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***John***  
***(Mast. Theology Students)***

## CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Introduction by Dr Jonathan James</i>	3
John-Subject Description & Learning Outcomes	4-5
Examples of Typical Subject Plans & Examination Papers	6-13
COURSE NOTES	14-112
The First Epistle of John	15-16
The Second Epistle of John	17-18
The Third Epistle of John	19-20
Revelation	21-22
Introduction to John's Gospel	23-26
Chapter One	27-32
Chapter Two	33-35
Chapter Three	36-38
Chapter Four	39-42
Chapter Five	43-46
Chapter Six	47-51
Chapter Seven	52-57
Chapter Eight	58-61
Chapter Nine	62-64
Chapter Ten	65-67
Chapter Eleven	68-72
Chapter Twelve	73-79
Chapter Thirteen	80-82
Chapter Fourteen	83-86
Chapter Fifteen	87-89
Chapter Sixteen	90-92
Chapter Seventeen	93-95
Chapter Eighteen	96-100
Chapter Nineteen	101-105
Chapter Twenty	106-108
Chapter Twenty One	109-110
Acknowledgements & References	111



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Dear ACOM family,

### JOHN – ACOM

My father, the late Dr. G.D. James, had a passion for evangelism. He also had a passion for training Christians locally. In a number of places he established a “School of Missions and Evangelism”. In 1977 he founded “The Tamil Bible Institute” in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. However, due to the ill health of the Principal the Institute closed in 1993. In 2000, I recommended to a number of TBI alumni, that the Bible Institute be re-established in a new form, and so ACOM was born with intensive classes commencing in Johor Bahru in 2001. Soon ACOM commenced in Kathmandu, Nepal and Yangon, Myanmar.

Until recently almost all of the teaching was done by international visiting lecturers, but from now on most of the teaching will be done by local teachers. Ideally these people will be bi-lingual. The teaching is to be given in the language of the students, but if the lecturer can read English much more resource materials are available.

To help in this way, the AEFI Board is making available a lot of helpful material such as that below. It starts with the SUBJECT DESCRIPTION. All lecturers must abide closely by this. It sets out the requirements of the ACOM Board of Regents for the subject. If, for any reason, you want to change any of it, please contact me as quickly as possible with your suggestions, so that I can discuss it with the Board and get back to you with their reply.

Following the Subject Description, we have added typical Subject Plans. These will save you a lot of time and energy. They set out, e.g., seminar topics that have been used previously. Remember, however, that all material given to the students **must** be in their own local language. Also included are Course Notes that have been given to students previously and material that will help you in your preparation.

Psalms also has a separate document called *Supplementary Lecturer’s Notes* that you as the lecturer may find helpful.

AEFI International is deeply indebted to **Dr Alan Meers** who dedicated many years in leading the development and growth of ACOM and in particular the production of these documents.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan D. James'.

(Dr.) Jonathan D. James  
International Executive Director

## SUBJECT DESCRIPTION - THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### RATIONALE

#### PURPOSE

A study of the life of Christ is fundamental to Christian life and ministry. This subject is an introductory study of Johannine literature, which presents distinctive themes in its own characteristic literary style, which supplements other approaches, such as the Pauline and Lucan.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO THE PROGRAMME

Since the Bible forms the basis of all Christian theology, life-style and ministry; a sound knowledge of this book, both Old and New Testaments, is essential for all students. This subject introduces students to Johannine Christology. At the same time it helps them further develop their skills in critical thinking and in N.T. exegesis and helps them to utilize these skills in oral exegetical presentations such as is required in expository preaching.

#### LOCATION IN COURSE

This is a Bachelor-level subject and assumes students have completed some previous N.T. exegesis studies at Diploma-level.

#### STATUS

To obtain their Bachelor's degree, all students must complete at least five biblical exegesis subjects. This is one of the subjects offered. As all pastors and missionaries need to be competent in critical thinking and biblical exegesis, assessment items emphasize these skills.

#### WORKLOAD

This subject consists of about 20 hours face-to-face teaching (consisting of twelve lectures and eight seminar groups) and a further 100 hours work to be done by each student at home.

#### CREDIT

This subject carries 3 hours of credit toward the Bachelor of Theology degree (which requires a total of 36 hours of credit, including at least 15 hours of biblical exegesis subjects).

#### PRE-REQUISITES

Students commencing the Bachelor of Theology degree programme must have previously completed a Diploma in Theology programme, preferably with some N.T. exegesis subjects.

### LECTURER

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the completion of this subject, the students will be able to:

- 1 **Describe the historical, geographical, cultural, political, and religious background of each of John's writings;**
- 2 Sketch the main content of each of John's writings and the major themes and content of each;
- 3 analyse the text of John's Gospel for its literary style and structure, and exegete the text in the light of that style and structure;
- 4 apply the teaching of John's Gospel to contemporary culture;
- 5 relate John's advice to young Christians to modern discipleship;
- 6 synthesize John's Christology; and
- 7 synthesise the theology of John.

### SUMMARY OF CONTENT

This subject is a study of the Johannine Literature - the structure, context, and themes of each. It introduces students to modern hermeneutical strategies for the interpretation of Johannine literature.

## CONTENTS

The subject includes topics such as:

- 1 an introduction to and a survey of each of John's writings;
- 2 exegesis of the text of John's Gospel;
- 3 the theology of John, including such topics as Christology, Pneumatology, Eschatology, faith and signs; and
- 4 the critical issues in the fourth gospel, such as authorship, dating, literary style and the relationship between John and the synoptic gospels.

## ASSESSMENT METHODS

All of the above learning outcomes will be assessed together in each of the three assessment methods used in this subject:

- 1 A Seminar paper and Presentation 30%;
- 1 A Major written Research Paper 30%; and
- 2 A Three-hour final written Examination 40%.

## STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

To achieve competency in this subject students must:

- 1 attend at least 85% of all classes, excluding approved absences;
- 2 obtain at least 40% of the marks allocated in each of the above assessment items; and
- 3 obtain a total grade of at least 50% in the subject.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

**The subject will include a variety of teaching and learning processes, including lectures, seminars, discussions, PowerPoint presentations, videos and research assignments.**

## CONDITIONS

Learning will take place in the classroom and other suitable study environments. For the assignments, students will have access to reference books, the internet, and journals, etc. However, in the examination no resources, apart from an unmarked Bible and a dictionary, can be used.

## TEXTBOOKS

Meers, A.F. (2007). *The Gospel of John course notes*. Duncraig, WA: Asia College of Ministry.

Meers, A.F. (2007). *The Gospel of John Course Reader*. Duncraig, WA: Asia College of Ministry.

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Carson, D.A. (1991). *The gospel according to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

Guthrie, D. (1990). *New Testament introduction*. Leicester: Apollos.

Morris, L. (1969). *Studies in the fourth gospel*. Exeter, Devon: Paternoster.

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## TYPICAL SUBJECT PLAN

ASIA COLLEGE OF MINISTRY  
The Training arm of Asia Evangelistic Fellowship

### MASTER PROGRAMME

#### THE GOSPEL OF JOHN - SUBJECT PLAN – \_\_\_\_\_, 2015

#### INTRODUCTION

It is important that you carefully read this Subject Plan as soon as you receive it.  
It explains what the subject offers and what you are required to do.

#### RATIONALE

##### PURPOSE

A study of the life of Christ is fundamental to Christian life and ministry. This subject is an introductory study of Johannine literature, which presents distinctive themes in its own characteristic literary style, which supplements other approaches, such as the Pauline and Lucan.

##### RELATIONSHIP OF THIS SUBJECT TO THE B.TH. PROGRAMME

Since the Bible forms the basis of all Christian theology, life-style and ministry; a sound knowledge of this book, both Old and New Testaments, is essential for all students. This subject introduces students to Johannine Christology. At the same time it helps them further develop their skills in critical thinking and in N.T. exegesis and helps them to utilize these skills in oral exegetical presentations such as is required in expository preaching.

##### LOCATION IN COURSE

This is a Master-level subject and assumes students have completed some previous N.T. exegesis studies at Bachelor level.

##### STATUS

To obtain their Master's degree, all students must complete at least five biblical exegesis subjects. This is one of the subjects offered. As pastors and missionaries need to be competent in critical thinking and biblical exegesis, assessment items emphasize these skills.

##### WORKLOAD

This subject consists of about twenty hours face-to-face teaching (consisting of twelve lectures and eight seminar groups) and a further 100 hours work to be done by each student at home.

##### CREDIT

This subject carries three hours of credit toward an ACOM Master degree (which requires a total of 36 hours of credit, including at least fifteen hours of biblical exegesis subjects).

##### PRE-REQUISITES

Students commencing an ACOM Master Degree programme must have previously completed a Bachelor course, preferably with some N.T. exegesis subjects.

#### LECTURER

\_\_\_\_\_

#### LECTURE TIME-TABLE

This course will be taught at \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, 2015. (DV).  
*Please note these dates carefully and plan to be at the venue on time each day.* It is essential that you have read all of the *course notes*, and *the course reader* before the lectures. Remember to bring note paper, pens, this subject Plan, *the course notes*, *the course reader* and your Bible to every class session.

#### NEXT COURSE

The subject to follow *John*, will be \_\_\_\_\_ to be held from \_\_\_\_\_, 2015 (DV). The lecturer will be \_\_\_\_\_.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the completion of this subject, the students will be able to:

- 1 analyze the text of John's Gospel for its literary style and structure, and exegete the text in the light of that style and structure;
- 2 apply the teaching of John's Gospel to contemporary culture;
- 3 relate John's advice to young Christians to modern discipleship;
- 4 discuss the accounts of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus;
- 5 exegete the text of John according to its literary structure.
- 6 synthesize John's Christology;
- 7 synthesize the theology of John;
- 8 explain how the abiding lessons of Matthew can be applied to individual Christians and churches today;**
- 9 demonstrate skills in independent research at a high level; and**
- 10 effectively share their findings orally.**

## SUMMARY OF CONTENT

This subject is a study of the Gospel of John, its structure, context, and themes. It introduces students to modern hermeneutical strategies for the interpretation of Johannine literature.

### CONTENTS

This unit includes topics such as:

- 1 exegesis of the text of John's Gospel;
- 2 the theology of John, including such topics as Christology, Pneumatology, Eschatology, faith and signs; and
- 3 the critical issues in the fourth gospel, such as authorship, dating, literary style and the relationship between John and the synoptic gospels.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

The subject will include a variety of teaching and learning processes, including lectures, seminars, discussions, Power Points, white-board and research assignments.

## SYLLABUS

DAY	SESSION	CONTENT
Monday,	1	Introduction
24 Aug	2	John 1 & Seminar 1 Exegesis 1
	3	John 2-3 & Seminar 2 Exegesis 2
	4	John 4-5 & Seminar 3 Exegesis 3
Tuesday,	5	John 6-7;
25 Aug	6	John 8-9 & Seminar 4 Exegesis 4
	7	John 10-11 & Seminar 5 Exegesis 5
	8	John 12-13 & Seminar 6 Exegesis 6
Wednesday	9	John 14-15
26 Aug	10	John 16-17 & Seminar 7 Exegesis 7
	11	John 18-19 & Seminar 8 Exegesis 8
	12	John 20-21

**Note:** It is essential that all students read *The Gospel of John*, the *Course Notes*, the *Supplementary Notes* and the *Course Reader* in preparation for the seminars and lectures.

## ASSESSMENT ITEMS

- 1 One Seminar Paper and Presentation 30%;
- 2 One Exegetical Paper and Presentation 40%; and
- 3 A 2,000 word written research paper 30%.

## STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

To pass this subject students must:

- 1 attend at least 85% of all classes, excluding approved absences;
- 2 obtain at least 40% of the marks allocated in each of the above assessment items; and
- 3 obtain a total grade of at least 50% in this subject.

## CONDITIONS

Learning will take place in the classroom and other suitable study environments. For the assignments, students will have access to reference books, the internet, and journals, etc.

## SEMINAR PAPER AND PRESENTATION

Each student must choose one topic (from the list below) and make an individual presentation on it to the class on the date shown above. Ring the ACOM Registrar (as soon as possible) to indicate your preference, as every student must present a different topic. At the beginning of your presentation you will give every student a one-page, A4 size handout (in language, typewritten if possible, may be double-sided). Your oral presentation is to be in language. Be sure to attach a “*Written Paper Cover Sheet*”; an “*Oral Presentation Evaluation Form*” and a copy of your class handout at the front of your written submission.

In preparing your presentation:

- 1 Read widely, and critically on the topic. Focus on the main points. Be selective in what you present, bearing in mind the learning outcomes and level of this subject.
- 2 Prepare a carefully structured single-sided one-page A4 handout for each class member to help them understand the subject. Be selective in what you include. Decide on the most appropriate format for the greatest clarity and impact. The handout should be referenced.
- 3 Prepare an oral presentation which identifies at least two major issues, critically analyses them and argues for a position on each of them. Allow about 15 minutes for your presentation.
- 4 You can choose the delivery style which you feel will maximize the impact of your presentation and help all class members think through the issues raised. Encourage all class members to participate, by preparing one or two questions for them to consider. As far as possible your oral presentation should be supported by appropriate visuals, e.g. use of PowerPoint, white board, diagrams, etc.

*Grades are based on both the oral presentation and the written paper. In grading the following criteria is used:*

***Oral Presentation: Carries: 10%.*** Marks will be allocated for:

- 1 understanding of the topic;
- 2 selection of the major issues;
- 3 argument for position taken; and
- 4 style and quality of presentation.

***Written paper: Carries: 20%.*** Marks will be allocated for:

- 1 level of understanding of the topic;
- 2 adequate coverage of major issues;
- 3 critical analysis of key issues;
- 4 development of arguments for position taken; and
- 5 clarity of expression, structure of paper, correct referencing, etc.

***Seminars are assessed holistically rather than according to an itemized breakdown***

## LATE SEMINAR PAPERS

If special circumstances apply, a student presenting a seminar may be granted a deferral of the submission of the written seminar paper. If the seminar paper is not submitted by the normal time (or extended date) without such approval, the student will automatically fail the unit.

## SEMINAR TOPICS

**No: Topic:**

**Required Pre-reading:**

**1 Introduction - Understanding John today**

Carson, 1991, pp. 23-40.

Explain some ways that John's Gospel has been understood in the past and today. Explain which 'understanding' seems best to you and present the evidence for your view.

**2 The conceptual background to John's Gospel**

Morris, 1995, pp. 55-62.

Explain some of the non-Christian influences that John used (consciously or unconsciously) in writing his Gospel. Discuss the significance of this for our understanding of the Gospel.

**3 The authorship of John's Gospel**

Morris, 1995, pp. 4-24.

Discuss a number of theories as to who wrote the fourth Gospel. What internal and external evidence is there to support the traditional view?

**4 The aim and purpose of John's Gospel**

Morris, 1995, pp. 4-24.

Discuss a number of theories as to the purpose of the Gospel. Explain the conclusion you came to and present the evidence for your view.

**5 Characteristics of John's Gospel**

Guthrie, 1990, pp. 248-252.

What are the main characteristics of John's Gospel? Show how understanding these matters help in our interpretation of the Gospel.

**6 John and the Synoptics**

Morris, 1995, pp. 43-45.

How do you explain the differences between John and the Synoptic Gospels? Did John write to correct the Synoptic Gospels, to supplement them or replace them, or did he write independently of them?

**7 The structure of John**

Guthrie, 1990, pp. 316-331

Discuss a number of suggested structures for the Gospel. Which one, if any, do you feel best explains all of the data?

**8 John and Paul**

Barclay, 1976, pp; 191-218.

How do you explain the many similarities between Paul and John? Did John use Paul, did Paul use John, or were they independent of each other?

All students are expected to have read ALL of the *Required Pre-Readings* before class.

Note: All of these readings are contained in the *Course Reader*.

## MAJOR ASSIGNMENT

**Due: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. on \_\_\_\_\_, 2015. Carries: 30%.**

All students are required to submit a 2,000 word paper (preferably typed, in English for M.Th. students) on the following topic:

*"The Person and work of the Holy Spirit as presented in the Fourth Gospel"*.

Your paper should clearly explain the importance of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17). This is a research project and students will be expected to show wide, relevant, up-to-date reading which will be evidenced by showing references to a number of books and preferably a number of journal articles.

## LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments submitted after the normal date without approval shall incur a penalty of 10% of the value of that assignment per calendar day. Assignments more than one week will not be accepted, with the result the student will automatically fail the subject. Where a student has been granted a deferral of an assignment, the assignment must be submitted no later than the extended date.

## EXEGETICAL PAPER AND PRESENTATION – CARRIES 40%

Instead of a written examination, each Master student will present a thirty-minute exegetical lecture on a selected passage from John to the class at the date and time shown above. Please talk to the Registrar as soon as possible to discuss your preference, as every student must teach from a different chapter. The aim of this assessment item is:

- 1 to exegete a passage from John, and
- 2 to learn how to teach the Bible.

You must give an introduction/overview of the passage, exegesis of about 10 verses, AND an application to Christian living. Do not just select any 10-verse passage. Always try to select a complete paragraph. At the beginning of the presentation, you will give each class member a one-page (may be double-sided) A4-size (in Language, typewritten if possible) handout, and submit a typed paper of 2,000 words (in English for M.Th. students) on the passage to the lecturer. Attach a “*Written Paper Cover Sheet*”, an “*Oral Presentation Evaluation Form*” and a copy of your class handout, at the front of your written paper. Your oral presentation should be in Language.

#### PREPARATION

In preparing their presentation the student should:

- 1 Read widely and critically on the passage. Summarize and highlight the main points. Be selective in what you present, bearing in mind the level of the subject, and the subject’s learning outcomes,
- 2 Prepare a carefully structured one-page A4 handout for each class member to help their understanding of the passage. Be selective in what you include. Decide on the most appropriate format for the greatest clarity and impact. The handout should be appropriately referenced, and
- 3 Prepare an oral presentation which:
  - 3.1 Gives an introduction to, and an overview of, the passage;
  - 3.2 Carefully exegetes at least ten verses of the text of John, and
  - 3.3 Applies the teaching of the passage to Christian living today.

**YOU CAN DECIDE ON A DELIVERY STYLE THAT YOU FEEL WILL MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF YOUR PRESENTATION, AND HELP THE OTHER CLASS MEMBERS UNDERSTAND AND THINK THROUGH THE ISSUES RAISED. AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY APPROPRIATE VISUALS. YOU SHOULD ALSO PROVIDE A NUMBER OF THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC. SUCH QUESTIONS MAY HELP IDENTIFY CONCERNS, CLARIFY ISSUES, CONSIDER APPLICATIONS, AND/OR STIMULATE FURTHER REFLECTION. YOUR PRESENTATION IS LIMITED TO 30 MINUTES. WHILE THE MAIN EMPHASIS IS ON THE LECTURE COMPONENT, YOU SHOULD ALSO TRY TO ENGAGE THE OTHER CLASS-MEMBERS IN SOME DISCUSSION.**

- 4 BEFORE YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION, YOU MUST:
  - 4.1 Study the selected passage in detail using all available resources;
  - 4.2 Prepare an A4 size page typed handout, which will:
    - 4.21 give a clear introduction to, and an outline and/or summary of the passage; and
    - 4.22 give relevant exegetical notes.
  - 4.3 prepare appropriate visual aids (where suitable),
  - 4.4 prepare detailed lecture notes (for your own use).

***Grades are based on both the oral presentation and the written paper.***

***Oral Presentation: Carries: 20%.*** Marks will be allocated for:

- 1 understanding of the passage;
- 2 identification of application of the material;
- 3 clear, thorough exegesis of the text,
- 4 implications raised,
- 5 style and quality of presentation, and
- 6 involvement of class members.

*However of the 20% for the Oral Presentation, half (i.e., 10%) will be by allotted by your peers.*

***Written paper: Carries: 20%.*** Marks will be allocated for:

- 1 level of understanding of passage,
- 2 adequate coverage of major issues,
- 3 clear, thorough exegesis of the text,
- 4 evidence of wide, current, relevant reading, and
- 5 clarity of expression, overall structure of paper, correct referencing, etc.**

***Presentations are assessed holistically rather than according to an itemized breakdown.***

## NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS

To obtain a full and proper understanding of any passage of the New Testament, the exegete must look at:

- 1 The Text:** Where the NIV or the RSV give marginal readings these must be examined and discussed.
- 2 Linguistics:** Sometimes a Greek word is expressed by translators in significantly different ways. Such differences should be discussed. Sometime Greek grammatical constructions are ambiguous and therefore translated quite differently. These expressions must be examined and explained.
- 3 Subject Exegesis:** All persons, institutions and facts of various kinds are to be noted, identified and their historical situation explained. The meanings of people's names and place names should be investigated. Architecture, furniture, utensils and customs need consideration.
- 4 Concept Exegesis:** The exact understanding of the content of theological and other ideas and the historical, religious and conceptual background of important words and ideas are to be explained. Contemporary &/or Biblical cross-references throw light on this. It is important for us to gain an understanding of what the idea meant to the original readers.
- 5 Content Exegesis:** Having examined the above areas we are now in a position to give a detailed analysis of the passage in its context. It is important to present a careful examination of the true meaning of the whole passage.
- 6 Inter-related Passages:** Parallel passage/s, Old Testament quotes and the same topic discussed elsewhere in Scripture will often materially aid our investigation.

## PRESENTATION

In the oral presentation to the class, you should aim to teach an over-view of the passage, then go into whatever additional detail time permits. You are limited to 30 minutes.

## LATE EXEGETICAL PRESENTATIONS

If special circumstances apply, a student giving an exegetical presentation may be granted a deferral for the submission of the written exegetical paper. If the paper is not submitted by the normal time (or extended date) without such approval, the student will automatically fail this subject.

## SCALING OF MARKS

Please note that your final grade may be scaled (upward or downwards), so that the final grade is not necessarily a simple addition of marks in each assessment item. Scaling of grades may be necessary to ensure equity. Your final grade will appear on your Academic Transcript at the end of the year.

## ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

In line with other tertiary institutions, ACOM regards academic misconduct as a serious matter. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism; unauthorized collaboration; cheating and theft of other students' work. Students must acknowledge the source of the ideas and material used in written work. To provide adequate documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty, it also helps both reader and writer. It enables the reader to track down your sources of information with ease, and it also enables you to subsequently refer to your sources so enhancing future use of your effort. Deliberate failure to provide documentation may constitute plagiarism, which is subject to the charge of academic misconduct. If you have doubts about what constitutes plagiarism or collusion please contact the ACOM Office.

## NON-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

It is important to avoid the use of discriminatory language in your written work. Discriminatory language is that which refers in negative terms to gender, race, age, sexual orientation, citizenship or nationality, ethnic or language background, physical or mental ability, or political or religious views, or which stereotypes groups in an adverse manner. The most common form of discriminatory language in academic work tends to be in the area of gender bias. As the word '*man*' can mean either '*humans*' or '*a male human*' its use can be confusing and may be seen as an exclusion of women. In assignments students should avoid such gender bias and write in inclusive way, e.g. use '*humans*' instead of '*men*', or use '*people*', etc.

## COPYRIGHT

Students are reminded that copyright restrictions apply to all copied material (be they hardcopies or electronic copies).

## TEXTBOOKS

Meers, A.F. (2007). *The Gospel of John course notes*. Duncraig, WA: Asia College of Ministry.

Meers, A.F. (2007). *The Gospel of John Supplementary Notes*. Duncraig, WA: Asia College of Ministry.

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### KEY READINGS (IN COURSE READER):

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McKnight, S. (1996). Matthew, Theology of. In *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology*. W.A. Elwell Grand Rapids, MI: Baker [pages 514-517].

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Thomas, R.L. & Gundry, S.N. (1988). *The NIV harmony of the gospels*. San Francisco: Harper & Row

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*The Gospel of John*  
*Course Notes*

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

### TITLE

Most MSS simply read, "Of John 1". It is one of the "Catholic" or "General" epistles, not being addressed to any particular reader/s.

### FORM

Although called an "Epistle" or "Letter" it has no salutation or greetings, but it is personal (Cf. 2:12). Probably it is best regarded as a "Pastoral Letter" or a "Tract".

### AUTHOR

The Apostle John, the son of Zebedee. Evidence supporting this interpretation includes:

- 1 The similarity of style and vocabulary between the Gospel and the Epistle;
- 2 Mention of eye-witness testimony (1:1-14);
- 3 Suggestions of advanced age of the author (e.g. 2:1, 28; 3:7);
- 4 The authoritative manner (e.g. 1:6, 8; 2:15, 24, 28; 3:14; 4:12);
- 5 Indications of a close relationship with Christ (e.g. 1:1; 2:5-6, 27-28).

### DATE OF WRITING

Probably soon after the Gospel which is generally dated about A.D. 90-95. (Gnosticism is on the horizon, but not yet fully developed).

### PLACE OF WRITING

Based on the testimony of Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, III, 3:4) and Hippolytus (*On the Twelve Apostles*, "Fragments", p.130) it is generally accepted that he wrote from Ephesus prior to his exile to Patmos (Rev 1:9).

### WRITTEN TO

A group of people, possible in more than one Asiatic community, with whom the writer was personally acquainted and who were threatened with the same infiltration of false teaching.

### CHARACTER

The two general characteristics of the Epistle are due to the changes which occurred between the death of Paul and the writing of this letter, i.e.:

- 1 **The Missionary aspect** of the church's work no longer occupies first position in the Apostle's thoughts;
- 2 **Different doctrinal controversy** - No longer Judaism but the Person of Christ.

### CONTENT

The three tests of fellowship in the church of God.

### PURPOSE

- 1 **Edification** To present a wholesome picture of the true Christian life;
- 2 **Instruction** To instruct the believers of the seriousness of the peril and to present an adequate antidote to combat it;
- 3 **Denunciation** To denounce the Anti-Christ (e.g. 2:18, 22; 4:3).

### OBJECTIVES

He sets out his objectives very clearly. 1:4; 2:1; 5:13 (Cf. Jn 20:31).

## THE PROBLEM

**Docetic Gnosticism** - Since an incarnate deity was unintelligible they taught that the heavenly Christ only appeared to have a human form. Some believed that the Christ descended on Jesus at his baptism (Cf. Lu 3:22) and flew back to God at Gethsemane (Cf. Lu 22:43).

## STYLE AND LANGUAGE

Both vocabulary and structure bear a close resemblance to the Gospel of John. "Truth", "love", "being born of God", "light", "abiding", occur often in both writings. (Cf. 1 Jn 1:2-3; Jn 3:11; 1 Jn 3:16; Jn 10:15; etc.)

## OUTLINE

The letter can be seen to have FIVE major sections:

- |                       |          |                  |            |
|-----------------------|----------|------------------|------------|
| <b>1 Introduction</b> | 1:1-4    |                  |            |
| <b>2 First Cycle</b>  | 1:5-2:28 | God is LIGHT     | (Cf. 1: 5) |
| <b>3 Second Cycle</b> | 2:29-4:6 | God is RIGHTEOUS | (Cf. 2:29) |
| <b>4 Third Cycle</b>  | 4:7-5:13 | God is LOVE      | (Cf. 4: 8) |
| <b>5 Conclusion</b>   | 5:41-21  |                  |            |

In each cycle the three tests of fellowship (i.e. Obedience/Sin; Love/Lovelessness and Sound Doctrine/Error) are examined against the background of the particular attribute of God highlighted.

## KEY

**Key Word** Fellowship.

**Key Verse** "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (4:13).

## THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

### TITLE

MSS titles range from "Second of John (Σ , B) to "Second Epistle of the holy Apostle John the Divine" (L).

### CONTENT

Refuse those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ.

### AUTHORSHIP

#### EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

- 1 **Eusebius** stated, "Among the disputed writings, which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant . . . those that are called the second and third of John, whether they belong to the evangelist or to another person by the same name" (*HE.III.25.3*).
- 2 **The Muratorian Fragment** ascribes two epistles to John as "received in the catholic church".
- 3 **2 John** is first quoted by Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*, I. xvi. 3, 8).
- 4 **Clement of Alexandria** refers to the "larger Epistle of John" showing that he knew of a shorter epistle. (*Stromateis*, ii.15.66).
- 5 **Jerome** (*de vir. ill.* 9:18) says that most writers ascribe them to 'presbyter John'.
- 6 **The Peshito version** - Second and Third John are not in the Peshito version nor are they accepted by the Syrian church.
- 7 **Dionysius of Alexandria** recognized them as the works of St. John.

#### INTERNAL EVIDENCE

- 1 **Language and thought** - The letter bears the closest resemblance in language and thought to the First Epistle. There are many phrases in both Two and Three John which are identical or similar to phrases in One John, e.g., truth, walk, abide, having the Father and the Son, a new commandment (5), joy made full, etc.
- 2 **Presupposition** - The two smaller epistles are more meaningful if a knowledge of 1 John is presupposed (Cf. 2 Jn 1:7, 9; 3 Jn 1:11).
- 3 **The letter claims** to have been written by "The Elder" (Cf. 3 Jn 1:1), Papias spoke of "an Elder John" which may refer to St. John but could also mean some unknown writer called "John". Some assume 'elder' is used here in a technical sense that denotes one who belonged to the leadership of the church succeeding the Apostles, but Peter used the title of himself (1 Pet 5:1) so why should not John?
- 4 **Most Scholars** feel that "The Elder" refers to the Apostle John, the author of the Gospel, Revelation and three epistles.

### DATE OF WRITING

"The letters contain no direct indication of the time or place at which they were written. They seem to belong to the same period of the Apostle's life as the First Epistle and they were therefore probably written from Ephesus" (Westcott, 1909, p. lvi). A date of about 90-95 A.D. would seem probable.

### OCCASION AND PURPOSE

The letter deals with the same general error as the First Epistle (cf. v7 with 1 Jn 4:2-3). John writes to warn them against offering hospitality to these false teachers (v10).

## OUTLINE

<b>vv1-3 Greetings</b>	Fellowship is found in truth and love.
<b>vv4-6 Walk in Truth</b>	Love is walking in truth and walking in truth is to love one another.
<b>vv7-9 Deceivers deny Truth</b>	These Anti-Christian teachers deny the incarnation, a situation we must carefully guard against.
<b>vv10-11 Defend the Truth</b>	These errorists must not be received lest we fall into the same error.
<b>vv12-13 Conclusion</b>	He sends greetings from other Christians and tells of his plans to visit them shortly.

## WRITTEN TO

<b>εκλεκτη κυρια</b> ( <i>eklekte kuria</i> )	This has been variously interpreted as:
<b>1 To Electra Kyria</b>	Both words are regarded as proper names,
<b>2 To the elect Kyria</b>	One word is regarded as a proper name (Cf. v5),
<b>3 To the lady Electra</b>	The other word is seen as a proper name (Cf. Rom 16:13, but Ct. v13),
<b>4 To an elect lady</b>	Neither word is treated as proper name, i.e., it refers to a literal woman: Martha?, and
<b>5 To an un-named local church</b>	N.B. 2nd person plurals in vv 8, 10, 12, etc.

## KEYS

**Key Word:** Truth

**Key Verse:** "It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the father commanded us" (2 Jn 1:4).

\*\*\*\*\*

## THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

### INTRODUCTION

This is the shortest book in the New Testament - just **219 words**.

### TITLE

Most MSS read, "three of John" but in its usual style L reads, "Third Epistle of the holy apostle John" - stating the traditional author of the letter.

### CONTENT

Show hospitality to those who proclaim the truth.

### AUTHOR

"The Elder" (v1) Cf. 2 Jn 1:1 - traditionally the Apostle John.

### DATE OF WRITING

"Both letters [2 & 3 Jn] may well belong to the latter part of the closing decade of the first century" (Harrison, 1977, p. 453). Probably written between 85 & 95 A.D. (i.e. before 96 A.D. when Domitian intensified his persecution of Christians).

### PLACE OF WRITING

**Ephesus** - According to ancient and universal testimony John laboured, both before and after his Patmos exile, in Ephesus (Cf. *HE.III.i.1*)

### OUTLINE

- v1 GREETINGS** Fellowship is based on true love.
- vv2-8 THE PROSPERITY OF GAIUS**
- v2** His Condition Spiritual health and wealth
  - vv3- 4** His Conduct Walks in the Truth
  - vv5- 6** His Charity He loves the brethren and gives hospitality
  - vv7- 8** His Co-operation By receiving such he is a fellow helper to the truth.
- vv9-10 THE PRIDE OF DIOTREPHES**
- v9** Refused to receive the brethren
  - v10** Spoke maliciously about them
  - v10** Casts out those that would receive them
- vv11-12 THE PRAISE OF DEMETRIUS**
- v11** He contrasts to Diotrophes
  - v12** He is highly regarded by the brethren
  - v12** John also commends him
- vv13-14 CONCLUSION** He sends greetings from other Christians and tells of his plan to visit them shortly.

## WRITTEN TO

**Gaius** (v1) But who is Gaius? There are three men by this name elsewhere in the New Testament:

- 1 **Gaius of Corinth** (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14);
- 2 **Gaius of Macedonia** (Act 19:29), and
- 3 **Gaius of Derbe** (Act 20:4-5).

However, all of these seem unsuitable as they were Paul's converts, whereas this Gaius seems to be John's convert (Cf. "my children" v4). He was an influential, hospitable member (probably an elder) in one of a circuit of churches in the Roman province of Asia which were under the general supervision of John (the 7 churches of Asia, Rev 2-3??) Traditionally he was the Bishop of Pergamos.

## OCCASION AND PURPOSE

John had sent missionaries to the town where Gaius lived (vv9-10) but Diotrephes (apparently a self-appointed leader) refused to receive them and even said he would excommunicate anyone who did receive them (v10).

John now writes to encourage Gaius to receive such men (v8) and to encourage him to stand against Diotrephes (v11) and warns Diotrephes of what will happen when he (John) comes in person (v10). Demetrius (v12) may well have been one of the original missionaries and is apparently the one John is now sending with this letter.

## CANONICITY

Eusebius put 3 John on the list of disputed books (HE.III.xxv.3).

Origen had some doubts but did not reject it (HE.VI.xxv.10).

Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Dionysius of Alexandria, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem all recognized it.

Its place in the New Testament canon was confirmed at the Third Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) "Dodd points out that it is so unimportant that it is difficult to suggest why anyone should have fabricated it" (Guthrie, 1962, p. 217).

## RELATION TO 2 JOHN

Both letters are similar in length, background, ideas, style, vocabulary, structure, mood, object and character. **Note:**

	<b>2 John verse:</b>	<b>3 John verse:</b>
The Writer's intention to visit	12	13-14
"love in the truth"	1	1
"The Elder"	1	1
"children walking in the truth"	4	4

## KEYS

**Key Word** Hospitality

**Key Verse** "We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth" (v8).

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## TITLE

⋈C read, "Revelation of John"; P supplies, "Revelation of the apostle and evangelist John"; while some cursives read, "Revelation of the holy Apostle John the Divine" (*Our father's will*, n.d., p. 155). The word translated Revelation is *apokalupsis*, hence the name 'The Apocalypse'. It is commonly referred to as "Revelations" which is a mistake. The KJV expression "St. John the **Divine**" does not mean "god-like" but is the Old English word meaning, "Theologian". In any case this a poor title. Verse 1 gives a more accurate title, "The revelation of Jesus Christ" as it is Christ who does the revealing, not John.

## CONTENT

**THINGS WHICH MUST SOON TAKE PLACE (CF. 1:1).**

## AUTHOR

The Apostle John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Evidence in support is:

### 1 EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

- 1 **Tradition** which goes back to the mid-second century.
- 2 **It was unquestioned** until Dionysius in the late third century.
- 3 **Historical context** - Church historians record John's labours in Ephesus and his exile to Patmos.

### 2 INTERNAL EVIDENCE

- 1 **The prologue** states that this is a revelation which Jesus Christ gave to "his servant John" (1:1). His name is repeated in vv 4, 9.
- 2 **The epilogue** also uses his personal name (Cf. 22:8).

### 3 OTHER EVIDENCE?

- 1 **Jn 21:22-23** has been interpreted as a reference to the substance of the revelation visions.
- 2 **In the introduction** to John's Gospel (Cf. 1:1); to the First Epistle (Cf. 1:1) and to Revelation (Cf. 1:5, 8), we have a clear statement of both:
  - 1 The Eternity of the Son, and
  - 2 The fact of his humanity.

## DATE OF WRITING

**95 A.D** - Toward the end of Domitian's reign, i.e. about A.D. 95 or 96. Some reasons which would support this date are:

- 1 **The spiritual declension** of Ephesus, Sardis and Laodicea (cf. Col 3:13);
- 2 **The Church of Smyrna**, which did not exist in Paul's time; and
- 3 **Emperor worship** and consequent persecution were notable features of Domitian's reign.

## PLACE OF WRITING

**Patmos** - John wrote while exiled on the island of Patmos (1:1), which is just off the coast not far from Ephesus.

## OUTLINE

- |                                       |  |           |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| 1 <b>Introduction</b>                 |  | 1:1-3     |
| 2 <b>"What you have seen"</b>         | (The address and the vision of Christ) | 1:4-20    |
| 3 <b>"What is now"</b>                | (The letters to the seven churches)    | 2:1-3:22  |
| 4 <b>"What will take place later"</b> | (Things in heaven and on earth)        | 4:1-22: 6 |
| 5 <b>Conclusion</b>                   |  | 22:7-21   |

## WRITTEN TO

This can be taken at three levels:

- 1 **The "messengers"** of the seven churches, e.g., 2:1, 8, 12, 18;
- 2 **The members** of the seven churches, e.g., 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 22:16;
- 3 **All believers**, e.g., 1:1, 3; 22:18.

## OCCASION

Emperor worship was beginning to be enforced (2:10, 13; 3:10; 6:9) and apparently some advocated compromise (2:14, 15, 20).

## PURPOSE

- 1 **Revelation of future events:** (cf. 1:1), and
- 2 **A Message of comfort:** Apocalyptic writings generally appear in times of trouble and distress and bring a message of hope and ultimate glory.

## FORM

Revelation is typical of Jewish apocalyptic literature which feature grotesque visions, symbols and signs. Ezekiel and Daniel include similar visions.

## PLACE IN CANON

Being placed at the end of the canon is appropriate as it deals with consummation and review.

## INTERPRETATION

Revelation has been interpreted variously by four main schools of interpretation. There are:

- 1 **Preterist:** These people believe that the prophecies were all fulfilled in the early years of Church history, i.e. during John's life-time.
- 2 **Historicist:** These people teach that the book presents an unbroken outline of history throughout the church age, e.g. Patmos to the end of time.
- 3 **Futurist:** These people claim that chapters two and three are historical but chapters four onward describe events following the rapture of the church.
- 4 **Idealist:** Advocates of this view believe that Revelation represents by signs and symbols the constant conflict of great principles, good versus evil, until the final end.

## FEATURES

As well as the apocalyptic visions, numbers are clearly important, e.g., **seven** features frequently throughout the book, e.g., 1:3, 4, 11, 12, 16; etc.

## KEYS

**Key Word:** Revelation

**Key Verse:** "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place" (1:1).

## INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### TITLE

The title in the MSS varies from "*The (holy) gospel according to John*" to simply, "*According to John*", and thus follows the same format as that of the Synoptics. While this does not authenticate the authorship it clearly demonstrates an early tradition that John was the author. 'John' comes from the Hebrew name 'Johanan', which means "Yahweh has been gracious".

### CONTENT

CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD (Jn 1:1; 20:28, 31).

### PLACE IN CANON

John is often simply called, "The Fourth Gospel". This is the natural place for it as the three Synoptic Gospels come first and so John comes fourth.

### AUTHORSHIP

**EXTERNAL EVIDENCE** - The early church unanimously believed that the author was John, son of Zebedee.

- 1 **Irenaeus** (ca. 185AD) - Irenaeus is the earliest witness to Johannine authorship. He wrote, "Afterwards [after the Synoptics were written], John, the disciple of the Lord, who had also leaned upon his breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1; cf. 3.2.2; 3.3.4; 3.16.5; 2.22.2; 5.18.2). Irenaeus' testimony is significant since he was discipled by Polycarp, who himself was discipled by John.
- 2 **Contemporaries of Irenaeus** - Other contemporaries of Irenaeus ascribe the Gospel to John the Apostle. "Theophilus of Antioch (c.180) quotes Jn 1:1 and ascribes it to the apostle John. Tertullian (c.150-222) specifically ascribes this Gospel to the apostle John. Eusebius records that Clement of Alexandria (c.155-216) in his *Hypotyposes*, in which he gave 'the tradition of the earliest presbyters,' placed this Gospel as the last of the four gospels. Clement added that in view of the nature of the other gospels John, on the urging of his friends and with the illumination of the Spirit, composed 'a spiritual Gospel.' Origen (c. 185-254), the pupil of Clement, indicates in his commentary on the fourth gospel that its author was John 'who lay on Jesus' breast'".
- 3 **Orthodox church** – Therefore, the entire orthodox church accepted John as author of the fourth Gospel by the last quarter of the second century, the earliest time in which Christian theological literature practically begins.
- 4 **Other suggestions** – Despite the above evidence, four other unlikely and even impossible "Johns" have been proposed by some scholars:
  - 1 John the Baptist (1:6, 15, 19, 26, 29);
  - 2 John the father of Peter (1:42);
  - 3 John Mark (Acts 12:12); and
  - 4 John of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-6).

### INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Although the fourth gospel was traditionally written by John, he is not mentioned at all in the book. The internal evidence does, however, suggest that John the Apostle was the author.

