realization of God’s plan of redemption in Christ was now reached. The clock has been ticking since Eden’s failure by Adam and Eve, but now the pace quickens. Jesus had always glorified the Father in all that He had done (past). Five times in these two verses the verb for “glorify” is used - three times in a past tense, and twice in the future. The cross, the resurrection, and the ascension are the future events in which the Father and the Son will be glorified (future).

33) Jesus would be with the disciples only a little while longer; then He would go to the cross to deal with our sins - a place His followers could not go. Next He would spend 40 days with them after the resurrection, leaving again to ascend to heaven - they could only follow Him there upon their own deaths. With our hindsight, and with Scripture’s revelations, His words here seem less mysterious.

COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

34), 35) The final sphere in which the duty of love is enjoined is the family of God. Believers are to love one another with a unique love. This "brother-love" is to be patterned after Christ's love for His own - a high standard indeed. Because we are in a hostile environment, we really need each other. Love helps us survive. Matthew Henry says there are given here 3 arguments for us to love one another; 1- it is the command of the Savior, 2- we have the example of the Savior, and 3- it affects the reputation of the Savior that we love one another. Men will know that we belong to Christ when they see us loving one another with a Christ-like love. His death for us on the cross gives a fresh, new meaning to love - it is sacrificial, self-denying, other-seeking love. May we so love!

CLAIM AND COWARDICE OF PETER

36) Looking back over the words of Jesus, Peter skips right over the new commandment concerning love; he goes right back to the “you cannot go” statements. He asked Jesus where He was going, and once again Jesus said he cannot come, just now, that is. He would follow after, upon his own death.

37), 38) Impulsive, impetuous Peter. So often his were fiery hot professions, ice cold actions. His question implies that he challenges Jesus’ statements - “Why not? I will die for You if necessary!” Jesus’ reply sounds like this to me: “O, will you die for me Peter? Not really (at least not yet). In fact in the next few hours, before the rooster crows you will deny Me three times!” What a sad revelation to this one who loved so deeply, promised so faithfully, but failed so miserably!

JOHN CHAPTER 14

The scene is the upper room where Jesus and the disciples have celebrated the Passover, and He has established a new meal, the Lord’s Supper. Jesus has washed the disciples’ feet, and Judas, having been revealed as the traitor, has left the assembly. Now these men who have come to depend so much on their Rabbi receive the unsettling news that He is going to leave them. Jesus again commands them to mutual love. Following that, he predicts Peter’s denial.

AN ABODE WITH THE FATHER THROUGH FAITH IN THE SON (1-11)

1) Jesus’ command to “stop letting your hearts be troubled” reveals their reaction to His departure announcement. The cure for a troubled heart is trust - trust in the Father and in the Son. To the degree that we can rest in the bosom of deity we can have peace. Fear and faith are mutually exclusive in life. Faith will exclude fear, and belief will rid us of bewilderment. Christ’s departure is not desertion, but a necessary precursor to the coming of the Spirit.

2) “Father’s house,” “dwellings,” “a place for you.” This doesn’t describe an ethereal, mystical future; these expressions speak of a real home for our future. We are members of the family of God through faith in Jesus and the new birth! It is only natural that we live in the Father’s house. Christ went to the cross and prepared a way for me to go to my future eternal home!

3) Many of us believe in an imminent return of Jesus in what we call the “rapture” (from the Latin word *rapio*, meaning “to snatch away”). This is one of two key passages that describe that coming, the other being 1 Thess 4:13-18. In each passage there is the promise of being with the Lord Jesus. That is the blessed hope of the church.
4) The shadow of the cross is upon the scene now, and lest it press them to despair, Jesus calls on the best in them by telling them that they know the path to the place where He is going. If they could recall His teaching, and if they could understand it, they would indeed know, for He made no secret of His origin or His (same) destination.
5) How much we owe Thomas! Had he not had the courage to make his bold admission and ask his probing question, how much we might have missed! Throughout His ministry Jesus spoke often of His origin from heaven and His return there. Thomas had missed it, but don’t be too hard on him; we have all missed things ourselves.
6) One of the two best-known statements in the gospel of John, these words are another of the seven “I am’s” Jesus uttered in the gospel. Nowhere else is the exclusivity of the claims of Christ as clearly stated as here. We make no apology for being narrow here. It doesn’t bother me that there is only one way to heaven; it rather thrills me that God made a way! Don’t let political correctness move you from holding firmly to these exclusive claims!
7) Without chiding, Jesus shares that their lack of knowledge about the Father demonstrates a deficiency in how well they knew Him. To know Him, the “visible representation of the invisible God,” was to know the Father. From now on, they were to understand this revelation of the Father in the Son. See also Heb 1:3, Col 1:15, 2 Cor 4:6
8) Moses had said, “Show me thy glory” (Ex 33:18). Elihu spoke of a man who could “see His face with joy” (Job 33:26). David (Ps 17:15) said, “ I shall behold Thy face in righteousness.” Spiritually sensitive men have ever longed for a view of God. It is only natural and not to be criticized. Philip felt he would need nothing else but to see God.

9) All of us see things in people we know that make us wonder if we ever really knew them. Philip’s request spurs from Jesus a gentle rebuke. “After three years, Philip (did Jesus calling his name prick his conscience?), how can you ask to see the Father? You have been seeing Him in me all this time.” We may clearly see the Father in the Son.

10) The mystery of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father is not new to us. Even those who accompanied the Lord Jesus in the “days of His flesh” struggled to grasp it. The union of Father and Son made the words and works of the Son the words and works of the Father. May our union with Christ allow Him to live through us!
11) This is addressed to all the disciples, not just Philip, as is revealed in the plural ending on the verb “believe.” Jesus appeals to the miracles He had worked as evidences of His divine nature and union with the Father. Miracles as credentials are seen also in Exodus 4:1-5, Josh 3:7-17, 1 Ki 17:17-24, Mk 16:17-20, Ac 2:22, and Heb 2:3,4.
ADVANTAGE FOR BELIEVERS IN THE ABSENCE OF CHRIST (12-17)

12) This verse demands careful attention. Jesus spoke of the contrast between the works He did and the works that would be done by His followers after His ascension. He was leaving earth, and that would end the number of works He directly did in the flesh. For 2,000 years now, millions of Christ-followers have been doing “His work” on earth, all over the earth. Millions upon millions of souls have found salvation during this age of the church, and the growth of Christ’s body has been phenomenal. Is this not what He meant by “even greater things?” I am convinced it is that, rather than that our miracles would be greater than His - who could claim such a thing as doing a greater miracle than

raising Lazarus from the grave, or Jesus coming back from the grave Himself?
13), 14) Our paragraph closes with Jesus teaching some things about prayer. Just as coming to God for salvation must be done through the Son, so coming to God in effective praying follows the same channel. Twice each Jesus mentions that 1- we should ask, 2- in His name, and 3- He will do it. We should never stop asking God for things we know to be His will, remembering that we have access to Him by Jesus. What a wonderful privilege!
15) While words may be powerful, weighty, and of great value, they may also be cheap. Their value is enhanced by actions that prove the words. The real evidence that we love Christ is that we obey His commands. In John 21, Jesus told Peter to prove his professed love by actions, actions of obedience to commands he already had.
16),17) When I ask the Father, He'll give you a replacement Counselor. We need a Counselor like the departing Jesus! Will the Father deny the Son's request? Certainly not - He will rather grant it. When the Holy Spirit comes in, He is a permanent Resident. Jesus calls Him the "Spirit of truth," unacceptable, invisible, incomprehensible to this world, but you'll know Him Who is now with you, but shall be in you. This is a veiled prophecy of the coming new ministry of the Spirit - that of indwelling believers. As is spiritual truth, so the person of the Holy Spirit is strange to this world, but believers have the God-given ability to know and be blessed by His presence with us.
ATTITUDE OF OBEDIENCE TO THE SPIRIT, NOT GRIEF FOR LOSS (18-26)
18) Jesus now tells the disciples that His departure is not an abandonment - “I'll come to you myself.” First, after Calvary and before the ascension, Jesus will appear to His own. But even after that, when He does return to the Father, He will send to them this wonderful Counselor Who will teach, guide, convict, protect, seal, comfort, and more.
19) Once Jesus left this world physically, unredeemed eyes will no longer be able to see Him. But we who have been born again, who have a spiritual vitality absent in the world, are able to see Christ at work in the lives of others. His work is spiritual, and it takes spiritual eyes to behold it and Him. An added bonus is that the resurrection of Jesus is the pledge and assurance that we too shall rise!
20) Looking back, we can discern what Jesus meant by “that day.” On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came into the lives of all true believers as a permanent Guest and Resident. By Him we can begin to understand the union between the Father and the Son and between the Son and true believers. The former is perfect, complete, and is the pattern for the growth in the latter.
21) Not only is there a three-way union with Father, Son, and believers; there is also a three-way expression of love among us. Keeping Christ’s commandments is how we express our love to Him. The Father’s great expression of love for us is that He sent the Son to save us. The Son showed His love to us by going to the cross and dying for our sins. We who are partakers of His grace by faith are able to perceive Him, as He manifests Himself to us, but not to the world.
22) John makes it clear that this was not Judas the betrayer who was asking this question - he has left the company of the disciples never to return as friend again. But this Judas expresses his puzzlement that Jesus can be seen by us and not by the world. Again, it takes spiritual eyes to behold spiritual wonders. As Paul would write, the *soulish* (“natural”man, having a soul, but no spirit) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...” (1 Corinthians 2:14).
23) Jesus repeats, "Since you love me, therefore obey me." Now the Father and Son are said to also indwell the believer. Imagine that! To be loved by God, and for Him to dwell in me! And the Son will come, as well. I have the triune God living within me! What a blessing and privilege! What an awesome responsibility comes with it!
24) Jesus now states the converse of His previous statement - "He who doesn't love me will not obey me. I am not saying this of my own; this is what my Father says." Disregard for Christ's Word is an indication of lack of love for Christ. This is very serious business. God predicted it, knows it, and rest assured, He will judge it. So, obey!

25), 26) The three short years Jesus taught His disciples would be followed by added years of interpretation and revelation. The Holy Spirit would help them understand some of the things Jesus said that they could not yet comprehend, like His resurrection. He would also reveal new things, "mysteries," to them so they could help finish writing the revelation God had for His church. This we see in the completed canon of the New Testament Scriptures. And the Holy Spirit still does His work today of illumination - putting light in our sin-darkened minds so we can understand God's precious Word. We must depend on Him, and not ourselves, for that understanding.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PEACE AT CHRIST'S DEPARTURE (27-31)

27) "There's a peace in my heart that the world cannot give - a peace it cannot take away..." And so begin the lines of a sweet gospel song that I miss singing these days. This "harmonized relationship with God" is something only Jesus can impart, and it is an irrevocable gift. Once we have that "peace with God" through Jesus, we can also have "the peace of God" through trusting prayer. This is a "harmonized relationship with the circumstances of life." The world gives "escape" or "distraction," but it cannot afford peace.

28) Christ's going to His Father was really good for the disciples - it would be followed by the coming of the Holy Spirit in His new ministry of indwelling believers. Note the change from the denying Peter at Caiaphas' house to the declaring Peter of Pentecost! Jesus says they should have rejoiced at His departure, not grieved. We can understand this because of 2,000 years of hindsight and the written Word of God. Let's not be too hard on these first-century believers for their shortcomings.

29) The miracle of prophecy is designed, among other things, to aid men in believing. When they see the things predicted in the Word of God come to pass, the Word can generate faith in their hearts.

30) This last evening of teaching by the Master is packed! But it won't last much longer - the time is growing short. Satan will come in the persons of Christ's attackers, including Judas (into whom he has entered). But he has no claim on Jesus. This seems to be a note about the sinlessness of Jesus. He alone of earth's humans, has no sin nature to which Satan can appeal. He demonstrated that at the outset of His ministry in the wilderness temptation.

31) As they leave the upper room to head to Gethsemane, Jesus teaches the remaining 11 disciples that what He commanded for us also applies to Him in this: our obedience proves our love; His obedience to the Father also demonstrates His love. This will of the Father that Jesus now goes to obey is death on the cross; Paul would write that Jesus was "obedient to the point of death; even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). This was the most difficult obedience to the commands of God ever!

JOHN, CHAPTER 15

Judas has departed to do his dastardly deed. On the way to the garden, Jesus challenges the 11 to abide in Him. He uses a familiar emblem to set forth several spiritual truths for them. Vineyards and their care were known to all in Israel.

CONDITIONS FOR FRUIT-BEARING (1-6)

1) Jesus identifies the metaphor's elements: the true vine represents Him, the Gardener is the Father. In God's vineyard there is one source of fruitful life - abiding in Christ. God tends His people like a careful gardener tends his vines.

2) A great emphasis is placed upon fruit-bearing. 1st, it is a sign of life; living things are fruitful, unfruitful branches are dead. 2nd, there is the design of the Father that branches bear fruit. Fruit-bearing is not an option - it is an obligation. Unfruitful, presumably dead, branches are removed; fruitful branches are pruned to be more fruitful.

3) This pruning is a cleaning like that symbolized in John 13 by the foot-washing. Jesus makes clear here that saved people are already clean, but do need an occasional sponging off from the defilement of the world. Ps 119:9 stated it: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy Word."

4) Salvation places us into union with Christ; then comes the duty of communion with Him. The believer, to be fruitful, must adhere to his Lord, deriving from Christ the grace and strength needed for the Christian walk. As a branch draws life from the vine, so we draw life from Christ, the sustaining of the life He imparted to us at salvation.
5) Jesus had spoken in John 10 of the abundant life. Fruit-bearing is an essential part of this life. Vital to fruit-bearing is continual abiding in Christ. Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ..." This is the converse truth of what is here - "Apart from me you can do nothing." God's ability more than compensates for man's inability.
6) We need to be careful here not to try and make every part of the metaphor correspond to some spiritual truth. Christ speaks here of either a false professor who in the end is cast into hell, or He speaks of a believer who, because of unfruitful life loses rewards at Christ's judgment seat. Probably it is the unbeliever of whom the Lord speaks here.
COMMANDMENTS FOR FELLOWSHIP (7-15)
7) Judas and most Jews had rejected Christ's words. But if the disciples will pay heed to His words, their prayer lives will be enhanced. Knowing God's truth helps us to pray more in line with God's will, and such praying is always fruitful.
8) We move from fruit and more fruit (2) to much fruit (5,8). This higher level of fruit-bearing has 2 effects: 1- it glorifies God, and 2- it produces evidence that we belong to Him. Jesus had said, (Mt 7:20) "By their fruits ye shall know them." God grant us to have the fruit of the Spirit borne in our lives, as well as the fruit of souls won to Christ.
9), 10) He Who is the personification of love calls on us to remain in His love. Christ's love for us is patterned after His Father's love for Him. Jesus abode in the Father's love and obeyed His commands. He challenges us to show that we abide in His love by obeying His commands. Love is not how we feel; it is action on the behalf of the one loved. Jesus went to the cross to redeem, showing His love for lost mankind. This is sacrificial love.
11) Many think that religion and joy are mutually exclusive. The reality is that through faith and obedience to Christ we are made partakers of His joy; and in Him our own joy is filled up. In fact, true joy can only be found in Christ.
12), 13) Christ commands us - "Love each other like I love you." The extent of that love is seen at the cross. We are called upon to imitate His love as we deal with others, requiring the power of the Holy Spirit. Loving one's neighbor fulfills the second table of the law. When you love someone, you will not work ill toward that person. A love that would give its own life for another is the greatest known to man - such was Christ's love for us, and He requires the same love from us for others. We must be empty of self if we are to be filled with such love.
14), 15) Once enemies of God and strangers to His grace, we have now been brought into the inner circle. We are family, and we are friends - demonstrated by obeying His commands. We are let in on the Master's secrets, unlike household servants, who do not know their Lord's business. Jesus spent a great deal of time sharing the mind of God with His followers; when He left for heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to keep informing us of what God has in store for us. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide us into all truth - such knowledge is, as the Psalmist said, "too wonderful for me." Also, such knowledge is a sign of family membership and friendship with Christ.
CHOSEN FOR FRUIT-BEARING (16-17)
16) See here God's election unto discipleship; He chose us that we might serve - fruitfully. Normally, disciples chose a teacher and followed him. Jesus chose His disciples. He took the initiative; He set them in place to carry out a mission for Him, a mission of bearing lasting fruit. Such fruit-bearing disciples have the privilege of efficacious praying.
17) Space in Scripture is at a premium - God didn't waste words. When He chose to say something more than once (and in so short a space as 6 verses) it must be important! Solve this riddle: it isn't

love unless it is given of its own free will, but we are here ***commanded*** to love! Don't try to understand it - just do it! Live in love, and bear fruit. Give love because God commanded it and because you want to!

CONFLICT FOR FRIENDS OF CHRIST (18-25)

18) The half-brother of Jesus, James, wrote in his epistle that “friendship with the world is enmity with God.” Conversely, friendship with God is enmity with the world. Understand that the world hated Him first, and so it will hate all those connected with Him. “Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help us on to God?” NO! It is not. From Herod the Great to Pilate the coward, the world hated Jesus. The servant should be ready to expect what the Master experienced.

19) The source of our life and being is not of the world, but of the Lord. He called us out of this world (which is the meaning of the word translated “church”), and so the world hates us. We are light in their darkness, exposing their wicked deeds. When the light comes on, the bugs and vermin scatter.

20) Jesus repeats the concept that servants may anticipate the same treatment from the world that their Master received, for they (we) are not greater or better than He. “Since (not ‘if’) they persecuted Me, they will persecute you.” The principle works both ways; “if some of them do turn and hold to My Word, they will appreciate My Word when it comes through you, as well.”

21) Only those who do not know the Father can and will hate Jesus. This ignorance of God is willful, sinful, not passive and innocent. Men who choose to not know God will give account for that choice. And the people of God are the easy target for the hatred of the world for God - so watch out for persecution; it will indeed come.

22) Jesus in His omniscience not only knows what did and will happen, He knows all the possibilities of what might have happened had things been different. Because He came and showed His contemporaries God, they have a greater degree of guilt than had they not seen Him. See Luke 12:47, 48 for a parable about degrees of punishment in Hell (just as there will be degrees of reward in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

23) We have read (and perhaps known) of people who hated a person simply because they hated their parents. Love and hate can cross generational lines - there are people who came to love me because they loved my parents. Those who hated Jesus demonstrated that, regardless of their profession toward God, they hated Him also. You cannot love the Father and hate the Son!

24), 25) This is very much like verse 22. Because Jesus came and did the works of God before His contemporaries, theirs will be the greater accountability - because they had the greater light. It may be that the generation who saw Jesus will be judged the most harshly of all mankind. There was no reason for them to hate and wish to kill Jesus, except that He represented Someone Whom they already hated - the Father! The Judaism of Jesus’ day was a false Judaism, as is any today that chooses to reject Jesus as Israel’s Messiah. It is a legalistic, rabbinical, man-made Judaism that has a form of godliness, but denies the God it clams to serve and worship. How very sad!

COMFORT FOR FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST (26, 27)

26), 27) Jesus promises the “Paraclete,” the “Comforter,” the “One Called Alongside,” Who, when He comes, will bear witness of Jesus. This He did in guiding Scripture writers, in enabling preaching, teaching, singing, and sharing of our faith about Jesus. We can effectively bear witness of Jesus because the Holy Spirit lives within us and helps us to do so. On our own we would be like Peter at Caiaphas’ house; with the Holy Spirit, we can be more like Peter at Pentecost.