- 1 **The author was a Jew who knew Palestine and the Temple well.** He knows the Old Testament (e.g., Jn 12:40; 13:18, etc.); Jewish feasts (e.g., Jn 2:23; 10:22, etc.); the coming of Messiah (e.g. Jn 4:25; 11:27, etc.); Jewish customs (e.g., Jn 2:1-10, 11:38-44, etc.). Although the temple had been destroyed about twenty years before this book was written, the author knows the details intimately (e.g., Jn 2:13-15; 7:37, etc.).
- 2 **The author also knew Jesus intimately.** The author had seen Christ's glory (Jn 1:14), but this was only seen by Peter, James and John (Mt 17:1-13). Of all the disciples, John was the only one close to Christ at the crucifixion (Jn 19:25-27, 33-35) and records details no one else knew. Since Peter is mentioned by name (1:42) and John's brother James was martyred, by Herod in AD 44 (Acts 12:2), by process of elimination the author must be John.

## AUTHOR

John, Son of Zebedee (Mk 1:19) and Salome (Mk 16:1; Mt 27:56), the '*beloved disciple*' (Jn 21:20-24). A cousin of our Lord (Jn 19:25), from a wealthy family (Mk 1:20) of Bethsaida (Jn 1:44), called '*Boanerges*' by Christ (Mk 3:17)

## DATE OF WRITING

The time when John wrote has been more difficult to ascertain than the authorship. Three general times have been proposed for the date of the Gospel:

- 1 **Second Century** - Many critical scholars who do not ascribe to authorship by the Apostle John give the book a second century date. However, this view cannot be supported because of these reasons:
  - 1 Arguments for Johannine authorship are convincing.
  - 2 The recent archaeological find called the John Rylands Papyrus 52 in Egypt deals a major blow to critics who have long postulated a second century date. This fragment contains portions of John 18:31-33, 37-38 and is dated at AD 135. This proves a first century date for the Gospel as it would have taken considerable time to copy the Gospel in Ephesus and distribute it as far as Egypt.
  - 3 Other arguments of the liberal late dating are answered by Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT), pp. 30-33.
- 2 **Late First Century** - Irenaeus states that John ministered in Ephesus from AD 66 until the time of Trajan (AD 98-117) which makes this Gospel the last, perhaps composed shortly before John's death. While nothing excludes an even earlier date, John's Gospel has always been known as the fourth gospel, so it probably follows the Synoptics chronologically (for this course we date Matthew in the 40s, Mark in 64-68, and Luke at AD 57-59). Most scholars believe that the best estimate for the composition of John's Gospel is ca. AD 80-95, despite the fact that most arguments do not demand this late of a date (Morris, 1995, 31-32).
- 3 **Before AD 70** - Most agree that John's gospel was written after the Synoptics, but how much later? Some of John's expressions may indicate that it was written even before the AD 70 fall of Jerusalem, perhaps around AD 65-69 (Morris holds to this early date):
  - 1 John 5:2 says, "Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool". This verse is written in the present tense, but this gate was destroyed in Titus' invasion of the city in AD 70, so John referred to it as still existing. Later date advocates respond to this argument by saying that John may have used the present tense because "he recalls a familiar scene" and thus "lives again in the past, and forgets the desolation which has fallen upon the place which rises before his eyes". However, the more natural reading is to take a present tense as it is.
  - 2 The often used expression "the Jews" points to the Jerusalem leaders' powerful influence which waned significantly after the destruction of the city in AD 70. This may "point to a possible if not probable date contemporary with the Pauline Epistles [AD 49-67]" (G. A. Turner and J. R. Mantey, *The Gospel According to John*, 18; cited by Morris, 1995, 33).
  - 3 John speaks of Christ's immediate followers as "disciples" and not "apostles"-a later designation. He even calls them "His disciples" rather than "the disciples"-a standard expression in later years.
  - 4 The writer also demonstrates a concern over the followers of John the Baptist, (e.g., John 1) which was obviously more prominent in the church in the early part of the first century than in later years when few of John's disciples were left.

As the last remaining disciple in Jesus' inner circle of three (James died in AD 44 and Peter in AD 64), John was urged on by his friends to write a "spiritual gospel" (cf. Clement). Whenever he actually did write, John was an old man. Although John could have been written before 70AD (e.g., Jn 5:2), "conservatives and radicals alike generally hold that the Fourth Gospel is of comparatively late date" (Morris, 1995, p. 25). The assumption that John was written probably in the last decade of the first century is today almost universally accepted (i.e. 90-100 A.D.)

## PLACE OF WRITING

The tradition that John wrote the Gospel in Ephesus at an advanced age is found in Irenaeus (quoted in Eusebius, *HE.V.3.24.1*, 8.4).

## WRITTEN TO

**Christians everywhere** - to confirm and secure them in the faith. Three important MSS have present tense (not aorist) in Jn 20:31, which would imply "*to encourage existing faith.*"

## SIGNS

John's Gospel is built around sixteen signs:

8 Signs in Works (MIRACLES)		8 Signs in Words ("I AM")	
1	Water to Wine 2:1-11	1	"I AM the Bread of Life" 6:35, 41, 48
*	Resurrection 2:18-22	2	"I AM the Light of the World" 8:12
2	Nobleman's Son 4:46-54	*	"Before Abraham was, I AM" 8:58
3	Bethesda 5:1-15	3	"I AM the Door of the Sheep" 10: 7
4	5,000 fed 6:5-14	4	"I AM the Good Shepherd" 10:11
5	Tempest Stilled 6:16-21	5	"I AM the Resurrection & Life" 11:25
6	Man born blind 9:1-27	6	"I AM the Way, Truth & Life" 14: 6
7	Lazarus 11:38-44	7	"I AM the True Vine" 15: 1

## DIVISIONS

John is in four basic parts:

1	Prologue	1:1-18	Based on John 16:28: "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father"
2	Public Revelation to the World	1:19-12:50	
3	Private Revelation to the Disciples	13:1-20:31	
4	Epilogue	21:1-25	

## PURPOSE

Five theories as to why John wrote have been suggested:

- 1 Evangelistic** - In John 20:31, many MSS read, "that *you may believe*" (Aorist Subjective) suggesting the readers were non-Christians who needed to be converted.
- 2 Edification** - However some MSS read, "*that you may go on believing*" (Present Subjective) suggesting the purpose was to confirm people in their faith and to assure them that if they had believed they have life in His name.
- 3 Apologetic** - Another suggestion is that John wrote to defend Christianity against one or more false teachings, e.g.:
  - 1 To defend against docetism (the belief that Jesus was not fully human)
  - 2 To defend against incipient gnosticism (the belief that Jesus was not fully deity)
  - 3 To defend against remaining followers of John the Baptist
  - 4 To expose Judaism as an inadequate religion (anti-synagogue emphasis)
- 4 Supplemental to the Synoptics**: - John leaves out even important events in the life of Christ which do not fit his purpose, such as Christ's genealogy, birth, temptation, Galilean ministry; exorcisms, transfiguration, Last Supper institution, parables, Gethsemene agony, and Ascension. This shows that the account does serve as a supplemental account written for those probably familiar with one or more of the Synoptic Gospels. However, to say that this is John's only reason for writing is to ignore John's stated evangelistic purpose. John is 92% independent of the Synoptics. It is more devotional and theological than the others and sets forth the teaching of Jesus more fully.
- 5 Combination**: Some (e.g., Griffith, 2006, p. 110) believe that John's purpose was a combination of more than one purpose, e.g., a combination of 4 (Supplemental) and 1 (Evangelistic).

## FEATURES

John, the Monoptic Gospel, differs from the Synoptics in many ways, e.g.

- 1 Beginning** - Not birth nor baptism but in eternity (Jn 1:1). John selects the important things from the life and ministry of Christ which show who he is and what he came to do (Jn 20:31, Cf. Jn 1:12).
- 2 Judea** - John tells us what happened in Jerusalem and Judea in the early part of Jesus' ministry, e.g., John alone tells us of the first year of Christ's ministry (1:29-4:42).

- 3 **Discourses** - John contains no parables, but many long discourses (both private interviews and public talks.)
- 4 **Chronology** - John records three journeys from Galilee to Jerusalem. The 3 or 4 Passover Feasts recorded (Jn 2:13; 5:17; 6:4; 11:55) fix the length of Christ's public ministry.
- 5 **Anti-Gnostic** - Christ is seen as Son of God but also as a *real man* who is weary and thirsty (4:6-7), emotional (11:35) and who has a real physical body (19:34).
- 6 **Style** - Written in a simple Greek vocabulary and style but with Hebrew thoughts and repetitious vocabulary.
- 7 **Teaching on Holy Spirit** - More of our Lord's teaching on the Spirit is given here than elsewhere (e.g. Jn 3:18; 4:24; & chapters 14-16).
- 8 **Personalities** - 34 people are introduced to us (23 named) and 27 interviews are included.
- 9 **Vocabulary** - This Gospel is profound in its simple, limited vocabulary with simple syntax, purity of Greek (in contrast to Revelation), and short pithy sentences (e.g., "I am the bread," "in Him was life") often connected with "and."
- 10 **Parallelisms** - John often employs this common Semitic style with dual statements expressing the same or similar truths (1:3; 3:5-6).
- 11 **Repetition** - Since the vocabulary is limited there is constant use of the same words (esp. "believe," "light," "life," etc.).
- 12 **Contrasts** - John is especially fond of opposites (light vs. darkness, truth vs. falsehood, good vs. evil, life vs. death).
- 13 **Explanatory Statements** - John is also known for elaborating upon Jewish concepts to communicate clearly to a Gentile readership (4:9b; 5:2-3).
- 14 **Preface** - John contains a highly theological preface that is related to God and eternity (1:1-18) in contrast to the Synoptics which relate to His earthly advent.
- 15 **Allegories** - He often uses these extended similes: Good Shepherd (10:1-18), True Vine (15:1-6), etc.
- 16 **First Year** - John alone provides an account of the first year of Christ's ministry which includes Christ's first few days with the disciples, the Cana wedding, and Christ's conversations with Nicodemus and the woman at the well (cf. 1:29-4:42). In fact, 92% of John's Gospel is not found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.
- 17 **Personalities** - Personalities also receive great prominence as 34 persons are introduced (23 named and 11 unnamed) and 27 interviews are included.
- 18 **The number seven** - The number seven is a notable literary tool.
- 19 **Eschatology** - John also emphasizes eschatology, especially as it relates to judgment (3:36), resurrection (11:25), and eternal life (3:16).
- 20 **The Holy Spirit** - He also provides extensive teaching on the Holy Spirit (chs. 13-17).

## ARGUMENT

John's argument is traced through five sections which alternate between public and private encounters of Christ:

- 1 **Prologue** - Theological Introduction Previewing Themes in the Book (1:1-18)
- 2 **Public** - Signs and Discourses Presenting Christ as God to Israel (1:19- 12:50)
- 3 **Private** - Discourse Preparing Disciples for Ministry and Christ's Death (chs. 13-17)
- 4 **Public** - Passion and Resurrection Proving Christ as Deity (chs. 18-20)
- 5 **Epilogue (Private)** - Appearance at the Sea Presenting Disciples' Responsibilities (ch21)

Each section is designed to present Christ as the Son of God (deity) to prompt readers to believe in Him as Savior (1:1; 20:31). This is accomplished by first providing the reader with His true identity as God made man which introduces recurring themes later (1:1-18), followed by the main section which presents seven signs and eight discourses demonstrating Him to be God (1:19-12:50).

## KEYS

**Key Verse:** Jn 20:31

**Key Word:** "Life"

## CHAPTER ONE

**vv1-18 - JOHN'S PROLOGUE:** The progress of the gospel, seen in four significant happenings:

- vv1-5 THE CREATION;**
- vv6-9 THE COMING OF THE FORERUNNER;**
- vv10-14 THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST;**
- vv15-18 THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST.**

Each happening is referred to by the use of the Greek verb *egeneto* (= *became*):

- v3 The creation,
- v6 The coming of the forerunner John,
- v14 The incarnation of Christ, and
- v17 The crucifixion of Christ. "These four reflect the progress of the gospel as it moves toward its climax in the passion of Christ" (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 29).

**vv19-28 – JOHN THE BAPTIST DENIES BEING THE CHRIST** (JOHN'S TESTIMONY ABOUT HIMSELF TO THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES) - John points the Religious Leaders away from himself to Christ as revealed in Prophecy (Cf. Mal 4:5-6).

**vv29-34 – JESUS THE LAMB OF GOD** (JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS AS THE SON OF GOD) - John points Repentant Listeners away from himself to Christ as revealed in Person (Cf. Isa 53:5-6).

**vv35-51 - JESUS' FIRST DISCIPLES**

**vv35-39 THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN**

- v37 The disciples heard John .
- v39 They abode with Jesus.

**vv40-42 THE TESTIMONY OF ANDREW**

- v40 They followed Jesus.
- v41 They witnessed about Him (Cf. Jn 1:45).

**vv43-47 THE TESTIMONY OF PHILIP**

**vv48-51 THE TESTIMONY OF NATHANIEL**

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "In the beginning"** - A deliberate echo of Gen 1:1 to link God's action in behalf of the world through Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16) with his first work, the creation of the world.

**"Word"** - Greek *logos*, a term Greeks used not only of the spoken word but also of the unspoken word, the word still in the mind - the reason. When they applied it to the universe, they meant the rational principle that governs all things. The Jews, however, used it to refer to the "word" of God by which he created the world and governs it (e.g., the LXX rendering of Psa 33:6; 119:89; 147:15, 18) and to refer to the law of God that he gave Israel to be their life (Deut 32:47; 30:20). Of the law, the rabbis said that it was "created before the world," that it "lay on God's bosom while God sat on the throne of glory," that it was divine, that it was God's "firstborn" through whom he "created the heaven and the earth," that it is "light" and "life" for the world and that it "is truth." This Jewish use of *logos* as that which comes from God to fulfill his purpose in and for the world appears to lie behind the heavily freighted affirmation with which John begins his Gospel.

**"with God"** - The Word was distinct from the Father.

**"was God"** - Jesus was God in the fullest sense (Rom 9:5). The prologue (vv1-18) begins and ends with a ringing affirmation of his deity (v18).

**Verse 2, "with God in the beginning"** – In the beginning He was with God, afterwards (in time) He became human. John clearly states the Logos Pre-existence before Incarnation, Personality & Deity.

**Verse 3, "without him nothing was made that has been made"** – "nothing was created except through him" (NLT); "Or and nothing that was created was created except through him. The word gave life to everything" (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 4, "life"** - One of the great concepts of this Gospel. The Greek word for "life" is found 36 times in John, while no other NT book uses it more than 17 times. Life is Christ's gift (10:28), and he, in fact, is "the life" (14:6).

**“light of men”** - This Gospel also links light with Christ, from whom comes all spiritual illumination. He is the *“light of the world,”* who holds out for humanity (8:12) and for the creation (3:16).

**Verse 5, “the darkness has not understood it”** – *“Or the darkness has not overcome it”* (NIV<sup>mg</sup>); *“the darkness can never extinguish it”* (NLT). The stark contrast between light and darkness is a striking theme in this Gospel (e.g., 12:35).

**Verse 6, “his name was John”** – *“God sent a man, John the Baptist”* (NLT). In this Gospel the name John always refers to John the Baptist.

**Verse 7, “as a witness to testify”** - John the Baptist’s singular ministry was to testify to Jesus (10:41). *“Witness”* is another important concept in this Gospel. The Greek noun for *“witness”* or *“testimony”* is used 14 times (in Matthew not at all, in Mark three times, in Luke once) and the verb (*“testify”*) 33 times (found once each in Matthew and Luke, not at all in Mark) - in both cases more often than anywhere else in the NT. John (the author) thereby emphasizes that the facts about Jesus are amply attested.

**“that through him all men might believe”** - People were not to believe *“in”* John the Baptist but *“through”* him. Similarly, the writer’s purpose was to draw them to belief in Christ (Jn 20:31). John uses the Greek verb for *“believe”* 98 times.

**Verse 8, “He himself was not the light”** - The greatness of John the Baptist caused some of his followers to have exaggerated ideas about him (v21), but while Jesus affirms John’s greatness (Mt 11:11), he also makes clear his limitations. John is *“a lamp”* (5:35) but not *“the light.”*

**Verse 9, “The true light”** – *“Or This was the true light that gives light to every man who comes into the world”* (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). John is referring to the incarnation of Christ.

**“world”** - Another common word in John’s writings, the Greek noun for *“world”* is found 78 times in this Gospel and 24 times in his letters (only 47 times in all of Paul’s writings). It can mean the universe, the earth, the people on earth, most people, people opposed to God, or the human system opposed to God’s purposes. John emphasizes the word by repetition, and moves without explanation from one meaning to another (e.g., 17:5, 14–15).

**Verse 10, “did not recognize him”** – The world that He had created refused to recognize Him. Not only did the world fail to know the Pre-Incarnate Logos but it failed to recognize Him when he became Incarnate.

**Verse 11, “He came to that which was his own”** – He came to his *“own things”* (his own home, Jn 19:27) but *“his own people”* (probably the Jewish people) did not receive him.

**Verse 12, “he gave the right”** - Membership in God’s family is by grace alone - the gift of God (Eph 2:8–9). It is never a human achievement, as v13 emphasizes; yet the imparting of the gift is dependent on human reception of it, as the words *“received”* and *“believed”* make clear.

**Verse 13, “of natural descent”** – *“Greek of bloods”* (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**“born of God”** - The *“children of God”* (v12) have been given a new openness to and relationship with God that was not theirs as a result of their natural birth (3:3, 5; 2 Co 5:17; Gal 6:15; Tit 3:5).

**Verse 14, “the Word became flesh”** – *“The Word became human”* (NLT). *Flesh* is a strong, almost crude, word that stresses the reality of Christ’s humanity.

**“made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory”** - The Greek for *“made his dwelling”* is connected with the Hebrew word for *“tent/tabernacle”*; the verse would have reminded John’s Jewish readers of the Tent of Meeting, which was filled with the glory of God (Ex 40:34–35). Christ revealed his glory to his disciples by the miracles he performed (2:11) and by his death and resurrection.

**“One and Only”** – *“Or the Only Begotten”* (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**“full of grace and truth”** – *“full of unfailing love and faithfulness”* (NLT). The corresponding Hebrew terms are often translated *“(unfailing) love and faithfulness”* (Psa 26:3; Pr 16:6).

**“grace”** - A significant Christian concept (Jn 4:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2), though John never uses the word after the prologue (vv1–18).

**“truth”** - John uses the Greek word for *“truth”*, 25 times and links it closely with Jesus, who is the truth (14:6).

**Verse 15, “he was before me”** - In ancient times the older person was given respect and regarded as greater than the younger. People would normally have ranked Jesus lower in respect than John, who was older. John the Baptist explains that this is only apparent, since Jesus, as the Word, existed before he was born on earth.

**Verse 16, “one blessing after another”** - “Or received the grace of Christ rather than the grace of the law; Greek reads *received grace upon grace*” (NLT<sup>msg</sup>); *charin anti charitos* = ‘grace instead of grace’. John uses ‘grace’ only in this prologue. Grace is used in contrast to *truth*. (Cf. v14, “who came from the Father, full of *grace and truth*”; Col 4:6, “Let your conversation be always *full of grace, seasoned with salt*”). Here *grace* seems to indicate ‘kindness’, ‘love’, ‘tenderness’. Numerous translations of this section have been suggested, including:

- 1 “the grace of Christ **instead of** grace of law” (Chrysostom);
- 2 “limited favours **replaced by** larger favours” (Philo);
- 3 “grace **corresponding to** grace” (J.A. Robinson), i.e., “grace **answering to** grace” (Knox);
- 4 “O.T. grace **exchanged for** N.T. grace”;
- 5 “grace **upon** grace” (RSV, Tasker);
- 6 “grace **added to** grace”;
- 7 “grace **taking the place of** grace”, like manna fresh every morning, new grace for the new day and the new year (A.T. Robinson).

**Verse 17, “through Jesus Christ”** – The intermediate agent of God the Father.

**Verse 18, “God the One and Only** – “the unique One, who is himself God” (NLT). *monogenes Theos* = ‘only begotten God’. Although there is a MSS variant here (“Some manuscripts read *But the one and only Son*”, NLT<sup>msg</sup>), most modern commentators have adopted this reading. It can be understood two ways:

- 1 “God the only begotten” (Robertson); **or**
- 2 ‘the eternal generation of God’ (Origen).

*Monogenes* is **not** an adjective qualifying *Theos*. There are three distinct designations of Him who is the Exegete or the Interpreter of the Father:

- 1 The Only Begotten;
- 2 God;
- 3 Who is in the bosom of the Father. (A Hebrew idiom signifying an intimate relationship as e.g., between a parent and child.

**“has made him known”** - Sometimes in the OT people are said to have seen God (e.g., Ex 24:10). But we are also told that no one can see God and live (Ex 33:20). Therefore, since no human being can see God as he really is, those who saw God saw him in a form he took on himself temporarily for the occasion. Now, however, Christ “has made him known” (2 Co 4:4; Col 1:15, 19; 2:9).

**Verse 19, “the Jews”** - The phrase occurs about 70 times in this Gospel. It is used in a favorable sense (e.g., 4:22) and in a neutral sense (e.g., 2:6), but generally John used it of the Jewish leaders who were hostile to Jesus (e.g., 8:48). Here it refers to the delegation sent by the Sanhedrin to look into the activities of an unauthorized teacher.

**“Levites”** – “Temple assistants” (NLT). Descendants of the tribe of Levi, who were assigned to specific duties in connection with the tabernacle (Num 3:17–37) and temple. They also had teaching responsibilities (2 Chr 35:3; Neh 8:7–9), and it was probably in this role that they were sent with the priests to John the Baptist.

**Verse 20, “I”** - Emphatic, contrasting John the Baptist with someone else. Throughout the following verses this emphatic “I” occurs frequently, and almost invariably there is an implied contrast with Jesus, who is always given the higher place.

**“the Christ”** – “Or *Messiah*. ‘The Christ’ (Greek) and ‘the Messiah’ (Hebrew) both mean ‘the Anointed One’; also in verse 25” (NIV<sup>msg</sup>).

**Verse 21, “Are you Elijah?”** - The Jews remembered that Elijah had not died (2 Ki 2:11) and believed that he would come back to earth to announce the end time. In this sense, John properly denied that he was Elijah. When Jesus later said the Baptist was Elijah (Mt 11:14; 17:10), he meant it in the sense that John was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Mal 4:5-6.

**“the Prophet”** – “*Are you the Prophet we are expecting*” (NLT). The prophet of Deut 18:15, 18. The Jewish people expected a variety of persons to be associated with the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist emphatically denies being “the Prophet.” He had come to testify about Jesus, yet they kept asking him about himself. His answers became progressively more terse.

**“He answered, No”** - “John’s relationship to Malachi’s prophecy about Elijah (Mal 4:5-6) is difficult to determine in light of his response to this question. Perhaps the key is found in the condition, “If you are willing to accept it” (Mt 11:14). At any rate, John was certainly unaware that he was fulfilling the prophecy, if he was” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 47).

**Verse 22, “Who are you”** – The same question as in v19, but later they opened wide the door by asking, ‘What do you say about yourself?’

**Verse 23, “I am the voice”** - The Baptist applied the prophecy of Isa 40:3 to his own ministry of calling people to repent in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The men of Qumran (the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls) applied the same words to themselves, but they prepared for the Lord’s coming by isolating themselves from the world to secure their own salvation. John concentrated on helping people come to the Messiah.

**Verse 24, “Pharisees”** - The conservative religious party, who probed deeper than the rest of the delegation (v19; Mt 3:7; Mk 2:16; Lk 5:17).

**Verse 25, “the Christ”** - In OT times anointing signified being set apart for service, particularly as king (1 Sa 16:1, 13) or priest (Ex 28:41; 29:7; 30:30; 40:13, 15). But people were looking for not just *an* anointed one but *the* Anointed One, the Messiah (Mt 16:16).

**Verse 26, “with water”** – “Or *in*; also in verses 31 and 33” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 27, “I am not worthy to untie”** - A menial task, fit for a slave. Disciples would perform all sorts of service for their rabbis (teachers), but loosing sandal thongs was expressly excluded.

**Verse 28, “all this happened at Bethany”** - The Bethany mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels was only about 3km from Jerusalem. The site of this Bethany is not known, except that it was located on the east side of the Jordan, Cf. Jn 10:40, “Then Jesus went back *across the Jordan* to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days”.

**Verse 29, “The Lamb of God”** - “John was a student of the Old Testament, particularly of Isaiah’s prophecy (cf. Mt 3:1-6; Isa 40:3-5). It is no surprise, therefore, that he focuses on Messiah’s soteriological work (“*Look the Lamb of God*”, cf. Isa 53:6-7) as well as his eschatological (“*The Kingdom of Heaven is near*”, Mt 3:2). John did not completely comprehend how the two ministries would combine (Mt 11:2-3, cf. 1 Pe 1:10-11). Even those closest to Christ did not see, until after his resurrection, why he must die” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 48). There are a number of possible **lambs** that John may have had in mind:

**1 The Passover Lamb** - It was Passover time (**Jn 2:13**, “When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem”. The Passover Lamb delivered the Israelites from death (**Ex 12:11-13**) and Christ is the anti-type of the Passover Lamb (**1 Co 5:7**).

**2 The Lamb of the Daily Sacrifice** - Every morning and every evening (**Ex 29:38-42**) lambs were sacrificed which could never take away sins (**Heb 10:11**).

**3 The Messianic Lamb** - The vision in Isaiah 53 is of one who would meekly and lovingly die for His people (**Isa 53:7**).

**4 The Conquering Lamb** - In Revelation, 29 times John uses the expression, but there it denotes a conqueror. A number of OT kings were described as lambs and during the Maccabean revolt, the Jewish leader, Judas Maccabeus was called The Lamb.

Putting these pictures together we get the idea of a person who humbly dies on behalf of others to obtain redemption and cleansing from sin but who would also be the conqueror!

**Verse 30, “This is the one”** – John points to Jesus. This is really a duplication of v15.

**Verse 31, “I ... did not know him”** - John the Baptist, who “*lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel*” (Lk 1:80), may not have known Jesus at all. But the words probably mean only that he did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the sign mentioned in vv32–33.

**Verse 32, “John gave this testimony”** - Jesus’ baptism marked the beginning of his Messianic ministry.

There were several reasons for his baptism:

- 1 The first was “to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt 3:15). His baptism indicated that he was consecrated to God and officially approved by him, as especially shown in the descent of the Holy Spirit (v16) and the words of the Father (v17; Psa 2:7; Isa 42:1). All God’s righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus.
- 2 At Jesus’ baptism John publicly announced the arrival of the Messiah and the inception of his ministry (Jn 1:31–34).
- 3 By his baptism Jesus completely identified himself with humanity’s sin and failure (though he himself needed no repentance or cleansing from sin (Heb 4:15), becoming our substitute (2 Co 5:21).
- 4 His baptism was an example to his followers.

**Verse 33, “baptize with the Holy Spirit”** - John baptized with water, but Jesus would baptize with the Spirit - by which he would cause those who believe in him to participate in the powers and graces of the new life he came to give (Jn 20:22; Act 1:5; 2:4; 11:15–16; 19:4–6; 1 Co 12–14; Gal 3:5, 14; 4:6; 5:16–25; Eph 1:13; 3:16; 5:18; Php 3:3; 1 Th 4:8).

**“Holy Spirit”** - His normal title in the NT - though only here; 14:26 & 20:22 in this Gospel - emphasizing his holiness rather than his power or greatness.

**Verse 34, “Son of God”** - See vv14, 18; 3:16; 20:31.

**Verse 35, “the next day”** – This was a very busy day. On this day:

- 1 The Disciples hear John (Jn 1:37, “When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus”);
- 2 They followed Jesus (Jn 1:40, “Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus”);
- 3 They abode with Jesus (Jn 1:39, ““Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour”);
- 4 They bore witness (Jn 1:41, “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ)”);
- 5 They worshipped Him (Jn 1:49, “Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”

**“two”** - One was Andrew (v40). The other is not named, but from early times it has been thought that he was the author of this Gospel.

**“his disciples”** - In the sense that they had been baptized by John and looked to him as their religious teacher.

**Verse 36, “he saw Jesus”** – This was probably the third and last time John saw Jesus (the baptism, v29, and here).

**Verse 37, “they followed Jesus”** – Andrew and Peter heard him speaking, took him at his word and acted on it.

**Verse 38, “Turning around”** – A vivid picture of the sudden act of Jesus on hearing their steps behind him.

**Verse 39, “tenth hour”** - 4:00 p.m.

**Verse 40, “Andrew”** - One of the 12 apostles (Mt 10:2). He was from Bethsaida (v44), but later lived with Peter at Capernaum (Mk 1:29), where they fished for a living (Mt 4:18). He is famous as the man who brought Peter to Christ.

**Verse 41, “The first thing Andrew did”** – Before he did anything else he found his brother. But some MSS suggest the meaning is that Andrew was the first to find his brother implying that John also went after his brother James.

**Verse 42, “Cephas . . . Peter”** – “Both *Cephas* (Aramaic) and *Peter* (Greek) mean *rock*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). In the Gospels, Peter was anything but a rock; he was impulsive and unstable. In Acts, he was a pillar of the early church. Jesus named him not for what he was but for what, by God’s grace, he would become (Mt 16:18).

**Verse 43, “Galilee”** – (*galil* = circle). The region of Galilee was part of the kingdom of Herod the Great. On his death it was controlled by Herod Antipas as Tetrarch. In the time of Christ, Galilee was a rectangular territory 65km from north to south and 40km from east to west (bordered on the east by the Jordan River and on the west by Syro-Phoenicia).

**Verse 44, “Bethsaida”** - (Julias, *el-Araj*), means “house of fishes” or “fishing resort”, but seems to have been the name of two different villages on the Sea shore. In the Roman period this Bethsaida was a small fishing village on swampy land on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, but Philip the Tetrarch built a new city on drier ground and re-named it *Bethsaida-Julias* after the Roman imperial family.

**Verse 45, “Philip”** – Probably from a Greek-speaking family. *Philip* = lover of horses. He seems to have been a disciple of John the Baptist before Jesus called him. He had a good understanding of the O.T. expectations concerning Messiah, had a missionary-heart (Jn 12:21-22) and yet also showed defective spiritual knowledge (Jn 6:5-7; 14:7-9).

**“Nathaniel”** - “If Nathaniel became one of the Twelve, he should probably be identified with Bartholomew in the lists found in the synoptic gospels and Acts. It cannot be concluded dogmatically, however, that he was one of this select group” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 48).

**“Nazareth”** – (*en-Nasireh* = *watch tower*). Located in Lower Galilee close to a number of main trade-routes. It is north of the Plain of Jezreel in a high valley among the mostly southerly limestone hills of the Lebanon range. It is 24km from the Sea of Galilee and 32km from the Mediterranean, at a height of 555m above Sea Level. With its moderate climate and ample rainfall it is good for vegetation.

**“son of Joseph”** - Not a denial of the virgin birth of Christ (Mt 1:18, 20, 23, 25; Lk 1:26–35). Joseph was Jesus’ legal, though not his natural, father.

**Verse 46, “Nazareth”** - In Jesus’ day “*Nazarene*” was virtually a synonym for “*despised*”. When Matthew speaks of Jesus as a “*Nazarene*” (Mt 2:23), he was probably alluding to the “Branch” (Hebrew *neser* ) of Isa 11:1, since the word also appears in the Targums, rabbinic literature, and the Dead Sea Scrolls as a Messianic title.

**Verse 47, “a true Israelite”** – One living up to the covenant name, Israel at its best (Rom 2:29).

**Verse 48, “fig tree”** - (*Ficus carica*). The fig is a native of Western Asia but has long been cultivated in Palestine. If the ground is well cultivated and the trees well cared for, they produce two harvests each year - one in early summer, from the previous year's growth, and the second on new shoots. The early figs (Song 2:13) begin to appear before the leaves. Fig trees are naked in winter but when the rains are over small green knops appear at the ends of the twigs. The leaf bud then expands and the new green leaves soon overshadow the little figs. This is a famous sign of early summer (Mt 24:32). Its shade was a favorite place for study and prayer in hot weather.

**Verse 49, “Rabbi”** - Hebrew word for “(my) teacher.”

**“the Son of God”** - vv14, 18, 34; 3:16; 20:31. At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry Nathanael acknowledged Jesus with this meaningful title; later it was used in mockery (Mt 27:40; Jn 19:7). Andrew’s “*the Messiah*” (v41) and Nathanael’s “*the Son of God*” together match Peter’s “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Mt 16:16).

**“King of Israel”** – In Mk 15:32 “*Christ*” and “*King of Israel*” are equated.

**Verse 50, “You believe”** – “Or *Do you believe . . . ?*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 51, “I tell you the truth”** – “The Greek is plural” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**“heaven open”** - In Jesus’ ministry the disciples will see heaven’s (God’s) testimony to Jesus as plainly as if they heard an announcement from heaven concerning him.

**“the angels of God ascending and descending”** - As in Jacob’s dream (Gen 28:12), thus marking Jesus as God’s elect one through whom redemption comes to the world - perhaps identifying Jesus as the “true Israelite” (v47).

**“the Son of Man”** – “A frequent self-designation adopted by the Lord. Its source was Dan 7:13-14. The nature of the title both alluded to his Messiahship and veiled it. Listeners probably read into the title as much as they apprehended of Jesus and no more. Its scope of meaning is broad, including overtones of deity, undertones of humanity, and redemption of lost man, among other connotations” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 49).

## CHAPTER TWO

**vv1-11 – JESUS CHANGES WATER INTO WINE** - When the wine was exhausted at the wedding (of John? so Jerome in *The Prologue to St. John* (Cited in Trench, 1889, and in the *Monarchian Prefaces*). One Coptic gospel says that Mary was the bridegroom's mother's sister (Barclay, 1975). Edersheim (1959) feels it was "a friend, if not a relative" (p. 356) with which Alford (1874) agrees. Mary went to Jesus with her problem. However, Jesus explained that it was not yet time for Him to be glorified (Cf. Jn 17:1).

**vv12 - JESUS' FIRST STAY IN CAPERNAUM WITH HIS RELATIVES AND EARLY DISCIPLES**

**vv13-22 – JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE (FIRST CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE AT THE PASSOVER)** - "This cleansing of the Temple should be kept distinct from the one at the close of the Lord's ministry. The differences in wording and setting, along with John's chronological placement of it, verify that the two narratives refer to two different events. Three years between the two is more than ample for the practice of buying and selling to have arisen again on the temple premises, especially in light of the avaricious tendencies of the Jewish leaders" (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 50).

**vv14-16** - On seeing the merchants in the temple courts, Jesus drove them out.

**vv17-22** - The religious leaders asked for His authority for His actions (cf. Mal 3:1), to which Jesus replied that His resurrection would provide the proof of His authority.

**vv23-25 - EARLY RESPONSE TO JESUS' MIRACLES** - Although many people '*believed*' in Him, He did not '*entrust*' himself to them.

Note how John's Purpose (Cf. **Jn 20:31**, "these are written that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by *believing* you may have life in his name") is developed in this chapter by showing:

**1 Jesus is the Christ** 1st Miraculous sign, vv 1-11, and 2nd Miraculous sign, vv 12-24.

**2 Believing** Verses 11 (faith), 22 (believed), 23 (believed) and 24 (entrust) use the same word (*pisteuo, faith*) to illustrate genuine "faith".

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "On the third day"** – "*The next day*" (NLT). This marks the conclusion of a week about which we have a rather full account. Beginning with 1:19-28 as the first day, we have then the second day in vv29-34, the third in vv35-43; the fourth in vv43-51, and the seventh in 2:1-11" (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 49). (Cf. Gen 22:4).

**"wedding"** - Little is known of how a wedding was performed in the Holy Land in the first century, but clearly the feast was very important and might go on for a week. To fail in proper hospitality was a serious offense.

**"Cana"** – *Kafir Kana, Kafer Kanna* (place of reeds). *Cana of Galilee* is used to distinguish it from other places with the same name (Jos 16:8; 19:29). Kafir Kana is 10km NE of Nazareth on the Haifa-Tiberias Road. In 70AD Cana was the headquarters of the Jewish resistance under Josephus.

**Verse 2, "had also been invited"** – Included in the invitation (possibly at the suggestion of Mary) was Jesus and his followers, who were probably all acquaintances of the family.

**Verse 3, "When the wine was gone"** - More than a minor social embarrassment, since the family had an obligation to provide a feast of the socially required standard. There was no great variety in beverages, and people normally drank water or wine. "Water was drunk in Bible times, but there was always the attendant danger of pollution. Paul advised Timothy to avoid water in favour of wine '*because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses*' (1 Ti 5:23). Wine in its various forms was the most common drink for people in Palestine. It was less likely than water or even milk to be contaminated as its alcohol content killed germs" (Thompson, 1986, p. 159). However, unfermented wine was impossible to keep without the aid of modern antiseptic precautions, and its preservation in the warm and not over-cleanly conditions of ancient Palestine was impossible" (Orr, 1946, p. 3086). It is impossible to know what type of grapes the ancient Israelites grew, but they were probably red grapes (*Vitis vinifera*). A vineyard was often planted "on a very fertile hill" (Isa 5:1) where the sun reached all sides.

**“Jesus mother said to him”** - “Jesus’ mother showed the same lack of understanding as John the Baptist and Peter did later on (Mt 11:2-3; 16:22). Though they were right as to the fact of his Messiahship, they were wrong as to the time and manner of its glorious manifestation. Jesus did perform a miracle to meet the need, but in a manner that revealed his identify to only a few” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 49).

**Verse 4, “Dear woman”** - The Greek is literally, “*Woman, why do you*” which sounds very disrespectful in English, however it was actually a term of respect (Cf. Jn 19:26) and so is translated, “*O woman*” (RSV) and “*mother*” (NEB).

**“My time has not yet come”** - Several similar expressions scattered through this Gospel (7:6, 8, 30; 8:20) picture Jesus moving inevitably toward the destiny for which he had come: the time of his sacrificial death on the cross. At the crucifixion and resurrection Jesus’ time had truly come (12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

**Verse 5, “whatever he tells you”** – While Mary recognized the right of Jesus as Messiah to be independent of her, she evidently expected him to carry out her suggestion and showed her absolute trust in him.

**Verse 6, “stone water jars”** – These stone jars, full of water, were kept handy at a feast for ceremonial cleansing of the hands (2 Ki 3:11; Mk 7:3).

**“ceremonial washing”** - Jews became ceremonially defiled during the normal circumstances of daily life, and were cleansed by pouring water over the hands. For a lengthy feast with many guests a large amount of water was required for this purpose.

**“holding from twenty to thirty gallons”** – Greek “*two to three measures*”, i.e., about 75 to 115 litres. Refers to capacity, not actual content.

**Verse 7, “filled them to the brim”** – They filled them up to the top – there was nothing left in the pots which were now full of water.

**Verse 8, “master of the banquet”** - A function mentioned only here in the NT. Apparently he was one of the guests charged with serving as master of ceremonies.

**Verse 9, “tasted the water”** – This was part of his task, but he knew nothing of the miracle.

**Verse 10, “you have saved the best”** - Ordinarily, after the guests’ taste buds were dulled, the “cheaper wine” was served.

**Verse 11, “signs”** - Miracles of Jesus. John always refers to Jesus’ miracles as “*signs*,” a word emphasizing the significance of the action rather than the marvel (e.g., 4:54; 6:14; 9:16; 11:47). There are seven (the number of completeness and perfection) such “*signs*” in the main body of this Gospel; the large catch of fish in 21:1–11 is in the epilogue (6:35). They revealed Jesus’ glory (1:14). They likely also pointed to the fullness of the salvation he came to effect. In his account of Jesus’ first display of “his glory” by providing an abundance of wine so that a wedding feast of common folk could be fully celebrated, John probably was testifying that Christ’s saving mission would culminate in the redemption of the creation from all its distresses so that the wine of joy would flow fully, as the prophets had announced (Isa 35:1–2; Joel 3:18; Am 9:13; Gen 49:11).

**Verse 12, “Capernaum”** – (*Tell Hum, Kefar Nahum*). Located on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee, it was the nearest village to the Jordan River (4km SW of the Jordan mouth). Because it was near major east-west trade routes, in New Testament times, it was the home of a detachment of Roman Soldiers and a Customs station. “Capernaum became Jesus’ new home after His unfriendly reception at Nazareth (cf. Lu 4:16-31). It had by New Testament times grown into a city, having a tax office (Mt 9:9) and a garrison of Roman soldiers (Mt 8:9).

**Verse 13, “the Jewish Passover”** – Cf. Ex 12:11–23; Deut 16:16; Mt 26:17, 18–30; Mk 14:1, 12; Lk 22:1; Jn 5:1. Passover was one of the annual feasts that all Jewish men were required to celebrate in Jerusalem. From Capernaum Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Passover. “This is the first of four Passovers [i.e., **1:** 2:13; **2:** 4:35; 5:1, **3:** 6:1, 4; **4:** 11:55, 13:1] that provide a chronological framework for Jesus’ public ministry.” (Thomas & Gundry. 1988 p. 50). Note however that Reference **2:** – may not, in fact, be a Passover at all.