JOHN, CHAPTER 16

AFFLICTION OF THE SAINTS (1-6)

1), 2) I’m not one who wants to know about bad things in my future - I might dread them to the point of misery. Why, then, does Jesus give the apostles a short list of negative things to anticipate? I think the answer is that, expecting them, they will not be caught off guard and be made to stumble by them. It

was a safeguard to know that they might be asked to leave their synagogue fellowships. They could muster up courage, knowing that they might die for their faith, even at the hands of religionists!
3) The reason these religionists will do these awful things is that they don't know God or His Messiah-Son. Just look at the current news (2016); mass graves of Christians, even children, are being found in areas where fanatical Muslims (ISIS) are persecuting and committing genocide against people of the true God! People whose hearts are captured by grace could never do such things to those who disagree with us! In bygone centuries people calling themselves Christians did some of this, but they could not have been true believers and do such things - they were only professors of the faith.
4), 5) Surely the Jesus Who could predict these things would Shepherd them from heaven through His Spirit. They would remember His predictions and have confidence in Him to carry them through! While He was here, the venom was directed at Him personally. When He leaves, which He has talked about, the attacks will be against Him in the persons of His followers. That is why He waited until now to warn them. Before Jesus explained (John 14 and 15) what He meant about His departure, there were many questions. Now there were none - they seemed to understand.
6) The reaction to His teaching that He was going back to the Father Who sent Him was one of sorrow. While this sorrow may have indicated lack of maturity and understanding, I can identify with it. I recall the departure of my pastor who led me to Jesus - I was devastated! I leaned so heavily on him; but I learned to stand alone and lean on Jesus more after he left than I did while he was with me.
ARRIVAL OF THE SPIRIT (7-15)
7) The issue here is the advantage of the physical presence of Jesus versus the spiritual presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says it is for the believer's best good that He depart and send the Spirit. In the presence of Jesus, Peter was strong, and then weak. He failed when he denied Jesus. But with the indwelling Holy Spirit, he preached the Pentecostal sermon and courageously withstood the Jewish leaders. What a difference Pentecost made!
8), 9), 10), 11) As we Christians witness to unsaved people in this world, the Holy Spirit works through us to bring conviction in their hearts about three specific things: Sin, Righteousness, Judgment. Sin brings death; righteousness results in life; execution or exoneration are pronounced at Judgment. The sin of unbelief is the condemning sin, and the Holy Spirit helps people believe, removing the sin and the condemnation. While Christ was here, He showed a standard of perfect righteousness. But He is now absent from the view of the world. In His absence, the Holy Spirit helps men to see there is a righteousness to be had by faith in Jesus Christ. Without His work, they cannot see their need or God's supply. If the world today denies any one truth preeminently, it is that there is a judgment to be faced. They will not accept that they must one day stand before God! How blessed when the Holy Spirit breaks through, and a man sees his sinful condition, God's wonderful supply in Jesus, and in faith escapes the judgment to come (of which Satan stands condemned).
12) , 13) What a great Teacher Jesus is! He recognizes when His students can receive no more; He knows their infirmity of mind, their pride for position, their fear at His announcement of His death. So He leaves other teaching to other times (and to another Teacher - the Holy Spirit). There will be no great change in teaching ministries from the Son to the Spirit - neither works independently of the father; the "things to come" Jesus speaks of come from the Father to the Spirit for the saints. Thank God for this completed book - the Bible!
14), 15) It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring glory to the Son, not to Himself. This helps us recognize what is and what is not his work. If undue attention is taken from the Son and placed on the Spirit, that is not the Spirit at work. Since the Son is the image of the Father, the Spirit reveals the father when He makes known the Son. There is no jealousy among the Persons of the Trinity. God's plan in this age is that Christ should have the preeminence (Col 1:18), and the Spirit is content to take the things of Christ and make them known to the body of Christ. It is the Spirit Who enables us to know and to make known the Lord Jesus. How blessed to have Him!

ABSENCE OF THE SAVIOR (16-24)

16), 17), 18) The upper room discourse of Jesus has begun. The last Passover has been celebrated, and the new meal called the “Lord’s Supper” has been instituted. Jesus is less than a full day from the cross, and He is redeeming the time by teaching His disciples great truths. We find it hard to see why these men were so dull to understand what we consider the simple things that Jesus was laying out for them. Yet we must not be too hard on them - we have the benefit of and indwelling Holy Spirit, the completed Word of God, and two millennia of church history to help us see the things they missed. One of their struggles here is grasping the meaning of His soon departure from them to heaven. They discussed it among themselves quite at length, but did not raise the question to Jesus Himself. What a picture this is of modern men who seek answers to life’s riddles by endless discussion among themselves, but fail to consult the Primary Source to get real solutions.

19) For a mortal to know their private discussion would require great intuition. Christ possessed more than that; He is omniscient. This possession of all knowledge shows up when he draws them out on the matter of His word about being unseen shortly, and then seen again shortly after that. He is ever the concerned, engaging Christ.

20) Soon will come the arrest, trial, beating, and cruel crucifixion of Jesus. When He is pronounced dean and laid in the tomb, it will appear that the world has won and Jesus is defeated. This will bring great grief and lamenting to those who loved Him and hoped in Him, but great joy to those who opposed Him. But all that will change, soon!

21) Christ gives an illustration followed by an explanation. The fact that the disciples will suffer deep pain, followed by great joy is like what happens with a birth. Only a mother knows the agony of labor pains, and only she can know how quickly those pains are forgotten when her newborn is placed in her arms to caress and cherish.

22) For those who walked with Jesus for three years, who had pinned their hopes in Him, the agony of His crucifixion was emotionally akin to labor pains. There was, however, great joy to follow - the sightings of the risen Christ removed all memories of the pain of his death and apparent defeat! Resurrection victory brought great joy!

23), 24) O, the questions these men had asked Jesus, desiring to learn; and the requests they had made of Him, to gain His aid for some need! But that was about to change - His absence would remove the option of asking the physically-present Son of God. The new arrangement was that they (and we) could ask the Father all that we wished to, and we would ask in the ***name of Jesus!*** One of those present in the upper room and on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, John the beloved, would share this promise of Jesus with his readers over six decades later. The Holy Spirit’s teaching ministry in and through them, and the Father providing their needs, is a new and wonderful relation.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SAVIOR (25-33)

25) So many figures of speech had been the teaching method of Jesus - shepherds and sheep, vines and branches, knocking down the Temple and rebuilding it, and so many more. Yet the meaning was never far away, and Jesus often explained the parables. A day was coming when plain speech would replace symbolic teaching methods. The backwards look at the cross one day would be clearer than the forward gaze had been. Certainly the indwelling Spirit as Teacher and Interpreter would clarify things so that these very men (and a few others) could write clearly and powerfully about things they struggled to grasp before.

26), 27) The Scriptures promise an intercessory and advocacy work of Christ for us in heaven (Heb 7:25, 1 John 2:1). Jesus does not address that here. He has prayed on their behalf because of His relation with the Father. Soon believers would have a more intimate relation with God than ever before because of Calvary; they would have direct access (the veil of the Temple was torn in half) to God in the name of Jesus. I liken this a little to the way my Mother prayed for her children from our infancy. The day came, however, when, no longer little children, we were able to enter into that conversation

with God ourselves. The redemptive work of Christ and the indwelling Spirit enhance it.
28) What a sweeping summary statement of the incarnation to the ascension! And not one figure of speech in the sentence as Jesus spoke ever so plainly to His own. He left heaven's splendor to enter the family and sphere of mankind. His work soon to be done - showing to the world the Father, bearing witness to the truth, redeeming humanity, and more - He will leave this people and place and go back to the Father Who sent Him.
29), 30) Here is a foretaste of the clear speech Jesus mentioned, and they got it! Christ's upper room and Garden path discourses to them have been effective - their understanding, once somewhat foggy, is clearing up. They recognize that Jesus is omniscient - "You know all things." They also grasp about His divine origin - "You came from God." Growth is happening before our very eyes!
31) ,32) Jesus sees beyond the moment and knows that there will be ups and downs in their faith and experience. Rather than cling to each other for strength, comfort, and love after Jesus is gone, they will scatter. Peter, the most boisterous braggart, will even abandon ministry and return to the nets and boats of his former vocation. Wonderfully, that will not be the end of his story. Also wonderfully, when the disciples forsake Him and flee, Jesus will still have the company of the Father. He will not be alone until the hour that God turns away from Him when He becomes sin for us!
33) In their dark hours to come, the words of Jesus will help them have peace. When the world's trouble comes, they can recall that Jesus has conquered the world. In the words of a gospel song, "I've read the back of the Book, and we win!" Peace is the crown of all blessings, and hardest to have in the midst of tribulation, but Jesus promises it to us in that very time! Let us trust Him.

JOHN, CHAPTER 17
in Matthew six we have what is commonly called the "Lord's Prayer." It is more properly called the "disciples' prayer," taught to us by the Lord. This chapter contains the real "Lord's Prayer." Here we see the heart of Jesus for His Father and His children revealed. It merits much attention, and it rewards great study.
THE FATHER'S GLORY (1-5)
1) Many have lifted up their eyes to heaven in prayer, but none whose prayer was as apt to be answered as this One - Jesus. He has spoken in the upper room to man for God, now He speaks to God for man. The previously unarrived-at hour has now come. Christ prayed for the glory of the father in the glory of the Son.
2) In the Great Commission Jesus would again say that all authority was given Him by the Father. The purpose of the power included imparting eternal life to men - men given Him by the Father - the inscrutable mystery of election.
3) Here Jesus gives the essence of eternal life - knowing God. It is a knowing that is experiential, subjective, not just possession of information about Him. The grammar here points up the unity of the Father and the Son, "the only true God, ***even*** Jesus Christ, Whom you sent." John later wrote, "He that has the Son has life." "AMEN!"
4), 5) Here again is the glory of the Father in the glory of the Son. He who does not honor and glorify the Son, does not honor or glorify the Father. Here is accomplishment - the completion of a divinely ordained task. Jesus would later say from the cross, "It is finished!" No one else could have, would have kept at such an arduous task as Jesus had. Who would live in poverty and shame having spent eternity past in heaven's wealth and glory? None I know - none but Jesus. I have glorified you on earth in the presence of men; now glorify me in heaven.
THE FOLLOWERS' SECURITY (6-16)
PROOF OF DISCIPLESHIP
6), 7), 8) Before Jesus walked the shores of Galilee and began calling disciples, God had chosen whom He should call. In the sense of creation, all men belong to God, and these 12 He had given to

Jesus to train, lead, and send out. These men were not perfect, but they had “kept” God’s Word. The eleven (Judas is now absent) finally understand the intimate union between Father and Son - they now get it that Jesus represents God on earth, that all Jesus said and did was from the Father. Jesus faithfully shared the words God intended for these men, and the men in faith received them. They now understand the divine origin of Jesus.