- “Jerusalem”** - (*el-Quds*). Jerusalem means probably means City of Peace. It was called *Salem* in Psa 76:2 and *Ur-sa-li-im-mu* by the early Babylonians. It was conquered by King David and became the capital of the Kings of Judah and the religious centre in the time of the Romans. It is almost 60km from the Mediterranean Sea, on a mountain range at an elevation of 816m.
- Verse 14, “cattle, sheep and doves”** - Required for sacrifices. Jews who came great distances had to be able to buy sacrificial animals near the temple. The merchants, however, were selling them in the outer court of the temple itself, the one place where Gentiles could come to pray.
- “exchanging money”** - Many coins had to be changed into currency acceptable to the temple authorities, which made money changers necessary (Mk 11:15). They should not, however, have been working in the temple itself.
- Verse 15, “a whip out of cords”** – It is not said that Jesus smote the sheep and oxen, for a flourish of the scourge would suffice.
- Verse 16, “doves”** - (*Turtur communis*). The dove is the most important bird in the Bible being mentioned 31 times. According to ancient zoology the dove has no bile and so was considered to be a very peaceful and clean bird and so it became the symbol of Christian virtues.
- Verse 17, “His disciples remembered”** - Probably after Jesus’ crucifixion (v22) - when Psa 69 came to them like a prophecy of his suffering at the hands of those his “zeal” for the true worship of God had deeply antagonized.
- “that it is written”** – i.e., Psa 69:9 (“zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.”)
- “Zeal for your house will consume me”** – “Passion for God’s house will consume me” (NLT); “Or Concern for God’s house will be my undoing” (NLT<sup>ms</sup>).
- Verse 18, “What miraculous sign”** – They may have heard of the “sign” at Cana, but in any case they demand proof for his Messianic assumption of authority over the temple worship. These traders had paid the Sadducees and Pharisees for the right to trade in the way they did. So they were within their technical rights to question Jesus in this way.
- Verse 19, “I will raise it again in three days”** – This brief, vague expression is explained in v21. Verse 20 shows how the Jews characteristically misunderstood Jesus. The Jews thought Jesus was referring to the literal temple, but John tells us that he was not (v21). Just a few years later, Jesus was accused of saying that he would destroy the temple and raise it again (Mt 26:61; Mk 14:58), and mockers repeated the charge as he hung on the cross (Mt 27:40; Mk 15:29). The same misunderstanding may have been behind the charge against Stephen (Act 6:13).
- Verse 20, “forty-six years”** - The temple was not finally completed until 64AD. The meaning is that work had been going on for 46 years. Since it had begun c. 19 or 20BC, the year of the event recorded here is c. 27AD.
- Verse 21, “he had spoken of”** – The Greek literally says, “**this one had spoken of**”. John frequently uses the demonstrative adjective ‘*this*’ (*ekeinos*) in the sense of “*he*” referring to Christ (Cf. Jn 1:1:18, 18; 3:30; 4:25; 5:19; etc.)
- Verse 22, “they believed”**. It is not clear whether reference here is to a particular word from the OT (e.g., Psa 16:10; 17:15) or to the OT in general (cf. 1 Co 15:4). Cf. Jn 20:9.
- Verse 23, “believed in his name”** – Means the same as, “*believed in Him*” (Cf. Psa 5:11; Eze 20:9).
- Verse 24, “would not entrust himself to them”** – Literally, “But Jesus himself kept on refusing (negative imperfect) to trust himself to them.”
- Verse 25, “he knew what was in a man”** - “Jesus, being God as well as man, was omniscient [Evidence??]. His awareness of human depravity revealed the basically selfish reasons of those attracted to him at this point. The moral preparation of these prospective subjects was not yet sufficient for their participation in the kingdom of which he and John the Baptist spoke” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 50), but Cf. Lu 2:40, 52.

## CHAPTER THREE

### vv1-21 – JESUS TEACHES NICODEMUS (NICODEMUS' INTERVIEW WITH JESUS)

vv1-5 - When Nicodemus sought out Jesus, he was told that inner cleansing and a complete change of heart are essential for a person to enter the Kingdom of God.

vv6-8 - Like the wind the work of the Holy Spirit is mysterious - it cannot be seen but its results certainly can.

vv9-12 - Only those who have personally experienced God know this new life.

vv13-15 - As the bronze snake was lifted up (cf. Num 21:8-9) so Christ will be lifted up and if people look to Him by faith they will have eternal life.

vv16-18 - Those who believe have life, those who reject Christ continue to be under the wrath of God.

vv19-21 - People come to the light for cleansing or choose to remain in the darkness.

### vv22-36 – JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY ABOUT JESUS

vv22-24 - Before John was imprisoned (cf. Mt 4:12) he baptized at Aenon, at the same time Jesus' disciples baptized in Judea.

vv25-30 - John reminded his disciples that he was only the friend, Christ was the bridegroom.

vv31-33 - John was the herald of Christ, the divine messenger. People in general refused to accept His teaching.

vv34-36 - Those who accept Jesus' teaching show they believed God but those who refused placed themselves under God's judgement.

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “a man of the Pharisees”** - The Pharisees were a legalistic and separatist group who strictly, but often hypocritically, kept the law of Moses and the unwritten “*tradition of the elders*” (Mt 15:2).

“*a member of the Jewish ruling council*” – i.e., the Sanhedrin (70 or 72 elders and teachers of the nation) which was the ruling body (under the Romans) which governed Judea. John gives us more information about Nicodemus in 7:50-51 & 19:39.

**Verse 2, “at night”** - Perhaps Nicodemus was afraid to come by day, or he may have wanted a long talk, which would have been difficult in the daytime with the crowds around Jesus. For later references to Nicodemus in this Gospel see Jn 7:45–52; 19:38–42.

**Verse 3, “is born again”** – The Greek word translated as “*again*” (*anōthen*) can also mean, “*anew*” (so RSV) or “*from above*” (Cf. Jn 3:7, 31; 19:11, 23). “Being born again is not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament. The idea closest to it are those of a new heart and a special activity of the Spirit in conjunction with the inauguration of the New Covenant and Israel’s Kingdom (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-32)” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 51). *Again* is, in fact, translated in four ways:

1 “*From above*”, e.g. Jn 19:11, “Jesus answered, ‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you *from above* [anōthen].’”

2 “*from the top*”, e.g., Jn 19:23, “This garment was seamless, woven in one piece *from top* [ἀνωθεν] to bottom.”

3 “*From the first*”, e.g., Lu 1:3, “Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning [ἀνωθεν, *from the very first*, AV],

4 “*Again*” e.g., Gal 4:9, “But now that you know God - or rather are known by God - how is it that you are turning *back* [ἀνωθεν, lit. ‘*again*’] to those weak and miserable principles?”

But which is the meaning here? Nicodemus understood it as “*again*”, since in verse 4 he rendered it “*a second time*” [δεύτερον]. But this does not seem to be the Lord’s emphasis here. The point being, not that spiritual birth is a repetition, but that it is being born into a higher life. To be begotten *anōthen* (again) means to be begotten from heaven “of the Spirit” (v5).

“*see the kingdom*” - “Seeing the Kingdom of God” in John’s phraseology is “entering into it”, i.e., “to participate in it”, to have experience of it as in Luke 9:27, “some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God”.

**Verse 4, “when he is old”** – Nicodemus knew of the idea of re-birth for Gentiles who became Jewish proselytes, but not with idea that a Jew had to be re-born, but this “stupid misunderstanding” (Bernard) of the meaning of Jesus is precisely what John represents Nicodemus as making.

**Verse 5, “water and the Spirit”** – “Or *and spirit*. The Greek word for *Spirit* can also be translated *wind*; see 3:8” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). This phrase can be understood in various ways:

- 1 It means much the same as “born of the Spirit” (v8; Tit 3:5);
- 2 Water here refers to purification;
- 3 Water refers to baptism - that of John (1:31) or that of Jesus and his disciples (v22; 4:2); or
- 4 Water refers to physical birth - specifically to the water of the amniotic sac (v6).

**Verse 6, “flesh”** - Flesh is used in five different ways:

- 1 *Mankind*, e.g. Rom 3:20, “Therefore no one [πασα σαρη] will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law”;
- 2 *The whole humanity of the Lord Jesus*, e.g., Rom 1:3, “regarding his Son, who as to his human nature [σαρη] was a descendant of David”;
- 3 *The weaker element of human nature*, e.g., Rom 8:3, “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature [της σαρκος], God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering”;
- 4 *The unregenerate state of people*, e.g., Rom 7:5, “when we were controlled by the sinful nature [τη σαρκι], the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death”;
- 5 *The natural attainments of people*, e.g., Rom 4:1, “Abraham, our forefather, [kata sarka] discovered in this matter”.

**“the Spirit”** – “Or *but spirit*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>); “*the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life*” (NLT).

**Verse 7, “You must be born again”** – “*You*” here in Greek is plural, indicating that Jesus did not just have Nicodemus in mind when he said this.

**Verse 8, “The wind blows”** – The Greek word translated as “*wind*” (*pneuma*) can mean both ‘*wind*’ and ‘*spirit*’ (Cf. Jn 3:5, 6, 8, 34, etc.), so here Jesus is clearly using a play on the word. The Holy Spirit is sovereign. He works as he pleases in his renewal of human hearts

**Verse 9, “How”** – Nicodemus is not helped by either by the use of *water* or *spirit* to understand the necessity of the birth from above or regeneration. His preoccupation prevented him seeing the truth.

**Verse 10, “Israel’s teacher”** – “*a master of Israel*” (KJV) – Teacher is preceded by a definite article, i.e., “*The teacher*” and points out Nicodemus’ official relation to the people and shows a contrast with the following words, “*you do not understand*”.

**Verse 11, “we speak what we know”** – The plural associates others, perhaps the disciples, with Jesus. The words are true of Christians as well as of Christ.

**Verse 12, “earthly . . . heavenly things”** – Earthly things are “things upon the earth”, not worldly or sinful things and included the work of the kingdom of God including the new birth. Heavenly things are things that take place in heaven like the deep purpose of God in redemption and the need for Christ to be lifted up.

**Verse 13, “the Son of Man”** – A number of ancient MSS add, “*who is in heaven*”.

**Verse 14, “the Son of Man must be lifted up** – Referring both to the Crucifixion and beyond that to the Glorification. It is characteristic of John to blend the two ideas of Christ’s passion and glory (e.g., Jn 8:28; 12:32).

**Verse 15, “believes in him may have eternal life”** – This expression could also mean, “*whoever believes may have eternal life in him*”. *Eternal life* is an infinitely high quality of life in living fellowship with God - both now and forever

**Verse 16, “For God so loved the world”** – It is difficult to know if verses 16-21 are still the words of Jesus or whether they are John’s reflections on the words of Jesus (vv 10-15). Thomas & Gundry (1988) say that, “it seems a more natural assumption, however, to view these verses as continuing the Lord’s teaching already in progress” (p. 51).

**“his one and only Son”** – This expression can also be understood as, “*his only Son*” (RSV) or “*his only begotten Son*” (KJV), Cf. Jn 3:18.

**Verse 17, “send his Son”** – John uses “*sent*” here rather than “*gave*” (v16) because the idea of sacrifice is here merged with that of authoritative commission.

**Verse 18, “only son”** – “Or *God’s only begotten Son*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**“believes . . . does not believe”** - John is not speaking of momentary beliefs and doubts but of continuing, settled convictions.

- Verse 19, “men loved darkness”** – Literally, “*the darkness*”. Men rebel against the light and choose moral and spiritual darkness. Darkness is a common metaphor in John for the state of sinners (e.g., Jn 8:12; 12:35).
- Verse 20, “does evil”** – A different word that in v19. Originally it meant, *light, paltry, trivial* and so *worthless*. The emphasis here is evil considered as worthlessness.
- Verse 21, “through God”** - “*they are doing what God wants*” (NLT); “*Or can see God at work in what he is doing*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>); “Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 15” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).
- Verse 22, “After this Jesus and his disciples went out”** - “Suggestions that relocate John 3:22-30 after 2:12 or after 3:36 are not well-founded. No convincing reason for doing this has been forthcoming. Besides, John 3:31 does not follow smoothly after 3:21” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 51).  
**“baptized”** - According to Jn 4:2 only the disciples actually baptized.
- Verse 23, “Aenon”** - Possibly about 13km (8 miles) south of Scythopolis (Beth Shan), west of the Jordan
- Verse 24, “before John was put in prison”** – This note is to explain why John was still baptizing at this time, the reason for his imprisonment is given by Luke (3:19).
- Verse 25, “an argument developed”** - The Dead Sea Scrolls show that some Jews were deeply interested in the right way to achieve ceremonial purification.  
**“a certain Jew”** – Some MSS read, “*Certain Jews*”.
- Verse 26, “the one you testified about”** - John’s disciples knew that he had testified about Jesus, but they loved their master and were apparently envious of Jesus’ success.
- Verse 27, “only what is given him”** - The words are true of both Jesus and John (and of everyone). Both had what God had given them, so there was no place for envy.  
**“given”** - The Greek verb is used 76 times in this Gospel, especially of the things the Father gives the Son.
- Verse 28, “I am not the Christ”** – “*Or Messiah*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).
- Verse 29, “the bridegroom”** - The most important man at a wedding, referring here to Jesus. “The friend who attends the bridegroom” is there only to help him, which describes the role of John the Baptist.  
**“full of joy”** - Not because he was on center stage, but because the bridegroom was there. John’s joy was to hear of Jesus’ success
- Verse 30, “I must become less”** – John the Baptist’s pointed way of reaffirming his subordinate position.
- Verse 31, “The one who comes from above”** - “John 3:31 may be a continuation of John the Baptist’s speech, the words of Jesus, or the reflections of the Apostle John. The second possibility is unlikely without relocating some verses. The third possibility is a characteristic of this writer, but comes too much by surprise. The more natural flow is obtained by taking this as a continuation of the Baptist’s words” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 52).  
**“from heaven is above all”** – “*from heaven and is greater than anyone else*” (NLT); “Some manuscripts do not include *and is greater than anyone else*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).
- Verse 32, “what he has seen and heard”** - Jesus taught from divine experience.  
**“no one”** - Does not mean that no person accepted what he said (v33) but that people in general refused his teaching.
- Verse 33, “certified”** - When people accept Christ’s testimony, they accept the truth that Jesus came from heaven and that God was acting in him for the world’s salvation. They thereby testify that God is truthful.
- Verse 34, “without limit”** - Some teach that it is only to Jesus that the Spirit is given without limit. Others take the “*he*” (“*Greek he*”, NIV<sup>mg</sup>) as a reference to Christ’s giving the Spirit without limit to believers.
- Verse 35, “placed everything in his hand”** – John makes the same statement about Jesus in Jn 13:3 and Jesus makes the same claim in Jn 5:19-30; Mt 11:27; 28:18.
- Verse 36, “has”** - Eternal life is a present possession, not something the believer will only obtain later (v15).  
**“God’s wrath”** - A strong expression, meaning that God is actively opposed to everything evil. The word “*wrath*” occurs only here in John’s Gospel (Cf. Rom 1:18).  
**“remains”** - No one who persists in rejecting the Son of God as Savior and Lord can expect God’s wrath eventually to fade away. God’s opposition to evil is both total and permanent.  
**“on him”** – “Some interpreters end the quotation after verse 30” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **vv1-38 - JESUS TALKS TO THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

**vv1-4 - JESUS DEPARTURE FROM JUDEA** (Cf. Lu 3:19-20; Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lu 4:13). - After John had been imprisoned Christ departed from Judea to Galilee in order to avoid conflict between his disciples and John's, and also to escape the jealousy of the Pharisees.

#### **vv5-26 – THE DISCUSSION WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

**vv5-9** - Christ traveled through Samaria (not by the usual route) to meet one particular Samaritan woman who needed Him.

**vv10-15** - The woman misunderstood Jesus' words (cf. Nicodemus, 3:4) but He explained that the water He spoke of was spiritual water that would give eternal life.

**vv16-19** - Jesus asked her about her own personal life but she tried to hide her true situation. Jesus' reply made her realize that she was not talking to any ordinary man.

**vv20-24** - She therefore tried to turn the conversation to religion, only to be told that externals were unimportant, what really matters is a right attitude and a right relationship with God.

**vv25-26** - She then tried to end the conversation by stating that she would wait for the Messiah, only to be told that she was talking to Him.

#### **vv27-38 - THE DISCIPLES REJOIN JESUS (THE CHALLENGE OF A SPIRITUAL HARVEST)**

**vv27-30** - When the disciples returned the woman departed and told all the villagers about Jesus.

**vv31-34** - Next the disciples interpreted Jesus' words literally, so Jesus explained that His strength was from obedience to the will of God.

**vv35-38** - Seeing the Samaritans coming, Jesus told the disciples that now was harvest time.

**vv39-42 – MANY SAMARITANS BELIEVE (THE EVANGELIZATION OF SYCHAR)** - Although the woman introduced the villagers to Jesus, they now exercised personal faith and genuinely accepted Him for who is He.

### **vv43-54 - JESUS HEALS THE OFFICIAL'S SON**

**vv43-45 - ARRIVAL IN GALILEE** - After two days He returned to Galilee where the people welcomed Him.

#### **vv46-54 - CHILD AT CAPERNAUM HEALED BY JESUS WHILE AT CANA**

**vv46-50** - While in Cana, a Roman official from Capernaum asked Jesus to heal his son. Jesus tested the man's faith and in faith the man obeyed Jesus and returned home

**vv51-54** - On his way home, the man was met by his servants who gave him the good news that at the exact time Jesus had spoken his son was healed.

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “Pharisees”** - These religious leaders took a close interest in John the Baptist (Jn 1:24) and then also in Jesus.

**“that Jesus”** – “Some manuscripts read *The Lord*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 2, “but his disciples”** - The disciples did not baptize without Jesus' approval (Jn 3:2).

**Verse 3, “left Judea”** - Success (which aroused opposition; Jn 7:1-8:59), not failure, led Jesus to leave Judea.

**“went back once more into Galilee”** - Jesus had two obvious reasons for leaving Judea to go to Galilee at this time; potential opposition from the Pharisees (Jn 4:1-3) and the imprisonment of John the Baptist (Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lu 4:14). According to Luke, Herod imprisoned John because of being rebuked by John for taking his brother's wife, and also because, according to the secular historian Josephus, Herod feared a revolution led by John” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 52).

**Verse 4, “had to go”** - Perhaps the necessity lay in Jesus' mission rather than in geography.

**“Samaria”** - Omri purchased the hill of Shemer, re-named it Shemeron or Samaria and established his capital there. It was located between Judah and Galilee in a very mountainous area with few access roads, but controlled an important highway intersection on the route from Shechem to the Coastal Highway. Here it refers to the whole region, not simply the city.

The Samaritans were a mixed-blood race resulting from the intermarriage of Israelites left behind when the people of the northern kingdom were exiled and Gentiles brought into the land by the Assyrians (2 Ki 17:24). Bitter hostility existed between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus' day (Jn 4:9) and so Jews often avoided Samaria by crossing the Jordan and traveling on the east side (Mt 10:5; Lk 9:52).

**Verse 5, "a town in Samaria"** - "Among the gospel writers only Luke and John devote special attention to Samaria and Samaritans. Both are especially conscious of how Christ met the needs of non-Jews, because both gospels were composed with readers of Gentile background in view" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 52).

**"Sychar"** – *Askar*. Some manuscripts spell it as *Sichar*. A small village near Shechem on the eastern slope of Mt. Ebal almost 1km (about ½ m) north of Jacob's well. Jacob bought some land in the vicinity of Shechem (Gen 33:18–19), and it was apparently this land that he gave to Joseph (Gen 48:21–22).

**Verse 6, "Jacob's well"** - Mentioned nowhere else in Scripture.

**"sixth hour"** - 12:00 noon.

**Verse 7, "to draw water"** - People normally drew water at the end of the day rather than in the heat of midday (v6; Gen 24:11). But the practice is attested by Josephus, who says that the young ladies whom Moses helped (Ex 2:15–17) came to draw water at noon.

**Verse 8, "to buy food"** – This explains why Jesus asked her. They had already gone before she came.

**Verse 9, "do not associate with"** – "Or do not use dishes Samaritans have used" (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). The point of the NIV marginal reading (and probably of the text) is that Jews would become ceremonially unclean if they used a drinking vessel handled by a Samaritan, since they held that all Samaritans were ceremonially unclean. "Some manuscripts do not include this sentence" (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 10, "gift"** - The Greek for this word is used only here in this Gospel and emphasizes God's grace through Christ. Jesus gave life and gave it freely.

**"living water"** - Not stagnant cistern water but fresh, flowing water, as of a spring or mountain stream, that revives and refreshes life. In 7:38–39 the term is explained as referring to the Holy Spirit, but here it refers to that which produces eternal life (v14).

**Verse 11, "deep"** - Christian pilgrim sources as early as the fourth century mention a well in this area that was about 30m (100') deep. When the present well was cleaned out in 1935, it was found to be 42m (138') deep.

**Verse 12, "our father Jacob"** - Deep regard for the past prevented her from seeing the great opportunity of the present.

**Verse 13, "Everyone who drinks"** – Present tense, "keeps on drinking". It denotes a habit, repeatedly.

**Verse 14, "whoever drinks"** – Whoever has one single drink – a single act, something done once.

**"never thirst"** – The double negative is used here - the strongest possible negative – "by no means".

**"welling up"** - The expression is a vigorous one, with a meaning like "leaping up." Jesus was speaking of vigorous, abundant life (Jn 10:10).

**Verse 15, "Give me this water"** - Cf. the misunderstanding of Nicodemus (Jn 3:4). In both cases the way was opened for further instruction.

**"keep coming"** – Implying "coming here every day".

**Verse 16, "call your husband"** – Had she started to leave after her perplexed reply? Jesus, by this sudden remark, gives the woman a conviction of sin and guilt without which she cannot understand his use of water as a metaphor for eternal life.

**Verse 17, "I have no husband"** – The Greek word means either "man" or "husband". She had a "man" but he was not her legal "husband".

**Verse 18, "five husbands"** - The Jews held that a woman might be divorced twice or at the most three times. If the Samaritans had the same standard, the woman's life had been exceedingly immoral. Apparently she had not married her present partner.

**Verse 19, “I can see”** – The word she used properly means ‘*behold*’, ‘*contemplate*’, but often just, ‘*see*’, ‘*perceive*’. It is a favourite word of John (occurring x23). It may be used of bodily vision (20:6) or of mental contemplation (12:45), but always denotes an intelligent attention. It means to behold more critically and was later used of a General officially reviewing an army parade.

**“you are a prophet”** - Because of his special insight.

**Verse 20, “this mountain”** - Perhaps the woman did not like the way the conversation was going and so began to argue. The proper place of worship had long been a source of debate between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans held that “this mountain” (Mount Gerizim) was especially sacred. Abraham and Jacob had built altars in the general vicinity (Gen 12:6–7; 33:18–20), and the people had been blessed from this mountain (Deut 11:29; 27:12). In the Samaritan Scriptures, Mount Gerizim (rather than Mount Ebal) was the mountain on which Moses had commanded an altar to be built (Deut 27:4–6). The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim c.400BC, which the Jews destroyed c.128 BC. Both actions, of course, increased hostility between the two groups.

**Verse 21, “neither on this mountain”** – Both Jews and Samaritans were wrong as to the necessity of place. “These ancient rivalries will disappear when the spirituality of true religion is fully realized.”

**Verse 22, “worship what you do not know”** - The Samaritan Bible contained only the Pentateuch. They worshiped the true God, but their failure to accept much of his revelation meant that they knew little about him.

**“salvation is from the Jews”** - The Messiah would come from God’s historic people (Rom 1:16; 11:18).

**Verse 23, “true worshippers”** – Lit. ‘*to bow the knee*’ and hence ‘*to worship*’. Jesus emphasizes that it is not where but how a person worships. Worship is to be in the spirit of the person (their highest part) and also in truth.

**Verse 24, “God is spirit . . . worship in spirit and in truth”** - The place of worship (vv20–21) is irrelevant, because true worship must be in keeping with God’s nature, which is spirit. “True worshippers” (v23) must worship God in the power (enablement) of his Spirit and in accordance with truth. In John’s Gospel truth is associated with Christ (Jn 1:14; 14:6), a fact that has great importance for the proper understanding of Christian worship.

**Verse 25, “Messiah . . . will explain everything”** - The woman’s last attempt to evade the issue. The matter was too important, she reasoned, for people like Jesus and herself to work out. Understanding would have to await the coming of the Messiah (Jn 1:25). The Samaritans expected a Messiah, but their rejection of all the inspired writings after the Pentateuch meant that they knew little about him. They thought of him mainly as a teacher.

**Verse 26, “I . . . am he”** - The only occasion before his trial on which Jesus specifically said that he was the Messiah. The term did not have the political overtones in Samaria that it had in Judea, which may be part of the reason Jesus used the designation here. “This was Jesus’ only declaration of His Messiahship until His trial. See Mark 14:62” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 53).

**Verse 27, “the disciples returned and were surprised”** - “The disciples’ surprise arose from Jesus’ unconventional conduct. Rabbis would not have carried on a conversation with a woman, because they regarded women as inferior in every way. Yet the disciples did not question the action because they had already been with Jesus long enough to know he did not always conform to conventional rabbinic behaviour” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 53).

**Verse 28, “leaving her water jar”** – Apparently is her excitement and embarrassment, but it could have been that the jar would have slowed her down.

**Verse 29, “everything I ever did”** - An exaggeration, but it shows the impression Jesus made on her. **“Could this be the Christ?”** - Her question seems full of longing, as though she did not expect them to say “Yes,” but she could not say “No.”

**Verse 30, “made their way toward him”** – This graphically pictures the long procession as they approached Jesus.

**Verse 31, “urged him”** – “*prayed him*” (KJV); “*kept beseeching him*”. Their concern for Jesus overcame their surprise about the woman.

**Verse 32, “that you know nothing about”** – Jesus had spiritual food (Cf. Mt 4:4).

**Verse 33, “Could someone have brought him food?”** - A misunderstanding similar to that of the woman (v15).

**Verse 34, “My food . . . is to do the will of him who sent me”** - John often mentions that Jesus depended on the Father and did the work the Father sent him to do (Cf. Jn 5:30; 6:38; 8:26; 9:4; 10:37–38; 12:50; 14:31; 15:10; 17:4).

**Verse 35, “Four months more and then the harvest”** - Apparently a proverb that meant something like “Harvest cannot be rushed.” But, while the crops must take their time ripening, in the fields that Jesus referred to the harvest is already ripe (Cf. Mt 9:36–38).

**Verse 36, “draws his wages”** - The work, or at least part of it, had been done, and others were working hard. The disciples were not to think that the harvest was far off. Jesus was not speaking of grain but of “the crop for eternal life.” There was urgency, for the crop would not wait.

**“glad together”** - There is no competition among Christ’s faithful servants, and sower and reaper share in the joy of the crop.

**Verse 37, “One sows”** – Probably a well-known, true proverb, Cf. 1Co 3:6–9.

**Verse 38, “Others”** - May refer to John the Baptist and his supporters, on whose work the apostles would build. Or perhaps Jesus was looking further back, to the prophets and other godly people of old. Either way, he expected the apostles to be reapers as well as sowers.

**Verse 39, “that town”** - Sychar (v5).

**Verse 40, “stayed two days”** – They wanted to get to know Jesus so he remained there for two days of continuous revival, a most unexpected experience considering the feeling between Jew and Samaritan.

**Verse 41, “many more”** – Jesus was reaping more rapidly than the woman did, but all were rejoicing that so many believed.

**Verse 42, “the Saviour of the world”** - This expression occurs only here and in 1 Jn 4:14 and points to the facts:

- 1 that Jesus not only teaches but also saves, and
- 2 that his salvation extends to the world (Jn 3:16).

Recording the salvation of the Samaritans is John’s way of showing his predominantly Gentile readership that salvation in Christ is for all people regardless of race” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 54).

**Verse 43, “he left for Galilee”** – He stayed in Samaria for two days (Jn 4:40) and now heads for Galilee as He had started to do (Jn 4:3) before the interruption at Sychar.

**Verse 44, “a prophet has no honor in his own country”** - Nonetheless, Jesus went to Galilee, because he came to die for our salvation (Cf. Jn 1:29).

**“His own country”** - Galilee, not Judea as some have understood. Galilee is the meaning of the expression in the synoptic gospels. A reference to Judea at this point would not fit unless this departure were placed before Jesus’ time in Samaria” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 54).

**Verse 45, “welcomed him”** - The welcome of the Galileans actually was a kind of rejection, for they were interested only in his miracles. They were not welcoming the Messiah who could save them, but only a miracle worker who could amaze them.

**Verse 46, “royal official”** - Evidently an officer in Herod’s service.

**Verse 47, “close to death”** – This idiom is used of the impending death of Jesus in Jn 11:51; 12:33; 18:32. It explains the reason for the urgency.

**Verse 48, “you will never believe”** - “Jesus was not rebuking the royal official but lamenting over what was a typical attitude of the Galileans. The official was different in that he believed solely on the basis of Jesus’ word (Jn 4:50)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 55).

**Verse 49, “before my child dies”** – He thought that Jesus only had power before death as did Martha and Mary initially (Jn 11:21, 32).

**Verse 50, “Your son will live”** - Not simply a prophecy, but words of power. Jesus was healing, not forecasting a happy ending (vv51-53).

**Verse 52, “seventh hour”** – About 1:00 p.m., but the Greek could mean ‘during the seventh hour’.

**Verse 53, “believed”** - Cf. the aim of this Gospel (Jn 20:31).

**Verse 54, “second miraculous sign”** - This was the second time Jesus performed a sign after coming from Judea to Galilee (Jn 2:11).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### vv1-15 - THE HEALING AT THE POOL

**vv1-9 - JESUS HEALS AN INVALID ON THE SABBATH** - At Bethesda ("house of mercy") Christ healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years (cf. the 38 year wilderness wandering, Deut 2:14).

**vv10-15 - EFFORT TO KILL JESUS FOR BREAKING THE SABBATH** - Because Jesus healed this man on the Sabbath Day, the Jews began to persecute Him.

**vv16-30 – LIFE THROUGH THE SON (CHRIST REPRESENTS THE FATHER IN EVERY WAY)** - Jesus not only healed on the Sabbath but went on to call "God his own Father" (v18). The Son does nothing independent of the Father. The dead hear his voice both spiritually (v25) and eschatologically (v28).

**vv31-47 – TESTIMONIES ABOUT JESUS (THE WITNESSES TO HIS DEITY).**

1 *Christ Himself* (31) but this testimony is not valid;

2 *The Father* (32, 37);

3 *John* (33-35);

4 *His works* (36-38);

5 *The Scriptures* (39-40); and

6 *Moses* (41-47). His opponents accepted praise from one another but

Christ only accepted praise from the Father. If they believed Moses they would also believe Him.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "a feast of the Jews"** – "The two most probable identifications of this feast are Passover and Tabernacles. Of the two, the second seems the best choice" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 66). The identity of this feast is significant for the attempt to ascertain the number of Passovers included in Jesus' ministry, and thus the number of years his ministry lasted. John explicitly mentions at least three different Passovers: the first in 2:13, 23; the second in 6:4 and the third several times (11:55; 12:1), suggesting a public ministry lasting between two and three years. However, if the feast of 5:1 was a fourth Passover or assumes that a fourth Passover had come and gone, Jesus' ministry would have lasted between three and four years.

**Verse 2, "there is"** - Use of the present tense may mean that the pool was still in existence and that John wrote his Gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem.

**"Bethesda"** – Although the reading *Bethesda* is widely supported, some MSS read, *Bethzatha* and others, *Bethsaida*, but one of the Dead Sea Scrolls seems to show that Bethesda is the right name. The site is generally identified with the twin pools near the present-day Saint Anne's Church. There would have been a colonnade on each of the four sides and another between the two pools.

**Verse 3, "disabled people"** – The RV gives, *the sick* but it is literally, *people without strength*. Wycliffe translated it, *languishing*, the KJV, *the impotent*, and the RSV, *invalids*.

**Verse 4** - Although there is no verse 4 in the NIV, some MSS give, *waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

**Verse 5, "for thirty-eight years"** – Israel had actually spent 38 years in the wilderness (Deut 2:14).

**Verse 6, "Do you want to get well?"** - The man had not asked Jesus for help.

**Verse 7, "when the water is stirred"** - The man did not see Jesus as a potential healer, and his mind was set on the supposed curative powers of the water.

**Verse 8, "Pick up your mat and walk"** – Jesus told him to get up, pick up your bed and *go on walking*.

**Verse 9, "the man was cured"** - Ordinarily, faith in Jesus was essential to the cure (e.g., Mk 5:34), but here the man did not even know who Jesus was (v13). So while Jesus usually healed in response to faith, he was not limited by a person's lack of it.

**Verse 10, "the law forbids you to carry your mat"** - It was not the law of Moses itself but their traditional interpretation of it that prohibited carrying loads of any kind on the Sabbath. The Jews had very strict regulations on keeping the Sabbath, but also had many curious loopholes that their lawyers made full use of (Cf. Mt 23:4). It is always lawful to do good and to save life - including on the Sabbath (v17; 7:23; Mk 2:25; Lk 6:9; 13:15; 14:5).

**“it is the Sabbath”** – “On no other subject did the religious leaders differ with the Lord more frequently than that of the Sabbath. This is the first of **three controversies** that came in rather rapid succession [i.e., **One**, 5:10-9; **Two**, Mt 12:1-8; **Three**, Mt 12:9-14]. The rabbis had listed thirty-nine principal works that were forbidden on the Sabbath, one group of which included ordinary house chores. Carrying the mat violated this. A year and a half of ministry still remained, and already the Jerusalem authorities were ready to kill him (v18). This animosity spread very quickly to Galilee (cf. Mk 3:6)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 66).

**Verse 11, “The man who made me well”** – He did not know who Jesus was or even his name, but he quotes the exact words of Jesus.

**Verse 12, “this fellow”** - The Jews were contrasting the authority of the law of God, which in their view prohibited the action, and that of a mere man (as they considered Jesus to be) who permitted it.

**Verse 13, “into the crowd”** – Genitive absolute – explaining the reason for Christ’s departure.

**Verse 14, “Stop sinning”** - Implies that the man’s sins had caused his disability. In Jn 9:1 Jesus repudiates the idea that disabilities (such as blindness there) are inevitably caused by sin, but he does not say they are never caused by sin.

**“something worse”** - The eternal consequences of sin are more serious than any physical ailment.

**Verse 15, “told the Jews”** – Instead of thinking of Jesus’ warning about his sins, he went to the authorities to tell them who had commanded him to take up his bed, to clear himself and escape a possible stoning.

**Verse 16, “was doing”** - The continuous action points to more than one incident, and the Jews (Jn 1:19) apparently discerned a pattern.

**“persecuted”** – “began harassing (NLT). John does not tell us what form the persecution took.

**Verse 17, “My Father is always at his work”** - Jesus’ justification for his action was his close relation to his Father. The Jews did not refer to God as “My Father,” regarding the term as too intimate - though they might have used “Our Father” or, in prayer, “My Father in heaven.” (But see the many OT names that begin with Abi – [“my Father”], such as Abijah [“Yahweh is my Father”], Abiram [“The Exalted One is my Father”], Abinadab [“my Father is noble”] Cf. Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Jer 3:4, 19; Mal 2:10; 2 Sa 7:14; Pas 89:21; Jer 3:4). Jesus also exemplified the way the Sabbath should be observed. God does not stop his deeds of compassion on that day and neither did Jesus.

**Verse 18, “his own Father”** - Referring to a special relationship. The Jews did not object to the idea that God is the Father of all, but they strongly objected to Jesus’ claim that he stood in a special relationship to the Father - a relationship so close as to make himself equal with God.

**Verse 19, “Jesus gave them this answer”** - “This discourse takes its cue from and accepts the accuracy of the statement by the Jews in Jn 5:18, ‘he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God’” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 67).

**“can do nothing by himself”** - Because of who and what he was, it was not possible for Jesus to act except in dependence on the Father (Jn 4:34).

**Verse 20, “the Father loves the Son”** - Therefore the Father revealed to the Son his plans and purposes, and the Son obediently carried them out (Jn 17:4).

**“greater things”** - The Son’s activities in raising the dead and judging.

**Verse 21, “the Father raises the dead”** - A firm belief among the Jews (except the Sadducees). They also held that he did not give this privilege to anyone else. Jesus claimed a prerogative that, according to his opponents, belonged only to God.

**“the Son gives life”** - Probably refers to Christ’s gift of abundant life here and now (Jn 10:10), though possibly also to the future resurrection (Jn 11:25).

**Verse 22, “entrusted all judgment to the Son”** - The Jews believed that the Father is Judge of the world, so this teaching seemed heretical to them. (For other NT assertions that Jesus will be the eschatological Judge, see Mt 25:31–33; Act 10:42; 17:31; 2 Co 5:10; 2 Ti 4:1; 1 Pe 4:5).

**Verse 23, “He who does not honour the son”** – Jesus here claims the same right to worship from men that the Father has. Dishonouring Jesus is dishonouring the Father who sent him. John’s Gospel carries this high place for Christ throughout, as does the rest of the New Testament.

**Verse 24, “believes him . . . has eternal life”** - Faith and life are connected (Jn 20:31).

**“has eternal life”** - A present possession (Jn 3:15, 36).

**“has crossed”** - The decisive action has taken place, and the believer no longer belongs to the realm where death reigns supreme but to the realm of life.

**Verse 25, “is coming and has now come”** - A reference not only to the future resurrection but also to the fact that Christ gives life now. The spiritually dead who hear him receive life from him.

**Verse 26, “has life in himself”** - Must be understood against the background of the OT, where life is spoken of as belonging to God and as being his gift (Deut 30:20; Job 10:12; 33:4; Psa 16:11; 27:1; 36:9). The Son has been given the same kind of life the Father possesses.

**Verse 27, “authority to judge”** - Granted to the Son by the Father (v22).

**Verse 28, “will hear his voice”** - Jesus claims not only the power of (spiritual) life and of judgement, but of the power to awaken the actual dead at the Last Day. (Cf. Dan 12:2). There are 2 main resurrections:

1 The resurrection of life (e.g. Rev 20:4-6);

2 The resurrection of judgement (e.g. Rev 20:11-15).

**Verse 29, “done good . . . live . . . done evil . . . condemned”** - As always in Scripture, judgment is based on what people have done in their lives (Rom 2:6–8; Rev 20:12). Salvation, of course, is a gift from God in response to faith (v24), but true faith in Christ results in changed lives, lived in obedience to Christ as Lord (Rom 10:9–10; Jas 2:14–26).

**Verse 30, “By myself I can do nothing”** - Jesus stresses his dependence on the Father (v19). He judges only as he hears from the Father, which makes his judgment fair.

**Verse 31, “my testimony is not valid”** - Jesus’ testimony about himself required the support of all God’s revelation. Otherwise, it would have been unacceptable.

**Verse 32, “another”** - The Father testifies concerning the Son. The Jews might not accept this testimony, but it was the testimony that mattered most.

**Verse 33, “You have sent to John”** - A reference to the delegation from the Jewish leaders to John the Baptist (Jn 1:19).

**“he has testified”** - The testimony of John was important, though not, of course, equal to the testimony of the Father. But if the Jews had believed John, they would have believed Christ and would have been saved.

**Verse 34, “Not that I accept human testimony”** - Probably meaning that he does not rely on human testimony - which is always fallible and often fickle (1 Jn 5:9).

**Verse 35, “John was”** - The past tense may indicate that John was dead or at least imprisoned. In any case, his work was done.

**“burned and gave light”** - John’s giving light was costly to him.

**“for a time”** - The Jewish leaders never came to grips with John’s message, and their responses to him were always at best tentative and superficial.

**Verse 36, “work”** - The miracles of Jesus, which testified to what he is and to his divine mission (Jn 10:25).

**Verse 37, “the Father . . . has himself testified . . . his voice”** - Probably a reference to God’s voice in the Scriptures (vv38–39). But the father gave his voice of approval on three occasions:

1 Baptism (Mk 1:11);

2 Transfiguration (Mk 9:27); and

3 Passion week (Jn 12:28).

**“nor seen his form”** - Probably refers to their lack of spiritual perception of who Jesus really is.

**Verse 38, “you do not believe”** - The Jews did not recognize what God was saying, as their failure to believe Jesus shows.

**Verse 39, “You diligently study”** - The Greek is ambiguous. It could also mean, “Study diligently the Scriptures” (i.e., the imperative mood). The Jewish leaders studied Scripture in minute detail. Despite their reverence for the very letter of Scripture (Mt 5:18–21), they did not recognize the one to whom Scripture bears supreme testimony.

- Verse 40, “yet you refuse”** – Lit. “*and yet*”. The tragedy of the rejection of Messiah by the Messianic race.
- Verse 41, “praise from men”** - Jesus did not accept the kind of human praise that his opponents prized (v44).
- Verse 42, “love of God”** - May mean God’s love for them or theirs for God. Probably it is the latter.
- Verse 43, “if someone else . . . you will accept him”** – Similar prophecies occur in Mk 13:6, 22; Mt 24:5, 24; 2 Th 2:8-12; Zec 11:17.
- Verse 44, “from the only God”** – Although some MSS read, “*from the Only One*”, it seems they have accidentally omitted the word “*God*”.
- Verse 45, “Your accuser is Moses”** - The revelation God gave Moses is inseparable from the revelation God was giving through Jesus (Lk 16:31; Rom 10:4). Those who refused to believe the witness to Jesus in the earlier revelation would also reject the later revelation coming through Jesus. To their surprise, he declared that his listeners had refused to believe both and should therefore be accused before God by Moses.
- Verse 46, “he wrote about me”** - The authors of the NT books sometimes expressly stressed and everywhere assumed that the OT, rightly read, pervasively points to Christ (Lk 24:25–27, 44). Here Jesus applies this truth specifically to the writings traditionally ascribed to Moses. He may have had Deut 18:15, 18 especially in mind but probably was thinking more broadly of the whole scope of what the Pentateuch disclosed concerning God’s saving program in history, which Jesus the Messiah came to complete.
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## CHAPTER SIX

### vv1-15 – JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

**vv1-3 - WITHDRAWAL FROM GALILEE** - Because they were so busy, Christ suggested they cross the lake to a quiet place for some leisure. The crowds saw them go and followed on foot. Although they had gone for a rest Christ was moved with compassion on the crowds and taught them till evening.