PRESERVATION OF DISCIPLES

9), 10) While Jesus had a mission to the world (cf Jn 3:16), this prayer was for the disciples (and for us). He knew the difficulties they and we would face, and He prayed for our protection and sanctification. That protection is ***from the world***, and that sanctification separates us ***from the world.*** That is why He prays not for the world at this point. The world was His by divine right of creation, but the Church is His by redemption - a special relationship.

11) Jesus knows that He will soon leave this little flock and return to heaven. The sheep will remain in this sinful world which would divide and conquer them if it could. So the Son asks the father to preserve them by the power of His name; this preservation will result in their unity, unity that resembles that between the Father and the Son.

12) On the threshold of His departure, Jesus mentions in prayer that He “has been keeping” them and that He guarded them. The safety of the sheep was never in doubt as the Shepherd walked along with them. The only one who fell by the wayside was Judas Iscariot, here called the “son of destruction” (see 2 Thess 2:3 for a similar title for the Antichrist). The loss of Judas was to fulfill Scripture - Psalm 109:8, also referred to in Acts 1:16-20. We will never solve the mystery of Judas being destined to do this and yet making a choice to do it, for which choice he is accountable.

13) It must have been a joy to Jesus to say that He was about to come to the Father. Surely the manner of His death was no joy, but the aftermath of souls saved and His own reunion with the Father would be a source of Joy. Jesus had spoken so many things to His disciples, and one reason He spoke them was that they might have joy also. I find as I get further along in life that few things bring me the joy that studying the Word of God brings. Jesus’ words are still joy-bringers.

PROTECTION OF DISCIPLES

14) “I have given them Thy Word” has a verb in the perfect tense. This conveys a completed past act with present results. What can change a destiny, a life, a family like the Word of God!? Nothing else converts lost humanity and changes its value system, making us lights in the world. That is why the world hates us, because we turn the light on their darkness. We had an earthly origin in our first birth, but we were born “from above” in the second birth. We are aliens hated by earthbound lost humankind. O, but we must love them to Jesus, or they will have a lost eternity.

15), 16) The time for removing believers from the world will come later; for now we are left in this world with purpose, including to make a difference here as salt and light. The Devil would love to remove the savour from the salt and put out the light, but Jesus prays for God to protect us from Satan's evil work. This is obviously spiritual protection, for many have been martyred for the faith, but have kept their testimony to the end. Jesus mentions that believers were (are) like Him in that neither are from this world. Our source is heaven, our home is heaven, and our goal is heaven. We are *in the world*, but we are not *of the world*. May we remember this as we live here.

THE FOLLOWERS’ SANCTITY (17-19)

17) Jesus had prayed for our *security*, now He prays for our *sanctity*. Preservation and peculiarity. God's wants us to be different from the world - in what ways are you different? The instrument of sanctification - setting us apart unto God - is His Word of truth, the Bible. The world tries to make truth relative, subjective, and its people are paying a high price for tampering with the truth.

18) "As the father hath sent me, so send I you"(Jn 20:21). "...the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 Jn 4:14). While Jesus was here on His "Rescue Mission," the Father sanctified Him; He prays for that for us.

19) Jesus set Himself apart unto God and God's purpose for Him. He did this for us! His cross-work made it possible for us to be sanctified. Without Calvary, we would be, could be, no different from this world at its worst. Truth makes the difference. It is the truth that sets us free, and it is the truth that can set us apart. No Bible, no sanctification!

THE FOLLOWERS' UNITY (20-23)

20) Here is a wonderful thing - the Savior prayed for me. He included my needs in this prayer just hours before His death. The man who led me to Christ once visited Jerusalem and sent me a postcard from there saying he stood at Calvary and prayed for me. The One Who died for me stood in the shadow of the cross and also prayed for me!

21) Jesus earnestly prays for the unity of His Body, the Church. He uses the unity of the Godhead as the example, a high standard, indeed! He prays for a spiritual ***unity***, not an ecumenical, organizational ***union*** that disregards doctrinal truth for the sake of ***uniformity***! The unity of the true church is a great testimony for Jesus Christ!

22), 23) Glory, unity, testimony of love - these are the themes of these 2 verses. The glory of Christ in this world was veiled, as is the glory we share in Him. The world could not see it, and they still cannot, until they become part of the family. His glory shall be made manifest one day, and ours with Him. As God was in Christ, so Christ is in us and calls us to unity, oneness in spirit. Our unity as a body demonstrates 1- that God sent Christ, and 2- that Christ loves His people even as God loves Christ. What a privilege to show these things to a lost world!

THE FOLLOWERS' DESTINY (24-26)

24) How marvelous is Christ's prayer for His own! he asks the Father to give us spiritual protection and preservation while we are in this world, to sanctify us unto Himself, to make us one in Him, and now to bring us to heaven where we may see and share His glory fully. May I remind you that the Father always answers the prayers of the Son - Glory!

25), 26) Jesus first contrasts Himself with the world in the matter of knowing (some translate "acknowledging") God. "They didn't; I did." and the "I" gets great emphasis. He adds that His disciples "knew that You sent me." The "You" gets the emphasis here, as in "You, and no one else." The word "sent" is the verb form of the word "apostle," which means "one sent with a message." That is exactly what Jesus was! His message included love, that the love God had and has for Jesus might reside in us, too. Love is the distinguishing mark of a disciple (John 13:35).

JOHN, CHAPTER 18

TREASON OF JUDAS (1-9)

GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

1) When in this several-chapter discourse Jesus and His men actually left the upper room and began to walk is uncertain. Whenever it was, at this point they leave Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron Valley as they move eastward, down and then up to enter the Garden of Gethsemane, which lies on the western slopes of the Mt of Olives, facing Jerusalem's eastern gate.

2), 3) And now more about the sad saga of Judas Iscariot. Frequent visits to the garden made the path familiar to Judas. He had joined a group of soldiers (presumably Romans) and officers of the Temple police - the group gathered by the chief priests and Pharisees. With their way lit by lanterns and torches, and with weapons to insure against resistance, this evil band made its way to Gethsemane. As to its size, the "cohort" of soldiers could be as many as 600! What massive preparation to arrest and seize one Man!

4) Jesus acts to allow the treachery against Him to unfold according to God's plan. Stepping out in front of the small group with Him, Jesus asked, "Whom are you seeking?" Remember, Omniscience never needs information; His asking was to draw them out and to reduce to one the number of people sought, Himself. He was protecting His own.

GLORY OF CHRIST

5) “Jesus the Nazarene,” was their answer. It was an identifier and a slur at the same time. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” had been Nathaniel’s famous question upon being told that “Jesus of Nazareth” was the One predicted by the prophets. Apparently Nazareth was not of high reputation. Jesus responded “*Ego Eimi*!” “I AM!” It harkens back to the burning bush and God telling Moses He was the great I AM. The “he” is an injection to make it readable, but it is not in the original. Judas, who spent years walking with the Prince of Light, is now aligned with the representatives of the prince of darkness. How far one can fall when faith is not real and when greed takes hold of the heart.

6) This is one of those times when the brightness of the deity of Christ shines through His veil of humanity. When these men were floored (or grounded) by the expression of Jesus, why did they not stop to consider that He must not be an ordinary Man? He literally knocked them down with the word of His mouth! Paul would say that Jesus will slay the Antichrist with the “breath of His mouth” (2 Thess 2:8). What power is in the word of Christ! Creation, faith for salvation, slaying the enemy!

GRACE OF CHRIST

7), 8) Jesus repeats His earlier question with the same purpose. When they say they are looking only for Him, Jesus then orders them to let His disciples go their way - protecting His own right to the end!

9) John 6:39, 10:28, and 17:12 are confirmed here as true and illustrated in the practice of Jesus. Not only does He see to our spiritual protection, but in this case He protects them physically. He will allow no harm to come to them just now (although all 11 of them will suffer and 10 of them be martyred for their faith in Jesus) - just not yet!

TRAGEDY OF PETER (10-18)

DARING

10), 11) Here we go again! The impetuous Peter, not satisfied to accept the opportunity to escape with his life, draws a sword and swings wildly, lopping off the ear of Malchus, servant to the high priest. Jesus rebukes Peter, ordering him to sheath his sword. Once again Peter would try to prevent Jesus from being crucified (remember Matthew 16 at Caesarea Philippi?). Once again Jesus would show him the futility of trying to circumvent God’s plan.

DISTANT

12), 13), 14) Here we have the first of six trials that Jesus underwent that night. Three were religious, and three were civil. 1- Annas; 2- Caiaphas; 3- Sanhedrin; 4- Pilate; 5- Herod; 6- Pilate (second time). These several hundred deputies arrested and bound Jesus, taking Him first to Annas. He was not the acting high priest, but was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was. It seems that office went back and forth between the two for a time (see Luke 3:2 and Acts 4:6). John reminds us that Caiaphas was the one who (unwittingly) prophesied about Jesus dying for the nation (John 11:50).

DENYING (DENIAL NUMBER 1)

15), 16) John now records the coming of both himself and Peter to the site of this first trial. Yes, both had forsaken Him and fled earlier, had not gotten far, and decided to turn and follow Jesus. John had an acquaintance with the high priest, and so was able to enter and observe. Peter stayed on the outside. God might have revealed to John what happened in the trial, or he could have learned of it through research. But in this case he was there and reported things as he saw and heard them (1 John 1:3). John was able also to get a pass for Peter to enter at some point.