**vv4-13 - FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND** - The disciples wanted him to send them away but he told them to feed the crowd. The cost to buy would have been colossal. Note:

- 1 The Lord was systematic – seating in groups of 50.
- 2 He blessed the bread - acknowledging the Father's provision.
- 3 He broke the bread - but the disciples distributed it.
- 4 There was sufficient for all.
- 5 The fragments remaining were more than they started with, but all were collected.
- 6 The Lord thus demonstrated his power to provide for his servants.

**vv14-15 - A PREMATURE ATTEMPT TO MAKE JESUS KING BLOCKED** - The crowds wanted to proclaim Jesus as King (a political Messiah), but he quietly sends the disciples away and departs alone to the mountain to pray.

**vv16-24 - JESUS WALKS ON THE WATER DURING A STORM ON THE LAKE** - During the night he saw the disciples struggling against the elements and went to their assistance walking upon the water. When he arrived the wind ceased and they were amazed for they had not yet realized the significance of the previous miracle.

**vv25-59 - JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE** - The day after the feeding of the multitudes, they were again seeking Him looking for another handout (cf. 6:2, 14, 26, 30).

**vv60-71 - MANY DISCIPLES DESERT JESUS** - Many of His disciples found His teachings difficult because they wanted to take them literally and not spiritually. When some turned back, Jesus asked the twelve if they also wanted to leave.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “Jesus crossed”** – This is the first of five “withdrawals” recorded in the Synoptics.

**“far shore”** – He travelled from the West side (Gennesaret or Capernaum) to Bethsaida Julias on the northeast shore (Lk 9:10).

**“Sea of Tiberias”** - Probably the official Roman name of the *Sea of Galilee* (Mk 1:16, also known as *Gennesaret*, Lu 5:1). The name came from the town of Tiberias (named after the emperor Tiberius), founded about 20AD.

**Verse 2, “they saw the miraculous signs”** – Imperfect tense – They had been seeing the signs which Jesus had been doing for a long time.

**Verse 3, “up on a mountainside”** – From the level of the Jordan valley, Christ went up onto the high hill on the eastern side. Mk 6:46 and Mt 14:23 tell us that after the miracle Jesus went further up the mountain to pray.

**Verse 4, “Passover Feast was near”** – This is probably the third of four Passovers in Christ's ministry (Jn 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 11:55).

**Verse 5, “Philip”** - Since he came from nearby Bethsaida (Jn 1:44), it was appropriate to ask him.

**Verse 6, “to test him”** – “to prove him”. This is the word often translated *tempt* (Mt 4:11), but **not** used here in a bad sense.

**Verse 7, “eight months wages”** – “Greek *two hundred denarii*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). “A denarius was equivalent to a labourer's full day's wage” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). “Though not a large amount of money this was probably more than the disciples had in their treasury. Even if they had possessed this much, it would not have been enough” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 104).

**Verse 8, “Andrew”** – Andrew's main claim to fame is that he brought Peter to Christ (Jn 1:41).

**Verse 9, “barley loaves”** – Cheap bread, the food of the poor. Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), a member of the grass family, is a major cereal grain. Barley was one of the first domesticated grains in the Fertile Crescent, an area of relatively abundant water in Western Asia and near the Nile River of northeast Africa. Important uses include use as animal fodder, as a source of fermentable material for beer and certain distilled beverages, and as a component of various health foods. It is used in soups and stews, and in barley bread of various cultures. Barley grains are commonly made into malt in a traditional and ancient method of preparation.

**Verse 10, “about five thousand”** - The number of men; women and children were not included (Mt 14:21).

**Verse 11, “gave thanks”** – i.e., the usual grace before meals (Deut 8:10). The Synoptics used “*blessed*” (Mt 14:19; Mk 6:41; Lu 9:16).

**Verse 12, “Gather the pieces”** - Bread was regarded by Jews as a gift of God, and it was required that scraps that fell on the ground during a meal be picked up. The fragments were collected in small wicker baskets that were carried as a part of daily attire. Each of the disciples returned with his basket full (Mt 15:37; Mk 6:43).

**Verse 13, “twelve baskets . . . left over”** – These are small, hand-baskets (i.e., one per disciple). There was abundant supply (Mk 6:43).

**Verse 14, “sign . . . Prophet”** - It pointed people to the Son of Man and the food for eternal life that he gives (v27), but they thought only of the Prophet, i.e., the prophet of Deut 18:15, 18 who would be like Moses (Jn 1:21). Through Moses, God had provided food and water for the people in the desert, and they expected the Prophet to do more than this.

**Verse 15, “make him king by force”** - Jesus rejected the widely held Jewish view of the Messiah’s kingship (Jn 18:36; Lk 24:21). Cf. Mt 4:9.

**“Jesus . . . withdrew”** - “Once again Jesus refused to accede to popular demand (cf. Jn 2:23). He did not deny that he would eventually be King over earthly subjects, but he was unwilling to assume an active role until his subjects met the moral prerequisites for entering the kind of kingdom the he came to institute. (Cf. Sermon on the Mount, Mt 5:1-8:1). The recent rejection of Him in Galilee, as well as their selfish motives on the present occasion, were ample proof that they were not ready for His kingdom” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 106).

**Verse 16, “when evening came”** – “Between nine and twelve hours have elapsed since Jesus left the disciples. He had left them at about 6.00 p.m. (‘evening’ = *opsias*) and rejoined them between 3.00 a.m. and 6.00 a.m. the next morning (‘the fourth watch’, Mt 14:25). All this time they were fighting the storm and he was praying” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.106).

**Verse 17, “Jesus had not yet joined them”**- Darkness had come, but Jesus had not come. The tenses of the verbs in this verse are very graphic. Clearly they expected Jesus before darkness came.

**Verse 18, “the waters grew rough”** – Again the verb tenses in this verse convey the sense of gathering danger. Darkness had already fallen, the sea was rising, a great wind was blowing and Jesus had not yet come.

**Verse 19, “three or three and a half miles”** – “Greek rowed *twenty-five or thirty stadia*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). “4.6 or 5.5 kilometers” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). Mark says they were “*in the middle of the lake*” (Mk 6:47).

**“terrified”** - They thought they were seeing a ghost (Mt 14:26).

**Verse 20, “It is I; don’t be afraid”** – “*Don’t be afraid, I am here*” (NLT); “Or *The ‘I AM’* is here; Greek reads, *I am*. See Ex 3:14” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 21, “immediately the boat reached the shore”** – “A twofold miracle occurred: the immediate cessation of the wind and the immediate arrival of the boat at its destination” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.107).

**Verse 22, “the crowd that had stayed”** - The crowd could not figure out what had happened to Jesus. But they wanted to see him again, so they looked for him in the most likely place, Capernaum (Jn 2:12).

**Verse 23, “some boats from Tiberias”** – “*Little boats*” came from Tiberias, Herod’s capital, diagonally across the Lake.

**Verse 24, “in search of Jesus”** – They had several motives - curiosity (v22), to make Jesus king (v15) and getting another free feed (v26).

- Verse 25, “they found him”** – They found him in the synagogue in Capernaum (v59) – perhaps the synagogue built by a centurion (Lu 7:5).
- Verse 26, “because you ate the loaves”** – “The same selfish motive (cf. 6:14-15) was evident in those who had eaten the loaves and fish on the other side of the sea. They were quite ready for the benefits associated with the kingdom but not so ready to comply with its moral responsibilities” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.108).
- Verse 27, “eternal life”** - Not something to be achieved but to be received by faith in Christ (vv28–29; 3:15).
- “Son of Man”** - Submission of the Son to the Father is one of John’s major themes (Jn 4:34; Cf. Mk 8:31).
- “seal”** – A seal signifies, security, ownership and approval.
- Verse 28, “What must we do”** - They missed the point that eternal life is Christ’s gift and were thinking in terms of achieving it by pious works (Eph 2:8–9; Tit 3:5). Cf. Act 16:30.
- Verse 29, “work of God”** - Believing in Jesus Christ is the indispensable “work” God calls for - the one that leads to eternal life (Jn 9:4).
- “believe in the one He has sent”** - “‘The food that spoils’ (v27) represents the externalities which Israelites of the day thought important. Jesus constantly sought to correct their misguided efforts. Inward conditioning including faith in him, not outward conformity, was the crying need of the hour” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.108). (Cf. Act 16:31).
- Verse 30, “What will you do?”** - They seek from Jesus a sign greater than the gift of manna that had accompanied Moses’ ministry.
- Verse 31, “manna”** - A popular Jewish expectation was that when the Messiah came he would renew the sending of manna. The crowd probably reasoned that Jesus had done little compared to Moses. He had fed 5,000; Moses had fed a nation. He did it once; Moses did it for 40 years. He gave ordinary bread (Cf. vv1–15); Moses gave “bread from heaven” (Ex 16:4; Nu 11:7).
- “as it is written”** – Cf. Ex 16:4; Neh 9:15; Psa 78:24-25.
- Verse 32, “Jesus said to them”** - Jesus corrected them, pointing out that the manna in the desert did not come from Moses but from God, and that the Father still “gives” (the present tense is important) the true bread from heaven (life through the Son).
- Verse 33, “bread of God”** - Jesus moved the discussion to something (and Someone) much more important than manna.
- “he who comes down from heaven”** - This affirmation is repeated six times in this context (here, vv38, 41, 50–51, 58), emphasizing Jesus’ divine origin.
- Verse 34, “this bread”** - Probably another misunderstanding, like that by the woman at the well (Jn 4:15, Cf. Nicodemus, Jn 3:4). Their minds ran along materialistic lines.
- Verse 35, “I am”** - The first of seven self-descriptions of Jesus introduced by “I am”. “The ‘I am’ phrases of John’s gospel have far-reaching significance. Here, as elsewhere, it is probably traceable back to Ex 3:14 and the name of God heard by Moses from the burning bush. This is the first of seven such sayings in John’s gospel (cf. 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 108). In the Greek the words are solemnly emphatic.
- “the bread of life”** - May mean “the bread that is living” and/or “the bread that gives life.” What is implied in v33 is now made explicit and repeated with minor variations in vv41, 48, and 51.
- Verse 36, “You have seen me”** - Contrast Jn 20:29.
- Verse 37, “the Father gives me”** - God’s action (v44; 10:29; 17:6; 18:9), not ours (v28), is primary in salvation, and Christ’s mercy is unfailing (vv31–40; 10:28; 17:9, 12, 15, 19; 18:9).
- Verse 38, “to do the will of him who sent me”** -
- Verse 39, “I shall lose none”** - True believers will persevere because of Christ’s firm hold on them (Jn 10:28–29; Php 1:6; Heb 3:6,14).
- “the last day”** - An expression found only in John in the NT (vv40, 44, 54). Jesus probably refers to the day of resurrection (v40) followed by judgment (Jn 5:25–30; 11:24; 12:48).
- Verse 40, “raise him up at the last day”** - Death cannot destroy the life that Christ gives (Jn 11:25-26).

- Verse 41, “the Jews”** – “Then the people” (NLT); “Greek Jewish people; also in 6:52” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). Cf. Jn 1:19.
- Verse 42, “whose father and mother we know”** – This does not imply that Joseph was still alive, but merely the fact that they recognized Joseph as the father of Jesus.
- Verse 43, “Stop grumbling”** – *murmuring* (RSV, as in v41). The present imperative means they were murmuring and were to stop it. There was a growing tide of protest against Jesus.
- Verse 44, “draws”** - People do not come to Christ strictly on their own initiative; the Father draws them.
- Verse 45, “the Prophets”** – “In the Scriptures” (NLT). The section of the OT from which the quotation is taken (Isa 54:13, Cf. Mt 5:17).
- Verse 46, “No one has seen the Father** – No one has seen God with their eyes (Jn 1:18) except the Son who is “from God” in origin (1:1,14; 7:29; 16:27; 17:8).
- Verse 47, “He who believes”** – This is the way to see God in Christ.
- Verse 48, “I am the bread of life”** – Jesus repeats these astonishing words of v35 after a fuller explanation. The believer has eternal life because He gives himself to them.
- Verse 49, “they died”** - Jesus’ opponents had set their hearts (v31) on that which could neither give nor sustain spiritual life.
- Verse 50, “eat and not die”** - Jesus’ gift is in contrast; the life he gives is eternal.
- Verse 51, “eats of this bread”** - By faith appropriates Jesus as the sustenance of one’s life.  
**“my flesh, which I will give”** - Looking forward to Calvary. Providing eternal life would be costly to the Giver.
- Verse 52, “give us his flesh to eat”** – As if we were cannibals! They could not understand the mystical appropriation of Christ by the believer (Cf. Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17).
- Verse 53, “flesh . . . blood”** - Flesh and blood here point to Christ as the crucified one and the source of life. Jesus speaks of faith’s appropriation of himself as God’s appointed sacrifice, not - at least not directly - of any ritual requirement.
- Verse 54, “Whoever eats”** – This is a different word than that used previously. It is an old word for eating fruit or vegetables and the feeding of animals, but there does not seem to be any significance in the change of word. The present tense means continual or habitual eating. Some feel that Christ is referring to the Lord’s Supper but this seems incorrect.
- Verse 56, “remains in me”** – The verb *remains* expresses the continual mystical fellowship between Christ and the believer as in Jn 15:4-7.
- Verse 57, “the living Father”** – This expression is found nowhere else in Scripture, but see Jn 5:26; Mt 16:16; 2 Co 6:16. The Father is the source of life.
- Verse 58, “bread that came down from heaven”** - As in v49, the value of the manna is limited and is contrasted with the heavenly food Christ gives.
- Verse 59, “in the synagogue in Capernaum”** – Among the ruins at *Tell Hum* (probably Capernaum) was found a large block of stone, probably the lintel, carved with a pot of manna, grape leaves and clusters of grapes.
- Verse 60, “a hard teaching”** - Hard to accept, not hard to understand. The thought of eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood was doubtless shocking to most of Jesus’ Jewish hearers (Cf. Jn 6:53–58).
- Verse 61, “Does this offend you”** – “Cause you to stumble” (RV). Cf. Mt 5:29; Jn 16:1.
- Verse 62, “ascend”** - Probably refers to the series of events that began with the cross, where Jesus was glorified (Cf. Jn 7:39).  
**“where he was before”** - Referring to Jesus’ heavenly preexistence (Cf. Jn 8:58; 17:5).
- Verse 63, “The words I have spoken to you are spirit”** – “Or Spirit” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). ‘spirit’ here may mean ‘spiritual words’ or “are from the Holy Spirit”.
- Verse 64, “who would betray him”** – Jesus was not surprised when He saw signs of treason in Judas. Lu 6:16 calls Judas a *traitor*.
- Verse 65, “unless the Father has enabled him”** - Coming to Christ for salvation is never a merely human achievement (see vv37, 39, 44–45).

**Verse 66, “From this time”** - May also mean “For this reason” or both.

**“many . . . turned back”** - Jesus had already made clear what discipleship meant, and many were not ready to receive life in the way he taught.

**“many of his disciples”** - “The strong emphasis on inner response as the only proper basis for external behaviour was more than most listeners could bear (Jn 6:60). As a result, many would-be disciples no longer followed him. John 6:66 marks a turning point in the use of *disciple* in John’s gospel. From this point on, it is found in the more restricted sense of genuine *disciple*” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.109).

**Verse 67, “You do not want to leave too, do you”** - The question expects a “No!” answer.

**Verse 68, “words of eternal life”** - The expression is general. Peter was not speaking of a formula but of the thrust of Jesus’ teaching. He perceived the truth of v63.

**Verse 69, “the Holy One of God”** - “Peter and his fellow disciples at this point reached the threshold of what Jesus was teaching them during this period. Their confession was stronger than the previous one (Mt 14:33) but not yet as specific as it would be (Mt 16:16). ‘*The Holy One of God*’ was none other than the One whom God appointed to be King (Psa 16:10; 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa 1:4). In spite of public rejection of him, the disciples were growing into a full appreciation of his person” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.109).

**“We believe and know”** - Since the Greek verbs are in the perfect tense, they mean, “*We have entered a state of belief and knowledge that has continued until the present time.*”

**“Holy One of God”** – “Other manuscripts read *you are the Christ, the Holy One of God*; still others read *you are the Christ, the Son of God*; and still others read *you are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (NLT<sup>ms</sup>). Applied to Jesus in Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34 (Cf. Act 2:27).

**Verse 70, “a devil”** - Judas (v71) would oppose Christ in the spirit of Satan.

**Verse 71, “Iscaiot”** - Means “*man from Keriath*” (in Judea; Jos 15:25) and would apply equally to the father and the son (cf. Jn 12:4). Judas seems to have been the only non-Galilean among the Twelve.

**“one of the Twelve”** - Therefore one of the last persons likely to betray Jesus.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

**vv1-52 - JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES** - In chapters 7 & 8 John does three things:

- 1 He records strong opposition to Jesus, including repeated references to threats on his life (Jn 7:1,13,19,25,30,32,44; 8:37,40,59).
- 2 He gathers the major arguments against the Messiahship of Jesus and answers them; and
- 3 He also notes the reactions to Jesus by a whole range of people.

**vv1-9 - HIS BROTHERS RIDICULE HIM** - Because of the opposition from the Jewish leaders (Mt 15:1-3; Mk 7:1-23) Jesus stayed in Galilee at this time (v1). But His half-brothers mocked Him saying He should go to Jerusalem to show Himself to the world. Any self-seeking person would have welcomed the opportunity to prove his claims but Jesus did not need to prove anything (vv2-9).

**vv 10-13 - MIXED REACTION TO JESUS' TEACHING AND MIRACLES** - Christ "resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Lu 9:51, cf. Isa 50:7) but the Samaritans refused him hospitality, believing Gerizim to be the place for worship (cf. Jn 4:21). The disciples recalled when Elijah destroyed Samaritans with fire (Lu 9:54, cf. 2 Ki 1:1-15), but Christ came to save not destroy. The crowds at the Feast were divided as to who He was. "a good man" (12) these people seem to have been motivated by curiosity (11); "a deceiver" (12) these people seem to have been motivated by fear (13).

**vv14-31 - JESUS TEACHES AT THE FEAST** - The people reacted to His sudden appearance in a wide range of ways:

**The Leaders:** Already filled with anger against Him because of the happenings at Bethesda, their hostility increases in bitterness when they notice that He not only confirms His earlier exalted claims but also exposes their inconsistent reasoning about the Sabbath and that within the crowd there is considerable sentiment in His favour. Hence, they make an abortive attempt to arrest Him (vv11-24 & 28-30).

**Some of the citizens:** These reject Him because they "know where He comes from" (vv25-27).

**Many of the pilgrims:** On the basis of His signs they regard Him as being the Messiah (v31).

**vv32-52 - THE FRUSTRATED ATTEMPT TO ARREST JESUS** - Christ's urgent appeal, His tender invitation and His earnest exhortation. John described the content of Jesus' message (vv32-40), and then goes on to show how the people responded.

**vv41-44 - The Crowds** The sentiment was divided. Some said, "This is the Prophet" (40); others, "This is the Christ" (41); still others, "Surely The Christ does not come out of Galilee, does He?" (41-42).

**vv45-46 - The Officers** who had been sent to arrest Him, "Never did a man speak as this man speaks."

**vv47-49 - The Pharisees**, in an informal Sanhedrin-session. In a sneering criticism addressed to the officers who had failed to arrest Him, these Pharisees show that they regard Him as one who leads astray "the accursed rabble that does not know the law" (47-49).

**vv50-52 - Nicodemus**, who in an appeal to the law, defends Jesus' right to a full and fair hearing

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "After this"** - Cf. Jn 2:13; 3:22; 6:1 and the "sometime later" of Jn 5:1. In this case, it is six months later (Cf. 6:4 with 7:2).

**"the Jews"** – throughout this section, "the Jews" means the Religious leaders.

**Verse 2, "Feast of Tabernacles"** – Sept-Oct. All males within 25km (15miles) of Jerusalem were obliged to attend. This is the greatest feast in the Jewish year, celebrating the completion of the vintage harvest and commemorating God's goodness to the people during the desert wanderings (Lev 23:33-43; Deut 16:13-15; Zech 14:16-19). The name came from the leafy shelters in which people lived throughout the seven days of the Feast. *Shelter* (or *Booth*) is *Sukkah* (*Sukkot*, Plural), during this week all men are required to eat all meals in such a shelter. Some Orthodox Jews even sleep in them.

**Verse 3, "Jesus' brothers"** - Were his "brothers" older or younger than Jesus? Most Protestants say, "Younger" so Helvidius (actual blood brothers and sisters); but most Catholics say, "Older" so Epiphanius (children from Joseph's former marriage). Possibly both. All of the evidence suggests that Joseph was much older than Mary, e.g., the last time we read of him is when Jesus is 12 years old and it is interesting that in this story it is Mary that does all the talking. It seems highly likely that Joseph had been married previously. It is also probable that Mary was only a teenager when they were married. And there were, no doubt, tensions that existed in the household. Joseph's oldest sons may have been about the same age as Mary. Joseph probably treated Mary and her children with a special tenderness and this would have added to the tensions. Then this young fellow tells them that he is the Messiah. So it is easy to see how they ridicule him. **Heb 4:15** says, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have *one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are* - yet was without sin". When we witness to family members and they reject the message, he knows exactly how we feel. He is able to sympathize (more than that, he empathizes with us). But that's not the end of the story. These same people that were unbelievers during Christ's earthly life (Jn 7:5) become believers after the resurrection (1 Co 15:7; Act 1:14), and His brothers' James and Jude became leaders in the early church.

**Verse 4, "show yourself to the world"** - "After the past six months of relative obscurity, the Lord's brother's prodded him to make a dramatic appearance at the impending Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. It is not clear whether the brothers claimed some knowledge of Jesus' miracles that other people did not have or whether they were suggesting that any claim to Messiahship must be decided in Jerusalem. In their unbelieving state they mockingly asked for a kind of Messianic manifestation that would have been quite untimely in the working out of God's purpose (v8)" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 128).

**Verse 5, "did not believe"** - Imperfect tense "were not believing", i.e., were not believers.

**Verse 6, "right time"** - Jesus moved in accordance with the will of God (Jn 2:4).

**Verse 7, "The world"** - Either:

- 1 people opposed to God; or
- 2 the human system opposed to God's purposes (Jn 1:10). The brothers belonged to the world and therefore could not be the objects of its hatred. Jesus, however, rebuked the world and was hated accordingly.

**Verse 8, "I am not yet going"** - "Some early manuscripts [i.e.,  $\aleph$ DK1241al lat sy<sup>S</sup> bo and Nestle<sup>26</sup>] do not have *yet*" (NIV<sup>mg</sup>), but the earliest MSS [p<sup>66,75</sup>] do have it. How it was omitted or introduced is not known. Jesus was not refusing to go to the Feast, but refusing to go in the way the brothers suggested - as a pilgrim. When he went, it would be to deliver a prophetic message from God, for which he awaited the "right time" (v6).

**"the right time"** - They used three words for 'time':

- 1 *hora* - *the destined hour of God*, Cf. Jn 2:4; 7:30;
- 2 *chronos* - the usual word for 'time' in a general sense; and
- 3 *kairos* - *Opportunity*, the proper time. The word used here.

**Explanation of apparent contradictions** between verses 8 and 10.

- 1 Use of the word time (i.e., it was not the appropriate time);
- 2 Not public, but private (v10);
- 3 Lied to brothers? (But this can be eliminated).

**Verse 10, "not publicly"** - Rejecting the brothers' suggestion to show himself (v4).

**Verse 11, "the feast of the Jews"** - "This is the Feast of Tabernacles. At this point Jesus returned to Jerusalem, the home ground of his strongest enemies. The inevitable result was strong controversy, which dominated a 3-month period [from now until the Feast of Dedication, Jn 10:22]. By then decisions had been reached regarding the controversial issues, and there remained only the carrying out of the decision to separate Messiah from His people" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 130).

**Verse 12, "whispering"** - Because it was not safe to speak openly (v13).

**Verse 13, “for fear of the Jews”** - Distinct from "the crowds" (v12), who were also Jews (Jn 1:19).

In John 7-8 names given to the *enemies* of Jesus' include:

‘the Jews’ (7:11, 12, 15, 35; 8:22, 48, 52, 57),

‘the Pharisees’ (7:32, 47; 8:13), and

‘the chief priests and the Pharisees’ (7:32, 45).

Those who are *friendly* (or mildly friendly) to him are called:

‘the crowd’ (or ‘people’ or ‘mob’) (7:12, 20, 31-32, 40-41, 43, 49),

‘Nicodemus’ (7:50), and

many who ‘put their faith in him’ (8:30).

Those who are as yet *undecided* are:

‘the crowds’ (7:12-13),

‘the people of Jerusalem’ (7:25),

‘temple guards’ (7:32, 45), and

‘the Jews who had believed in him’ (8:31).

Notice how John records the mixed reactions to Jesus:

vague inquiries (7:11),

debates (7:12, 40-43),

fear (7:13, 30, 44),

wonder (7:15, 46),

perplexity (7:25-27),

sincere belief (7:31; 8:30),

open hostility (7:32),

unfriendly criticism (7:23-27; 8:48-53), and

selfish belief (8:33-44).

**Verse 14, “halfway through the Feast”** - When the crowds would be at their maximum. Teaching in the temple courts at such a time would reach many.

**Verse 15, “how did this man”** - “Two specific issues dominated the discussion: the source of Jesus’ authority (7:15-24) and possible identification of him as the Messiah (7:25-31)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 130).

**Verse 16, “not my own”** - The Father, from whom he came, had been his "rabbi" (Jn 4:34).

**Verse 17, “chooses to do God’s will”** - Reflecting a whole attitude of life. A person sincerely set on doing God’s will welcomes Jesus’ teaching and believes in him (Jn 6:29). Augustine commented, "Understanding is the reward of faith . . . What is 'If any man be willing to do his will'? It is the same thing as to believe."

**Verse 18, “is a man of truth”** - Or "is true." They should recognize that Jesus was not self-seeking. In this Gospel, no one is spoken of as being "true" except God the Father (Jn 3:33; 8:26) and Jesus (here). Once more John ranks Jesus with God.

**Verse 19, “the law”** - The Jews congratulated themselves on being the chosen recipients of the law (Rom 2:17), but Jesus told them that they all broke the law of which they were so proud.

**Verse 20, “You are demon-possessed”** - The accusation of demon possession is made elsewhere in John (e.g., Jn 8:48-52; 10:20-21; Mt 9:34; 12:24; Mk 3:22-30; Lu 11:15; 12:10).

**“the crowd”** - Probably the pilgrims who had come up to Jerusalem for the Feast - different from "the Jews" who were trying to kill Jesus (v1) and the Jerusalem mob that knew of the plot (v25).

**Verse 21, “I did one miracle”** - Evidently that of healing the lame man at Bethesda (Jn 5:1-9), as the discussion about the Sabbath shows.

**Verse 22, “circumcision”** - The requirement of circumcision was included in the law Moses gave (Ex 12:44, 48; Lev 12:3), yet it did not originate with Moses but went back to Abraham (Gen 17:9-14). The Jews took such regulations as that in Lev 12:3 to mean that circumcision must be performed on the eighth day even if it was the Sabbath, a day on which no work should be done. This exception is of critical importance in understanding the controversy (v23). Jesus was not saying that the Sabbath should not be observed or that the Jewish regulations were too harsh. He was saying that his opponents did not understand what the Sabbath meant.

The command to circumcise showed that sometimes work not only might be done on the Sabbath but must be done then. Deeds of mercy were in this category.

**Verse 23, “a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath”** - Our laws are absolute, but laws in Israel were hierarchical, i.e. sometimes a lower law must be broken to keep a higher law. One must not work on the Sabbath, but what happens if you are involved in a motor vehicle accident on Saturday? In Israel, the doctors do enough to keep you alive till evening (the next day) and then continue to do what is fully required. They can “save life” (Mk 3:4) on the Sabbath because it is higher than working on the Sabbath.

**Verse 24, “by mere appearances”** – *Appearance* primarily means, seeing or sight, and so means external appearances, i.e., superficially (see also Jn 11:44).

**Verse 25, “people of Jerusalem”** - An expression found only here and in Mk 1:5 in the NT, probably referring to the Jerusalem mob (v20). They did not originate the plot against Jesus, but they knew of it.

**“Isn't this the man”** - Question expects a "Yes" answer.

**Verse 26, “he is the Christ?”** This question expects a "No" answer. ‘Christ’ is ‘Messiah’, Cf. vv 27, 31, 41, 42 and Jn 8:22, etc.

**Verse 27, “no one will know where he is from”** - Some Jews held that the OT gave the origin of the Messiah (v42; Mt 2:4-6), but others believed that it did not.

**Verse 28, “you know me”** - Irony, because in a sense they knew Jesus and that he came from Nazareth, but in a deeper sense they did not know Jesus or the Father (Jn 8:19). Jesus mentioned again his dependence on the Father (Jn 4:34) and went on to declare that he had real knowledge of God and that they did not. Both his origin and mission were from God.

**Verse 29, “I know him”** – In contrast to the ignorance of the people. Jesus makes the same claim in Jn 17:25; Mt 11:27; Lu 10:22. These three words contain the unique claim of Jesus, which is emphasized throughout these chapters. Jesus is the interpreter of God to men (Jn 1:18).

**Verse 30, “they tried to seize him”** - Jesus' enemies were powerless against him until his time came (Jn 2:4).

**Verse 31, “crowd”** - Of pilgrims (v20). Many of them believed on the basis of the miraculous signs (Jn 6:26).

**“will he do more miraculous signs”** - Question expects a "No" answer.

**Verse 32, “the chief priests”** – There was only one ruling Chief Priest, but the Romans had deposed a number of chief priests and they retained the title by courtesy.

**Verse 33, “Jesus said”** - Should read, "Jesus **therefore** said".

**“then I go”** - Jesus changed the topic from his miracles to his death, to which he referred enigmatically (v34).

**Verse 34, “where I am”** – This does not conflict with v33, but described the essential spiritual home of Christ in absolute, eternal being and fellowship with the Father.

**Verse 35, “scattered among the Greeks”** - The Jews of the Diaspora (Cf. Jas 1:1; 1 Pe 1:1). From the time of the exile, many Jews lived outside Palestine and were found in most cities throughout the Roman Empire.

**Verse 36, “What did he mean”** – Literally, “*What is this word?*” Puzzled and uneasy over this unintelligible saying. Even Peter is distressed over it later (Jn 13:37).

**Verse 37, “the last and greatest day of the feast”** - Either the seventh or the eighth day. The feast lasted seven days (Lev 23:34; Deut 16:13,15) but had a "closing assembly" on the eighth day (**Lev 23:36**, “For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and **on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work**”), which is when this event seems to have take place [“The eighth day of Assembly”, *Shemini Azaret*]. “The Feast of Tabernacles included a daily pouring out of water (about 1 litre) to commemorate the miraculous supply of water in the wilderness after Israel departed from Egypt. It also pointed forward to what the prophets saw as the future blessing of the nation (Ezek 47:1, 12; Joel 3:18). Jesus claimed ability to fulfill this promise, and the parenthetical interpretation of John 7:39 identifies the fulfillment with the provision of the Holy Spirit following Jesus’ glorification” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 131). Singing the Hallel (Psa 113-118) followed immediately after the outpouring of the water. The water commemorated Meribah (Ex 17:1-7), but on the eighth day there was **no** water and **no** light.

**“stood and said in a loud voice”** - Teachers usually sat, so Jesus drew special attention to his message.  
**“streams of living water will flow from within”** - The punctuation here is a problem. Do streams of living water flow out of the believer, or out of Christ? Note that John equates this with the giving of the Spirit. But Cf. **Jas 5:20**, "remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way *will save him* from death and cover over a multitude of sins".

**Verse 38, “streams of living water”** - Jesus claimed ability to fulfill this promise predicted by the prophets, and the parenthetical interpretation of verse 39 identifies the fulfillment with the provision of the Holy Spirit following Jesus' glorification”

**Verse 39, “the Spirit”** - Explaining the "living water" (v38).

**“had not been given”** - In the manner in which he would be given at Pentecost (Act 2).

**“glorified”** - Here probably refers to Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation (Jn 13:31). The fullness of the Spirit's work depends on Jesus' prior work of salvation.

**“stood and said in a loud voice”** - Teachers usually sat, so Jesus drew special attention to his message.

**“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink”** – Every morning during the Feast of Tabernacles, a procession would make its way from Temple Mount to the Pool of Siloam where a priest filled a Golden flask with water (about 1 litre). On the return to the Temple the priest would transfer the water to a silver bowl and from there the water was poured on the altar as a “Drink offering”. This was to commemorate the miraculous supply of water in the wilderness after Israel departed from Egypt. It also pointed forward to what the prophets saw as the future blessing of the nation (Ezek 47:1, 12; Joel 3:18). But this was the 8<sup>th</sup> day – NO water, only prayers for rain (this was the beginning of the rainy season).

**Verse 40, “people”** - The "crowd" of v20, Cf. Jn 7:52

**“the prophet”** - The sentiment was divided. Some said, “This is the Prophet” (v40), referring to Messiah (**Deut 18:15**, “The LORD your God will raise up for you *a prophet like me* from among your own brothers. You must listen to him”); others, “This is the Christ” (v41); still others, “Surely The Christ does not come out of Galilee, does He?” (vv41-42).

**Verse 41, “He is the Christ”** – These people went further and dared to call Jesus the Messiah and not merely the prophet who might be the Messiah. They said it openly.

**Verse 42, “from David’s family”** – The Greek text reads, “*from David’s seed*”, Cf. Jn 8:33.

**“Bethlehem”** - There were different ideas about the Messiah's place of origin (v27). Bethlehem (*Beit Lahm*) means House of bread. It is called “*Bethlehem Ephrathah*” (Mic 5:2) [Ephrathah was the district (*Ephrath*) in which Bethlehem is located] and “*Bethlehem in Judah*” (Ruth 1:2) to distinguish it from Bethlehem in Zebulun (Jos 19:15). The home of King David, it is just 9km south of Jerusalem.

**Verse 45, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”** – The Sanhedrin was indignant at the failure of the temple police to arrest Jesus. Apparently they were sitting in expectation of immediately questioning him.

**Verse 46, “the guards”** - They knew they would be in trouble for failing to make the arrest, but did not mention the hostility of part of the crowd, which would have given them something of an excuse before the Pharisees. They were favorably impressed by the teaching of Jesus and were not inclined to cause him trouble.

**Verse 47, “the Pharisees retorted”** - They must have been greatly irritated. Ordinarily the chief priests would have rebuked the temple guards.

**Verse 48, “the Pharisees believed in him?”** – The question expects a, “No!” answer. These temple police were employed by the temple authorities who now felt they were losing their authority and this was probably the reason for their hostility toward Jesus.

**Verse 49, “this mob”** - The pilgrim crowd again (v20).

**“knows nothing”** - The Pharisees exaggerated the people's ignorance of Scripture (v42). But the average Jew paid little attention to the minutiae that mattered so much to the Pharisees. The "traditions of the elders" were too great a burden for people who earned their living by hard physical work, and consequently these regulations were widely disregarded.

**Verse 50, Nicodemus . . . asked**” - There is irony here. The Pharisees implied that no leader believed in Jesus, yet Nicodemus, "a member of the Jewish ruling council" (Jn 3:1), spoke up. They called for people to observe the law, but Nicodemus pointed to their own failure to keep the law.

**Verse 51, “Does our law condemn anyone”** – Again a negative answer is expected. These law-makers were breaking the law of criminal procedure (Ex 23:1; Deut 1:16). The law required that a condemned person must be heard. There was no legal answer to Nicodemus’ question.

**Verse 52, “a prophet does not come out of Galilee”** – As this reading stands they were saying, “out of Galilee ariseth *no prophet*” (so KJV) but this is NOT correct, as Jonah came from Gath Hopher (2 Ki 14:25) in Galilee and probably also Elijah. And the Pharisees must have known this. As early as 1750 an English scholar, Dr. Owen, conjectured that the original text must have read, “that *the prophet does not arise out of Galilee*”, i.e., the Messiah does not come out of Galilee. His conjecture has now been confirmed as p<sup>46</sup> and p<sup>75</sup> both read, *ho prophetes*, as the NIV<sup>mg</sup> notes, “Two early MSS *the Prophet*” – referring to the Prophet Moses spoke of in Deut 18:18. Recent scholars favouring this reading include Bultmann, Barrett (1956), Michaels (1957) and Smothers. However the evidence is not conclusive.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

**7:53-8:11 - JESUS' FORGIVENESS OF A WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY** - Although this section is included in a number of English Bibles (e.g., KJV, NASB), it is **not** in most modern English Bibles (e.g. RSV, NIV) as it is absent in most early Greek MSS. When it is included, it is sometimes located here, sometimes at the end of this gospel, and sometimes after Luke 21:38. The evidence for a non-Johannine origin is overwhelming, but at the same time the account has all of the marks of historical truthfulness. It seems to record an actual historic incident in the life of Christ which was preserved by Christian tradition but not by John. Evidence, from reliable textual sources, denies this story a place in John's Gospel, and so it is impossible to know the correct chronological location of this event. This was clearly another trap (v6) as both man and woman were equally guilty (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22). The law said that "*the hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting him to death*" (Deut 17:7). If Christ did NOT condemn the woman they would accuse Him to the Sanhedrin for defying the law; if He did condemn her they would accuse Him to the Romans for usurping their authority (cf. Jn 18:31).

### **vv12-30 - THE VALIDITY OF JESUS' TESTIMONY**

**vv12-20 - CONFLICT OVER JESUS' CLAIM TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** - On the first and last day of the Feast, four giant oil lamps (each with 4 bowls filled by 4 men on 4 ladders) in the Court of the Women threw light over the city. Now the lamps were being removed. Jesus claimed to be "*the light of the world*" (v12). The Pharisees objected that He had no right to testify on His own behalf (cf. Jn 5:31). Jesus gave a two-fold reply:

- 1 He was qualified (vv14-15); and
- 2 The Father also testified on His behalf (vv16-18).

There is a natural break here. Verse 21 may **not** have followed immediately.

**vv21-30 - JESUS' RELATIONSHIP TO GOD THE FATHER** - The Pharisees' deliberate unbelief. By rejecting Jesus they lost all chance of having their sins forgiven (v24, cf. Jn 7:36).

**vv31-41 - THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM** (JESUS' RELATIONSHIP TO ABRAHAM AND ATTEMPTED STONING) - In contrast to the Pharisees, many common people accepted Him (v31). Israel had often been politically &/or socially enslaved. They probably referred to their religious freedom (v33). They felt that Christ was accusing them of being of mixed blood &/or religion, like the Samaritans (v41, cf. 4:20). Their reply probably implied, "We are not. You are!" (v48).

**vv 42-47 - THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL** - Jesus replied that if God was their Father, they would believe His teaching and receive Him.

**vv 48-59 - THE CLAIMS OF JESUS ABOUT HIMSELF** - They knew Christ was from Galilee (cf. 7:52). The word they used (v48) in Aramaic could be either 'heretic' or 'child of the Devil', i.e. the charges are basically the same. Christ answered only one (v49). Abraham acknowledged Jesus by rejoicing when he foresaw the coming of the Messiah (v56, cf. Heb 11:13).

### **EXEGETICAL NOTES**

**Verse 1, "Mount of Olives"** - The Mount of Olives (Mount Olivet, *Olivetum*) is actually a small range of four summits, over 1.6km long and 75m higher than Temple Mount. It is the eastern boundary of Jerusalem and a boundary that separates the Mediterranean climate region (to the west) and the arid desert climate (to the east). From here one can see the Dead Sea.

**Verse 2, "at dawn"** - The time is the day after the eighth and last day of the feast.

**Verse 3, "a woman caught in adultery"** - This sin cannot be committed alone, so the question arises as to why only one offender was brought. The incident was staged to trap Jesus (v6), and provision had been made for the man to escape. The woman's accusers must have been especially eager to humiliate her, since they could have kept her in private custody while they spoke to Jesus.

**Verse 4, "caught in the act"** - Mere compromising circumstances were not sufficient evidence; Jewish law required witnesses who had seen the act.

**Verse 5, “to stone such women”** - They altered the law a little. The manner of execution was not prescribed unless the woman was a betrothed virgin (Deut 22:23–24), and the law required the execution of both parties (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22), not just the woman.

**Verse 6, “using this question as a trap”** - The Romans did not allow the Jews to carry out death sentences (Jn 18:31), so if Jesus had said to stone her, he could have been in conflict with the Romans. If he had said not to stone her, he could have been accused of being unsupportive of the law.

**“write on the ground with his finger”** - This would seem to recall that the tablets of the law were inscribed in stone “by the finger of God” (Ex 31:18) and may suggest that the accusation against the woman is, by contrast, as ephemeral as something written in the dust by Jesus’ finger.

**Verse 7, “without sin”** - The phrase is quite general and means “without any sin,” not “without this sin.”

**“let him be the first”** - Jesus’ answer disarmed them. Since he spoke of throwing a stone, he could not be accused of failure to uphold the law. But the qualification for throwing it prevented anyone from acting.

**Verse 9, “began to go away”** - Because they were not “without sin” (v7).

**“older ones”** - They were the first to realize what was involved. But all the men were either conscience-stricken or afraid, and in the end only Jesus and the woman remained.

**Verse 10, “Woman”** – Not a harsh form of address. Cf. its use in Jn 2:4; 19:26.

**Verse 11, “Go now and leave your life of sin”** - Jesus did not condone what the woman had done.

**Verse 12, “I am the light”** - “Some people have suggested that light drew attention to the pillar of fire in the wilderness. Though an indirect reference to this is probable, the preferable understanding is a reference to the golden oil lamp that was lit on the first night of the Feast of Tabernacles. This light source in turn was commemorative of the Shekinah that guided the Israelites through the wilderness” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.132). Four candelabras in the Court of the Gentiles (symbolic of the pillar of fire over the Tabernacle, Num 14:14) burned during the whole feast, but tonight there will be **no** light (Cf. Jn 7:37), however Christ is the eternal light.