17) Here is the first of Peter’s three denials, fulfilling Christ’s prediction to him. He boasted when he should have been humble; he slept when he should have prayed. Now he denies when he should have confessed! Small failures unrepented-of may soon turn into large sins.

18) Here are two somewhat strange things - servants hanging out with officers, and a saint hanging out with sinners. We are so much shaped by the company we keep that we ought always to seek the association of people of faith. Here Peter failed in that also.

TRIAL OF JESUS

REQUEST BY THE PRIEST

19) Annas (here called the high priest, which office he held alternatingly with Caiaphas) interrogated Jesus about His followers and His teaching. It is certain that he was pursuing getting Jesus to say things they could use as a basis for charges against Him - which indeed they did in the end.

REPLY OF JESUS

20), 21) The answer Jesus gave is not sarcastic, but plain. “Why do you ask ***Me***? Thousands have heard Me teach on hillsides, by the Lake, in synagogues and the Temple. All My teaching was public and open, so you could ask others what I taught. That would be better than asking Me.”

REACTION OF THE SOLDIER

22) One officer perceived it as sarcasm and slapped Jesus, saying, “Is that any way to respond to the high priest?” So often we mistake the intentions of people’s words and act improperly in response. It becomes us to react slowly or not at all until we know the certainty of what is said and meant.

REBUKE BY JESUS

23) What a dignified answer from the majestic Christ! In a trial testimony is preferred over bullying; that is all Jesus requested. Though we have little information on the appropriate behavior at Jewish trials, we can be sure that this action of the officer was inappropriate. The answer of Jesus showed His mercy and grace in the face of being terribly wronged.

REMOVAL TO CAIAPHAS

24) Annas left Jesus bound and then sent Him to his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the current acting high priest. The second religious trial would take place there. Today a beautiful church maintained by the Sisters of the Assumption Catholic order stands marking the traditional site of Caiaphas’ house.

RETURN TO PETER (DENIALS 2 AND 3)

25), 26), 27) Now John records Peter’s second and third denials. The first two questions about his being a disciple of Jesus were asked in a way that suggested a negative answer: “You are not one of...?” But the third interrogation required a positive answer, and Peter’s denial was more heated, more defined, even with cursing and an oath (learned from the other gospels, though John makes no such distinction). Immediately the rooster crowed, and Peter knew that his boasting was vain and his promise empty. No doubt his heart was broken, and we see him later abandoning his post.

The movements of Jesus on Thursday evening and Friday morning go like this: 1) He and the disciples leave the upper room, exit the city, cross the Kidron Valley, and go to Gethsemane on the Mt of Olives. 2) Arrested in the garden He is taken to Annas and then to Caiaphas, and ultimately to the Sanhedrin, 3) Caiaphas next sends Him to Pilate at the Antonia Fortress (NW corner of Temple Mount). 4) Pilate sends Jesus to Herod. 5) The king sends Him back to Pilate. 6) From Pilate, Jesus is taken to Golgotha, where He is crucified. The fullest single-gospel-writer description of these movements is recorded in Luke, chs 22, 23.

SEVEN MOVEMENTS IN THE CIVIL TRIALS OF JESUS, 4 OUTSIDE, 3 INSIDE

1- ACCUSATION (18:28-32) OUTSIDE

28) This corresponds to step 3) above. The political circumstance of Israel in those days required them to submit capital crime cases to the Roman governor in Jerusalem, and that man was Pontius Pilate. The hypocrisy of avoiding “ceremonial uncleanness” while trying to murder the sinless Son of God is incredible, yet it is true. They would smugly sit down at the Passover Seder with the blood of Jesus Christ dripping from their hands. Peter would rail against them, “you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”

29) And so the drama continues as the Roman procurator, in great pomp and circumstance, comes out of his palace to address the accusers of Jesus. No doubt he was on an elevated platform or balcony to look down on them. One of the 4 towers of the Antonia Fortress was built to be higher than the pinnacle of the Temple for the same purpose. As he asks for the charges, they know (begrudgingly) that the Romans are their masters.

30) Their very rude answer shows their disdain for the “Gentile dog” with whom they are forced to deal. And because Israel was a sort of “punishment assignment” for Roman leaders, he did not like being there any more than they liked his presence. There is clearly a mutual reproach here. Pilate was giving them a hard time because he knew why they were trying to get rid of Jesus - Pilate knew they envied Him (according to Matthew 27:18).
31), 32) Here is a scene of unthinkable injustice, and held by the Gentile judge. The Jewish leaders have brought Jesus to Pilate for trial; they have done this because as a suzerainty under Roman rule, the most serious matters had to be determined by the Roman Procurator in the land - they could not slay Jesus themselves. For many years critics of the Bible argued that there was no record in secular history of this procurator. A seat marker was found in the theater in Caesarea with Pontius Pilate’s name on it, attesting to the truth of Scripture. The critics have been strangely silent on this issue since then. The inability of the Jews to execute criminals worked to the fulfilling of Hebrew Scripture statements, as well as those of Jesus about how He would die. This prevented His bones from being broken (Ps 34:20), caused Him to be lifted up (Jn 3:14), and joined Jew and Gentile in His execution (Ps 2:1,2).
2- EXAMINATION (18:33-37) INSIDE
33) Because the Jews wanted Jesus executed, and because rumors of Him abounded, Pilate feared that word of a possible insurrection might reach Rome, causing him political problems. He therefore had Jesus brought in to question Him further. One wonders how such a weak-willed, selfish man came into such a high position in the first place. But God would use Pilate to accomplish His will and fulfill His prophetic Word. What a wonder!
34) Pilate’s question was straightforward - ”Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus responded with a 2-part question of His own - “Where did you get this information? On your own? Or from others?” Remember, Luke 23:2 tells us the Jewish leaders had brought charges against Him, including an alleged claim that He Himself was a King. Pilate should have been better informed about the area he governed, but he was a poor and weak leader.
35) The Roman procurator seemed totally frustrated. He asked the prisoner, the Man on trial, two strange questions. The first, “Am I a Jew?” Does this show scorn for this hated race? Or is he excusing his ignorance of Jewish matters by his being a Gentile? The last question should never be asked of the accused - “What is it you have done?” No system of justice requires a man to condemn himself. Governor Pilate is thoroughly frustrated.
36) Christ’s kingdom has two aspects - a spiritual present one, in which He rules in the lives of those who trust Him, and a future, manifest one, in which He will reign over the earth from David’s throne. Neither one is a kingdom of rebellion or insurrection. Each kingdom is achieved by totally “other-worldly” means. Now men submit in inward faith to the Lordship of Jesus; to come is a kingdom in which nations will submit to His outward rule.
37) So much is here! Jesus responds to further discussion about His being a King by saying that He is. He mentions His birth, but makes it clear that it was not His beginning - “I came into this world.” His kingdom is one characterized by truth - a strange thing in this world of deceit. Men must choose - we must take sides, and if we are on the side of truth, we will listen to Jesus. The Spirit in a believer is drawn to the truth about Jesus.
3- EXONERATION (18:38-40) OUTSIDE
38) Pilate asks a question which we must all answer, “What is ‘truth?’” Simply stated, truth is that which is consistent with reality. Reality is that we are sinners who need a Savior, and Jesus came into the world to be that Savior. Jesus declared Himself to be “the Truth” in John 14:6. He is the central Truth of all time for all men. He is the Door we must each enter, the Issue we must every one face, and the Judge whose justice we cannot escape.
39), 40) There was apparently a custom at this high holiday that the Roman governor would pardon

and release one high-profile Jewish prisoner selected by the Jews. It also seems that he hoped to release Jesus as that pardoned Prisoner and be free of this dilemma he faced. His problem: there was no real judicial reason to execute Jesus, but the people seemed bent on His death. They were so determined in this that Pilate knew an uprising might follow, and that would make him - the keeper of the peace - look bad. So maybe here is the solution to this “catch 22” - get the people to ask him to free Jesus! But it was not to be! They cried out for Pilate to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus. O, the blindness of willful unbelief and sin!

JOHN, CHAPTER 19

4- HUMILIATION (19:1-3) INSIDE

1) Luke (23:16) advises that Pilate intended that this flogging was to precede the release of Jesus. Did he hope the Jews would be satisfied with the humiliation and pain inflicted on this One they hated so much? We cannot be sure, but perhaps so. The trials and humiliation of Jesus fulfilled prophecies like Isaiah 50:6, Lamentations 3:30, and Micah 5:1. The short-handled scourge had several leather straps with bits of metal or sharp pointed bone at their ends. The blows inflicted with this instrument always brought maximum misery and often caused death.

2) Dozens, perhaps scores of thorns in the crown they made were pressed into the head of Jesus. Since there is no depth of skin here, awful blood flow would follow, making His face completely covered with blood! What a sight it must have been! To further mock His claims as being Israel’s King, they dressed Jesus in a robe of purple - the color reserved for the rich and royal.

3) The last verbs are imperfect, depicting action going on over an extended period of time. “They kept on coming, and they said over and over, ‘hail, King of the Jews.’ They unceasingly struck Him with their hands” - in my mind’s eye I see this as slapping and punching in the face - such humiliation!

5- DESPERATION (19:4-7) OUTSIDE

4), 5) What a pathetic Figure Pilate brings out now before the people, having commanded or allowed Jesus to be so mistreated. Great blood loss from His back and sides for the flogging, a garment blood-soaked, especially on the back, His entire head a bloodied sphere, stumbling in weakness, perhaps with tears streaming down His cheeks - O, my; I must turn away. I cannot gaze on such. For the second of three times (18:38, 19:6) Pilate declares that he finds Jesus to have committed no crime. He requires the crowd, including the Jewish leaders, to look at this beaten, battered, bloody shell of a man. Will their gaze make them feel bad for Him? Will they reverse their course and cry “Enough has been done!?” No, not at all; they are bloodthirsty, and they are insistent that He die!