**“the light”** – Cf. Jn 1:4; 9:5; 12:46. It is true that “*God is light*” (1 Jn 1:5), and as Jesus’ followers reflect the light that comes from him, they too are “*the light of the world*” (Mt 5:14; Php 2:15).

**“darkness”** - Both the darkness of this world and that of Satan.

**“light of life”** - “God is light” (1 Jn 1:5); but Jesus is also the light from God that lights the way for life - as the pillar of fire lighted the way for the Israelites (Ex 13:21; Ne 9:12).

**Verse 13, “your testimony is not valid”** – This technical objection was according to the rules of evidence among the rabbis – “No man can give witness for himself”. In Jn 5:31 Jesus acknowledged this rule and gave them external evidence.

**Verse 14, “Jesus answered”** - Jesus made two points: First, he was qualified to bear testimony, whereas the Pharisees were not; and he knew both his origin and his destination, whereas they knew neither. Jesus’ second point was that his testimony was not unsupported: The Father was with him, so he and the Father were the two witnesses required by the law (Deut 17:6; 19:15).

**Verse 15, “by human standards”** - The judgment of the Pharisees was limited and worldly. In the sense they meant, Jesus made it clear that he did not judge at all. In the proper sense, of course, he did judge (v26).

**Verse 16, “I am not alone”** – Jesus now takes up the technical criticism (v13), after justifying his right to speak concerning himself.

**Verse 17, “it is written”** – Perfect tense: “*it stands written*”. The common form of citation.

**Verse 18, “the Father, who sent me”** – “Some manuscripts read *The One*” (NLT<sup>ms</sup>). Jesus was always aware of his mission (Jn 4:34).

**Verse 19, “If you knew me”** - John makes it clear that the Word (Jesus) was with God and was God (Jn 1:1) and reveals God (Jn 1:18). Jesus here stresses that the Father is known through the Son and that to know the one is to know the other (Jn 14:7, 10–11).

**Verse 20, “Where the offerings were put”** – “in the treasury” (KJV). “This is a reference to that part of the Court of the Women in which thirteen trumpet-shaped collection boxes were located (Cf. Mk12:41-43; Lu 21:1). This court was a gathering place for both men and women, and teaching was permitted there. Interestingly, it was quite near the meeting hall of the Sanhedrin, the official council of Judaism that was determined to dispose of Jesus” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 132).

**“his time”** – “Greek *his hour*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 21, “Once more”** – There is a natural break here, so verse 21 may not have followed immediately.

**Verse 22, “will he kill himself”** – The mockery in these words is both subtle and bitter. They infer that Jesus refers to the next world and suggest that he means Gehenna, the abode of suicides where, of course, the rabbis could never join him.

**Verse 23, “You are from below”** - Things other than death divide people (v47; 3:31; 15:19; 1 Jn 3:10).

**“of”** - Here denotes origin. Jesus was certainly in the world, but he was not of the world. They belonged to “this world” - Satan’s domain (1 Jn 5:19; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).

**Verse 24, “if you not believe”** - “Jesus’ challenge to believe in him as Messiah is met with a positive response by ‘many’ (v30). Whether these were opponents, neutral bystanders, or both is not disclosed” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 133).

**“that I am the one I claim to be”** – Greek is literally, “I am”, and could mean, “that I am he”, so also in verse 28. Jesus echoes God’s great affirmation about himself (v58; 6:35; Ex 3:14).

**Verse 25, “Just what I have been claiming all along”** – The Greek could also mean, “Why indeed do I speak to you at all?”

**Verse 26, “reliable”** - Or “truthful” (Jn 3:33; 7:18).

**Verse 27, “They did not understand”** – They were preoccupied with thoughts of an earthly deliverer and prejudiced against recognizing Jesus as the one sent from God.

**Verse 28, “lifted up”** – Normally used in the NT in the sense of “exalt,” but John uses it of the crucifixion (Jn 3:14; 12:32). Here it probably has both meanings. Christ was “lifted up” on the cross which brings “lifted up” to glory. The Cross and the Resurrection.

**“I am the one I claim to be”** – Literally, “you will know that I am”. The words, “the one I claim to be” are not in the Greek text but have been added to try to give a better meaning to the text.

**“I do nothing on my own”** – Better to read, “From myself I do nothing.” A statement of what Jesus constantly does, not what they will come to know.

**Verse 29, “he has not left me alone”** – In one sense, the Incarnation brought separation from the Father, but “He did not leave me alone”. The Father always comforted and understood him.

**Verse 30, “put their faith in him”** – These new believers were from among the Pharisees, so Jesus tested the faith of these new believers.

**Verse 31, “the Jews who had believed”** - “The Greek construction is such as to distinguish from the sincere believers of John 8:30. ‘Believed him’ does **not** carry the same connotation of commitment as ‘put their faith in him’. The words of this section are therefore addressed to those who see the plausibility of his messianic claims but are unwilling to comply with the ethical demands accompanying them.” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 133).

**Verse 32, “truth”** - Closely connected with Jesus (v36; 14:6), it is not philosophical truth but the truth that leads to salvation.

**“free”** - Freedom from sin, not from ignorance (v36).

**Verse 33, “we are Abraham’s descendants”** - The Greek text reads, “Abraham’s seed”, Cf. Jn 7:42. “This is the first of seven declarations in the section that portray the animosity of Judaism toward Jesus and his teachings. Here the Jews claimed inheritance of freedom through Abraham so as to contradict Jesus’ promise of freedom only if they abide in his word. Their other claims and accusations are found in verses 39, 41, 46, 53, 57)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 133).

**“never been slaves”** – This is historically false, e.g., Egyptian and Babylonian slavery. Even now they were a vassal State of Rome. Note this is the only reference in the Gospel to *slaves* (lit ‘been in bondage’). It could mean, “this present generation has never been in actual physical bondage”, OR perhaps thinking of spiritual bondage, “we are children of YHWH and not in bondage to foreign gods/idols”.

**Verse 34, “slave to sin”** - Because sinners cannot break free by their own strength (Rom 6:18).

**Verse 35, “a son belongs”** – The metaphor changes to contrast the son and the slave. The slave has no security and may be thrown out at any time while the son is the heir and has a permanent place.

**Verse 37, “ready to kill me”** – Some of the professed believers were now filled with murderous vengeance. They have no room or space for Christ and would not abide in his word (v31).

**Verse 38, “in the Father’s presence, and you do what you have heard from your father”** – This could mean, “*in the Father’s presence. Therefore do what you have heard from the Father*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). Note the contrasts here: “*I ... you*”; “*seen ... heard*” (Cf. Job 42:5); “*the Father ... your father.*” Not until later (v44) did Jesus say who their father was, but it is clear even at this point that it was neither God nor Abraham as they claimed.

**Verse 39, “If you were Abraham’s children”** – “Some early manuscripts, ‘*If you are Abraham’s children, said Jesus, then*’ (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

“**free**” - Freedom from sin, not from ignorance (v36).

**Verse 40, “I heard from God”** – Jesus’ only crime was telling the truth directly from God the Father.

**Verse 41, “illegitimate”** - May have been a slander aimed at Jesus.

**Verse 42, “you would love me”** – Their failure to love Jesus is proof that God was not their Father.

**Verse 43, “my language”** - The form of expression - the actual words.

“**what I say**” - The content. These descendants of Abraham (v33) were so convinced of their own preconceptions that they did not really hear and understand what Jesus was saying (v47).

**Verse 44, “You belong to your father, the devil”** - Jesus warned his Jewish opponents of the reality of Satan’s murderous and deceitful influence. Since “salvation is from the Jews” (Jn 4:22), Jesus’ words do not apply to the Jewish people as a whole. His warning should caution both Gentiles and Jews to follow Abraham’s example (vv39–40; Rom 4:16).

“**you want**” - Points to determination of will. Their problem was basically spiritual, not intellectual. Being oriented toward Satan, they were bent on murder (v37) and eventually would succeed (v28).

“**truth**” - Foreign to Satan and those who are his (Jn 14:6).

**Verse 46, “Can . . . you prove me guilty of sin”** - The asking of the question was more significant than the opponents’ failure to answer, in that it showed Jesus had a perfectly clear conscience.

**Verse 48, “Samaritan”** - Possibly to suggest that he was lax in Jewish observances - “*no better than a Samaritan*” - or that he was a Samaritan by birth.

**Verse 51, “my word”** - The whole of Jesus’ message, which when accepted brings deliverance from death.

**Verse 53, “Are you greater”** - The question was framed to expect the answer “No.” This is ironic, since Jesus was indeed far greater than Abraham, even as he was greater than Moses (Jn 6:30–35).

**Verse 56, “my day”** - All that was involved in the incarnation. Jesus probably was not referring to any one occasion but to Abraham’s general joy in the fulfilling of the purposes of God in the Messiah, by which all nations on earth would receive blessing (Gen 12:2–3).

“**he saw it**” - In faith, from afar.

**Verse 57, “not yet fifty years old”** - A generous allowance for Jesus’ maximum possible age. Jesus was “about” 30 when he began his ministry (Lk 3:23).

“**you have seen Abraham**” – Some MSS read, “*has Abraham seen you?*”

**Verse 58, “I am”** - A solemnly emphatic declaration echoing God’s great affirmation in Ex 3:14 (vv24, 28; 6:35). Jesus did not say “I was” but “I am,” expressing the eternity of his being and his oneness with the Father (Jn 1:1). With this climactic statement Jesus concludes his speech that began with the related claim, “I am the light of the world” (v12).

**Verse 59, “to stone him”** - Those who heard Jesus could not interpret his claim as other than blasphemy, for which stoning was the proper penalty (Lev 24:16).

## CHAPTER NINE

**vv1-12 - JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND** - The chronological location of this event is unclear. Some feel it follows immediately after John 8:59 (i.e., at the Feast of Tabernacles), but this seems unlikely. It is more likely that this occurred about three months later at the Feast of Dedication.

**vv1-7 - HEALING OF A MAN BORN BLIND** - Jesus performed more miracles of this kind than of any other. Giving sight to the blind was predicted as a Messianic activity (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Thus these miracles were additional evidence that Jesus was the Messiah (Jn 20:31). The disciples assumed that physical suffering was a punishment for sin (v2). Jesus explained that this is not necessarily the case (v3).

**vv8-12 - RESPONSE OF THE BLIND MAN'S NEIGHBOURS** - Many of his neighbours could not believe he had been healed (9).

**vv13-34 - THE PHARISESS INVESTIGATE THE HEALING** - Note the contrast between the progress of the man and the regress of the Pharisees.

**vv13-17 - THE FIRST INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN** - He believed that only a prophet could heal a person born blind (v17).

**vv18-23 - THE INTERVIEW WITH HIS PARENTS** - The parents were afraid and would not commit themselves (v21).

**vv24-34 - THE SECOND INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN** - Was he sarcastic or naïve (v27)?

**vv35-41 - SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS**

**vv35-38 - JESUS' IDENTIFICATION OF HIMSELF TO THE BLIND MAN** - When told who Jesus was he worshipped Him (v38).

**vv39-41 - SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF THE PHARISEES** - "There are none so blind as those who will not see" (16<sup>th</sup> century proverb).

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "a man blind from birth"** – This man was probably a well-known character with his stand as a beggar (v8). There is no account of healing the blind in the OT or by Christ's followers, but this is the largest category of Christ's miracles. Giving sight to the blind is attributed to God (Ex 4:11; Psa 146:8). It is a Messianic activity (Isa 29:18) so this story is significant in relation to John's purpose.

**Verse 2, "who sinned?"** – Sickness and suffering were commonly believed to be the consequences of one's sins. But what about a person born blind? Jesus first corrected this false idea and then discussed the purpose of God in this particular case. The rabbis had developed the principle that "There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity. They were even capable of thinking that a child could sin in the womb or that its soul might have sinned in a pre-existent state. They also held that terrible punishments came on certain people because of the sin of their parents. As the next verse shows, Jesus plainly contradicted these beliefs.

**Verse 3, "Neither"** – Jesus denies both alternatives and puts God's purpose as the true solution. It is sometimes true that disease is the result of sin, but not always. There is comfort for many sufferers in the words of Jesus here.

**Verse 4, "As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me"** – "We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned to us by the one who sent us" (NLT); "Other manuscripts read *I must quickly carry out the tasks assigned to me by the one who sent me*; still others read *We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned to us by the one who sent me*" (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**"we"** - Not Jesus only; his disciples share with him the responsibility of doing what God wants done.

**"Night is coming"** - When Jesus, "the light of the world" (v5), will be taken away in death.

**Verse 5, "I am the light"** – There is no definite article here. It literally reads, "*I am light to the world, whenever I am in the world.*" Christ is "light to the world" as well as "the one light of the world". The character is unchangeable, but the display of the character varies with the occasion.

**Verse 6, “made some mud”** - Jesus used variety in his cures. He could turn even the dirt of the earth into a medium of restoration (cf. Mk 8:22–25).

**Verse 7, “the Pool of Siloam”** – The water in Jerusalem flows from the Gihon spring (2 Chr 32:30) to the Pool of Siloam. It is located at the southern end of the Tyropoeon Valley at the end of Hezekiah’s Tunnel. Until recent years the general site of the pool on the southern end of the main ridge on which Jerusalem was built was marked by a structure from the Byzantine period. In 2004, however, archaeologists identified nearby remains that proved to be the original Pool of Siloam of Jesus’ day. The aqueduct leading into the pool served as part of the major water system developed by King Hezekiah (2 Ki 20:20; Ne 2:14; Job 28:10; Isa 8:6).

**“Sent”** - Or “one who has been sent”.

**Verse 8, “begging”** - About the only way blind people of that day could support themselves.

**Verse 10, “How then were your eyes opened?”** – These neighbours admit the fact but want to know how it happened.

**Verse 11, “the man they call Jesus”** - “At this point the healed blind man has little understanding of who Jesus is. As events unfold, however, his understanding grows rapidly. In verse 17 he calls him “a prophet”. In verses 27–28 he has become his *disciple*. In verse 31 he describes him as a *godly man*. In verse 33 he acknowledges him to be *from God*. In verses 35 and 38 he accepts him as *the Son of Man*” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 135).

**Verse 14, “was a Sabbath”** – To the Pharisees this fact was more important than whether or how this thing was done.

**Verse 16, “Some . . . others”** - The first group started from their entrenched position and ruled out the possibility of Jesus being from God. The second started from the fact of the “miraculous signs” and ruled out the possibility of his being a sinner (vv30–33).

**“this man is not from God”** - The regress of the Pharisees in this encounter is pronounced. In verse 16 the dominant group says Jesus is not from God. In verse 18 they question his miracle. In verse 24 they call him a sinner. In verse 29 they acknowledge their ignorance about him. In verse 41 they are pronounced to be blind sinners.” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 135).

**“he does not keep the Sabbath”** – This is the second Sabbath Controversy recorded in John (Cf. Jn 5:1–29).

**Verse 17, “What have you to say about him”** - It is curious that they put such a question to such a person; their doing so reflected their perplexity.

**“prophet”** - Probably the highest designation the man could think of. He progressed in his thinking about Jesus: from a man (v11), to a prophet (v17) who might be followed by disciples (v27), to one “from God” (v33), to one who was properly to be worshiped (v38).

**Verse 18, “the Jews”** - In their prejudice they did not learn from the sign but tried to discredit the miracle.

**Verse 21, “He is of age”** - There was much to which the parents could not testify, but their emphasis on the son’s responsibility showed their fear of getting involved.

**Verse 22, “Jesus was the Christ”** – i.e., the *Messiah*, Cf. Jn 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42, etc.

**“put out of the Synagogue”** - “A form of excommunication as a penalty for those who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah had by now been adopted by some Jewish leaders and perhaps by the Sanhedrin. Severe and final, the punishment resulted in severance from the religious and social life of Israel. This punishment was apparently not implemented with consistency. Christians in Acts moved in synagogue circles with a good bit of freedom” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 135). The synagogue was the center of Jewish community life (Jn 6:59), so excommunication cut a person off from many social relationships (though in some of its forms, at least in later times, not from worship).

**Verse 24, “Give glory to God”** – “Give glory to God for this” (NLT); “Or Give glory to God, not to Jesus; Greek reads Give glory to God” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). This is a solemn charge to tell the truth (Cf. Joshua 7:19).

**“We”** - Emphatic in the Greek.

**Verse 25, “One thing I do know”** – The man refuses to fall into the trap set for him. He passes by their quibbling about Jesus being a “sinner” and clings to the fact of his own personal experience.

**Verse 27, “his disciples, too”** - The man already counted himself a disciple.

**Verse 28, “they hurled insults at him”** – The verb means to reproach or scold in a loud and abusive manner and hence to wound a person as with an accursed sting.

**Verse 30, “Now that is remarkable”** - Good reasoning from an unschooled man.

**Verse 31, “God does not listen to sinners”** - Cf. the remark of some of the Pharisees in v16.

**Verse 32, “a man born blind”** – This is the chief point and the man will not let it be overlooked and, in fact, almost rubs it in. It was congenital blindness.

**Verse 33, “if this man were not from God”** – Assuming that Jesus is not “from God” as some argued in Jn 9:16, “he could do nothing.” The man scored with terrific power in his use of Scripture and logic.

**Verse 34, “they threw him out”** - “The excommunication so greatly feared by the parents (vv 22-23) was here carried out against the son because of his tenacious defense of Jesus” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 136).

**Verse 35, “when he found him”** - Jesus obviously had been looking for the man.

**“the Son of Man”** – Some MSS read, “*the Son of God*”. Cf. Mk 8:31.

**Verse 36, “so that I may believe”** - The man was ready to follow any suggestion from his benefactor.

**Verse 37, “he is the one speaking with you”** – In 4:26 Jesus revealed himself in a similar fashion to the Samaritan woman as the Messiah, here as the Son of Man (v35).

**Verse 38, “he worshipped Him”** - “The man’s devotion to Jesus here reaches its climax. In John’s gospel the word for *worship* (*proskuneo*) describes a reverence that is due God alone” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 136). The man was giving Jesus the reverence due to God.

**Verse 39, “Jesus said”** - It is unlikely that the conversation of vv35–38 took place in the presence of the Pharisees. The incident of vv39–41, therefore, probably occurred a little later.

**“For judgment I have come into this world”** – Jesus’ coming was not for the purpose of judgment (Jn 3:17), but it resulted in judgment because people decided against Him (Cf. Mt 13:14-15; 10:34). His coming divides people, and this always brings a type of judgment. Those who reject his gift end up “blind.”

**Verse 40, “Pharisees”** - They found it incredible that anyone would consider them spiritually blind.

**Verse 41, “if you were blind”** - “If the Pharisees had been willing to admit their spiritual blindness, they would have yearned for spiritual light and could have found forgiveness. Since they professed to see and consequently refused to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, their case was hopeless. They were fully persuaded they were right and refused to learn the truth about him. Any prospect of being freed from sin was thereby removed (cf. Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lu 5:32)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 136).

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## CHAPTER TEN

**vv1-21 - THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK** – This passage should be understood in light of the OT (and ancient Near Eastern) concept of “shepherd,” symbolizing a royal caretaker of God’s people. God himself was called the “Shepherd of Israel” (Psa 80:1; 23:1; Isa 40:10–11; Eze 34:11–16; 34:2; Zec 10:2), and he had given great responsibility to the leaders (“shepherds”) of Israel, which they failed to respect. God denounced these false shepherds (Isa 56:9–12; Eze 34) and promised to provide the true Shepherd, the Messiah, to care for the sheep (Eze 34:23).

### **vv1-18 - ALLEGORY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE THIEF**

**vv1-6 - The Allegory** – Jesus told them a story they would easily identify with to illustrate their spiritual position.

**vv7-13 - The Good Shepherd contrasted to others** – Thieves and robbers want to use the sheep for their own benefit. The hired hand puts his own self-interests before the good of the sheep.

**vv14-18 - One flock with One Shepherd** – The Good Shepherd will die to achieve the Father’s plan.

**vv19-21 - FURTHER DIVISION AMONG THE JEWS** - Again John records the results of the discussions.

### **vv22-42 - THE UNBELIEF OF THE JEWS**

**vv22-39 - ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO STONE OR ARREST JESUS** - When asked if He were the Messiah, Jesus gave three proofs:

- 1 His works (v25);
- 2 His giving of eternal life (v28); and
- 3 His unity with the Father (v30).

**vv40-42 - FROM JERUSALEM TO PEREA** - The people here accepted that Jesus was the one John had foretold and they “believed in Jesus” (v42).

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “the man who does not enter”** - “The occasion for this allegory was furnished by the excommunication of the blind man whom Jesus healed (Jn 9:34). The healed man was one of the sheep who are the godly remnant of Israel, and the Pharisees were identified with the thieves (10:1, 8), the stranger (10:5), and the hired hand (10:12-13). The ‘*other sheep*’ of which he spoke (10:10-16) were those of the Gentile world who were to believe in Christ. ‘One flock’ (10:16) anticipated formation of the body of Christ composed of the godly remnant of Israel and Gentile believers. Jesus is both the door of access into the flock (10:7, 9) and the good shepherd who cares for the flock (10:11, 14)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 137).

**“sheep pen”** - An enclosure with only one entrance. Its walls kept the sheep from wandering away. This ‘*sheep fold*’ is Judaism (v1) – kept and protected Cf. Gal 3:24.

**Verse 2, “the shepherd of his sheep”** – Better, “*a shepherd*”. It is the character rather than the person that is contemplated. Jesus applies this to himself in v16 and it is used of him in Heb 13:20; 1 Pe 2:25. Christ is drawing a sharp contrast after the conduct of the Pharisees toward the blind man.

**Verse 3, “watchman”** - Apparently in charge of a large sheep pen, where several flocks were kept.

**“his voice”** - The sheep responded only to the voice of their own shepherd.

**“his own sheep”** - Shepherds did not call sheep randomly, but only those that belonged to them.

**Verse 4, “he goes on ahead”** - Palestinian shepherds led their sheep (they did not drive them), and the sheep followed because they knew their own shepherd’s voice.

**Verse 5, “a stranger”** – It may be the shepherd of another flock not necessarily the thief or robber of v1.

**Verse 6, “this figure of speech”** – Literally, “*this allegory*”. John has no parables as such, but uses a series of allegories.

**Verse 7, “I am the gate for the sheep”** – Not the door of the fold (as the KJBV implies). The thought is connected with the life not the organization. He is the door by which the true shepherd must enter. He repeats this idea in v9.

**Verse 8, “All whoever came before me”** – “Some manuscripts do not include *before me*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). False shepherds like the Pharisees and the chief priests, not the true OT prophets (vv1–30; Zec 11:5, 8).

- Verse 9, “the gate”** - The one way into salvation. Inside there is safety, and one is able to go out and find pasture, i.e., the supply of all needs.  
**“will be saved”** – Or *‘kept safe’*. “Or will find safety” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).
- Verse 10, “thief”** - His interest is in himself. Christ’s interest is in his sheep, whom he enables to have life to the full (Jn 1:4).
- Verse 11, “I am the good shepherd”** – Christ is:
- 1 **The Good Shepherd** who gave His life for the Sheep (v11) and became the door to the Sheep-fold (v7);
  - 2 **The Great Shepherd** who rose from the dead to care for His sheep (Heb 13:20-21); and
  - 3 **The Chief Shepherd** who will come again for His sheep (1 Pe 5:4).
- “lays down his life”** - Palestinian shepherds might risk danger for their sheep (Gen 31:39; 1 Sa 17:34–37), but they expected to come through alive. Jesus said that the good shepherd will die for his sheep (Jn 15:13).
- Verse 12, “hired hand”** - Interested in wages, not in the sheep (v13).
- Verse 14, “I know . . . my sheep know”** - A deep mutual knowledge, like that of the Father and the Son.
- Verse 16, “other sheep”** - These already belonged to Christ, though they had not yet been brought to him.  
**“not of this sheep pen”** - Those outside Judaism. Here is a glimpse of the future worldwide scope of the church.  
**“one flock”** - All God’s people have the same Shepherd (Jn 17:20–23).
- Verse 17, “I lay down my life”** - That Christ would die for his people runs through this section of John’s Gospel. Both the love and the plan of the Father are involved, as well as the authority he gave to the Son. Christ obediently chose to die; otherwise, no one would have had the power to kill him (Cf. Lk 23:46).
- Verse 18, “I have authority”** - “Only here and in John 2:19 does Jesus claim to raise himself or have authority to do so. Elsewhere the agent in raising the Son is always the Father” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 137).
- Verse 19, “the Jews were again divided”** - “In John, earlier instances of such division include 6:52 and 9:16. Jesus’ function as a divider of people had already become quite evident (Matt 10:34-36 cf. Luke 12:51-53). (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 137).
- Verse 22, “the Feast of Dedication”** – i.e., *Hanukkah* (The Festival of Lights) which is celebrated annually in late November or early December. It commemorates the dedication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus in December, 165 BC, after it had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes. This was the last great deliverance the Jews had experienced. It is called the *Festival of Lights* because tradition says that when Judas came to relight the golden lamp in the Temple there was only enough oil to last for one day. By faith they lit the lamp and it is said that it remained burning for eight days (the time it took to prepare additional oil). Note how John explains to his Christian readers that *“it was Winter”*.
- Verse 23, “Solomon’s Colonnade”** - A roofed structure (somewhat similar to a Greek *stoa*) along the western side of the Temple mount complex (overlooking the present *“wailing wall”*), commonly but erroneously thought to date back to Solomon’s time (Cf. Act 3:11; 5:12).
- Verse 24, “If you are the Christ”** – i.e., the *Messiah*. “The heart of the whole dispute was whether Jesus was Israel’s promised Messiah. As proofs that he was, Jesus offered his works (v25), his giving of eternal life to his sheep (v28), and, as a climax, his unity with the Father (v30). This claim was more than his enemies could bear so they sought both to stone him again (v31) and to arrest him (v39)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 147).
- Verse 25, “I did tell you”** - Jesus had not specifically affirmed his Messiahship except to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:26). He may have meant here that the general thrust of his teaching made his claim clear or that such statements as that in 8:58 were sufficient. Or he may have been referring to the evidence of his whole manner of life, including the miracles, - all he had done in the Father’s name.
- Verse 26, “not my sheep”** - Their failure to believe arose from what they were.
- Verse 28, “never perish”** – Lit., *‘not not they should perish unto the age’*. The Greek construction (the emphatic negative future) here is a strong denial that the sheep *“will never, ever perish”*. The sheep’s security is in the power of the shepherd, who will let no one take them from him (Jn 3:16).

**Verse 29, “My Father . . . is greater than all”** – Many early MSS read, “*What my Father has given me is greater than all*”. “still others read *for regarding that which my Father has given me, he is greater than all*” (NLT<sup>ms</sup>). “*What my Father has given me is greater than all*” is probably the correct reading. But what has the Father given?

**1 The Flock** – He values it and will look after it to the end;

**2 Eternal Life** – This quality of life is greater than anything else;

**3 The Plan of Salvation** -

**4 The Church** – 1 Jn 5:4, “everyone born of God overcomes the world”.

“*can snatch them*” – better, ‘*will snatch*’ – a Future statement of fact – active evil. Eternal life does not depend on our feeble hold of Him, but on His firm grip on us.

**Verse 30, “I and the Father are one”** – ‘one’ here is Neuter gender. It is literally, “*we are one thing*”. It is **not** “*one person*” and so goes against Sabellianism which denies the diversity of persons, but “*one essence*” or “*one substance*” which goes against Arianism which denies the unity of essence (Cf. Heb 1:3).

**Verse 31, “to stone him”** - They took Jesus’ words as blasphemy, and therefore prepared to carry out the law (Lev 24:16), though without due process.

**Verse 32, “great miracles”** - Or “good deeds” (as, e.g., in Mt 5:16; 1 Ti 5:10, 25; 6:18). Although the reference here includes Jesus’ miracles, the underlying Greek words refer to works in general that are fine and noble in character first of all.

**Verse 33, “blasphemy”** - The Jewish leaders correctly understood the thrust of Jesus’ words, but their preconceptions and unbelief prevented them from accepting his claim as true.

**Verse 34, “Is it not written in your Law?”** – In its strictest sense the term meant the Pentateuch, but was often used, as here, of the whole O.T. Here the quote is from Psalm 82:6.

“*you are gods*” – i.e., *Elohim*, the plural title of God. This word was used to describe a class of supernatural beings, e.g., angels (1 Sa 28:13) and also God’s representatives on earth, e.g., the judges (Ex 21:6; 22:28; Deut 1:17; 16:18; 2 Ch 19:6).

**Verse 35, “Scripture cannot be broken”** - Jesus testified to the complete authority and reliability of the OT.

**Verse 36, what about the one**” - If there is any sense in which humans can be spoken of as “gods, how much more may the term be used of him whom the Father set apart and sent!

“*I am God’s son*” - “It is wrong to conclude that Jesus was claiming to be no more than a man among men. His words mean that if the Psalm quoted in 10:35 applies the term gods to men, it may with even greater propriety be applied to him who is one in essence with the Father (cf. 10:30)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 148).

**Verse 37, “what my Father does”** - The kind of works of compassion that the Father himself does.

**Verse 38, “miracles”** - Lit. “*works*.” The miracles were a part of Jesus’ works. It was Jesus’ quality of life, not people’s inability to explain his marvels, that he primarily spoke of here.

**Verse 39, “they tried to seize him”** - It is not clear if this was to arrest him for trial or to take him out for stoning.

“*he escaped*” - John does not say why they failed, but he often makes it clear that Jesus could not be killed before the appointed time (Jn 2:4; Lk 4:30).

**Verse 40, “Jesus went back”** - “The period begun by this departure lasted about three and one-half months from the Feast of Dedication until the week before Passover. Response to Jesus; ministry in Perea (v42) was in sharp contrast to the recent response in Jerusalem (John 10:37-39)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 149).

**Verse 41, “many people came to him”** – Jesus was busy here in an atmosphere more congenial than Jerusalem. Although John did no miracles that the people could recall, they acknowledged that his witness to Christ was “true”. John prepared the way for Christ.

**Verse 42, “in that place”** – i.e., *Perea*. The Greek word *Peran* means ‘*beyond*’. Perea was part of Herod’s Kingdom and in NT times seems to have been called “Judea beyond the Jordan” (Mk 3:8). Machaerus, where John was imprisoned, was at the southern tip of Perea tangent to the northeast corner of the Dead Sea (Mt 11:2).

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### vv1-44 - THE STORY OF LAZARUS

**vv1-16 – THE DEATH OF LAZARUS** - God's glory was more important than the immediate relief of suffering (vv1-6). Although the disciples were afraid of another stoning (v8), Jesus said He would be as safe as a man walking in the day time (vv7-10). The disciples still tend to interpret everything literally. His words of assurance gave them strength to go on (vv11-16).

### vv17-37 - JESUS COMFORTS THE SISTERS

**vv17-27 Jesus talks to Martha** - Martha went out to welcome Jesus but was clearly disappointed that He had not come earlier.

**vv28-37 Jesus talks to Mary** – Jesus called for Mary and she expressed her disappointment in exactly the same words as Martha (v32, cf. v21). Some in the crowd questioned his real power (v37).

**vv38-44 – JESUS RAISED LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD** - “It was a common Jewish idea that corruption commenced on the fourth day, that the drop of gall, which had fallen from the sword of the angel and caused death, was then working its effect and that, as the face changed, the soul took its final leave from the resting-place of the body” (Edersheim, 1993, p. 699).

### vv45-57 - THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

**vv45-54 - DECISION OF THE SANHEDRIN TO PUT JESUS TO DEATH** - Again John tells us of the results of the previous happenings. From a human view point it was the raising of Lazarus that caused Jesus' death (v53, cf. Jn 12:10), and at the same time fulfilled prophecy (v51). Jesus now moved to Ephraim, also known in the Bible as *Ophrah* [modern Taiyiba] about 20 km NE of Jerusalem.

**vv55-57 - JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES RETURN TO JERUSALEM** - Just before the Passover Feast Jesus and the disciples return to Jerusalem.

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “Lazarus”** – *Lazarus = God has helped*. Mentioned only in Chs 11–12 of John's Gospel. The name is found also in the parable of Lk 16:19–31. The sisters are mentioned in Lk 10:38–42.

**“Bethany”**– (*el-Azariyeh, el-Azariah*). *Bethany = House of dates*. Originally *Beth-ananiah* (Ananiah was the name of a man) – sometimes abbreviated to *Anania* (Neh 11:32). Located on the Jericho Road (southeast of Bethphage) on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, 2.4km from Jerusalem.

**“Mary”** – *Mary = strong* (a form of the name Miriam).

**“Martha”** – *Martha = lady*. Martha seems to have been Mary's elder sister and daughter (or widow?) of Simon.

**Verse 3, “you love”** – *Phileo*. Present tense – “*the one you continue to love*”, i.e., your friend. The relationship must have been exceptionally close. Greek has three words which we translate, “*love*”.

**1 Eran** Body Lust **Passionate love** which desires the other for itself. Love of the world **seeking satisfaction** wherever it can. Seeks in others the **fulfillment** of its own life's hunger.

**2 Philein** Soul Like **The inclination of friends for friends**. The natural attraction to those who **belong**. Love for close relatives. Based on **reciprocity**. (v3 – Jesus' love for Lazarus)

**3 Agapan** Spirit Love **To prefer**. To esteem one person more highly than another. Relates, for the most part, to the love of God, to the love of the higher lifting up the lower. It is **a giving, active love** on the other's behalf. (v5 – Jesus' love for Mary and Martha)

**Verse 4, “This sickness will not end in death”** - Thus predicting the raising of Lazarus (v44), since Jesus already knew of his death (v14). In fact, Lazarus must have died shortly after the messengers left Bethany, accounting for the “four days” of vv17, 39: one day for the journey of the messengers, the two days when Jesus remained where he was (v6), and a day for Jesus' journey to Bethany.

**“glory”** - Here God's Son would be glorified through what happened to Lazarus, partly because the miracle displays the glory of God (who alone can raise the dead; see 5:21) in Jesus (v40) and partly because it would help initiate events leading to the cross (vv46–53). God's glory does not consist in sparing the faithful life's difficulties.

- Verse 5, “Jesus love Martha” – Agapan.** To prefer, to esteem a person more highly than another. Imperfect, “Jesus used to love”. Note that it is a different word form that used in v3.
- Verse 6, “when He heard”** – “Although the NIV leaves it untranslated in three of the four occurrences, four unusual uses of the Greek particle *oun* mark the incident involving Lazarus. They apparently indicate four steps by which Jesus followed a sequence predetermined by the Father in carrying out this miracle:
- 1 In verse 6 *oun* is translated as *yet* - it shows how he purposely delayed going to the scene;
  - 2 In verse 17 *oun* indicates the plan was for him to arrive four days after death;
  - 3 In verse 33 *oun* points out his appointed response to the bereaved;
  - 4 In verse 38 *oun* shows the final step of going to the tomb to accomplish the miracle;
- This procedure was clearly designed to bring glory to God and His son (v4)” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 155).
- “he stayed”** - Jesus moved as the Father directed, not as people (here Mary and Martha) wished (cf. 2:4).
- “where he was”** - In Perea, east of the Jordan River (10:40).
- Verse 7, “Let us go back”** – They had but recently escaped the rage of the Jews in Jerusalem to this haven in Bethany.
- Verse 8, “the Jews tried to stone you”** - “The disciples remembered the recent attempted stoning in Jerusalem (Jn 10:31). Jesus’ response was that he, like everyone else, had to use his opportunities while present or else lose them. Danger could not be a deterrent” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 155).
- Verse 9, “twelve hours”** - Enough time for what must be done, but no time for waste.
- Verse 10, “he has no light”** – The ancients had poor illumination at night, so much so, that some pedestrians actually fastened little lamps on their feet to light the path.
- Verse 11, “fallen asleep”** - A euphemism for death, used by the unbelieving world as well as by Christians.
- Verse 12, “he will get better”** – Literally, “*he shall be saved*”; “*he shall recover*” (RV).
- Verse 15, “so that you may believe”** – Aorist. The beginning of faith.
- Verse 16, “Thomas . . . Didymus”** - The Hebrew word from which we get “Thomas” and the Greek word *Didymus* both mean “twin.” Usually remembered for his doubting (Jn 20:24–25), he was also capable of devotion and courage, as here.
- Verse 17, “four days”** - Many Jews believed that the soul remained near the body for three days after death in the hope of returning to it. If this idea was in the minds of these people, they obviously thought all hope was gone - Lazarus was irrevocably dead.
- Verse 18, “was less”** - Does this imply it is now not?, i.e., why not say "Bethany is less"? May be meaningless, as this was a not uncommon way of saying, “Bethany is . . .”
- “two miles”** - “Greek, *fifteen stadia* (about 3 kilometers)” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).
- “from Jerusalem”** - When the evangelists mention well known places (e.g., Jerusalem or Nazareth) they do not give the distance, but places or villages that are little known or have the same name as another locality, are often distinguished by a determinative word (e.g. "Bethlehem in Judea", Mt 2:1) or a given distance (e.g., Lu 24:13, "a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem"). And so here John has given us, in addition to the name, the distance from Jerusalem to distinguish it from places with a like name.
- Verse 19, “to comfort them”** - Jewish custom provided for three days of very heavy mourning, then four of heavy mourning, followed by lighter mourning for the remainder of thirty days. It was usual for friends to visit the family to comfort them.
- Verse 20, “she went out to meet him”** - Perhaps because as the older sister she was hostess.
- Verse 21, “If you had been here”** - Repeated by Mary in v32. Perhaps the sisters had said this to one another often as they awaited Jesus’ arrival.

- Verse 22, “whatever you ask”** - This comment seems to mean that Martha hoped for an immediate resurrection in spite of the fact that Lazarus’s body had already begun to decay. Nothing is too difficult for God to do (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17, 27).
- Verse 25, “life”** - Jesus was saying more than that he gives resurrection and life. In some way these are identified with him, and his nature is such that final death is impossible for him. He is life (Jn 14:6; Act 3:15; Heb 7:16).
- “He who believes . . . will live”** - Jesus not only is life but conveys life to believers so that death will never triumph over them (1 Co 15:57).
- Verse 26, “never die”** - Believers may die physically but, as those who have eternal life, their physical death is not their ultimate end (v25). Death cannot destroy the life Christ gives.
- Verse 27, “I believe”** – Perfect tense. “Whatever fault she may have had (cf. Luke 10:41), Martha was a woman of faith in and conviction about the person of Christ. Her threefold confession here represents the highest view of him one can hold” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 156). Martha is often remembered for her shortcoming recorded in Lk 10:40–41. But she was a woman of faith, as this magnificent declaration shows.
- Verse 28, “The Teacher”** - A significant description to be given by a woman. The rabbis would not teach women (Jn 4:27), but Jesus taught them frequently (Lk 10:38–42).
- Verse 29, “got up quickly”** – Naturally so on the sudden impulse of joy.
- Verse 30, “had not yet entered the village”** – Why Jesus stayed at the place where He met Martha we do not know. Westcott thought it was so that He could meet the sisters away from the crowd of mourners.
- Verse 31, “to mourn there”** - Wailing at a tomb was common, and the Jews immediately thought this was in Mary’s mind. Because they followed her, Jesus got maximum publicity.
- Verse 33, “weeping”** - Both times the word denotes a loud expression of grief, i.e., “wailing.”
- Verse 35, “Jesus wept”** - The Greek for this word is not the one for loud grief (as in v33), but one that denotes quiet weeping, i.e., “shed tears.” “This verse has been subjected to a wide variety of interpretations. Certainly he did not weep because of the loss of Lazarus whom he was about to raise. His intense emotion (cf. v33) probably related somehow to the dominance of sin in these surroundings. Through sin, death had gained its power. Through it the mourners were misguided in their concept of death. Because of it he was about to call Lazarus from a far better existence back to mortality. Because of it Jesus himself became a criminal in the eyes of the authorities. It is no wonder that John used a word usually reserved for anger when describing his response to the situation (“was deeply moved” v33)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 156).
- Verse 37, “could not he”** - Their position was like that of Martha (v21) and Mary (v32), but they based it on Jesus’ ability to give sight to the blind (Jn 9).
- Verse 38, “cave with a stone”** - This type of burial place was not uncommon in the Holy Land at this time, especially for the wealthy (Jn 20:1; Mk 15:46; Lk 24:2).
- Verse 39, “four days”** – Jewish tradition said that the soul hovers around the tomb for three days hoping to return to the body, but on the fourth day leaves it.
- Verse 40, “the glory of God”** – “The glory of God” here refers to the resurrection of Lazarus (v4).
- Verse 41, “you have heard me”** – Jesus had the answer before he acts. Jesus well knew the issues involved: If He failed – his claims to be the Son of God would be discredited. If He succeeded – the rulers would be so embittered that His death would be inevitable.
- Verse 42, “that you sent me”** – Jesus had made this claim a long time previously (Jn 5:36) and had repeated it often (Jn 10:25, 38). Now was a supreme opportunity and Jesus opens his heart about it.
- Verse 43, “in a loud voice”** – This was not for Lazarus’ benefit but for the crowd standing around that they might see Lazarus come forth simultaneously with the command of Jesus.

**Verse 44, “the dead man came out”** - “It has been of great concern to many that the synoptic gospels say nothing of this highly significant miracle. For some reason the synoptic writers pass over other significant Jerusalem miracles too. They are likewise noticeably silent about other happenings that came one to two months before Passion Week. Apparently they felt that the two resurrections already recorded (Lu 7:14; Lu 8:55) were sufficient to show Jesus’ power over death” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 157). John does not rely on the Synoptics. He writes as if he believed he was writing something that actually happened.