6), 7) How they cried out for His death! “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate challenges them with something they cannot do - “Crucify Him yourselves!” The terms of peace between Israel and Rome removed from Israel the tight to execute capital felons - that is why they are dealing with Pilate in the first place! It was God’s way of fulfilling the Scriptures that clearly described crucifixion, such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. They shouted to Pilate that Jesus should die because He committed blasphemy, making Himself the Son of God. But it was not blasphemy, because He was God’s Son!

6- INVESTIGATION (19:8-11) INSIDE

8), 9) The relating of Jesus’ claim to deity rattled Pilate, and it led him to further interrogate Jesus. No doubt he had seen in the conduct and answers of Jesus a rare and exceptional dignity, an other-worldly presence. Was this Man indeed related to God? “Where are you from?” Pilate queried, but Jesus remained silent. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7.

10) Pilate seems more than a little perturbed that Jesus refuses to answer him. “Aren’t You going to reply? You do know, don’t You, that the authority to release or crucify You is mine?” This is the typical “Don’t You know who I am?” statement of weak men in high office. The better question would be from Jesus to Pilate, “Don’t <u>you</u> know who I AM?”

11) All authority is delegated by God. Pilate is under God’s authority and will give account for how he

uses that authority which is allowed him. It is Caiaphas, the high priest, who has the greater sin. While sin is sin, and it is all wrong, there are degrees of punishment for gradations of sin - see Luke 12:47, 48. Pilate will pay for his sin, but Caiaphas will pay much more. The latter had so much more light, therefore his responsibility is greater.

7- CONDEMNATION (19:12-16) OUTSIDE

12) His mystical fear of Jesus made him want to release Him, but then there were the people. They could make it difficult for him, and they implied such by reminding the governor of their charge that this Jesus was an insurrectionist against Caesar because He claimed to be a King. Now Pilate will squirm more than ever!

13) We have had leaders who charted their course based on opinion polls, simply to be popular with the people. Men who operate like that are modern-day Pontius Pilates. Unable to change his mind, unwilling to stand by what was right, Pilate takes the next step. He brings Jesus out for public judgment at the Stone Pavement.

14) Some argue that these events happened on Wednesday, or Thursday. It seems clear that it was Friday, the day on which the Sabbath began at sundown. It is 6:00 A.M., and there is an early morning assembly at the Fortress of Antonia. The governor taunts his adversaries, “Look at your King!” They will not bend or yield.

15) Here is a statement of indictment of that generation of Abraham’s children. When faced with the choice to crucify or release Jesus, they cry for His death. When Pilate speaks of His being their King, they cry with bitterness, hostility, and venom, “We have no king but Caesar!” This is a blasphemous fulfilling of Psalm 2:1-3.

16) The mockery of a trial has ended. Weak, and without the strength of moral conviction, Pilate yields to the pressure of those he governs and hands Jesus over to the executioners. The deed is to be done. Jesus is to be crucified. Man's injustice will be the means of God's justice being satisfied in the saving of condemned sinners. Pilate gives up the fight. He wanted to free Jesus, but he wanted more to placate the Jews and keep Rome off his back. He took the easy way out, but faced a hard thing when death later came and he discovered that temporary comfort was not a fair exchange for eternal doom. My Friend, what will you do with Jesus?

The final verses of chapter 19 take us outside the city to Golgotha and the Garden Tomb.

THE SINFUL WORK OF MEN (19:17-24)

WISHES OF THE JEWS

17) The scene is almost too gruesome to think on. The Man condemned for our sins carries our cross and heads outside the city. From the Fortress of Antonio (on the northern edge of Temple Mount) to the hill called "skull" was about a half-mile walk. Jesus began the journey carrying His own cross. What He bore for you and me!

18) How perfectly Jesus fulfilled Scripture, even in His death! Lev 24:14 outside the camp; Isa 53:9,12 death with the wicked; Dan 9:26 Messiah shall be cut off. The two thieves typify how men can respond to Jesus. One rejected Him with scorn; the other repented and believed. Which thief represents you today? Have you repented of your sins and trusted this Jesus as your Savior?

WRITING BY PILATE

19) We often entertain ex-convicts at the Rescue Mission; most of them like to keep their crimes a secret. Rome informed passers-by of the crime for which a man was crucified. In this case Pilate printed the following - “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” The Jewish leaders had forced Pilate’s hand - now he was getting back at them. But what he wrote was absolutely the truth! Jesus was executed for Who He was, not for what He did!

20) Just outside the northern city wall’s Damascus Gate Jesus was crucified. Much traffic caused that many saw what Pilate wrote. Its being written in the three languages made sure all who could read could read it. Aramaic was the language of the Jews; Greek the language of the world’s commerce;

Latin, the official language of Rome. Pilate covered all the bases in his successful attempt to irritate those who had put him such a position as this!
21), 22) The prosecutor-Jews stood and said, “I object. Rather write that this was His claim!” Judge Pilate smacked the gavel down on the desk and replied, “OVER-RULED! What I have written stands written.” How strange that in such a crude ploy, Pilate finally speaks the truth. What he wrote would indeed stand written, for it had been written aforetime by the prophets. It was a truth made known to men by God, and here, He Who spoke long before by the mouth of a donkey, speaks eternal truth by the mouth of a profligate Roman governor! God knows how to get His Word out, even when men attempt to stifle it by murder. Pilate knew how to play the game as well as did the Jewish leaders, and he got the upper hand with this move. Or was it God’s move?

WICKEDNESS OF THE SOLDIERS

23), 24) Here is a strange irony - “To the victor belongs the spoils.” These Roman conquerors of Israel, executioners of her King, add to their soldier’s pay by confiscating the last belongings of the Condemned, His clothing. Four of them divided among themselves His sandals, prayer shawl, tunic, and belt. A fifth piece remained, more valuable than the others, for which they gambled. This fulfilled the prophecy of Ps 22:18. The irony is that it was He Who was the real Victor! And if these men could learn to trust Him, He would provide for them clothing for the soul. Through faith in Jesus any person can find themselves robed in His righteousness before God.

THE SAVING WORK OF CHRIST (19:25-37)

CARE FOR MARY

25) John provides a short list of some of the people who were brave enough to come and stand near the cross. We should not be surprised that the list is all women (though there will be at least one male disciple named later). It was a woman (Mary of Bethany) who shattered social protocol and entered a men’s meal to anoint Jesus. It was a woman (the Syro-Phoenecian) who begged Jesus for help for her daughter. It would be women who would come early to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus and find Him gone. God bless the three Mary’s mentioned here, and the unnamed aunt of Jesus on Mary’s side.
26), 27) I never cease to be awed by this part of the crucifixion scene. Here Jesus suffers as no man ever did, before or after, dying to fulfill the law’s demands. In the midst of that great transaction and suffering, He obeys the law by honoring His mother in a very special way. He entrusts her for care to His beloved disciple. John is to be to her as a son, treating her as if she were his own mother. He asked for no response, just obedience. No doubt the emotion of seeing the suffering of her Son made a sword pierce through her own soul (just as Simeon had predicted 33 years before). Though John had fled in the Garden, thank God he had the courage to return!

CRY OF THIRST

28) Ps 22:13 and 69:21 were prophecies of Jesus' thirst on the cross. Here they, too, are fulfilled. The agonies of Calvary were surely the worst man could inflict on the Son of God! His physical suffering was great, but His spiritual suffering greater. "The soul of His suffering was the suffering of His soul." - R. G. Lee. Jesus willingly endured these things, physical and spiritual, in order that you and I might be saved. "O, what love, that He should die for me, saving grace thus to supply for me...”

COMPLETION OF THE TASK

29), 30) Here is Jesus on the cross, suffering all at the hands of man and God that was intended for you and me. It was our sins that nailed and kept Him there; we are the guilty, He was the sacrifice. The fires of God's wrath against our sin were taking their toll on Him. He suffered tortuous pain and killing thirst. He refused pain reliever, but accepted a drink of the wine-vinegar lifted to Him on a sponge. Having had the drink, Jesus now finishes His business with God for our sins. He makes a declaration, "It is finished!" If a worker used this term, it meant his task was done. A merchant meant the transaction was completed, and the debt was paid in full. All of this may apply here, Jesus finished

the work God gave Him to do; He completed the picture God was painting, and He paid in full the debt for our sins. "It is finished!" And we praise the Lord!

CONFIRMATION OF DEATH

31) There is unending debate about the timing of Christ's crucifixion. The best (as it seems to me) data is that He went on the cross at 9:00 AM Friday and was removed just before sundown (6:00 PM) on that same day. Read about bodies being removed from the places of hanging before night (Deut. 21:23; Josh. 8:29; 10:26, 27). To be in the grave any part of Friday before sundown counts as a day buried. Then there was 6:00 PM Friday until 6:00 PM Saturday, another day buried. Finally. Any time after sundown on Saturday counts as another day buried, satisfying the Jonah prophecy and the predictions of Jesus that He would rise on the third day. Legs broken would cause men to suffocate, since they could not push up with their feet and legs to relieve the constriction on their diaphragms.
32), 33) They did indeed break the legs of the other two, bringing quick death. Jesus had already dismissed His spirit by an act of His will, so that His legs need not be broken.
34) The flow of blood and water from the pierced side of Jesus displays His humanity. This is exactly what you would expect to see when the abdomen is pierced, possibly even up to the heart.
35), 36), 37) John, without using his own name or even the first person personal pronouns, records that he saw these things and testifies to them as the truth of what he saw. He mentions two purposes for these events and their being recorded: 1- that men might believe, and 2- that Scripture might be fulfilled. He refers first to Psalm 34:20, where it was predicted that none of His bones would be broken. The next Scripture is one of those that has dual fulfillment - Zechariah 12:10. It has one fulfillment here, and it has a second in the end times - Revelation 1:7. The pierced Christ was looked upon there on the cross. He will be seen again when He comes again.