**“strips of linen”** - Narrow strips, like bandages. Sometimes a shroud was used (Jn 19:40).

**“a cloth”** - A separate item.

**Verse 45, “put their faith in him”** - Perhaps some who had been opposed to Jesus now came to believe (Jn 1:7, 19; 20:31).

**Verse 46, “some of them”** – Not of the Jews who had come to Mary but some who had joined the crowd out of curiosity.

**Verse 47, “the chief priests”** - “The chief priest belonged to the Sadducean hierarchy, which took the lead in opposing Jesus from this point until the end. (The Pharisees had now become secondary opponents.) Now that the resurrection of a dead person had become the centre of attention in Jerusalem, the Sadducees could do no other because of their teaching that denied resurrection” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 157). In all four Gospels the Pharisees appear as Jesus’ principal opponents throughout his public ministry. But they lacked political power, and it is the chief priests (Mt 2:4) who were prominent in the events that led to Jesus’ crucifixion. Here both groups are associated in a meeting of the Sanhedrin (Mk 14:55). They did not deny the reality of the miraculous signs (Jn 2:11), but they did not understand their meaning, for they failed to believe.

**Verse 48, “our place”** – i.e., the holy place, the *Temple* (Act 6:13; 21:28), though sometimes the Jews used the expression to denote Jerusalem.

**Verse 49, “Caiaphas”** - High priest 18–36AD. He was the son-in-law of Annas (Jn 18:13), who had been deposed from the high priesthood by the Romans in A.D. 15.

**“high priest that year”** - Probably means simply that he was high priest at that time.

**“You know nothing at all”** - A remark typical of Sadducean rudeness (Caiaphas, as high priest, was a Sadducee). Josephus says that Sadducees “in their intercourse with their peers are as rude as to aliens.”

**Verse 50, “better”** - Caiaphas was concerned with political expediency, not with guilt and innocence. He believed that one man, no matter how innocent, should perish rather than that the nation be put in jeopardy. Ironically in A.D. 70 the nation still perished.

**“that one man die”** - “As Caiaphas intended them; these words meant that Jesus must be put to death for the privileged class of Jews to maintain its authority under Roman occupation. But John observes that God, because of Caiaphas’ high priestly office, was using the high priest’s cynicism to voice something altogether different. Unwittingly the high priest predicted the substitutionary death of Christ for Israel and for all Gentiles who were destined to believe in him (vv51-52; cf. Jn 10:16)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p.157).

**Verse 51, “as high priest”** - Caiaphas was not a private citizen but God’s high priest, and God overruled in what he said.

**“prophesied”** - His words were true in a way he could not imagine. Prophecy in Scripture is the impartation of divinely revealed truth. In reality, Caiaphas’s words meant that Jesus’ death would be for the nation, not by way of removing political trouble, but by taking away the sins of those who believed in him.

**“Jesus would die for the Jewish nation”** – It was His life or theirs. If He dies, the nation lives. His death would be the means of gathering together the children of God, wherever they might have been scattered (Jn 10:16).

**Verse 52, “for the scattered children of God”** - Jesus’ death would have effects far beyond the nation (1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 10:16).

**Verse 53, “they plotted to take His life”** - “This occasion marked the official agreement of the Sanhedrin (v47) to have Jesus executed, even though this may well not have been a formal meeting of the council. On the basis of Caiaphas’ advice, these leaders came to a settled decision as to what must be done to rid themselves of this rival authority figure” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 157).

**Verse 54, “he withdrew”** - Jesus was not to die before his “time” (Jn 2:4), but he would not act imprudently. Knowing the attitude of his opponents, he withdrew. He would die for others, but in his own time, not that of his enemies.

**“a village called Ephraim”** - 20km NE of Jerusalem. In the Bible it is also called Apherema, Ephraim, and Ophrah. It is the modern village of *et-Taiyiba*. It is on one of the roads from Jericho to the Central Benjamin Plateau.

**Verse 55, “before the Passover”** - “Because of the large number making this pilgrimage, ceremonial purification for the feast required more time than otherwise. Hence many came early, as much as a full week in some cases” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 168).

**“ceremonial cleansing”** - Especially important at a time like Passover, because without it, it would not be possible to keep the Feast (Jn 2:6; 18:28).

**Verse 56, “as the stood in the temple”** – i.e., after going through their ceremonial cleansing (v55, the essential purification rites).

**“isn’t he coming to the feast”** - The question expected the answer “No.” “General opinion appears to have been that Jesus would not come to this feast. The command of the authorities (Jn 11:57) served to incriminate anyone who withheld information as to his whereabouts. Under such conditions Jesus’ presence in Jerusalem was difficult for all who knew him” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 168).

## CHAPTER TWELVE

**vv1-11 – JESUS ANOINTED AT BETHANY** (Cf. Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9) - This story had become so famous by the time that John wrote, that earlier in this gospel he refers to it to explain to his readers the identity of Mary (**Jn 11:2**, “*This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair*”).

**vv12-19 – THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY** (Cf. Mt 21:1-11; 14-17; Mk 1:1-11; Lu 19:29-44) - From Bethany (House of dates) Christ sent two disciples to Bethphage (House of unripe figs) to borrow the colt. If challenged they were to say, “*The Lord needs the colt, but will send it back promptly*”. Everything happened as Christ predicted (arranged?) and the Lord rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a carpet of clothes and palm leaves, in fulfillment of Zech 9:9. The people’s cry was based on Psa 118:25-26. After entering the Temple courtyard and looking around, the Lord and His disciples returned to Bethany.

**vv20-50 – JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH**

**vv 12:20-36a – THE REQUEST OF SOME GREEKS TO SEE JESUS, AND THE NECESSITY OF THE SON OF MAN’S BEING LIFTED UP** - When approached by Gentiles, Jesus indicated that the harvest was about to be produced. The Father’s voice confirmed the Son. The people were confused because they expected the Messiah to be a mighty deliverer.

**VV36B-50 – DIFFERENT RESPONSES TO JESUS AND JESUS’ RESPONSE TO THE CROWDS** - These verses summarize the public ministry of Jesus and explain the rejections which are equated with the rejection of God (v44). Again we see how John shows us the effect on the people. Most did not believe (v37). Many leaders believed in Him (v42) but were afraid to identify themselves with Him. Jesus said He would not judge them but implied that all true believers would confess their faith openly.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “six days before”** - Jesus probably arrived on the Friday before Passover, if we assume that the Passover fell on Thursday that year.

**“Bethany”** - 3km east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

**Verse 2, “Here a dinner was given”** – This story seems to be the same as that recorded in Matthew (26:6-13) and Mark (14:3-9), so if this is the case the dinner was held “*in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper*” (Mk 14:3). Was Simon, the leper cleansed in Mk 1:42? John seems to imply the dinner was in the home of Lazarus, so was Simon, the father of Lazarus?

**“among those reclining”** – “*among those who ate with him*” (NLT).

**Verse3, “Mary took about a pint of pure nard”** – Mt tells us that she had “*an alabaster jar*” (Mt 26:7). This was a long necked vessel made of oriental onyx, which was broken when the contents were used.

**“a pint”** – Greek, a *litra*, about 0.5 litre; “*a twelve-ounce jar*” (NLT); “*327 grams*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**“pure nard”** - “*Spikenard*” (KJV) is genuine “*nard*”, the oil of an Indian plant.

**“an expensive perfume”** – In v5 John tells us it “*was worth a year’s wages*”, (Greek *three hundred denarii*). As a labourer earned about 1 denarius per day (Mt 20:2), it was therefore worth about AU\$33,000.00 (as at January 2010)!! Since it was very expensive, Mary’s act of devotion was costly. It was a real sacrifice - a measure of her love (cf. **Eph 5:25**, “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*”).

**“she poured it on Jesus’ feet”** - It was also an unusual act. She poured the oil on Jesus’ feet (normally it was poured on the head), and she kept nothing kept back - no reservation.

**“wiped his feet with her hair”** – A respectable woman did not unbind her hair in public. It also shows her humility, for it was a servant’s work to attend to the feet.

**“the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume”** - This was a fringe-benefit of her worship. Worship is between God and me but others benefit from it. So what can we learn from Mary?

**1 She was a learner** – she “*sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said*” (Lu 10:39). She may not have been literally “*sitting at Jesus’ feet*”, as this would have been seen as inappropriate for a woman. This was the standard terminology for a disciple of a great Rabbi.

**2 She was a servant** - When Martha went off to meet Jesus, Mary stayed “*in the house*” with the people that had come to comfort the family. I’m sure she would have loved to have gone off with

Martha, but she stayed behind to look after their guests. A role reversal from their roles in Luke 10.

**3 She was a worshipper** - She didn't come to hear a sermon; to make a request; to meet with her friends; or because it was customary. She didn't come to get, but to give

- 1 **Her worship was voluntary.** Others may have thought she was stupid, but it was her way of showing her appreciation.
- 2 **It was a costly** - \$33,000. ("*It was worth a year's wage*").
- 3 **It was unconditional** and unreservedly given. None was held back ("*She broke the jar*")
- 4 **It was given after much forethought.** Some have felt that she had been keeping it for the night of her marriage, but Jesus said, "It was *intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial*" (v7) and seems to imply that she had purchased it especially for that purpose. A special gift.
- 5 **It was timely** – She decided to give it to Jesus right now, not wait.
- 6 **It was given in a spirit of true humility.** Poured the perfume on Jesus' head and feet – and then wiped his feet with her hair. Paul said a woman's hair is her glory (1 Co 11:5).

**Verse 4, "Judas Iscariot"** – "*Iscariot*" seems to be his family name as **Jn 6:71** tells us his father was "*Simon Iscariot*". *Iscariot* seems to mean "*from Kerioth*" (in Moab, East of the Dead Sea) which means that he was the only disciple NOT from Galilee. When Jesus sent out the 12, two-by-two, he was paired up with "Simon the Zealot" (Mt 10:4). He was clearly very intelligent and appointed the treasurer of the group. He also seems to be the first to realize that Jesus' kingdom "*is not of this world*" (**Jn 18:36**) Cf. Cleopas in **Lu 23:21**, "we had hoped that he was *the one who was going to redeem Israel*". So he decided to get what he could when he could.

**Verse 5, "Why wasn't this perfume sold"** – This is typical of the reaction of the world, "What a waste!" (cf. **1 Chr 11:17-19**, "David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" So the Three broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, **he poured it out before the LORD**. "God forbid that I should do this!" he said. "Should I drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives?" Because they risked their lives to bring it back, David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty men").

**"the poor"** – There is no definite article in the Greek so the meaning is, "*to poor people*".

**Verse 6, "he was a thief"** – This is the one passage from which we learn that Judas was dishonest. Yet he must have been thought to be a man of some reliability, for he was keeper of the money bag.

**"the money bag"** – Actually a small wooden money box (Cf. Jn 13:29).

**"he used to help himself to what was put into it"** – Judas was evidently the treasurer of the group. The Greek literally says, 'he *carried* the things put in the bag', which seems to mean, '*stole*', Cf. the English euphemism '*lifted*' which means '*to steal*'. Judas not only '*carried*' what was in the box but '*carried it off*'.

**Verse 7, "save"** – The Greek construction is very difficult and a number of meanings have been suggested but it seems to mean that Mary had decided to save this valuable perfume for the day of Jesus' burial, but in view of his imminent death she felt now was the right time to use it. The words of Jesus as recorded in Mark (14:8, "She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial") support this idea.

**"my burial"** – This is a technical word that actually refers specifically to the "*laying out*" of a body (Cf. Jn 19:40 which describes the wrapping of the body in linen with spices added).

**Verse 8, "You"** – "*You*" in this verse is plural. Jesus is speaking to all his disciples, not just Judas.

**"always have the poor"** – Reminding them of Deut 15:11 ("There will always be poor people in the land").

**"you will not always have me"** – Jesus makes a very strong contrast between Him and the poor, and says we are to seize an opportunity while it is present.

**Verse 9, "a large crowd of Jews"** – "*all the people*" (NLT).

**"to see Lazarus"** - The raising of Lazarus played a large part in attracting the crowds that witnessed the triumphal entry of Christ (Jn 12:17-18). The news of Lazarus' resurrection resulted in an official decision to have him executed (Jn 12:10), a decision like the earlier one against Jesus (Jn 11:53).

**Verse 10, "made plans"** – Lit. '*they took counsel in order that*' denoting purpose.

**"Lazarus"** – Lazarus was a double problem for them:

- 1 Because of him many people deserted the chief priests in favour of Jesus; and
- 2 He was a living condemnation of their doctrine that there was no resurrection of the dead (Act 23:8).

*“as well”* – Lit. ‘kill also Lazarus’ referring back to 11.53 where the chief priests had plotted to kill Jesus.

**Verse 11, “were going over to Jesus”** – “had deserted them [the chief priests]” (NLT); “Or had deserted their traditions; Greek reads *had deserted*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). NIV is a good rendering for the Greek is Imperfect, “were leaving”, i.e., continuity – the process going on for quite some time. “going over” is a common verb in John. Here it means, “depart from one’s allegiance”.

**“putting their faith in”** – Again Imperfect, “were trusting Him”. The construction John uses is that which he uses continually for a deep and genuine faith – a personal trust. Not believing  $\epsilon\pi\iota$  (believing about Jesus), but  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  (believing into Him).

**Verse 12, “great crowd”** - Pilgrims who had come up from the country for the Passover Feast. Many of the pilgrims had doubtless seen and heard Jesus in Galilee, and they welcomed the opportunity to proclaim him as Messiah. Josephus says the crowds exceeded 2 million people.

**“heard that Jesus”** – “Heard” is Aorist Plural Participle “having heard”. What they heard was “Jesus is coming!”

**Verse 13, “took palm branches”** – The road from Jerusalem was lined with Palm trees, so the people took ‘palm branches of palm trees’ (lit.) to wave. The Palm is a symbol of the vigor of God’s children (**Psa 92:12**, “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree”). During the Feast of Tabernacles the people waved a Palm branch with a myrtle and willow branch on either side of it, which was an expression of joy. The same here, but additionally an expression of Triumph! In about 140 A.D., Simon, the Maccabee, entered Jerusalem “with thanksgiving and branches of palm-trees” (1 Mac 13:51).

**“Hosanna”** – “Praise God” (NLT); “a Hebrew expression meaning ‘Save!’ which became an exclamation of praise” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). What they shouted came from: **Psa 118:25-26** (“O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD*. From the house of the LORD we bless you”), and this tells us what “salvation” they had in mind, i.e., freedom and prosperity!

**“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”** – This could be taken as “Blessed in the name of the Lord be he who is to come” OR “blessed is the one who is sent by the Lord to do His will”. The words come from Psalm 118 which is a Messianic Psalm, sung each year at Passover. However it is clear that many of these people were thinking of a Messiah that would fulfill their earthly expectations, i.e., deliver them from the Romans.

**“Blessed is the King of Israel”** – *kai* – “even the King” (as P<sup>75</sup>  $\aleph$  B W, which seems to be the correct text). These words are not part of the OT text, but seem to represent the people’s conclusion.

**Verse 14, “found”** - John does not tell us how Jesus “found” the donkey, but the Synoptics do.

**“young donkey”** – The donkey was not usually used by warlike person, but rather by a peaceable person – a King coming in peace, a priest, a merchant, etc. So the donkey may be seen as a symbol of peace.

**“sat upon it”** – A conqueror would ride in on a horse or march in on foot leading his troops. A person sitting on the donkey would be no higher than a person standing – it was a lowly position in contrast with a man riding on a horse.

**Verse 15, “O Daughter of Zion”** – “people of Jerusalem” (NLT). John sees this as the fulfillment of **Zech 9:9** (“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”).

**“Daughter”** – A collective singular noun – the inhabitants of Jerusalem as a whole.

**“Zion”** – The title, “Mount Zion” has moved around over the centuries to describe different locations. Initially it referred only to “Ophel” (The City of David, 2 Sa 5:7) which is a tiny hill directly south of the temple site and surrounded by the Kidron and Tryopoeon Valleys. Next it moved north to describe the Temple site itself (Ps 48:1-2) and now it has moved over to the Western Hill where the traditional (but incorrect) site of David’s tomb is located.

**“seated on a donkey”** – The fact that Jesus himself arranged to ride in on a donkey suggests he intended to make an emphatic statement, “I am the Messiah!”.

**Verse 16, “did not understand”** - An example of the meaning of **Jn 16:13** (the Spirit “will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come”). The idea seems to be that they “did not understand the full significance of these events”.

**“all this”** - Note the thrice repeated *tauta* (lit. “*these things*” - “all this”; “these things” and “these things”). It is unusual for John to repeat pronouns such as this. The reason here seems to be that he wants to emphasize the way the events fulfilled prophecy.

**“glorified”** - Only after the crucifixion and the coming of the Holy Spirit did the disciples appreciate the meaning of the prophecy and its fulfillment (v41; 11:4; 13:31).

**Verse 17, “the crowd that was with him”** – John now introduces us to another crowd. The crowd in verse 12 (also v18) had come to Jerusalem for the feast. This crowd was from Bethany.

**“continued to spread the word”** – “*they were telling others*” (NLT); “*Greek were testifying*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>). This is Imperfect tense denoting a continuing action, and the verb is *martureo* “*to give testimony*” from which we get our English word *martyr*.

“*Or Now the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead were telling everyone*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 18, “Many people”** – This is the crowd coming from Jerusalem. They had not seen the miracle, only heard about it, but they want to find out for themselves the truth of the matter.

**Verse 19, “said to one another”** - In a kind of irresolute despair. Their own plans had failed; and only the unscrupulous designs of “the chief priests” remained.

**“the whole world”** – “*everyone*” (NLT). The first part of their statement points to their own success, but this second part (given in a Hyperbole) points to Jesus’ efforts. John may want us to see this as a prophecy (Cf. **Act 17:6**, “These men who have caused trouble *all over the world* have now come here”).

**Verse 20, “Now”** – Greek *de*, which seems to indicate a contrast with the preceding. The Pharisees were opposed to Jesus, **but** the Gentiles coming up to Jerusalem wanted to see Him.

**“Greeks”** – i.e., *Gentiles*, probably “*God-fearers*,” people attracted to Judaism by its monotheism and morality, but repelled by its nationalism and requirements such as circumcision. They worshiped in the synagogues but did not become proselytes. We do not know where they came from. There were many “Greeks” living in the Decapolis and in just a few months time, on the Day of Pentecost, “there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Act 2:4).

**Verse 21, “Philip”** - A Greek name (meaning “*lover of horses*”), which may be why they came to this disciple (though he was not the only one of the Twelve to have a Greek name).

**“Bethsaida in Galilee”** – Also the home of Andrew and Peter. *Bethsaida* means, “*house of fishing*”. While not much is recorded of Jesus’ ministry there it must have been considerable, for later he denounced it as it was one of those “*in which most of his miracles had been performed*” (Mt 11:20).

**“Sir, they said”** – Sir (*kurios*) = ‘*lord*’. They spoke politely, but remember that *kurios* has a wide range of meanings:

- 1 A title of respect when addressing any gentleman;
- 2 “Master”;
- 3 A title for YHWH; and
- 4 A title that expresses the deity of Christ.

**“to see”** - Means “*to have an interview with*”. After v22 John records no more about these Greeks. He regarded their coming as important but not their conversation with Jesus. Jesus came to die for the world, and the coming of these Gentiles indicates the scope of the effectiveness of his approaching crucifixion.

**Verse 22, “Philip went to tell Andrew”** – Philip did not know what to do. It seems he may not have been good at making decisions for in Jn 1:42 when Jesus called him to follow, Philip went to Nathaniel to ask his advice. This time he goes to his friend Andrew (who was from his home town) to ask for advice. But what was Philip’s problem? Earlier Jesus had told them, “Do not go among the Gentiles” (Mt 10:5), but on the other hand, just a short time ago, Jesus had told them, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen” (Jn 10:16). So Philip seems to have been confused. Were Gentiles in or out?

**“told Jesus”** – Both Andrew and Philip together tell Jesus. Andrew seems to contrast Philip, because instead of seeking counsel from others he brings them to Jesus (Jn 1:41; 6:8-9).

**Verse 23, “Jesus replied”** – Lit., “*Jesus answered them*” “Jesus’ answer totally ignored the Greeks and their request. John’s inclusion of the incident, however, clearly indicates their importance. Indirectly, their coming to seek Jesus indicated to him that the climax of his ministry had come. The time had now come for him to conclude his ministry limited to the Jews and move out to include others such as

these Greeks. This, however, could happen only after his crucifixion (cf. Jn 12:24, 32)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 174).

**“the hour”** – The time had now come for which Christ had been working throughout His ministry, Cf. Jn 2:4; 7:6; 8:20. In **Jn 17:1** Jesus, “prayed, ‘Father, **the time [‘hour’]** has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you”.

**“has come”** – Perfect tense. The hour has come and stays with us.

**“Son of Man”** – “*Son of Man*” was a title Jesus used of himself over 80 times. He used it especially in relation to his mission, and so its use here is significant.

**“glorified”** - Jesus was speaking about his death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation.

**Verse 24, “I tell you the truth”** – Greek *amen, amen* lit, “*truly, truly*”, the transliteration of the Hebrew (or Aramaic) word that means, “*to confirm*”, used to indicate one’s consent. It is used to introduce a statement of real importance. In the Gospels it is only used by Jesus and marks words spoken before God who is thus invited to bring them to pass.

**“a kernel of wheat”** – *ho kokkos*, lit. ‘*the grain*’. The definite article here denotes a class. The use of this illustration here was timely. Passover was the harvest feast.

**“if it dies, it produces”** - The principle of life through death is seen in the plant world. The kernel must perish as a kernel if there is to be a plant.

**Verse 25, “the man who loves his life”** - To love one's life here and now (i.e., chooses self) - to concentrate on one's own success - is to lose what matters (cf. Mt 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35; Lk 9:23-24). Supremely, of course, the principle is seen in the cross of Jesus.

**“will lose it”** – ‘lose’ often means, ‘destroy’. Loving the life is a self-destroying process. The verb is present tense.

**“hates”** - Love for God must be such that all other loves are, by comparison, hatred. eternal life (Jn 3:15).

**“eternal life”** - John changes the word for ‘life’ in this verse. “Loving . . . hating **life** (*psuche*) will keep it to eternal **life** (*zoe*)”.

**Verse 26, “serves me”** – The Greek text reads, “*If me anyone serves*” i.e., the ‘*me*’ is in the emphatic position. The first person is prominent in this verse (x5).

**“follow me”** – It has been said that, “*follow me*” is the whole of a Christian’s duty; and *to “be”* where Christ is, the whole of his reward.

**“My Father will honor”** – Service to Christ will be rewarded by His father.

**Verse 27, “troubled”** - John's equivalent to the agony in Gethsemane described in the other Gospels.

**“what shall I say?”** – He considered praying for God to save him from this death, but refused to pray it, because the very reason he had come was to die.

**“this hour”** - Jesus faced the prospect of becoming sin (or a sin offering) for sinful people (2 Co 5:21).

**“No”** – This prayer is the equivalent of the Lord’s Prayer in Gethsemane when he prayed, “Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet **not what I will, but what you will**” (**Mk 14:36**).

**Verse 28, “Father, glorify”** - His prayer was not for deliverance but for the Father to be glorified. The voice from heaven gave the answer. The verb is Aorist (a single happening) and so implies the cross.

**“your name”** – Name expresses the character (Ex 6:3), not just a convenient handle.

**“a voice came from heaven”** – Two other times we are told of “a voice from heaven” giving witness to the son, i.e., At the Baptism (**Lu 3:22**, “a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son’”) and the Transfiguration (**Mk 9:7**, “a voice came from the cloud, ‘This is my Son’”)

**“will glorify it again”** – Again referring to the cross.

**Verse 29, “The crowd that was there”** – Lit. “*The crowd standing and hearing*”.

**“said it had thundered”** – A similar explanation occurred when God spoke to Paul. They heard the sound (Act 9:7), but did not understand the voice (Act 22:9).

**Verse 30, “Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine”** - .But why then didn’t they understand it. Perhaps because of their spiritual dullness. However this could be a Semitic way of saying, “It was more for your benefit than mine”.

**Verse 31, “judgment on this world”** – The cross is God’s condemnation of all who reject it; and it is also the ultimate victory over Satan.

**“the prince of this world”** – i.e., Satan. *Prince* is *archon* = ruler, i.e., the ruler of peoples’ minds.

- “will be driven out”** – Driven out is *ekballo* = to throw out (“cast out”, RSV), Cf. **Mt 8:12**, “will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”. Just as the cross represented judgement of this world it also represented the defeat of the Devil.
- Verse 32, “But I”** – *kago* = and I (emphatic). This is the work of Christ and no other.
- “lifted up”** – Cf. **Jn 3:14**, “Just as Moses *lifted up* the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must *be lifted up*”. It is significant that Greek Gentiles were present on this occasion (v. 20).
- “draw all men”** – Cf. **Jn 6:44**, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me *draws him*”.
- Verse 33, “He said this to show”** – John’s explanatory note to explain verse 32.
- “the kind of death”** – N.B. Death and exultation are seen as inseparable from each other.
- Verse 34, “we have heard”** – i.e., from the Old Testament. They could not conceive of the heavenly Son of Man being lifted up to die.
- “the Law”** – OT Scripture in general. The reference being to passages such as Psa 89:36; 110:4; Isa 9:7; Dan7:14.
- “The Christ”** – “Or Messiah” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).
- “will remain forever”** – This was one of the fairly widely held views common in Judaism, however others taught that the Messiah would die.
- “The Son of Man”** - The only place in the Gospels where anyone other than Jesus used the expression, and even here Jesus is being quoted. They speculated that the “Christ” and the “Son of Man” were not the same person.
- Verse 35, “the light just a little while”** – Jesus does not really answer their question. What was true for them is a permanent truth – the light is shining *just for this present time* and we must seize the opportunity.
- Verse 36, “Put your trust in the light”** – We would have expected, “Walk in the light”, but Jesus says they are to believe or put their trust in Him.
- “hid himself”** – The word is passive (i.e., “Jesus was hidden from them”, but hidden by whom? God the Father? But it may here be equivalent to the Middle, i.e., as the NIV, “Jesus hid himself”.
- Verse 37, “all these miraculous signs”** – All can be read, “so many” (NRSV), but the word is used to describe both quantity and quality.
- “they still would not believe”** - God’s ancient people should have responded when God sent his Messiah. They should have seen the significance of the signs he did.
- Verse 38, “This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”**
- Verse 39, “could not believe”** - Does not mean that the people in question had no choice. They purposely rejected God and chose evil, and v40 explains that God, in turn, brought on them a judicial blinding of eyes and hardening of hearts. “I will not” leads to “I cannot”. Yet many Jewish leaders did believe in Jesus as the Messiah (v42).
- Verse 40, “He has blinded their eyes”** - These words from Isa 6:10 are quoted by Jesus (Mt 13:14-15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10) and by Paul (Ac 28:26-27).
- “deadened their hearts”** – The verb originally had to do with the forming of a callus. “hardened and benumbed (Amp).
- “nor turn”** – The hand of God is the consequence of their actions (Cf. the three-fold “God gave them over” in Rom 1).
- Verse 41, “Jesus’ glory”** – Lit. “his glory”. Isaiah spoke primarily of the glory of God (Isa 6:3). John spoke of the glory of Jesus and made no basic distinction between the two, attesting Jesus’ oneness with God. The thought of glory here is complex. There is the idea of majesty, and there is also the idea (which meant so much to John) that Jesus’ death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation show his real glory. Isaiah foresaw the rejection of Christ, as the passages quoted (Isa 53:1; 6:10) show. He spoke of the Messiah both in the words about blind eyes and hard hearts, on the one hand, and about healing, on the other. This is the cross and this is glory, for the cross and resurrection and exaltation portray both suffering and healing, rejection and triumph, humiliation and glory.
- Verse 42, “many even among the leaders”** - John does not give a picture of unrelieved gloom. Many Jewish leaders believed, though they remained secret believers for fear of excommunication.

**Verse 43, “for they loved praise from men more than praise from God”** – Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea must have been only two of a much larger number of leaders who had trusted Christ. What a pity that misplaced values (Jn 12:43) may have kept them from speaking up in his defense.

**Verse 44, “cried out”** - The words are given special emphasis by being spoken in a loud voice.

**“when a man believes”** - “Fittingly, John closes his description of Jesus’ public ministry with a final plea to believe. This along with other emphases of the earlier chapters are picked up in this summary paragraph, e.g. his being sent by the Father (vv44-45,49); light and darkness (v46); present and future judgment (vv47-48); salvation for the world (v47); eternal life (v50)” (Thomas and Gundry, p. 175). He does not say when Jesus spoke these words (they may have been uttered earlier), but they are a fitting close to this part of his account. the one who sent me. Jesus’ mission, as well as the inseparability of the Father and the Son, is stressed throughout this Gospel

**Verse 45, “he sees the one who sent me”** – The two are so close that to trust the one is to trust the other. Note the father is not named but called “the one who sent me”. The title “Father” emphasizes the idea of the natural, essential relation to the Son and to men: the phrase “*He that sent me*” brings out the idea of the special mission, as involving a peculiar charge and corresponding authority.

**Verse 46, “I have come into the world”** – The “*I*” is emphatic. There is a significant contrast between “*I have come*” (Perfect) & “*I came*” (v47). The one marks the abiding result; and the other the particular purpose. Here it points to both Jesus’ pre-existence and his mission.

**“as a light”** – This was the office of Christ, to make all things clear. His Person when seen in its fullness illuminates the mysteries of life. There is darkness over the world, and without Him it must remain. Faith in Him brings purer vision.

**“should stay in darkness”** - The normal state of men without Christ. The exact phrase occurs only here, yet see 1 Jn 2:9, 11 (*is in the darkness*); and Jn 8:12, 12:35; 1 Jn 2:11 (*walk in the darkness*).

**Verse 47, “does not keep them”** – Those who know and understand the message but do not keep it are condemned.

**“to judge”** - Not the purpose of Jesus’ coming, but judgment is the other side of salvation. It is not the purpose of the sun’s shining to cast shadows, but when the sun shines, shadows are inevitable. There is a sense in which Jesus judges, but there is also a sense in which people judge themselves (Jn 3:17-19).

**“the world”** – Note the repetition from v46.

**“to save it”** - .Lit. ‘*save the world*’. The NIV unfortunately obscures John’s emphasis.

**Verse 48, “the one who rejects me”** – *ho atheton = the rejector*. The one who persistently rejects - a very strong expression. “*He who completely disregards me as of no account*” (Barclay).

**“that very word which I spoke”** – There is two sides to the message of salvation. Where the word is spoken and the hearer rejects it, that person does not go unscathed and the judge is the word of salvation that came to the person and that person rejected it.

**“will condemn him at the last day”** – The day of the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11).

**Verse 49, “For”** – Introduces Jesus’ reason for the foregoing. It is because the message is of divine origin.

**“I did not speak of my own accord”** – *ex emautou = out of myself*. This is the only place John uses this construction, but he uses *ap emautou = from myself* x7, but the meaning seems to be the same.

**“the Father who sent me commanded me what to say”** – Commanded is Perfect Tense. The message is permanent. Jesus’ hearers have a great responsibility. His “word” (v48) is that which the Father commanded him to say. To reject it, therefore, is to reject God.

**Verse 50, “his command leads to”** – Lit. “is eternal life” – not just leads to eternal life.

**“eternal life”** – “this is *eternal life*: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3).

**“So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say”** Jesus said what he did in order to fulfill the will of the Father. These are the final words of Jesus’ public ministry.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

**vv1-38 - THE LAST SUPPER** (Cf. Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25; Lu 22:7-20)

**vv1-17 - JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET** - Christ ILLUSTRATES the New Commandment.

**vv1-11 - His condescension in washing their feet.**

**vv1-5 The Action:** When they gathered for the meal that night, Jesus took the place of a servant and washed the disciples' feet. By this action He symbolized firstly, the need for humility, and **secondly**, that He, the perfect servant, would cleanse people from sin through His death.

**vv6-8 - The Discussion:** Not understanding this symbolic action, Peter objected. Jesus responded that if he refused to let Jesus cleanse him, he could not be Jesus' disciple. By this cleansing Jesus was referring to cleansing from sin, something that Peter would understand more fully after Jesus had died, risen and been glorified (cf. Acts 5:30-31; 1 Pe 1:18-21; 2:24).

**vv9-11 - The Explanation:** Peter thought that if washing the feet symbolized cleansing, he should be washed all over to ensure complete cleansing. Again he did not realize that this was what Jesus had just symbolized. The disciples (with the exception of Judas) were already cleansed all over, and needed no further symbolic cleansing. The only washing necessary was the washing of the feet, and that was not for cleansing the body but for washing away the defilement of the way.

**vv12-17 - The Application** - If Jesus, the apostles' Lord and teacher, had humbled himself by washing their feet, how much more should they, His servants, humble themselves in serving one another.

**vv18-30 - JESUS PREDICTS HIS BETRAYAL** (Cf. Mt 26:21-25; Mk 14:1, 8-21; Lu 22:21-23) - The Warning to Judas. Christ PREDICTS his betrayal. Contrast of the manifestation of love and hatred.

**vv18-20 - The Prediction** - Jesus knew that Judas was a traitor, but the rest were His servants and messengers. Those who received them received Him and His Father.

**vv21-25 - Warning to Judas** - The apostles were surprised when Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him, for they did not suspect treachery among them. Perhaps they thought one of them might unintentionally betray Him through speaking carelessly. But Judas knew what Jesus was talking about (cf. Mt 26:20-22).

**vv26-30 - Judas departs** - When Jesus took a piece of bread, dipped it in the dish and gave it to Judas, He was giving Judas a special honour. It was as if Jesus was making a last appeal to him. But Judas' heart was set on doing evil. Jesus knew what Judas intended to do, but the apostles still did not suspect him of being a traitor (cf. Mt 26:23-25).

**vv31-38 - JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL** - Christ ISSUES the New Commandment and PREDICTS Peter's denial. He announces the fact that He is going to the Father. Judas' departure from the room made the death of Jesus certain, though for Jesus that death would be not a misfortune but a glorious triumph. His death would bring glory to God by displaying His immeasurable love for sinful mankind. It would also bring grief to His disciples as they saw their master taken from them. However, they were to show no bitterness in their grief; rather, a forgiving love, by which others would see that they were indeed disciples of Jesus.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "before the Passover feast"** - "Apparently John intends this as a chronological note to locate the supper (Jn 13:2) described in the rest of the chapter. It is also apparent that this is the same supper described as the Passover in the synoptic gospels. Therefore John seems to have in mind a different scheme for reckoning when the Passover began" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 199).

**"He know showed them the full extent of His love"** - This could also mean, 'He loved them to the last'. In either case it denotes "to the fullest extent".

**Verse 2, "The evening meal was being served"** - *deipnou ginomenou* - Genitive Absolute = 'during supper'. "This verse contains two serious textual problems. The first involves but a single letter: *deipnou ginomenou* is generally taken to mean 'supper being ended' (KJV), whereas *deipnou genomenou* means 'during supper' (RSV). The former reading is by far the most difficult, for it stands in opposition to the following context, which indicates that the supper was still in progress (vv 4, 26).

On the basis of what was felt to be superior manuscript evidence (Ⲛ\* B L W X y al), a majority of the committee, while preferring the aorist, interpreted it as an ingressive aorist, 'supper having been served'" (Metzger, 1971, p. 239), i.e., the serving was finished, but the supper itself was continuing.

**the devil had already prompted Judas**"- "Or *the devil had already intended for Judas*" (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 3, "all things under his power"** – Jesus is fully conscious of his deity and Messianic dignity when he performs this humble act.

**Verse 4, "wrapped a towel around his waist"** – "Girded himself" (KJV). Peter seems to recall this incident when he writes, "*gird yourself with humility*" (1 Pe 5:5).

**Verse 6, "wash my feet"** – Probably Peter drew his feet up, as he spoke, in his impulsive humility. Not understanding this symbolic action, Peter objected. Jesus responded that if he refused to let Jesus cleanse him, he could not be Jesus' disciple. By this cleansing Jesus was referring to cleansing from sin, something that Peter would understand more fully after Jesus had died, risen and been glorified (cf. **Act 5:30-31**, "The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead--whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give *repentance and forgiveness of sins* to Israel"; **1 Pe 1:18-21**, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were *redeemed* from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with *the precious blood of Christ*, a lamb without blemish or defect . . . Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.").

**Verse 8, "you have no part with me"** – Jesus takes up the challenge of Peter which amounted to irreverence and lack of confidence. "*No part*" not simply here but in the deeper sense of fellowship. Jesus does not make foot washing an essential to spiritual fellowship but simply tests Peter's real pride and mock humility.

**Verse 9, "not just my feet"** – A moment ago he told his master he was doing too much, now he tells him he is doing too little.

**Verse 10, "needs only to wash his feet"** – A person would bathe themselves before going to a feast. When they arrived they only needed to wash their feet to be entirely clean again. Note however that some MSS read, "*He who has bathed does not need to wash*". In the spiritual life a person who has been cleansed from sin does not need to think that all is lost when they sin in their walk through life. They only need to confess these sins to be entirely clean again (Cf. 1 Jn 1:9).

**"had a bath needs"** - The washing of **regeneration** (**Tit 3:5**, "He saved us through *the washing of rebirth*").

**"only to wash his feet"** - The washing of **confession** (**1 Jn 1:9**, "*purify us from all unrighteousness*").

**Verse 11, "For he knew"** – The imperfect tense. Jesus had known for at least a year (6:64, 70), yet treated Judas with the usual courtesies.

**Verse 13, "'Teacher' and 'Lord'"** – Jesus approves of both titles and claims both titles in their fullest sense at this very moment when he renders this menial, but very symbolic, service.

**Verse 14, "you also should wash one another's feet"** – This phrase especially means that believers are to forgive one another (Cf. Mt 5:23-24; Eph 4:32).

**Verse 15, "I have set you an example"** - "What Jesus did while the supper was in progress was meant to be an example of self-sacrificing humility. The disciples would do well to imitate their Teacher in possessing this quality (Jn 13:14, 16-17)" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 199).

**Verse 18, "to fulfill the Scripture"** – i.e., Psalm 41:9, "*my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*"

**"lifted up his heel"** – The metaphor is that of kicking with the heel or tripping with the heel like a wrestler. It was a gross breach of hospitality to eat bread with any one and then turn against him.

**Verse 19, "that I am he"** – "*that I AM the Messiah*" (NLT); "Or *that the 'I AM' has come*; or *that I am the LORD*; Greek reads *that I am*" (NLT<sup>mg</sup>); i.e., the one to whom Psalm 41:9 referred. This emphatic form of speech would have immediately reminded his hearers of **Exodus 3:14** ("God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'"). Cf. Jn 8:58.

**Verse 21, "troubled in spirit"** – This agitation of Christ's spirit has already been mentioned (11:33; 12:27). The same word is used of the disciples in 14:1, 27.

**Verse 23, "the disciple whom Jesus loved"**- "Greek was *reclining on Jesus' bosom*. The 'disciple Jesus loved' was probably John" (NLT<sup>mg</sup>) Cf. Jn 20:2; 21:7.

**Verse 25, "Leaning back"** – The word literally means, *to fall upon*, and it occurs nowhere else in John. It describes a sudden change in position.

**Verse 26, "It is the one"** - Mark (14:20) and Luke (22:21) do not identify the traitor by name, but Matthew (26:23, 25) and John do. The rest present apparently did not grasp that Judas was the betrayer (v28). Judas was an honoured member of the Twelve. He was their treasurer (13:29; 12:6) and normally was the one to administer benevolences to the poor on their behalf (13:29; 12:4-5). In fact, he seemingly was seated in the place of honour at this supper, that is, at Jesus' left hand, and John the apostle was on the right (13:23, 26). Surely, the rest of the disciples must have reasoned, one so respected as Judas could not be the betrayer" (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 200).

**"dipping the piece of bread"** – "the morsel" (NASB) or "the Sop" (KJV) refers to a small piece of bread that the host offered to one of his guests as a sign of special friendship. By doing this Jesus was showing Judas how much he loved him, and perhaps suggesting to him that it was not too late to change his mind.

**Verse 31, "Now is the Son of Man glorified"** – Literally, *was glorified*, i.e., in the departure of Judas. Jesus was glorified through death and, humanly speaking, His fate was sealed by Judas' going out.

**Verse 32, "If God is glorified in Him"** – Many MSS do not have this clause.

**Verse 33, "so I tell you now"** – "now" implies that the sorrowful announcement of Christ's departure from His disciples had been withheld until the present. The time was *now* come.

**Verse 34, "A new command"** – A single commandment which embodies the whole body of the moral precepts of Christianity.

**"Love one another"** – Present tense, "keep on loving one another". The measure of our love for another is set by Christ's love for us.

**Verse 35, "by (in) this"** - *en touto* - by what? Bible reading and prayer? Preaching the Gospel? No, but "if you love one another":

**"all men"** - Not a few, not some, not most but all people.

**"will know"** - *gnosontai*- not should, might or perhaps, but they shall know. The future definite. There are a number of Greek words rendered 'know'. *Oida* and *ginosko* both mean 'to know', 'to understand', 'to be acquainted with', 'to learn', but *oida* means know as "to know a doctrine" whereas *ginosko* (the word used here) signifies "knowledge which produces some emotion and affection of the mind, knowledge that causes a change, or reaction" and this is what we all want to see in our ministry.

**"disciples"** – Disciple means:

- 1 Pupil** - Opposite to teacher, as e.g., "regular in attendance at studies" hence, '*one who follows one's teaching*'. But Socrates refused to allow his students to use the term. Why? The word always involves a personal attachment.
- 2 Apprentice** - Implies a direct dependence of the one under instruction upon the authority superior in knowledge.
- 3 Follower** - Denotes the men who attached themselves to Jesus as their master. It always implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described as . . . The control of the *disciple* by the man to whom they have committed themselves extends in the N.T. to the inner life. In the N.T. we do not find any instance where *disciple* is used without this implication of supremely personal union. The word occurs in the Bible only in the Gospels and Acts, and in Acts is used of all who confess Jesus as the Messiah.

**Verse 38, "before the rooster crows"** - "The third of the four 'watches' of the night (12 midnight to 3.00 a.m.) was called 'rooster crowing' (cf. Mk 13:35). The rooster would crow early in this period and again toward the period's end. In Mark's account Jesus referred to the second crowing as to be quite specific. Matthew, Luke and John record a reiteration of his prediction in more general terms, that is, they refer to only one crowing, the second, which was the more commonly known of the two. Before dawn the next morning Peter was to deny his Lord three times" (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 203).

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**14:1-18:1 - DISCOURSE AND PRAYERS FROM THE UPPER ROOM TO GETHSEMANE** (Cf. Mt 26:30-46; Mk 14:26-42; Lu 22:39-46)

<b>JOHN 14 - COMFORT</b>	There is a gradual transition from one to the other.
<b>JOHN 15 - ADMONITION</b>	15 tells what THEY should do,
<b>JOHN 16 - PREDICTION</b>	16 tells what GOD will do!

**14:1-31 - QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS DESTINATION, THE FATHER, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ANSWERED**

The four questions and their answers are:

*13:36-14:4*    *Question 1*    PETER    13:36    *Answer 1*    13:36-14:4

*14:5-7*        *Question 2*    THOMAS    14:5        *Answer 2*    14:6-7

*14:8-21*       *Question 3*    PHILIP    14:8        *Answer 3*    14:9-21

*14:22-31*      *Question 4*    JUDAS     14:22      *Answer 4*    14:29-31

**VV1-14 - THE WAY TO THE FATHER**

**vv1-4 - Peter** - The disciples by now surely knew that Jesus was soon to die. He therefore comforted them by saying that he was going to His Father to prepare a permanent dwelling place for them, and one day He would return to take them to be with Him forever. He had told them often enough that if they followed Him as loyal followers, they would share in His final victory.

**vv5-7 - Thomas** - Thomas misunderstood, thinking that Jesus was speaking of a physical location and a physical journey. He wanted Jesus to show them the way so that they would have no difficulty in following Him later. Jesus explained that the 'way' to the Father was through the Son. Jesus had brought the truth of God and eternal life to mankind, and to know Him was to know God. To know the Son was to know the Father.

**vv8-11 - Philip** - Philip also misunderstood. He wanted a special revelation of the Father, though he should have known, after more than three years with Jesus, that Jesus and the Father were inseparably united. Jesus' words and actions were the Father's words and actions.

**vv12-14 - The Power of Prayer** - Jesus may have been about to die, but God's work in the world was not yet finished. When Jesus returned to the Father He would send the Holy Spirit, and through the power of the Spirit and prayer the disciples would do even greater works than Jesus had done. Jesus' ministry had been limited to a few years in Palestine, but His disciples would be able to travel to other countries and reach the whole world for God. Jesus' return to the Father would bring in a new era.

**VV15-31 - PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**vv15-17 - Another Counselor** - In assuring the disciples of the blessings that would follow His return to the Father, Jesus had not specifically mentioned the Holy Spirit (v.12). Now he explained. When He returned to the Father, He would send the Holy Spirit as the Counselor or helper to guide, instruct and strengthen them. Those who did not believe in Jesus would not be able to understand how this Helper worked, because their understanding was limited to the things of the world in which they lived.

**vv18-21 - Believers not orphans** - Soon Jesus would leave the world, but He would not desert His disciples. Although people in general would see Him no longer, His disciples would, in a sense, continue to see Him. They would know Him spiritually, because he would live within them. He would love them, and in return they would love Him.

**vv22-26 - Judas** - Judas Thaddaeus (not the betrayer), still thinking of Jesus' physical body, could not understand how (or "why", NIV??) the disciples would see Him but others would not. Jesus replied that not only the Son but the Father also, would live with them, provided they gave proof of their love for Him by following His teachings. The Holy Spirit would help them recall those teachings.

**vv27-29 - Peace given** - Jesus saw that His disciples were confused and unsettled and promised them His peace. By this He did not mean a life free from trouble, but an inward calm such as He had. Though outwardly afflicted, inwardly He had peace. The disciples should not have been troubled over Jesus' coming death, but glad that by that death He was bringing to completion the work His Father had given Him to do.

**vv30-31 - Satan's servants** - Though sinless and in no way under Satan's power, Jesus would allow Satan's servants to betray and kill Him, so that through His death He might fulfill His Father's will and save sinners.

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "Do not . . . be troubled"** - The apostles had just received disturbing news (13:33, 36). "This discourse, given on Thursday evening of Passion Week, was delivered to the same group as the Olivet discourse given on Tuesday. Yet the two differ radically from one another. A good reason for this difference lies in the dual capacity in which they were addressed. On Tuesday the focus of interest was the future of the nation of Israel, of which those in the group were members (Cf. Mt 24:1-3). On Thursday the issue was the state of the disciples and other believers during the period of Jesus' absence (Jn 13:33, 36; 16:5-7). Anticipations of the latter group, many of whom are not Israelites, differ markedly from those concerned with the national expectations of Israel" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 205).

**"Trust in God!"** - The Greek could mean either, "*Trust in God!*" (Imperative) or "*You trust in God*" (Indicative). There is no way to be sure which Jesus meant.

**"Trust in God . . . in me"** - Jesus' antidote for a troubled heart (Cf. Psa 56:3-4; Isa 26:3-4).

**Verse 2, "many rooms"** - Lit. "*many dwelling places,*" implying permanence and plenty of room.

**Verse 3, "I will come back"** - Jesus comes in many ways:

- (a) Resurrection;
- (b) Death of the individual Christian;
- (c) Descent of the Holy Spirit (cf. 14:18); or
- (d) The Parousia. The meaning here seems to be to his second advent (Cf. Rev 22:7, 12, 20).

**Verse 4, "You know the way to the place where I am going"** - Some Greek MSS read, "*Where I am going you know, and the way you know*".

**Verse 5, "Thomas"** - He was honest, and plainly told the Lord he did not understand.

**Verse 6, "I am"** - This is the sixth "I am" saying. In the predicate each of the words *way*, *truth*, and *life* is preceded by the definite article. Jesus not only shows the way, he himself is the way. Because God is infinite He is equal to each of His attributes and 'possesses' each attribute in an infinite degree, so God not only loves, but God is love (1 Jn 4:8). In the same way, Christ not only shows people the way (i.e., by revealing the way to the Father), He is the way (i.e., He redeems us and brings us to the Father).

**"the way"** - To God. Jesus is not one way among many, but the only way (Act 4:12; Heb 10:19-20). In the early church, Christianity was sometimes called "the Way" (Act 9:2).

**"the truth"** - A key emphasis in this Gospel (Jn 1:14).

**"the life"** - Very likely the statement means "*I am the way (to the Father) in that I am the truth and the life.*"

**Verse 7, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father"** - Some Greek MSS read, "*If you really have known me, you will know my Father*".

**"me . . . my Father"** - Once more Jesus stresses the intimate connection between the Father and himself. Jesus brought a full revelation of the Father (Jn 1:18), so that the apostles had real knowledge of him.

**Verse 10, "not just my own"** - Jesus' teaching was not of human origin, and there was an inseparable connection between his words and his work.

**Verse 11, "Believe . . . that I am in the Father and the Father is in me"** - Saving faith is trust in a person, but it must also have factual content. Faith includes believing that Jesus is one with the Father (Jn 10:30; 17:21-22).

**Verse 12, “greater things”** - These depended on Jesus’ going to the Father, because they are works done in the strength of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus would send from the Father (vv16–17; 15:26). But what are the greater works? Christ performed all kinds of miracles. Are we to understand “Greater” in a Qualitative or Quantitative way?

**1 Miracles and Signs – Qualitative** - Objective measuring of individual miracles, e.g. the healing power of Peter's shadow (Ac 5:15), speaking in foreign languages (Ac 2:6). But can miracles be compared in this way? Which miracles is the "greatest"? “The measuring of miracles of this kind by their magnitude is foreign to the New Testament” (Meyer, p. 218).

**2 Quantitative Measuring of Miracles** – The conversion of the Gentiles. Miracles in the spiritual realm (Cf. 5:20-21, 24). Christ spoke of the conversion of the Gentiles just before (Jn 12:23-32) and just after (Jn 17:20) this statement.

*"Meizona Touton* [“greater things than these”] is the notion of *Erga* [“works”] **expanded**” (Meyer, p. 218). “He assumed only *a small corner* for Himself, *a little time* for His preaching and working of miracles but the Apostles and their successors went throughout the whole world” (Martin Luther cited in Meyer, p. 219).

The conversion of the Gentiles was not possible until after the descent of the Holy Spirit.

1 But “conversion is not ascribed to man”! However, Cf. Jas 5:20.

2 If “greater” = “spiritual” then physical to disappear???

**Verse 13, “in my name”** - Not simply prayer that mentions Jesus’ name but prayer in accordance with all that the person who bears the name is (Jn 2:23). It is prayer aimed at carrying forward the work Jesus did - prayer that he himself will answer (v14).

**Verse 14, “You may ask me for anything”** – Some Greek MSS read simply, “If you ask anything in my name”.

**Verse 15, “love . . . obey”** - Love, like faith (Jas 2:14–26), cannot be separated from obedience.

**Verse 16, “the Father . . . will give you”** - The first of a series of important passages about the Holy Spirit (v26; 15:26; 16:7–15), the gift of the Father.

**“Counselor”** - It is a legal term, but with a broader meaning than “counsel for the defense” (1 Jn 2:1). It referred to any person who helped someone in trouble with the law. The Spirit will always stand by Christ’s people.

**Verse 17, “Spirit of truth”** - In essence and in action the Spirit is characterized by truth. He brings people to the truth of God. All three persons of the Trinity are linked with truth. See also the Father (Jn 4:24; Psa 31:5; Isa 65:16) and the Son (v6).

**“The world”** - Which takes no notice of the Spirit of God (Jn 1:9; 1 Co 2:14). But the Spirit was “with” Jesus’ disciples and would be “in” them. Some believe the latter relationship (indwelling) specifically anticipates the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Act 1:2; 2:4, 17, 38; Rom 8:9).

**“The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him, nor knows him”** - The gender of each of these pronouns is neuter, because they agree with the antecedent noun (*pneuma* = *spirit*) which is a neuter gender word. The writer has used correct grammar even though the personal Spirit of God is meant.

**“he lives with you and will be in you”** – Although some MSS read, “and is in you” this is an anachronism because the Spirit did not indwell believers until the Day of Pentecost.

**Verse 18, “I will come to you”** - The words relate to the coming of the Spirit, but Jesus also speaks of his own appearances after the resurrection and at his second coming (vv3, 19, 28; 16:22).

**Verse 19, “world . . . but you”** - The cross separated the world (who would not see Jesus thereafter) from the disciples (who would).

**“Because I live, you also will live”** - The life of the Christian always depends on the life of Christ (Jn 1:4; 3:15; 10:10; Php 1:21).

**Verse 20, “On that day you will realize”** - The resurrection would radically change their thinking.

**Verse 21, “obeys . . . loves”** - Love for Christ and keeping his commands cannot be separated (v15).

**“loved by my Father . . . I too will love him”** - The love of the Father cannot be separated from that of the Son.

**Verse 22, “why” - why do you intend** - lit, “*What thing has happened?*” - “*how is it you will?*” (RSV). Implies some change of plan. Judas (and, for that matter, the other apostles) probably looked for Jesus to fulfill popular Messianic expectations. It was not easy, therefore, to understand how that would mean showing himself to the disciples but not to the world. They may have expected a public manifestation by miracles or a Messianic appearance as in the coming day of Judgment, i.e., “How is it possible to display *your power* to us alone and not to the world?”, but it is to be *a manifestation of glory* not a manifestation of judgment.

**Verse 23, “make our home with him”** – If the Holy Spirit “*abides*” (v17) in you, that heart becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Co 3:16) and so a fit dwelling place for the Father and the Son, a glorious uplifting reality.

**Verse 24, “the father who sent me”**- Once more the close relationship between Jesus’ words and the Father’s is stressed (v10; 7:16)

**Verse 26, “whom the Father will send”** - Both the Father and the Son are involved in the sending (Jn 15:26).

**“remind you of everything I have said to you”** - Crucial for the life of the church - and for the writing of the NT.

**Verse 27, “Peace . . . my peace”** - A common Hebrew greeting (Jn 20:19, 21, 26), which Jesus uses here in an unusual way. The term speaks, in effect, of the salvation that Christ’s redemptive work will achieve for his disciples - total well-being and inner rest of spirit, in fellowship with God. All true peace is his gift, which the repetition emphasizes. Note:

Peace with God (Rom 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, *we have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ”).

Peace from God (Php 1:2, “Grace and *peace to you from God* our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”)

Peace of God (Php 4:7, “And *the peace of God*, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”)

God of Peace (Php 4:9, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you”)

**“I do not give . . . as the world gives”** - In its greetings of peace the world can only express a longing or wish. But Jesus’ peace is real and present (Jn 16:33).

**Verse 28, “the Father is greater than I”** - Revealing the subordinate role Jesus accepted as a necessary part of the incarnation. The statement must be understood in the light of the unity between the Father and the Son (Jn 10:30). They are equal in essence however (Cf. 10:30, “I and the Father are one”). The differences can be seen as those of:

1 **Role** - Son is agent “Father is greater than the Son as Son in person not in essence” (Westcott, p. 216);

2 **Humanity** - “inferior to the Father as touching his *manhood*,” i.e. in his incarnation; or

3 **Location** - Jesus on earth is inferior to the Father in Heaven.

**Verse 30, “has no hold on me”** - Satan has a hold on people because of their fallen state. Since Christ was sinless, Satan could have no hold on him.

**Verse 31, “I do exactly what my Father has commanded me”** - Jesus had stressed the importance of his followers being obedient (vv15, 21, 23), and he set the example. With these words he goes to fulfill his mission (chs. 18–19).

**“let us leave”** - “These words, expressed the intent to leave the upper room shortly, not the actual departure. Thus the discourse and prayer of Jn 15-17 was given while they were still in the upper room and their actual departure was recorded in Mt 26:30, Mk 14:26, Lu 22:39; Jn 18:1. However, it is also possible to argue that their departure from the upper room is indicated by Jn 14:31, with Mt 26:30, Mk 14:26; Lu 22:39 as parallels. Jn 18:1 would then refer to departure from the city. This, of course, would mean that the discourse and prayer of Jn 15-17 were given as they walked in the city on the way to Gethsemane. Although such a reconstruction of events is possible, it has certain problems. It introduces an unnatural change of subject [a possible second prediction of Peter’s denial, Mt 26:30-35; Mk 14:26-31]. Also is it likely that such a long discourse and prayer (Jn 15-17) would be delivered while walking through the streets?” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 207).

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### 15:1-16:33 - DISCOURSE ON THE WAY TO GETHSEMANE

#### 15:1-17 - THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES - ABIDE IN ME!

**vv1-5 - FRUITFUL BRANCHES** - In themselves believers have no life, strength or spiritual power. All that they have comes from Jesus Christ. If He is likened to a vine, they are likened to the branches, which means that they can bear spiritual fruit only as they are united in Him. As they allow the Father to remove the hindrances of sin from their lives, they will bear even more fruit.

**vv6-11 - UNFRUITFUL BRANCHES** - Those who bear no fruit are like the dead branches of a vine. Though attached to it, they receive no life from it. They say that they are disciples of Jesus, but they have no spiritual union with Him and in the end they will be destroyed. Such a person was Judas Iscariot. If people are true disciples, they will prove it by the fruits that their spiritual union with Jesus produces. Among those fruits are obedience, love, joy and effective prayer.

**vv12-17 - WE WERE APPOINTED TO BEAR FRUIT** - Jesus wants His disciples to serve Him willingly, lovingly and with understanding. For this reason he chose the twelve apostles and trained them to know God's ways. If their service is based on true knowledge of God and the true exercise of self-sacrificing love, they can expect it to result in lasting fruit.

#### 15:18-16:4 – THE WORLD HATES THE DISCIPLES

##### vv18-27 - ALSO TESTIFY

##### vv18-25 - *THE WORLD HATES YOU*

**vv18-21 - The Reasons They Hate You** - Union with Jesus, however, will bring some suffering, because disciples, like their master, will be hated by the world. Loyalty to Jesus will bring persecution.

**vv18-19 - *You are not of this world*** - The world loves its own, but Jesus' disciples are not of this world.

**vv20-21 - *You belong to Christ, whom the world hates*** - Jesus' teaching clearly showed that He came from God, but the world does not know God.

**vv22-25 - *THIS HATRED IS INEXCUSABLE*** - Those who heard and saw Him had no excuse for not believing Him. In fact, their clearly knowledge increased their guilt. They may have claimed to be worshippers of God, but if they hated Jesus they hated God.

**vv26-27 - *THE SPIRIT TESTIFIES - SO MUST YOU*** - The apostles also had heard Jesus' word and seen His works, but they had believed. Therefore, they could be assured of the Spirit's help in witnessing to Jesus during the difficult time they were about to meet.

**v26 - Testimony of the Spirit** - The coming Spirit will testify about Jesus.

**v27 - Testimony of disciples** - Because they were eye-witnesses, they too must testify.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “I am the true vine”** - *alethine* = “sterling”, ‘real’, ‘trustworthy’ “The vine as a symbol of Israel was well known from the Old Testament (Psa 80:8-16; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Ezek 15:1-8; Hos 10:1), but the generation of the nation at Jesus’ first coming turned its back on him. Hence they were not a part of the ‘true’ vine. Only by abiding in him who is the true vine does one belong to it (Jn 15:4). Through such a spiritual relationship, the disciples were enabled to bear fruit after his departure (Jn 15:16)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 206). When this imagery is used, Israel is often shown as lacking in some way. Jesus, however, is “*the true vine.*”

**“the gardener”** – *The vine-dresser* - cf. the Parable of tenants (Mk 12:1-12) and the Parable of Fruitless Fig Tree (Lu 13:6-9).

**Verse 2, “every branch”** - The vine gives branches:

- 1 True UNITY (a very close and organic unity);
- 2 LIFE (Jn 11:25, "he who believes in me . . . will live"); and
- 3 FRUIT bearing capacity (Jn 15:5, "If a man remains in me . . . he will bear much fruit")

**“no fruit”** – What is fruit? It is visible evidence:

**1 Evidence Of Repentance** (Cf. **Mt 3:8-10**, "Produce *fruit* in keeping with *repentance.*"

**2 Evidence Of New Birth** (Cf. **Mt 7:15-20**, "every good tree *bears good fruit*";

**Mt 12:33**, "make a *tree good and its fruit* will be good")

**3 Evidence Of Christian Maturity** (Cf. **Mt 13:8, 23**, "still other seed fell on good soil ... it *produced a crop* ... the man who hears the word and understands it"; **Col 1:6**, "the gospel is *bearing fruit* and growing")

**4 The Evidence Of The Spirit At Work** (Cf. **Gal 5:22**, "*The fruit of the Spirit* is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control")

Notice the progression in this discussion.

No fruit (v2);  
Fruit (v2);  
More fruit (v2);  
Much fruit (v8); and  
Fruit that will last (v16).

**"cuts off"** - A reference to judgment (v6).

**"prunes"** - The Greek word "*prunes*" (v2) also means "*cleans*" (v3), Cf. Jn 13:10-11. Pruning produces fruitfulness. In the NT the figure of good fruit represents the product of a godly life (Mt 3:8; 7:16-20) or virtues of character (Gal 5:22-23; Eph 5:9; Php 1:11).

**Verse 3, "the word"** - Sums up the message of Jesus.

**Verse 4, "Remain in me"** - "*Abide in Me*" (KJV). John explains exactly what this means in 1 Jn 3:24 ("Those who *obey his commands live in him*, and he in them") and in Jn 15:10. The believer has no fruitfulness apart from union and fellowship with Christ. A branch out of contact with the vine is lifeless.

**Verse 5, "remains in me and I in him"** - A living union with Christ is absolutely necessary; without it there is nothing (Php 4:13).

**Verse 6, "thrown into the fire and burned"** - Judged (v2). In light of such passages as 6:39; 10:27-29, these branches probably do not represent true believers. Genuine salvation is evidenced by a life of fruitfulness (vv2, 4, 10; Heb 6:9; Mt 7:19-23).

**Verse 7, "my words remain in you"** - It is impossible to pray correctly apart from knowing and believing the teachings of Christ.

**Verse 8, "to my Father's glory"** - The Father is glorified in the work of the Son (Jn 13:31), and he is also glorified in the fruit-bearing of disciples (Mt 7:20; Lk 6:43-45).

**Verse 9, "remain in my love"** - Literally, "*in the love, that which is mine.*" Not only the love of the disciple for Christ, nor the love of Christ for the disciple, but the Christ-principle of love which includes both. Christ uses the same form of expression in *the joy that is mine* (v11; 3:29; 17:13).

**Verse 10, "obey . . . as I have obeyed"** - Again the importance of obedience (Jn 14:15, 21, 23), and again the example of Christ (Jn 14:31).

**"my love . . . his love"** - Obedience and love go together (Jn 14:15, 21, 23; 1 Jn 2:5; 5:2-3).

**Verse 11, "my joy . . . your joy"** - "*joy*" has only previously been mentioned in 3:29, but is one of the characteristics of the Upper Room Discourse (Cf. Jn 16:20-24; 17:13). The Christian way is never dreary, for Jesus desires his disciples' joy to be complete (Php 4:4; 1 Th 5:16; 1 Jn 1:4).

**Verse 12, "Love each other"** - Present subjunctive active, "*keep on loving one another*" (Cf. 13:34).

**Verse 13, "Greater love"** - Christ's love was not only in words but also in his sacrificial death (Eph 5:25).

**Verse 14, "what I command"** - Present subjunctive active, "*keep on doing*", not just spasmodic obedience. A different way of saying what He had already said in v10. Obedience to Christ's commands is a prerequisite to discipleship and spiritual fellowship with Christ.

**Verse 15, "servants . . . friends"** - Servants are simply agents, doing what their master commands and often not understanding their master's purpose. But Jesus takes his friends into his confidence.

**"I have made known to you"** - From Jn 16:12 we learn that though Jesus had let his disciples know as much as they were able to absorb of the Father's plan, the revelation was not yet complete. The Spirit would make other things known in due course.

**Verse 16, "I chose you"** - Disciples normally chose the particular rabbi to whom they wanted to be attached, but it was not so with Jesus' disciples. He chose them, and for a purpose - the bearing of fruit (v2). We usually desire a strong prayer life in order that we may be fruitful, but here it is the other way around. Jesus enables us to bear fruit, and then the Father will hear our prayers.

**Verse 18, "If the world hates you"** - '*world*' refers to the human system that opposes God's purpose (Jn 1:9). "Because of his departure Jesus had to add this word about opposition. As long as he was present there was not need (Jn 16:4), for the persecution fell on him, not them. After his departure they would have to rely on the Holy Spirit to help them (Jn 15:26-27)" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 207).

**Verse 19, “you do not belong to the world”** – Definite and specific reason for the world hating true Christians whose very existence is a reproach to the sinful world. Does the world hate you? If not, why not? Has the world become more Christian or have Christians become more worldly?

**Verse 20, “they will persecute you”** – The verb originally meant, ‘to put to flight’, and then ‘to run swiftly’ in order to overtake or attain, as the goal or the competitor in a race. So generally it means, ‘to pursue with hostile intent, to harass, persecute’.

**Verse 21, “They will treat you this way”** - Because Christians do not belong to the world, persecution from the world is inevitable. The basic reason is the world’s ignorance and rejection of the Father (Jn 16:3).

**Verse 22, “no excuse”** - Privilege and responsibility go together. The Jews had had the great privilege of having the Son of God among them - in addition to having received God’s special revelation in the OT. Those who rejected him were totally guilty and without excuse. If he had not come to them, they would still have been sinners, but they would not have been guilty of rejecting him directly (v24).

**Verse 24, “they have hated both me and my Father”** – Permanent attitude and responsibility. The world and the religious leaders had united in this attitude of hostility to Christ, and in reality, to God.

**Verse 25, “written in their Law”** – i.e., in Psalm 35:19; 69:4. In this section Christ states:

- 1 the world hates Christ (v18);
- 2 His followers do not belong to the world(v19);
- 3 The world will persecute His followers (v20);
- 4 The persecutors do not know God (v21);
- 5 Christ’s words rebuke the persecutors (v22); and
- 6 Christ’s works rebuke the persecutors (v24).

**Verse 26, “When the Counselor comes”** – “I will send you the Advocate” (NLT); “Or Comforter, or Encourager, or Counselor. Greek reads *paraclete*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>),

**“goes out from the Father”** - Probably refers to the Spirit’s being sent to do the Father’s work on earth rather than to his eternal relationship with the Father.

**Verse 27, “you also”** - Emphatic. Believers bear their testimony to Christ in the power of the Spirit (Act 1:8). But it is their testimony, and they are responsible for bearing it.

**“from the beginning”** - The apostles bore the definitive testimony, for they were uniquely chosen and taught by Christ and were eyewitnesses of his glory (Lk 24:48; Act 10:39, 41).

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### 15:1-16:33 - DISCOURSE ON THE WAY TO GETHSEMANE

**vv1-4 - THE BELIEVERS TO BE PERSECUTED** - As long as Jesus had been with His disciples, the full force of people's opposition had been directed at Him, not at them. Now that He was about to leave them, He saw that it was necessary to warn them that this hatred would now be turned on them.

#### **vv5-16 – THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**vv5-6 - THE SELF-CENTRED DISCIPLES** - However, because of their grief over His coming departure, they scarcely understood His warning. Nor could they see the joy that lay before Him in being reunited with His Father.

**vv7-11 - IN THE WORLD** - Christ first addresses the work of the Spirit in the World.

**vv7-8** - When Jesus departed, the Holy Spirit would come to take Jesus' place with His disciples, to defend them and accuse their opponents. He would show the world to be wrong in three things in particular: *sin; righteousness; and judgment.*

**vv 9-11** - He would show that sin is the cause of man's unbelief in Jesus; that Jesus' death is proved to be the right way to God by Jesus' resurrection and ascension; and that judgment on sinners is certain because Satan has been conquered by Jesus' death.

**vv12-15 - IN THE CHURCH** - Having dealt with the spirit's work in the world, Christ now turns to His work in the Church. Jesus could tell His disciples no more at that time, as they were too filled with grief to take it in. After He left them, the Holy Spirit would instruct them further and help them to understand. What the Spirit taught would not be something new, but rather a development of what they had already heard from Jesus. It would concern both the present and the future.

#### **vv16-33 – THE DISCIPLES’ GRIEF WILL TURN TO JOY**

**vv16-22 - PREDICTION OF JOY OVER HIS RESURRECTION** - Within the next 24 hours Jesus would be taken from His disciples, but three days later, after His resurrection, they would see Him again. Their sorrows would be replaced by joy, just as a woman's pains before giving birth are replaced by joy after the child is born.

#### **vv23-33 - PROMISE OF ANSWERED PRAYER AND PEACE**

**vv23-24 - Prayer confident after the resurrection** - Jesus' victory through death and resurrection would give them a confidence in God that they never had before. They would see Jesus Christ as their mediator through whom they could boldly pray to the Father and thankfully receive the Father's blessings.

**vv25-28 - Pray direct to the father** - After His resurrection Jesus would no longer need to speak to the disciples in figurative language, because the resurrection would give them a clearer view of the purpose of His mission. Also, no longer would they depend on Jesus to do their praying for them. They would learn to approach the Father personally and with confidence. Yet even this would be possible only because of who Jesus was and what He had done.

**vv29-33 - Believers temporarily scattered** - The disciples' faith was strengthened by Jesus' words, but they did not realize that a few hours later their faith would be put to the test. Frightened and confused they would forsake their Lord in His final hours. But the lapse would only be temporary, through His victory they also would triumph.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “so that you will not go astray”** – The Greek word rendered “go astray” literally means ‘to offend’ or ‘to stumble’, and means, “so that you may be kept from falling away”.

**Verse 2, “a service to God”** - Religious people have often persecuted others in the strong conviction that they were doing God’s will (Act 26:9–11; Gal 1:13–14).

**Verse 3, “or me”** - Again the Father and the Son are linked. Not to know Christ is to be ignorant of the Father (Jn 14:7, 10–11; 17:6–7, 22–23, 26).

**Verse 5, “none of you asks me”** – “This statement at first appears to ignore the questions already asked by Peter (Jn 13:36) and Thomas (Jn 14:5). What Jesus meant by this statement was that the earlier questions were prompted by their concern over being separated from him, not by a genuine interest in where he was going. Now that he had explained about his return to the Father, they should have asked more intelligently about the meaning of such a destination” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 207).

**Verse 7, “I will send him to you”** - “The coming of the Holy Spirit [i.e. the ‘Counsellor’] to inaugurate the new age beginning at Pentecost, would mark a new phase of his ministry. His new activity was to be a leading characteristic of that age. The ministry of the Spirit is described here in a twofold manner; his ministry to the world (Jn 16:7-11) and his ministry to the disciples and others who would become believers through their testimony (Jn 16:12-13; 17:20)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 207).

**Verse 8, “he will convict the world of guilt”** – *Convict* means “to bring to light the true character of a man and his conduct, to expose, set forth” (Moulton & Milligan), “to expose guilt and call to repentance”. The Greek underlying these verses can be taken in any one of three ways. It may mean:

- 1 “He will convict the world of sin, in that they do not believe”; (Cf., NEB, “show where right and wrong and judgment lie”);
- 2 “He will convict the world of its sin because they do not believe”, i.e., their unbelief is a classic illustration of their sin; or
- 3 “He will convict the world of its sin (which consists in the fact) that they do not believe”, i.e., their unbelief is their sin.

**Verse 9, “in regard to sin”** – *Sin* here is primarily the rejection of the gospel (unbelief). Apart from the Spirit’s convicting work; people can never see themselves as sinners.

**Verse 10, “in regard to righteousness”** - The righteousness brought about by Christ’s sacrificial death (Rom 1:17; 3:21–24). No one but the Holy Spirit can reveal to a person that a righteous status before God does not depend on good works but on Christ’s death on the cross.

**Verse 11, “in regard to judgment”** - As the world has its own false views about sin and righteousness, it also has its own false standards of judgement. The world might think that “the power of darkness” conquered at Gethsemane and Calvary; but instead of conquering he was conquered, i.e. judged. The world, by clinging to the advice of Satan, in condemning Jesus, stands convicted. Those hostile to Christ stand condemned. (Cf. **Heb 2:14-15**, “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death”; **Col 2:15**, “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross”; **Jn 16:33**, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”; **1 Jn 4:4**, “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world”). Jesus was speaking of the defeat of Satan, which was a form of judgment, not simply a victory. More than power is in question. God acts with justice.

**Verse 12, “more than you can now bear”** - This may mean “more than you can understand now,” or “more than you can perform without the Spirit’s help” (to live out Christ’s teaching requires the enabling presence of the Spirit).

**Verse 13, “only what he hears”** - We are not told whether he hears from the Father or the Son, but it obviously does not matter, for the verse stresses the close relationship among the three.

**Verse 14, “glory to me”** - The Spirit draws no attention to himself but promotes the glory of Christ.

**Verse 15, “will take from what is mine and make it known to you”** – The Greek literally read, “he receives the things of me (that which is mine) and will announce to you”.

**Verse 16, “you will see me”** - “It is difficult to be sure what Jesus meant by these words. Though elsewhere in the discourse he seemed to refer to the coming of the Spirit as his own coming (Jn 14:17-18), the promise ‘you will see me’ is an unlikely way of referring to the Spirit’s coming at Pentecost. He also referred to his second advent earlier in the address (Jn 14:3), but ‘a little while’ (Jn 16:17) seems inadequate to refer to the entire present age that separate his two comings. The impending sorrow over his death, followed quickly by an impartation of joy (Jn 16:20-21) favours a reference to the historical experience of the disciples when they viewed the resurrected Christ (John 16:11)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 208).

**Verse 17, “going to the Father”** - Jesus had not linked this with “*a little while,*” but the apostles saw them as connected.

**Verse 20, “weep”** - The same verb for loud wailing as in 11:33, which carries the idea of deep sorrow and its outward expression.

**Verse 21, “A woman giving birth”** - Giving birth usually causes both pain and joy (Isa 26:17–19; 66:7–14; Hos 13:13–14).

**Verse 22, “no one will take away your joy”** - The resurrection would change things permanently, bringing a joy that cannot be removed by the world’s assaults (Jn 15:11).

**Verse 23, “In that day”** - What day?

1 "in the many days of His spiritual presence from Pentecost onwards" (cf. v 26, "*In that day* you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf"; 14:20, "*On that day* you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you") (Plummer, p. 302);

2 "in the dispensation of the Spirit" (Hendrickson, p. 334);

3 "the day of the resurrection and the dispensation it introduces" (Dods, *Expositors Gk NT*, p. 837);

4 “the day of the resurrection and afterwards" (Tasker, *TNTC*, p. 233); or

5 "Pentecost to the present" (Wescott, p. 233).

**“you will no longer ask me anything”** - Seems to mean asking for information (rather than asking in prayer), which would not be necessary after the resurrection. Jesus then moved on to the subject of prayer. However, Jesus may have been saying that his disciples previously had been praying to Christ, but after his death and resurrection they were to go directly to the Father and pray in Christ’s name (vv24–27).

**Verse 24, “Until now”** - Previously they had asked the Father or Christ, but they had not asked the Father in Christ’s name.

**Verse 25, “I have been speaking figuratively”** - Throughout the discourse, not just in the immediately preceding words.

**Verse 26, “I am not saying that I will ask”** - Not a contradiction of Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1 Jn 2:1. Those passages mean that Christ’s presence in heaven as the crucified and risen Lord is itself an intercession. Here the teaching is that there will be no need for him to make petitions in our behalf.

**Verse 27, “the Father himself loves you”** - Christ is explaining why the disciples can come directly to the Father in prayer. It is because the disciples have loved and trusted in Jesus, and in love God will hear their requests in Jesus’ name.

**“I came from God”** – “Some manuscripts read *from the Father*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 28, “I came from the Father”** - Note the outline of John's Gospel in this verse:

1	I came from the Father	Aorist	<i>I came</i>	Deity
	1:1-18	Prologue		
2	entered the world	Perfect	<i>I entered</i>	Incarnation
	1:19-12:50	Public revelation to the world.		
3	now I am leaving the world	Present	<i>I am leaving</i>	Crucifixion
	13:1-20:31	Private revelation to the disciples		
4	going back to the Father	Present	<i>I am going</i>	Ascension
	21:1-25	Epilogue.		

**Verse 30, “believe that you came from God”** - Two recurring themes of this Gospel: believing (Jn 1:7) and Jesus’ coming from God (Jn 4:34; 17:3, 8).

**Verse 31, “You believe at last!”** – The Greek could also mean, “*Do you now believe?*”

**Verse 32, “you will be scattered”** - The disciples had faith, but not enough to stand firm in the face of disaster. Jesus knew they would fail (Mt 26:31; Zec 13:7); however, his church is not built on people’s strength but on God’s ability to use people even after they have failed.

**Verse 33, “you will have trouble”** – There are three aspects of the tribulations that Christians suffer:

1 General trials that we suffer because we live in a sinful world (Cf. Rom 8:35-36);

2 Afflictions which God allows us to suffer to refine us (Cf. 2 Co 12:7); and

3 Chastisement which God sends to us as punishment on sin (Cf. Heb 12:6).

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

**vv1-26 - JESUS' PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLES AND ALL WHO BELIEVE** - In this "The Prayer of the Great High Priest", Jesus prays:

- vv 1-5 For Himself** (*Glorification*)
- vv 6-19 For His immediate disciples** (*Sanctification*)
  - vv 6-8 The Basis Their acceptance by Christ
  - vv 9-19 The Intercession Based on their need
    - vv 9-13 Preservation** *Christ is leaving*
    - vv 14-19 Sanctification** *From evil, by the Word.*
- vv 20-26 For the whole church** (*Contemplation*)
  - vv 20-23 Union That others may believe
  - vv 24-26 Communion The basis of union and witness

**vv1-5 - FOR HIMSELF** - Having announced His victory over the world (Cf. Jn 16:33), Jesus now offers a prayer that reflects the triumph of His completed work. He begins by speaking of His relationship with the Father. Jesus' work was to reveal God to humanity so that people might receive eternal life through Him. He prays that by dying on the cross and successfully completing His work, He will bring glory to His Father. At the same time, His death will bring glory to Himself, for it will enable him to return to His Father and enjoy the glory that was His before He became man.

### **vv6-19 - FOR HIS IMMEDIATE DISCIPLES**

**vv6-8 - The Basis: *Their acceptance by Christ*** - Although the majority had not believed in Jesus, there was many who had, such as the apostles. They believed the evidence they saw and heard that Jesus was God and that He had come from the Father to make God known to humanity.

### **vv9-19 - The Intercession: *Based on their need***

**vv9-13 – Preservation: *Christ is leaving*** - This though leads Jesus to the **second part** of His prayer, which is for His disciples. He prays that they will live in such a way as to show His glory to the world. Their unity will display to the world the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. Jesus asks that they will remain faithful to Him and not be defeated by the evil that is in the world. He wants them to share with Him the triumphant joy that comes through successfully completing the Father's work.

**vv14-19 – Sanctification: *From evil, by the Word*** - When Jesus leaves the world, His disciples will carry on His work. He prays therefore that they will be neither discouraged by the world's hatred nor corrupted by its sin. Just as Jesus gave Himself to God to carry out His work, so He desires His disciples to give themselves to God for the task of spreading His message throughout the world.

### **vv20-26 - FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH - Contemplation**

**vv20-23 – Union: *That others may believe*** - In the **final part** of His prayer, Jesus prays for those who will believe through the preaching of those first disciples and so become God's new people, the Christian church. He prays that the same unity as exists between the Father and the Son will bind the believers together, so that through them others too will believe.

**vv24-26 – Communion: *The basis of union and witness*** - Jesus desires that in the age to come, when He enjoys the glory that He had before the world began, all who believe in Him will be there with Him. Meanwhile, in the present world of unbelief, they will learn more of Him as they share in the love that the Father has for the Son. The world will begin to know God when it sees the love of Jesus in His people.

### **PRIMARY CONCEPTS IN THIS CHAPTER:**

- Jesus' identity 3, 5, 7
- Jesus' source 7, 87,
- Jesus' relationships 5, 8, 10

## KEY WORDS:

Glory	x 6	(4, 5, 10, 22, 24)
Give/Gave	x11	(2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 19, 14, 22, and 24)
Know/n	x5	(3, 7, 23, 25, 26)
world	x13	(5, 6,9,13, etc.)

**DOXA** (from *dokeo* = 'I think', 'I seem') in the NT means:

- 1 Opinion;
- 2 Repute/honour/power;
- 3 Radiance/glory - divine & heavenly radiance; majesty of God/being of God; Divine honour; The Divine Mode of Being (Kittle, TDNT, II, p. 247).

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “Father the time has come”** - “The prayer of this chapter is high priestly in the sense of Rom 8:34 and Heb 7:25. In his own thoughts Jesus was at this point thrust forward beyond the time of being offered as a sacrifice for sin to the time when in heaven he would engage in a continuing ministry of intercession. In other words, we have here a preview of his work as our advocate (1 Jn 2:1). The three parts of the prayer are: his prayer for his own glorification (17:1-5), his prayer for the disciples (17:6-19), and his prayer for future believers (17:20-26)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 209).

**Verse 2, “to all those you have given him”** – “All” is singular – the body of Christian disciples collectively. “those” – individual.

**Verse 3, “this is eternal life”** – This is Christ’s definition of salvation.

**Verse 4, “I have brought you glory”** – Verses 3 is parenthetical, so verse 4 joins directly onto verse 2. Literally, “I have glorified . . . I have finished” – Perfect tense verbs. As He faces death he is not a disappointed man, but rather a successful messenger of the Father.

**Verse 5, “the glory I had with you”** – Jesus prays for full restoration to the pre-incarnate glory and fellowship (1:1) He enjoyed before the incarnation (1:14).

**Verse 6, “I have revealed you”** – Literally, “revealed your name” (Cf. Jn 2:23; 14:14; 17:26).

**Verse 8, “the words you gave me”** – Plural, ‘each word of God’ – the message considered in its constituent parts. The Singular (vv6, 14) views God’s message as a whole – the gospel in its entirety.

**Verse 9, “I am not praying for the world”** – Not at this point in time. In verse 19 Jesus does pray for the world (future believers) that they may believe (v21). God loves the world (Jn 3:16). Christ died for sinners (Rom 5:8).

**Verse 10, “glory has come to me through them”** – I stand glorified in the disciples – in spite of their shortcomings and failures. There is comfort for us in this!

**Verse 11, “Holy Father”** - *pater hagio* – This is unique Cf. **Isa 6:3**, "And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" Cf. v1, "Father"; v25, "Righteous father" (*pater dikaie*). The wicked world contrasts to the Holy Father (v15, "My prayer is not that you take them out of *the world* but that you protect them from the evil one").

**“the name you gave me”** – “Some manuscripts read *you have given me these [disciples]*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 12, “kept them safe by that name that you gave me”** – “I protected them by the power of the name you gave me” (NLT); “Some manuscripts read *I protected those you gave me, by the power of your name*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**“the one doomed to destruction”** – “The son of destruction”, i.e., the one belonging to the sphere of damnation and destined for destruction.