THE SACRED BURIAL OF CHRIST (38-42)

PEOPLE AT THE BURIAL

38) Some say there is no such thing as a secret disciple - they will have to wrestle with this text on their own. I have no help for them. Joseph of Arimathea's fear of the Jews was overcome when he courageously approached Pilate to beg permission to take Jesus' body down for burial. What a man!

PREPARATION OF THE BODY

39), 40) This answers the question left by the third chapter of John - "Did Jesus get Nicodemus?" It appears He did catch him in the gospel net, eh? Here he is at night again, not questioning Jesus this time, but honoring Him. Joseph and Nicodemus respected Jewish burial traditions in their handling of His vacated body. They wrapped and anointed it, no doubt mixing some of their tears with the spices. This was an act of courage and love, and we commend these men for what they did.

PLACING OF THE BODY

41), 42) I am one of those who believes a strong case can be made for Gordon's Calvary as the place of Jesus' execution and the garden tomb as the place of His burial. So much that is written here and elsewhere works for those locations. I will, however, say with the Brits who guide us there from time to time that it is more important ***that*** these things happened than ***where*** they occurred. The gospel will be complete come Sunday morning when Jesus rises from the grave, never to die again

JOHN, CHAPTER 20

ARRIVAL AT THE GRAVE ((1-10)

REPORT OF MARY

1) It's the first Easter morning, and a sunrise service is to be attended by women only. Others are mentioned in other gospels, but only Mary Magdalene is pointed out here. This one was forgiven much, loved much, and came to the tomb of her Lord. Shabbat has ended a good many hours ago, and the sunrise now lights the way to the tomb. The ladies had come to anoint the body of Jesus; they

would be quite surprised to discover there was no corpse to anoint! What good news they will discover as the morning unfolds! And how gladly they share it!
2) The covering, rolling stone has been removed from the tomb's opening. Mary misinterprets the evidence to mean that Jesus' body has been removed and she rushes to advise Peter and John of what she believes has happened. Her saying "we" reveals that she was not alone on this mission. She describes it almost as a crime scene, "They have taken the Lord..." If Mary ever heard Jesus mention His resurrection, her speech and behavior here do not indicate that she understood it. But then neither did any of the others, even the twelve.

RACE OF THE TWO DISCIPLES

3), 4) Their immediate reaction is to make haste and get to the tomb. They must see for themselves just what Mary had seen. Here is an insight into the physical condition of Peter and John - John outran Peter and arrived first at the tomb. Had they perhaps been having similar footraces since childhood, these old friends? There are times when the heart gives wings to the feet, and this was such a time. If the two had been in the area of the last supper, traditionally believed to be just near the Zion Gate on the south end of the city, and if the garden tomb is the authentic burial location, then their "race" was about half a mile. This very real, lifelike touch in the story helps us to know of its authenticity - real people write real accounts, even such odd details as this. I close my eyes and see these two 30-something men hastening to verify Mary's story - was Jesus really gone from the grave?
5) John paused at the door to study things from without. The studious thinker let his eyes examine the burial clothes, probably strips of linen, lying there as if a body had just disappeared from within them. What kept John on the outside? Was it fear of ceremonial defilement? Or just his cautious nature? When groups visit the garden tomb today, you certainly can't keep them out! We step inside with awe and wonder; we depart with tears of joy.
6), 7) The more impulsive Peter arrives at the tomb and goes right in. His entrance allowed him to see something John had missed - they both saw the empty burial strips, but Peter also saw the facial napkin lying apart from the graveclothes, and folded neatly. Think of it - when you wake up late, or are for any reason rushing away, you might make the bed hurriedly, you might just leave it unmade. Thieves stealing a corpse from a guarded tomb would scarcely take the time for such a delicate touch. Who, I ask you, would, when armed Roman guards wait just outside the tomb, take time to unwrap the corpse and leave the long, narrow strips of linen on the burial couch? But, O, the risen, living Son of God would have plenty of time to leave a calling card, if you please - to say by this action, "I rise in power and I leave the tomb in peace." Is that Deity at its best, or what!?

RESULT OF THE EXAMINATION

8) Encouraged by Peter's entrance, John enters the tomb. He had seen the cloths, Peter viewed them attentively, and now John sees them with discernment, and he believes. The question then is, does this declare that John believed Mary's account of the missing body? Or does John now believe in the risen Christ? The former would be redundant, and the latter seems to be the better choice. Not understanding it all yet, nonetheless he believed.
9) Up to this point, they had still been without understanding; perhaps Peter still doesn't get it, but he will soon - just wait. Paul will later declare "that Christ rose on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:5). Clearly here John means us to understand that the Hebrew Scriptures proclaim the resurrection of Messiah. Examine Psalm 16:10; Psalm 22:15, 22; Isa 25:8; Isa 53:10-12; and look at Jonah's picture of rising from the dead.
10) Did you ever want to get home in a hurry because you had good news to share with a loved one? I certainly have, too. John tells us that the two disciples, having gotten to the scene, examined the evidence, and reached their conclusions, went away to their respective homes. Do you remember Jesus' commission to John from the cross? There was a lady waiting at John's residence who would be thrilled to learn her Son was risen.

THE AFFECTION OF MARY (11-18)

LOVE REMAINS BEHIND

11), 12) Mary Magdalene had come to the tomb and seen the stone sitting to the side away from the opening. She rushed into Jerusalem to tell the disciples, and Peter and John came to the garden. They found the tomb empty, and went back into town. Mary lingered at the scene, weeping. She musters up courage to look into the cave. To her surprise, Jesus is gone, and two angels are sitting in His burial place! Mary's devotion to and love for Christ is amazing. In 19:25 we see her standing by the cross with John and 3 other women. Now she is 1st at His grave after the Sabbath ended. She who had been forgiven much, loved much. May we love Christ as she did.

13) The angels speak to Mary, asking the cause of her tears. Do they understand her human emotion? Do they think she knows of the resurrection already, and should not, therefore, be weeping? All we know is they ask; and Mary answers. Peter and John saw not these angels - perhaps they were sent specifically to comfort Mary.

LOVE MAKES A REQUEST

14) Suddenly she wheeled about - maybe she heard a sound, or felt a presence. There she was, standing face-to-face with the risen Christ! But she did not recognize Him. Did He hide His identity? Were her eyes too full of tears to see clearly? Thinking Him dead, could she not grasp that this was He? "The Lord is near the brokenhearted."

15) The tomb in which Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus was in a garden - one like it, or perhaps the very one - can be seen today in Jerusalem, just outside the Old City's walls. Mary, in this garden, mistook the risen Christ for its gardener. When He asked the cause of her tears and the reason of her presence there, she asked if He had moved the body of Jesus, and if so, where might she find it. Did she really think she could move a dead body?

LOVE RECOGNIZES JESUS

16) And now one of the great recognition scenes of all history - Jesus speaks her name in a way only He could, and she knows instantly Who He is. Jesus said (10:4) that His sheep know His voice, and this one did. With joy she reverts to her native tongue, Aramaic, and calls out to Him with a name of respect and endearment - "Rabboni!" Had she been glad to see the angels in the tomb, she was gladder still to see Jesus out of the tomb - "Risen!"

LOVE'S ACTIONS ARE RESTRAINED

17) Much misunderstanding has been had over this text. Some would teach that Jesus disallowed physical contact with him until after some secret ascension in which He presented His blood to the Father. I cannot see that in Scripture at all. What is here is that Mary grabbed his feet (Matt 28:9), and He tells her that it is not in the flesh that He is to be clung to any longer. His physical absence will be overshadowed by His spiritual presence.

18) His command to go tell the disciples that he is risen (and what His message was) is immediately obeyed. One of the first to share the news of the resurrection, Mary Magdalene found out how it felt to be disbelieved, for Luke tells us that her words seemed to them as nonsense. The truth will not always find a welcome reception, but we must continue to share it nonetheless. Remember, the gospel is God's power unto salvation to the believer.

THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST TO HIS DISCIPLES (19-29)

PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION - PART 1 - TO THE 10

19) It is the resurrection Sunday, and the disciples are yet afraid of the Jews, who recently had executed their Head; what might they do to the lesser lights if they feared not to crucify their Leader? So they have found a secure place to hide, have gathered, and have locked the doors. Are they discussing the events of the week? Do they talk now about the reports of His body missing, and of His being seen by some, including the women? Suddenly He is there - and the door never opened! Fear rises in each heart; He calms the fears with His word of "Peace."

20) This was the 5th appearance He had made that day, and the 1st in which He now gives physical proof of His identity. He showed them the wounds, causes for glory, like our purple heart medal worn by wounded soldiers. Fear is replaced by joy, as they examine His body and know for sure that this is their Teacher, Friend, Savior! What kind of body was this that could eat a piece of fish, be touched, and yet pass through solid, unlocked doors?

PREVIEW OF COMING MINISTRIES

21) John writes in Greek, but I cannot help but think that Jesus spoke in Hebrew when he said, "Peace." "Shalom" is the word - a word of greeting, a soothing "hello." Fears now calmed, He gets down to business. "The Father sent Me into this world, and now I send you into the same world. I came to make the way; you go to tell the way. I came to save; you go to share. I took your place on the cross; now you take my place in the world. We are commissioned to be witnesses to a lost world of the grace, love, mercy, and salvation of God in Jesus Christ.

22) What have we here? Is this, as some say, a secret beginning to the church? Is this elite group receiving the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost? The command to carry the gospel to the world requires the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit. That power would come at Pentecost, but here I believe Jesus actually only predicts that event. He gives them a sign for which to look, with the sound of a hard breath being expelled. Fifty days later, they heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind as the Spirit came, and they doubtless remembered this night's events.

23) Our dear Catholic friends have erroneously seen in this text an apostolic authority to personally forgive sins - an authority passed on to the Pope and his emissaries today. The fact is that Jesus here was telling the believers they could proclaim sins forgiven by God. What they proclaim on earth (in accord with the Word) has already been settled in heaven. We may safely say, "If you will trust Jesus Christ as Savior, your sins will be forgiven." And, "If you refuse God's Son, your sins are bound to you, and you will suffer for them in the lake of fire."

PROOF OF RESURRECTION - PART 2 - TO THOMAS

24) We know not the reason for Thomas' absence on this first Lord's Day meeting - only that he was not with his peers. How much he missed by seeking solitude rather than fellowship, or by following other pursuits instead of spiritual ones. Another whole week of uncertainty was his - filled with the doubts that give him the name, "Doubting Thomas." Let us seek time with Christ's people, and let us pass that time in spiritual pursuits rather than carnal.

25) This verse tells us what he doubted - the resurrection. The others "kept on telling him" (imperfect tense). Again and again they tried (in vain) to convince him they had seen the Lord. All week long he doubted, saying his faith required sight of the wounds. Lest we be too hard on Thomas, no one else seems to have believed until they had seen the Lord, either. Since Jesus was patient with the doubter, so should we be.

26) One is reminded here of Paul's sentiment in Philippians 1, "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better...but to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Surely home beckoned to the risen Savior - heaven, angels, the Father. But His little flock had further need of Him, so He would wait awhile. Another week has passed, and the fearful group is still keeping behind locked doors. This time Thomas is present; they have persuaded him to wait upon Jesus for a demonstration that would help him believe as they had. and Jesus does not fail; "Shalom," is His greeting to them.

27) The omniscient Christ need not be told of Thomas' doubt and demands. He knew it all, and worked to help His weak follower. Descending to the plane of Thomas' need, Jesus answers each of the four requirements His disciple had set forth. 1- "Unless I see..." *"See my hands..."* 2- "And put my finger..." *"Bring here your finger..."* 3- "And put my hand..." *"bring your hand, and put it..."* 4- "I will not believe..." *"stop doubting and believe..."*

28) We have no record that Thomas actually did a physical investigation of the wounds of Jesus. He may have, but I rather think that hearing His voice, and seeing the wounded Christ was enough for the

once-doubting disciple. In confidence, he bursts forth with one of Scripture's most profound confessions of faith - "My Lord and my God." In one brief statement he affirms faith in the sovereignty and deity of the Son of God. This was a leap of faith for a Jew, especially in Jesus' day - to identify with an executed enemy of the state. GO THOMAS!
29) For Thomas, seeing was believing, and yet we doubt not His faith. That age was the exception, this age is the norm. Paul wrote, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). 1 Peter 1:8 further describes the joy of trusting in Him Whom we have not seen. I'll never forget the response of my maternal grandmother to my question as to whether she knew the Lord. "Yes, with the eye of faith I have seen Him, and know He is my Savior." "...faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1).
THE AIM OF JOHN'S GOSPEL - TO GIVE LIGHT AND LIFE
30), 31) John's gospel is written around seven miracles performed by Jesus that demonstrated that he was God. The apostle here tells us that Jesus did many other such signs that John did not record. Then he gives a purpose statement for his gospel - **"...**but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." This hardly requires any explanation, but I will put a P.S. - "You cannot think right in the rest unless you think right in Him." What an apt statement captured when I was a youngster from the preaching of a great Canadian evangelist, Dr. Walter Hughes.

JOHN, CHAPTER 21
A REUNION OVER BREAKFAST (1-14)
AN UNPROFITABLE NIGHT FISHING
1) Only John of the four gospels records what we find here, and he was part of the scene that he describes (verse 2). Sometime after the second Sunday's visit of Jesus with the disciples these things occurred; that's the time. The place is on the shore of the Galilee. Near here Jesus performed 22 of His 35 recorded miracles. This appearance is compelling in its content and its challenge to us all.
2) Seven disciples are together here, two of them unnamed in the text. Surely their many months together with Jesus had made them a close band, and even now they desired each other's company.
3) Peter's statement to his six friends could refer to a one-time fishing trip; the language also admits to the possibility that he was returning to his former vocation. Did he because of his failures feel unworthy to continue as a "fisher of men?" Jesus does seem to re-commission him by the fire at breakfast later in the chapter. Whichever is correct, the night's fishing was a miserable failure.
AN UNRECOGNIZED STRANGER
4) Morning comes, and on the not-too-distant shore they see a man standing. It is Jesus, but they cannot tell Who it is. We know not the reason for their inability to identify Him, for the text doesn't say.
5) Jesus opens the conversation with a question that implies a negative answer, "Lads, you don't have anything to eat, do you?" They give the honest and proper answer, "No."
AN UNPRECEDENTED CATCH
6) He directs them to cast their net a last time on the right side of the boat. Still not knowing Who He is, they instinctively obey. The result is such a catch of fish that the seven of them cannot pull the net into the boat, even though they "kept on trying!"
UNVEILED CHRIST
7) Here again is an illustration of John's early insight and Peter's early actions. John recognizes the Lord, either by seeing Him better or because of the events they experienced. Peter grabs his outer garment and dives into the water.
8) The other six men maneuvered the boat the hundred yards to the shore. The fish-laden net was still in the water, but connected to the boat. Peter's impulse is commendable, and so is their industry.
9) Is this the only time we read of Jesus having prepared a meal for the disciples? It was what we

have enjoyed numerous times by the Galilee, a meal of fish and bread.

AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION

10), 11) Jesus directed them to bring some of their fish, leading to Peter beginning to drag the net to shore. Did the others have to join him because of its weight? The text doesn't say. In the fashion of fishermen even today, they counted their catch, and there were 153 large fish! If this was to be their final Galilee fishing excursion, it certainly was one of their best, thanks to Jesus!

12), 13), 14) How sweet must have sounded those words of Jesus, "Come and dine." John later wrote of Jesus saying to His children, "I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me." His identity was now certain, so no questions were asked about Who He was. Peter led in the fishing trip, but Jesus led at breakfast. Did it look familiar to see Him distributing fish and bread? Certainly it did, but this time it was with nail-scarred hands. There were over a dozen post-resurrection appearances of Jesus; this, John calls this one the third of those.

THE RESTORATION OF A BROKEN-HEARTED DISCIPLE (15-19)

A DIFFICULT QUESTION, A HUMBLE ANSWER, A LOVING CHARGE

15) These five verses are so precious; I have shared them many times by the Galilee, and always with a lump in my throat. This after-breakfast conversation has given hope to many who have departed from the way. Jesus addresses Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He uses Peter's old name, and He asks if Peter has the kind of love that he had boasted about - the kind that would make one sacrifice for the benefit of the one loved - *agape* love, it is. He even puts a comparative with it, "more than these." Peter's response is on a lower plane; he asserts that Jesus intuitively knows that Peter's attachment to Him is of a lesser kind (he uses the word *phileo*, not *agape*) than asked (and often formerly asserted by Peter). Jesus gives Peter a command to an ongoing ministry of caring for His little lambs. Does He imply that Peter needs to leave the lake? Does Peter infer it?

A DOWNGRADED QUESTION, A HUMBLE ANSWER, A LOVING CHARGE

16) Christ's second question varies from the first only in that He drops the comparative. It is no longer about Peter's professed superiority of love over the others; now it is simply a matter of "Do you love Me?" What a probing question? Jesus uses the same high word (*agape*) as before. Peter's answer is identical to his earlier one. Jesus slightly alters His challenge, from "feed my lambs" to "tend my sheep." The subtle difference does not change the fact that it is not about fish that Peter is to live, it is about people, the sheep of Christ's pasture.

A DEVASTATING QUESTION, A HUMBLE ANSWER, A LOVING CHARGE

17) The series of questions ends with this third one. "Simon, do you love me?" It is a lowered requirement from the earlier questions, but a good one nonetheless. "Simon, you say you are drawn to me with *phileo* love - the kind that sees an advantage in the relationship, that even seeks to receive from the One loved, not just 'give,' as in *agape*." Peter is grieved at the third asking (does he recall here the three denials? Or is his grief from the lowered requirement?). When we fall as believers, all is not lost. Confession and repentance are part of the road back to faithful and fruitful service. When we give up on ourselves, Jesus stays true to His call. Peter's third answer changes in two substantial ways from the two earlier identical answers. First, he says "You intuitively know all things." Second, he adds, "You know from experience (a different word for 'know' than he used before) that my love is of a lower level, the *phileo* level of love." Jesus again says, "Get back to the task I gave you."

A DIVULGING OF PETER'S FUTURE, A LOVING CHARGE

18), 19) Jesus now gives Peter a future glimpse at his personal suffering for Christ. Peter has enjoyed freedom, independence, and self-determination throughout his life. That was going to change. The time would come when he would be bound and led where he did not want to go. John recognized and reported to us that Jesus' intent was that Peter know he would be a martyr. Jesus followed this revelation with one more renewed command to service, "Keep on following Me." What a precious seaside encounter between Jesus and a fallen disciple!

A READJUSTING OF PETER'S FOCUS - IT'S ABOUT HIM AND JESUS, NO ONE ELSE (20-25)
20), 21) How strange is this! With all that Jesus has just said, focusing primarily on Peter himself, the disciple still wants to compare! So he turns to point at John and says, "What about him?" Simon is still Simon, but Pentecost will transform him into Peter!
22), 23), 24), 25) This post-script by John, who never identifies himself as the author, is very telling. Peter has responded to Jesus' indication of how he (Peter) would die by then asking about John. The reply of Jesus implies that Peter should focus on Peter following Jesus and not worry about John. The disciples were quite human in their attitudes and behavior to say the least - "who will be first?" "If I have to die, what about John?" The others mistake Christ's answer to suggest that John will live until He returns. It was a hypothetical, not a statement of what will be, as John points out 60 years later here. John almost swears to the validity and credibility of his written testimony. He was an eyewitness and a faithful reporter; we can believe what he saw and said. With perhaps a little hyperbole John asserts that he limited what he included in his record, but that Jesus did so much more than what is written here. Perhaps eternity will afford us an opportunity to learn more about His great earthly ministry. We are indebted here to John for this wonderful record of the life and ministry of Jesus. For many folks, John is their "gospel of choice" for study and memorization. It is such a blessing.
[Finished on Sept 3, 2016]