**Verse 13, “the full measure of my joy within them”** – That they may keep on having Christ’s joy in their faithfulness realized in themselves.

**Verse 14, “they are not of the world”** – They are in the world (v13) and Christ sends them into the world (v18), but they must not be like the world nor get their standards and message out of the world.

**Verse 15, “protect them from the evil one”** – Or simply, “keep them from evil”, as the word could be either Masculine or Neuter gender.

**Verse 17, “Sanctify them by the truth”** – The Greek word for ‘sanctify’ is *hagiazō* = ‘to set apart for sacred use’ or ‘to make holy’, Cf. Jn 10:36; 17:19).

**Verse 18, “As you sent me”** - Jesus’ mission is one of the dominant themes of this Gospel and is given as the pattern for his followers (v3).

**“into the world”** - We may long for heaven, but it is on earth that our work is done.

**Verse 19, “I sanctify myself”** - This statement appears to be unparalleled. In the LXX the verb is used of consecrating priests (Ex 28:41) and sacrifices (Ex 28:38; Nu 18:9). Jesus solemnly sets himself apart to do God’s will, which at this point meant his death.

**“that they too may be ... sanctified”** - Jesus died on the cross not only to save us but also to consecrate us to God’s service.

**Verse 20, “those who will believe in me”** - Jesus had just spoken of the mission and the sanctification of his followers (vv18–19). He was confident that they would spread the gospel, and he prayed for those who would believe as a result. All future believers are included in this prayer.

**Verse 21, “that the world may believe”** - The unity of believers should have an effect on outsiders, to convince them of the mission of Christ. Jesus’ prayer is a rebuke of the groundless and often bitter divisions among believers.

**Verse 22, “glory”** - Glory is "manifested in weakness and humility, in defeat and death. The church is called to this same destiny along the same path of glory" (Marsh, 1968, p. 571, Cf. v 24, "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my *glory*, the *glory* you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world"). This is the glory of the ascended and glorified Christ in which believers are joint heirs (**Rom 8:17**, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory"). Christ speaks of this glory as already given back to him (v 5, "And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began") and shared with His followers. (Cf. **Jn 16:33**, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world") "(Plummer, 1902, p. 314). Believers are to be characterized by humility and service, just as Christ was, and it is on them that God’s glory rests. When believers are in Christ, then Christ is in them. This is their glory. By "the glory which thou hast given me" Jesus refers to the fact that the Father manifested Himself in the Son (v 21, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me"). To be able to say, "Christ only, always, living in me" is their glory. Believers become partakers of Christ, of the divine nature (**Heb 6:4**, "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit"; **2 Pe 1:4**, "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires") (Hendricksen, 1967, p. 365). Christ revealed His glory by:

\* Miracles (2:11);

\* Death & Resurrection (7:39; 13:31-32); and

\* Resultant Salvation (Ro 3:23; 8:17; 1:20; 1:23).

"The *δοξα* (*doxa*) of the earthly Jesus can only be seen by *πιστις* (*pistis* = faith). Participation in *δοξα* (*doxa*) whether here in hope or one day in consummation is participation in Christ. As it is only in the resurrection that God's aims for man is achieved"(Kittell, vol 2, p 249-250, Cf. Php 3:21; Col 1:27).

**“that they may be one as we are one”** - Again the Lord emphasized the importance of unity among his followers, and again the standard is the unity of the Father and the Son.

**Verse 23, “I in them and you in me”** - There are two indwellings here: that of the Son in believers, and that of the Father in the Son. It is because the latter is a reality that the former can take place.

**“complete unity”** - Again the emphasis on unity has an evangelistic aim. This time it is connected not only with the mission of Jesus but also with God’s love for people and for Christ.

**Verse 24, “I want”** - Means “I will that.” Jesus said, “I will” - his last will and testament for his followers. Where he himself was concerned, he prayed, “not what I will, but what you will” (Mk 14:36).

**“to be with me”** - The Christian’s greatest blessing (Jn 14:3; 1 Th 4:17).

**“my glory”** - Perhaps used here to refer to Jesus’ eternal splendor (1 Jn 3:2), or Jesus’ prayer may have been that in the life to come they might fully appreciate the glory of his lowly service (Eph 2:7).

**Verse 25, “Righteous Father”** - A form of address found only here in the NT (Cf. v11).

**“they know”** - They did not know God directly and personally, but they knew that God had sent Christ. To recognize God in Christ’s mission is a great advance over anything the world can know.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

**vv1 - JESUS' THREE AGONISING PRAYERS IN GETHSEMANE** (Cf. Mt 26:30-46; Mk 14:26-42; Lu 22:39-46) - Leaving eight disciples near the entrance to the garden, Christ took Peter, James and John with Him further. He left them with the instruction to watch and pray and proceeded further still. The Lord prayed three times and each time when He returned He found the disciples sleeping.

**18:2-19:42 - THE DEATH OF CHRIST** (Cf. Mt 26:47-26:66; Mk 14:43-15:47; Lu 22:47-23:56)

**18:2-11 - JESUS BETRAYED, ARRESTED AND FORSAKEN** (Cf. Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-52; Lu 22:47-53) - By this time Judas and the rulers were entering the garden. After Judas had kissed Christ (the pre-arranged sign) the guards seized Him; Peter drew his sword and cut off Malcus' ear. Christ showed them the inconsistency of their action for He had been in the temple daily but they never touched Him there. The disciples (and Mark?, Mk 14:51) fled and left Christ completely at their mercy.

**18:12-19:16 - TRIAL** (Cf. (Mt 26:57-27:26; Mk 14:53-15:15; Lu 22:54-23:25) - Notice the *movements* in the trials:

### 1 JEWISH

<b>1.1 Preliminary</b>	Before Annas	<b>Jn 18:12-14, 19-23;</b>
<b>1.2 Informal</b>	Before Caiaphas (& Sanhedrin) (During the night, before dawn)	Mt 26:57-68; Mk 14:53-65
<b>1.3 Formal</b>	Before the Sanhedrin (Just after dawn)	Mt 27:1; Mk 15:1' <b>Jn 18:28;</b> Lu 22:66-71.

### 2 ROMAN

#### 2.1 Before Pilate

Outside	<b>Jn 18:28-32</b> (cf. Lu 23:2; Jn 18:30)
Inside	<b>Jn 18:33-37</b>
Outside	<b>Jn 18:38</b>
Inside	Mt 27:12-14
Outside	Lu 23:5-6

#### 2.2. Before Herod Lu 23:7-12

#### 2.3. Before Pilate

Outside	Mk 15:5-8
Inside	Lu 23:13-16
Outside	Mt 27:17-21; Lu 23:18-19
Inside	<b>Jn 19:1-3</b>
Outside	<b>Jn 19:4-8</b>
Inside	<b>Jn 19:9-11</b>
Outside	<b>Jn 19:12-15;</b> Mt 27:24-26

#### 2.4. Before the Roman Soldiers Mt 27:27-31

**vv12-14 – JESUS TAKEN TO ANNAS** (THE FIRST JEWISH PHASE) - Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, apparently lived in the same house. Annas had been the previous high priest and, though replaced by Caiaphas was still well respected and influential. Jesus' captors took Him to Annas first.

**vv15-18 - PETER'S FIRST DENIAL** - Peter and John, who had followed at a distance, gained admittance and waited in the court-yard. By now it was past midnight and into the early hours of the morning. Peter stood with Christ's enemies warming himself and when challenged, denied his master.

**vv19-24 - THE HIGH PRIEST QUESTIONS JESUS** - When Annas questioned Jesus about His teaching, Jesus replied that it was known to all. There was no need for Him to testify on His own behalf (which would be contrary to Jewish law) when so many other witnesses could be called in.

**vv24 - SECOND JEWISH PHASE, BEFORE CAIAPHAS AND THE SANHEDRIN** (Cf. Mt 26:57, 59-68; Mk 14:53,55-65; Lu 22:54a, 63-65) - After being ill-treated for giving an honest answer, Christ was sent off to Caiaphas for an informal trial by the Sanhedrin, but even the bribed witnesses could not agree among themselves. When Christ said He was the one spoken of in Dan 7:13; Psa 110:1, they felt they had all the evidence they needed.

**vv25-27 - PETER'S SECOND AND THIRD DENIALS** (Cf. Mt 26:69-75; Mk 14:66-72; Lu 22:54b-62) - Peter was questioned at least three times and each time denied his Lord. After the final denial the cock crowed the second time and Peter realized that his boast (cf. Mk 14:29) was untrue and Christ's prophecy was fulfilled.

**vv28-40 - JESUS BEFORE PILATE (THE FIRST ROMAN PHASE)** (Cf. Mt 27:2, 11-14; Mk 15:1b-5; Lu 23:1-5) - Although Christ and the Pharisees had eaten the Passover earlier that night, the Sadducean priests refused to enter Pilate's judgment hall (Jn 18:28). When asked if He were a king, Christ did not deny it; but to acknowledge it would have been treason.

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "crossed the Kidron Valley"** - "*the ravine of the Kidron*" (NASB) is the ravine east of Jerusalem, between the city and the Mount of Olives.

**Verse 3, "a detachment of soldiers"** - "In connection with their intention of putting Jesus to death, the Sanhedrin represented by the chief priests and Pharisees, had called upon the Romans to help in the arrest. A roman cohort (NIV '*detachment of soldiers*') was normally a group of 300-600 soldiers. Although the Romans were known to use large numbers to handle one prisoner (cf. Acts 23:23), it is doubtful that the whole cohort was involved in this arrest. In light of Matthew's 'large crowd' (Mt 26:47) and the 'crowd' of Mark and Luke (Mk 14:43; Lu 22:47), the number of soldiers probably was still quite substantial" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 212).

**"officials from the chief priests"** - Equivalent to the temple guard sent by the Sanhedrin.

**"torches"** - Resinous pieces of wood fastened together.

**"lanterns"** - Terracotta holders into which household lamps could be inserted

**Verse 4, "knowing all that was going to happen to him"** - Jesus was not taken by surprise.

**Verse 5, "with them"** - John does not let us forget where Judas belonged.

**Verse 6, "fell to the ground"** - They came to arrest a meek peasant and instead were met in the dim light by a majestic and powerful person.

**Verse 8, "I am"** - The threefold repetition (vv5,6,8) emphasizes the solemn words.

**"let these men go"** - Jesus cared for the disciples even as he was going to his death. Twice he had made the arresting party say plainly that he was the one they wanted (vv4-5, 7).

**Verse 9, "would be fulfilled"** - Words normally used in quoting Scripture, and Jesus' words are on the same level.

**Verse 10, "Simon Peter"** - It is to John that we owe the information that the man with the sword (the Greek for this word refers to a short sword) was Peter, and that the man he wounded was named Malchus.

**Verse 11, "the cup"** - Often points to suffering (Psa 75:8; Eze 23:31) and the wrath of God (Psa 16:5; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15; Rom 1:18; Rev 14:10).

**"the Father has given me"** - The Synoptic Gospels also speak of the cup at the time of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42), and John says it came from the Father. God was in control.

**Verse 12, "bound him"** - The reason for the bonds is not clear. Perhaps their use was standard procedure, much like the modern use of handcuffs.

**Verse 13, "Annas"** - Had been deposed from the high priesthood by the Romans in 15AD but was probably still regarded by many as the true high priest (Lk 3:2). In Jewish law no one could be sentenced on the day their trial was held. The two examinations - this one (mentioned only by John; Cf. Mk 14:53-15:15) and that before Caiaphas - may have been conducted to give some form of legitimacy to what was done.

**Verse 14, “Caiaphas ... had advised the Jews”** - A reference to 11:49–50. For John it was this unconscious prophecy that mattered most about Caiaphas. John may also have been hinting that a fair trial could not be expected from a man who had already said that putting Jesus to death was expedient.

**Verse 15, “another disciple”** - Perhaps John himself.

**“known to the high priest”** - Refers to more than casual acquaintance; he had entrée into the high priest’s house and could bring Peter in.

**“the High Priest”** - “Here and in verses 16, 19 and 22, John calls Annas ‘the high priest’, but he says in 18:13 that Caiaphas was ‘high priest’. Caiaphas was the official high priest, having taken the office in A.D. 18, three years after his father-in-law Annas had been deposed. Though no longer in office Annas still wielded great influence and bore the title of courtesy granted to former high priests” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 217).

**Verse 17, “the girl at the door”** - All four Gospels tell us that Peter’s first challenge came from a slave girl, the most unimportant person imaginable. The form of the girl’s question implied a negative answer, and Peter capitalized on that by saying, “I am not.” The other Gospels seem to indicate that the other denials followed immediately, but it is likely that there were intervals during which other things happened (Lk 22:58–59).

**“I am not”** - “Each writer, including John, records three denials to show the fulfillment of Jesus’ predictions, but John records only two denials at the house of Caiaphas as compared with three described by the others (Cf. Jn 18:25-27). John places the first of his three denials in the court of Annas (Cf. Jn 18:13). If this understanding of the writers is correct, Peter apparently denied Jesus at least four times. Yet this does not create great difficulty, because Jesus’ prediction of at least three denials need not exclude a fourth” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 214).

**Verse 18, “Peter also was standing with them”** - On a cold night he would have been conspicuous if he had stayed away from the fire.

**Verse 19, “questioned”** - Not legal, since witnesses were supposed to be brought in first to establish guilt. The accused were not required to prove their innocence. Perhaps Annas regarded this as a preliminary inquiry, not a trial.

**Verse 20, “I have spoken openly”** - It should not have been difficult to find witnesses (v21).

**“nothing in secret”** - Not a denial that he taught the disciples privately, but a denial that he had secretly taught them subversive teaching different from his public message.

**Verse 22, “struck”** - Another illegality. The word apparently means a blow with the open hand - a slap.

**Verse 23, “testify”** - A legal term, indicating an invitation to act in proper legal form. John stresses the importance of testimony throughout his Gospel.

**Verse 24, “Annas sent him”** - “Or (Now Annas had sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**“to Caiaphas the high priest”** - “Mark (14:53) lists the three groups who composed the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, the supreme Jewish court of law:

- 1 ‘chief priests’ comprising those who were former high priests (including Annas probably), the commander of the temple guard, the steward of the temple, and the three temple treasurers;
- 2 ‘elders’ some of the wealthy and influential lay persons of Jerusalem;
- 3 ‘teachers of the law’ who were primarily drawn from the middle class.

The first two groups were predominately Sadducean and the last Pharisaic. In meeting at the house of Caiaphas rather than in its usual meeting place, the Sanhedrin evidenced its haste to carry out its predetermined plan to convict Jesus (Mk 14:55; Mt 26:4; Mk 14:1)” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 215).

**Verse 25, “he was asked”** - Lit. “they asked him.” Some find a difficulty in that Mt 26:71 says another girl asked this question, whereas Mk 14:69 says it was the same girl, and Lk 22:58 that it was a man. But with a group of servants talking around a fire, several would doubtless take up and repeat such a question, which could be the meaning of John’s “they.” As on the first occasion (v17) the question anticipated the answer “No.” The servants probably did not really expect to find a follower of Jesus in the high priest’s courtyard, but the question seemed worth asking.

**Verse 26, “a relative”** - Another piece of information we owe to John. A relative would have a deeper interest in the swordsman than other people had. But the light in the garden would have been dim, as in the courtyard (a charcoal fire glows, but does not have flames).

**“Didn’t I see you”** - Expected the answer “Yes.”

**Verse 27, “a rooster began to crow”** - The fulfillment of the prophecy in 13:38.

**Verse 28, “The palace of the Roman governor”** - The location of Christ’s trial under Pilate is controversial. “The traditional view is that Pilate’s residence was in the Tower of Antonia” (Morris, 1995, p. 674), however Lane (1974) states that “while the question whether the *Praetorium* of Pilate is to be situated in the fortress Antonia . . . or whether it was identical with the place of Herod has been disputed, the weight of evidence favors the latter location” (p. 548). On the other hand Hendriksen (1974) says that “the language used in Luke 23:7 makes it well-nigh impossible to believe that Herod’s place is meant” (p. 941). Commentators generally don’t commit themselves to either location, e.g. Cranfield (1972) wrote, “Pilate *would probably* be resident in the fortress of Antonia” (p. 449, emphasis added) and Plummer (1922) wrote, “Pilate *may have* used part of the fortress Antonia” (p. 520, emphasis added). In view of the above, it seems it was probably *the Fortress of Antonia*. John says little about the Jewish phase of Jesus’ trial but much about the Roman trial (Cf. Mk 14:53-15:15). It is possible that John was in the Praetorium, the governor’s official residence, for this trial.

**“early morning”** - The chief priests evidently held a second session of the Sanhedrin after daybreak to give some appearance of legality to what they did (Mk 15:1). This occasion would have been immediately after that, perhaps between 6:00 and 7:00AM.

**“ceremonial uncleanness”** - A result of entering a Gentile residence.

**“the Jews did not enter the palace”** – “*the Praetorium*” was the barracks of the soldiers and the Roman headquarters (Cf. v33). As a dwelling of Gentiles it was unclean. Although Christ (and the Pharisees) had eaten the Passover earlier that night, the Sadducean priests refused to enter Pilate’s judgment hall as they had not yet celebrated the Passover. Why? Some suggest that the Last Supper was **not** a Passover at all, but Matthew, Mark and Luke leave no doubt that it was truly a Passover. John is equally dogmatic that the Priests had not yet eaten the Passover (Jn 18:28). The answer seems to be that there were two Passovers during the time of Christ. The Pharisees celebrating one day and the Sadducees the next. This was due to a difference in interpreting “The LORD’S Passover *begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month*”. This means that Christ was crucified at the same time as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered.

**“to eat the Passover”** - Does not mean that the time of the Passover meal had not yet come, for this would contradict the Synoptic Gospels, which have Jesus eating the Passover meal the night before. The term “Passover” was used to refer to the whole festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days and included a number of meals.

**Verse 29, “Pilate”** - Roman historians described him as being "Rigid, Harsh, Spiteful, Wrathful, Proud, Violent and Brutal." Romans had three names:

- PRAENOMEN Unknown
- \* NOMEN PONTIUS - (Sammite extraction)
- \* COGNOMEN PILATE (Roman family name. He was from a Military family)

His wife was PROCULA Cf. Mt 27:19, a Jewish proselyte?? a Christian convert??

**“came out”** – Pontius Pilate had been the Roman Governor since 26AD. He normally lived in Caesarea on the coast. He was not liked by the Jews and had had two major arguments with them. He began poorly. Before his first visit he had his soldiers erect Roman standards in Jerusalem (these had an image of the Caesar on them). The Jews objected but Pilate would not yield. The Jews would not give in either and Pilate ordered the soldiers to arrest all objectors, at which the Jewish men all laid down and exposed their necks, inviting the Romans to cut their throats.

**“What charges are you bringing”** – From their reply it seems clear that they had pre-arranged all of this before hand, and expected Pilate simply to rubber stamp their request to have Jesus crucified. But Pilate plays hard ball.

**Verse 30, “If he were not a criminal”** - They brought three charges:

- 1 Rebellion - "He stirs up the people' (Lu 23:5)
- 2 Rebellion - "opposes payment of taxes (Lu 23:2) (Political)

3 Rebellion - "claims to be ... a King" (Lu 23:2)

**Verse 31, "Take him yourselves"** - In other words, no Roman charge, no Roman trial.

**"no right to execute anyone"** - They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. They were looking for an execution, not a fair trial. The restriction was important, for otherwise Rome's supporters could be quietly removed by local legal executions. Sometimes the Romans seem to have tolerated local executions (e.g., of Stephen, Act 7), but normally they retained the right to inflict the death penalty.

**Verse 32, "the kind of death he was going to die"** - If Christ were put to death by the Jews it would have been by stoning (Cf. the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, Act 7:57-58), but Christ had predicted crucifixion (Jn 12:32-33, "when *I am lifted up from the earth*, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die").

**Verse 33, "Are you the king of the Jews?"** - The Jews bought three Accusations to Pilate:

- 1 Lu 23:2, "*subverting our nation*";
- 2 Lu 23:15, "*He opposes payment of taxes*"; and
- 3 Lu 23:2, "*claims to be Christ, a King*".

Jesus skillfully neither confirms nor denies the charge.

**Verse 34, "Is that your own idea"** - If so, Pilate's question (v33) had meant, "Are you a rebel?" If the question had originated with the Jews, it meant, "Are you the Messianic King?"

**Verse 35, "What is it you have done?"** - Pilate now begins to realize that the charges really had a religious origin and the political charges were a mere façade.

**Verse 36, "My kingdom is not of this world"** - "Jesus denied that his kingdom had an earthly origin. If it had, he would have proceeded to round up and equip a conventional army to set it into operation. He did not deny, however, that the kingdom will consist of an earthly realm such as the scripturally oriented Jew expected messiah to establish (Dan 7:13-14, 22-23, 27). Because this kingdom on earth did not represent a rebellion against his Roman authority, Pilate was willing to release Jesus (Luke 23:4; John 18:38)" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 212).

**Verse 38, "What is truth"** - Pilate may have been jesting and meant, "What does truth matter?" Or he may have been serious and meant, "It is not easy to find truth. What is it?" Either way, it was clear to him that Jesus was no rebel.

**"I find no basis for a charge against him"** - Just as the Jews bought three Accusations to Pilate, Pilate makes three Declarations of Innocence"

- 1 **Jn 18:38**, "*I find no basis for a charge*";
- 2 Lu 23:15, "*I have found no basis*"; and
- 3 **Jn 19:4**, "*I find no basis for a charge*".

**Verse 39, "your custom"** - Prisoners are known to have been released on special occasions in other places.

**"king of the Jews"** - John keeps his emphasis on the note of royalty. Pilate may have hoped that the use of the title would influence the people toward the way he wanted them to decide.

**Verse 40, "Give us Barabbas"** - "Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder" (Lu 23:19). Barabbas means "*son of father*". From Mt 27:16 it seems his full name was, "*Jesus Barabbas*". So one Jesus took the place of the other Jesus - The Son of The Father became the substitute for *son of father*.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

**vv1-16a – JESUS SENTENCED TO BE CRUCIFIED** (THE THIRD ROMAN PHASE, BEFORE PILATE, Cf. Mt 27:15-26; Mt 15:6-15; Lu 23:13-25) - As it was his custom to release a Jewish prisoner at Passover, Pilate suggested that he release Jesus. But the chief priests prompted the people to ask for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Christ. The spineless Pilate did what they wanted. Notice the following groups of three in this section:

<b>Peter's Denials</b>	1 <b>Jn 18:19-24;</b> 2 Mk 14:66-69; and 3 Lu 22:59-62.
<b>Prayers (&amp; returns) in Garden</b>	1 Mt 26:39-40; 2 Mt 26:42-43; and 3 Mt 26:44-45.
<b>Accusations (to Pilate)</b>	1 Lu 23:2, "subverting our nation"; 2 Lu 23:15, "He opposes payment of taxes"; and 3 Lu 23:2, "claims to be Christ, a King".
<b>Declarations of Innocence</b>	1 <b>Jn 18:38</b> , "I find no basis for a charge"; 2 Lu 23:15, "I have found no basis"; and 3 <b>Jn 19:4</b> , "I find no basis for a charge".
<b>Places</b>	1 Mt 26:36 Gethsemane; 2 <b>Jn 18:13</b> Gabbatha ("the stone pavement"); and 3 Mt 27:33 Golgotha ("the place of the skull").

### **vv16b-27 - THE CRUCIFIXION**

**vv16b-17 - JOURNEY TO GOLGOTHA** (Cf. Mt 27:31-34; Mk 15:20-23; Lu 23:26-33) - Christ was led out carrying His own cross but on the way they compelled Simon to carry it. Christ again warned the women of the soon-coming destruction of Jerusalem (Lu 23:29-30). They crucified Christ between two thieves at Golgotha and offered Him a pain-killing potion which He refused to drink.

**vv18-27 - THE FIRST THREE HOURS OF CRUCIFIXION** (Cf. Mt 27:35-44; Mk 15:24-32; Lu 23:33-43) - Christ was nailed to a cross between those of two criminals (Cf. Isa 53) and below Him the soldiers gambled for His clothes (Cf. Psa 22:18). A tri-lingual inscription on the cross indicated the name and charge of the condemned. During this time Christ was mocked by:

<b>The Passers-by</b>	Mk 15:29-30;
<b>Chief Priests and Scribes</b>	Mk 15:31-32;
<b>The Two Robbers</b>	Lu 23:39-42; and
<b>The Soldiers</b>	Lu 23:36-37.

### **vv28-37 - THE DEATH OF JESUS**

**vv28-30 - THE LAST THREE HOURS OF CRUCIFIXION** (Cf. Mt 27:45-50; Mk 15:33-37; Lu 23:44-46) - From noon to 3 pm the earth was shrouded in darkness and at 3 pm Christ called out in Aramaic, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" He then called in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend My spirit," bowed His head and died. In the temple, at the same time, the veil was torn into two. The Centurion and the soldiers recognized that this was no ordinary criminal dying.

### **THE SEVEN WORDS**

#### **The first three hours - The first three words (OTHERS):**

Mt 27:33-36		No gall
Lu 23:33-34	WORD 1	<i>Prayer for Enemies</i> : "Father forgive"
<b>Jn 19:23-24</b>		Clothes divided
<b>Jn 19:19-22</b>		The Title
Mt 27:39-44		The Reviling
Lu 23:39-43	WORD 2	<i>Promise to Robber</i> : "Today you will be with Me"

<b>Jn 19:25-27</b>	<b>WORD 3</b>	<b>Protection for Mother:</b> "Here is your mother"
<b>The last three hours - The last four words (SELF):</b>		
Mk 15: 33-35	WORD 4	<i>Cry of Desolation:</i> "Why ... forsaken Me?"
<b>Jn 19:28-29</b>	<b>WORD 5</b>	<b><i>Cry of Physical Anguish:</i></b> "I am thirsty"
<b>Jn 19:30</b>	<b>WORD 6</b>	<b><i>Cry of Victory:</i></b> "It is finished"
Lu 23:46	WORD 7	<i>Cry of Resignation</i> "into your hands"
Mt 27:51-56		The Veil
<b>Jn 19:31-37</b>		Legs broken

**vv31-37 - CERTIFICATION OF JESUS' DEATH AND PROCUREMENT OF HIS BODY** (cf. Mt 27:57-58; Mk 15:42-45; Lu 23:50-52) - An interesting truth illustrated by the remarkable events connected with Jesus' death was that He was the true Passover lamb. He died on the afternoon of Passover day, at the same time as the Jews back in Jerusalem were killing the lambs in preparation for the meal that night. And because He was the true Passover lamb, not a bone in His body was broken. Normally, the soldiers broke the victim's legs to hasten their death, but they had no need to do this to Jesus, because he was already dead. Instead one of the soldiers plunged his spear deep into Jesus' body. When Pilate had confirmed that Christ was truly dead, he gave Joseph permission to bury the body in his own tomb.

**vv38-42 – THE BURIAL OF JESUS** (Cf. Mt 27:59-60; Mk 15:46; Lu 23:53-54) - Two members of the Sanhedrin did not agree with the decision to crucify Jesus. They were Nicodemus (cf. Jn 3:1-12; 7:45-52) and Joseph, the latter being a man from the Judean town of Arimathea. Joseph, like most rich people, had built a fine tomb to be used one day for himself, but he willingly sacrificed it so that Jesus could have an honourable burial. The two men took the body down from the cross late in the afternoon (cf. Deut 21:22-23) and prepared it for burial by wrapping it in cloth with spices. They then laid it in Joseph's tomb. The women who had gone to the tomb with Joseph and Nicodemus hurried home to prepare more spices and ointments before the Sabbath day of rest.

## EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged”** – Such scourging always preceded crucifixion. Few remained conscious at the end of it – some even died.

**Verse 2, “The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns”** - "Since it abounds in Jerusalem, the thorny burnet might have been the plant from whose spiny branches the Roman soldiers plaited the 'crown of thorns' (Mt 27:27-30)" (Zohary, 1982, p.156). The thorny burnet (*Sarcopoterium spinosum*) is a dwarf-shrub up to 50 cm. tall. Its stem is much-branched and its leaves are divided into several pairs of toothed leaflets. It is very common throughout the hilly regions of both Israel and Jordan. From the slopes its seeds are carried down by run-off waters enabling the plant to take root and grow along the dry river beds. The shapes of the bush vary greatly with their location. In damp, shady areas they have numerous leaves that remain green throughout most of the year. Their stems are soft and the thorns almost 'painless'. However on the sunny, windy slopes they remain green only in the rainy season. For most of the year they are leafless, brown, hard and painfully thorny, with the protruding thorns grayish-silver in colour.

**Verse 5, “Here is the man!”** – What Pilate meant was “look at this poor creature”, dressed in the “royal robes” and crowned with the crown of thorns – probably seeking to evoke pity. But to John the saying was, “Behold, THE man!” and for him he was reminding his readers of Christ’s favourite self-designation – “The Son of Man”. The one who was like Adam, the king of the whole earth.

**Verse 6, “You take him and crucify him”** - The petulant utterance of an exasperated man, for the Jews could not carry out this form of execution. *I find no basis for a charge against him.* For the third time Pilate proclaimed Jesus’ innocence (18:38; 19:4). Luke also records this threefold proclamation (Lk 23:4, 14, 22). The Gospel writers give no description of crucifixion. They had no need to as crucifixion was so common and so widespread, all readers would have been clearly aware of it, e.g., during the Jewish civil wars Alexander Jannaeus crucified 800 in one day. Varnus in crushing the revolt in Galilee (i.e., during Jesus' life time) crucified 2000. It was used from Egypt to Persia from India to Assyria and was used by both Greeks and Romans, but was **not** a Jewish mode of execution.

**Verse 7, “he claimed to be the Son of God”** – When being interrogated earlier that day, the priests asked, “Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” To which Christ replied, “Yes, it is as you say,” (Mt 26:63-64).

**Verse 8, “When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid”** – He was already afraid – afraid of the Jews, but it seems also afraid of who the prisoner really was. Just a short time earlier he had received a message from this wife saying, “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him” (Mt 27:19).

**Verse 10, “I have power”** - Pilate was incredulous and very conscious of his authority. His second question indicates his personal responsibility for crucifying Jesus.

**Verse 11, “from above”** - All earthly authority comes ultimately from God (Rom 13:14).

**“the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin”** – Rom 13:1 teaches us that “The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against . . . God”. But who handed Jesus over? It could refer to either Judas or Caiphaz, but did Judas really hand him over? No, the answer has to be Caiphaz and by extension the ruling Jewish authorities.

**Verse 12, “no friend of Caesar”** – “‘Friend of Caesar’ is a technical term that refers to an ally of the emperor” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 13, the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha”** – This large paved area was part of the Castle of Antonio at the North West corner of the Temple area, near the Ecce Homo Arch.

**Verse 14, “It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour”** – John tells us exactly when this took place. Notice that John uses Roman time (i.e., our time) not Jewish time as the Synoptics (Cf. Mt 27:45, “From **the sixth hour** until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land”). In a normal week Preparation was Friday, but how could Christ “be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mt 12:40)? The answer seems to be that there were two consecutive Sabbaths that week.

**Verse 15, “We have no king but Caesar”** - More irony. They rejected any suggestion that they were rebels against Rome, but expressed the truth of their spiritual condition.

**Verse 16, ‘handed Him over to them’** – ‘Their’ (Lu 23:25) and ‘them’ (Jn 19:16) naturally refer to the chief priests, the rulers, and the people mentioned in Lu 23:13 and Jn 19:15. Yet, the Jews had no authority to carry out capital punishment (Jn 18:31). Even if they had had such authority, their method of execution was by stoning (Cf. Act 7:58-60). Luke and John obviously mean that Pilate acceded to the wishes of the Jews in delivering Jesus to the Roman soldiers, who would execute Him by crucifixion (Lu 23:36; Jn 19:23)” (Thomas & Gundry, 1988, p. 226).

**Verse 17, “Carrying his own cross”** – The leading soldier carried the placard describing the crime. A board whitened with gypsum with block lettering. Simple but brief description e.g. “**THIS IS ATTALUS THE CHRISTIAN**” (HE.5.1). Crosses were various shapes. Normally the condemned person would carry their own cross beam (*antenna/patibulum*) weighing about 16 kg. (30-40 lb.) to the place of execution. Along the way Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross for Jesus (Mk 15:21, “A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross). Cyrene is in Libya (so probably a big black man). There was a large Jewish colony there (e.g. Act 6:9)

**“the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is Golgotha)”** – ‘Calvary’ (which means the same thing) is the Latin name. The name may have originated because the place looked like a skull, or because it was a place of execution where skulls accumulated. The true location is uncertain. A place **outside** the city as **conspicuous** as possible (as a warning to others). The route would be the longest route through the busiest part of town.

**Verse 18, “they crucified him”** - As with the scourging, John describes this horror with one Greek word. None of the Gospel writers dwells on the physical sufferings of Jesus. *Crucify* and *excruciating* come from the same root word. The nails would have been wrought iron 17 cm x 1 cm (6" x 1/2"). A 1968 excavation on Mount Scopus revealed an ossuary containing bones of a man crucified. A single nail went through both heel bones. The tibular and fibular broken were cleanly broken, as with a hammer.

**“one on each side”** - Perhaps meant as a final insult, but it brings out the important truth that in his death Jesus was identified with sinners (Mk 15:24-27).

- Verse 19, “a notice”** - A placard stating the crime for which someone was executed was often fastened to his cross. *THE KING OF THE JEWS*. Again the royalty theme. Luke (23:38) tells us the written notice was “above him” indicting the type of cross was **CRUX IMMISSA** (A Latin Cross).
- Verse 20, “Aramaic”** - One of the languages of the Jewish people at that time (along with Hebrew).  
**“Latin”** - The official language of Rome.  
**“Greek”** - The common language of communication throughout the empire. The threefold inscription may account for the slight differences in wording in the four Gospels (Mk 15:26).
- Verse 22, “Pilate answered”** - Pilate must have a sufficient reason for the execution, and he was not above mocking the Jews, but for John his insistence may also have served to underscore that Jesus’ kingship is final and unalterable.
- Verse 23, “undergarment”** - A type of shirt, reaching from the neck to the knees or ankles.  
**“seamless”** - Therefore too valuable to be cut up.
- Verse 24, “dividing up His clothes”** - Victims were normally stripped naked but Jews insisted on a minimum covering.  
**“cast lots for my clothing”** - Cf. Psa 22:17-21. The person would normally have five pieces of clothing: Sandals, Turban, Tunic and Belt (of comparable value) and an outer Cloak/Tunic (of much greater value).
- Verse 25, “Clopas”** - Mentioned only here in the NT.  
**“Mary Magdalene”** - Appears in the crucifixion and resurrection story in all four Gospels, but apart from that we read of her only in Lk 8:2-3.
- Verse 27, “took her into his home”** - And so took responsibility for her. It may be that Jesus’ brothers still did not believe in him (Jn 7:5).
- Verse 29, “wine vinegar”** - Equivalent to cheap wine, the drink of ordinary people (Mk 15:36; Lk 23:36).  
**“hyssop”** - The name given to a number of plants (Ex 12:22).
- Verse 30, “It is finished”** - “These words look back to the words ‘*all was now completed*’ in Jn 19:28. They refer to all things that the Father had given Jesus to do (John 17:4, Cf. Jn 3:35; 13:3). Included in his commission was the complete fulfillment of Scripture (Jn 19:28), which the words it is finished also reflect” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 232).
- Verse 31, “a special Sabbath”** - The Sabbath that fell at Passover time. The Passover meal had been eaten on Thursday evening, the day of Preparation was Friday, and the Sabbath came on Saturday.  
**“to have the legs broken”** - To hasten death, because the victim then could not put any weight on his legs and breathing would be difficult.
- Verse 34, “blood and water”** - “The flow of blood and water from Jesus’ side, though difficult to explain medically, actually happened as John describes it (Jn 19:35). This signified that Jesus was already dead and was the basis for a report to this effect brought back to Pilate (Mk 15:44-45). In the midst of uncertainty regarding the cause of this phenomenon, the possibility that Jesus died of a ruptured heart must remain one of the possible explanations (cf. Psa 69:20)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 234).  
**“a sudden flow of blood”** - Although dead bodies don't bleed, "physicians seem agreed that a flow of accumulated blood - as the 'at once' seems to indicate - from a wound inflicted shortly after death is not impossible" (Buehler, 19, p. 526).  
**“and water”** - Stroud (1847) believed that Jesus died literally of a broken heart and "while spontaneous rupture of the heart is not unknown it is the result of pre-existing heart disease" (Buehler, 19, p. 526). Barbet (1953) argued that the blood came from within the heart and the water from the pericardial sac" (Buehler, 19, p. 526). Sava (1957) suggested that severe nonpenetrating chest injuries are capable of producing such an accumulation in the pleural cavity between the rib cage and the lung. There was enough time between the scourging and the piercing to allow the red blood cells to separate from the lighter clear serum" (Buehler, 19, p. 526).
- Verse 35, “so that you also may believe”** – “so that you also can believe” (NLT); “Some manuscripts read *can continue to believe*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).
- Verse 37, “scripture”** - Again John observes God’s overruling in the fulfillment of Scripture. It was extraordinary that Jesus was the only one of the three whose legs were not broken and that he suffered an unusual spear thrust that did not break a bone.

**Verse 38, “Joseph”** - A rich disciple (Mt 27:57), and a member of the Sanhedrin who had not agreed to Jesus’ condemnation (Lk 23:50-51).

**“secretly”** - It would have been hard for a member of the Sanhedrin to support Jesus’ cause openly. Jesus’ closest followers all ran away (Mk 14:50), and it was left to Joseph and Nicodemus to provide for his burial.

**“With Pilate’s permission”** - Otherwise people could take away their crucified friends before they died and revive them.

**Verse 39, “Nicodemus”** – “The disciples who had openly followed Jesus during his lifetime ran away at the end (Mt 27:59), but Joseph and Nicodemus, who had kept their faith secret while he was alive (Jn 19:38) came forward publicly to give Him an appropriate burial” (Thomas & Gundry, 1998, p. 235).

**“a mixture of myrrh”** – *Commiphora*. Used in sacred oils and obtained from a tropical shrub in the genus *Commiphora* (the same family as frankincense) – thorny, branched shrubs or small trees growing on rocky ground. Their fruit is similar to a small olive. The fragrant stems and branches exude drops of oily resin spontaneously. Myrrh is a dark-red gum with a strong aroma and bitter taste. As it is not native to Palestine, its importation made it an expensive luxury. This bitter spice formed part of the potion at Calvary (Mt 27:58) and was used in embalming Christ’s body (Jn 19:39).

**“aloes”** – *Aloe barbadensis* or *Aloe vera* is originally from Yemen. The aloe plant is short-stemmed with a tuft of succulent leaves which have very sharp teeth along their edges and end in a point. The flowers are red and bell-shaped, growing together on a spike. Although the fragrance is very pleasant the juice is very bitter.

**“seventy-five pounds”** – “Greek *a hundred litrai* (about 34 kilograms)” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 40, “strips of linen”** - Thin strips like bandages. There was also a shroud, a large sheet (Mt 27:59; Mk 15:46; Lk 23:53).

**Verse 41, “new tomb”** - Joseph’s own tomb (Mt 27:60).

**Verse 42, “the Jewish day of Preparation”** – “*It was the day of preparation for the Jewish Passover*” (NLT).

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### 20:1-21:25 - THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

**vv1 - THE TOMB FOUND TO BE EMPTY BY THE WOMEN** (Cf. Mt 28:5-8; Mk 16:2-8; Lu 24:1-8) - The women returned about sunrise on Sunday only to find the stone removed and a "young man" (Mk 16:5) sitting there to tell them that "He has risen" (Mt 16:6).

**vv2-9 - THE EMPTY TOMB** (Cf. Mt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lu 24:1-12) - When the women reported this to the disciples some disbelieved, but Peter and John ran to see. After careful examination they returned home.

### 20:10-21:25 - THE POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

**vv10-18 - JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE** (Cf. Mk 16:9-11) - Mary stayed in the garden and Christ appeared to her. Again she ran into the city to share the good news with the other disciples.

**vv19-23 - JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES** (Cf. Mk 16:14; Lu 24:36-43) - Christ appeared in their midst and encouraged them. He ate and allowed them to touch Him to prove that He was not a ghost.

**vv24-31 - JESUS APPEARS TO THOMAS** (Cf. 1 Co 15:5) - Thomas (who had been absent when Jesus appeared in the locked room) stopped doubting when Jesus appeared among the disciples in the same locked room the following Sunday night. But faith that depended on seeing Jesus' actual body was not good enough, because soon He would return to His Father and people would no longer be able to see Him. However, they could still hear the preaching of His disciples or read their written records. Through believing in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, they could have eternal life.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, "while it was still dark"** - Mark says it was "just after sunrise" (Mk 16:2). Perhaps the women came in groups, with Mary Magdalene coming very early. Or John may refer to the time of leaving home, Mark to that of arrival at the tomb.

**Verse 2, "Simon Peter"** - Despite his denials, he was still the leading figure among the disciples.

**"we"** - Indicates that there were others with Mary (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1; Lk 24:10), though John does not identify them.

**"have put him"** - Mary had no thought of resurrection.

**Verse 6, "strips of linen"** - "John's description of the linen wrappings and face cloth (Jn 20:7) does not necessarily mean that Jesus rose from the dead without disturbing the grave clothes in which he was wrapped. The record rather presents a picture of the orderly arrangement of these grave clothes, such as would not have been the case if grave robbers, the disciples, or anyone else had taken the body away. This neatness was sufficient to convince John that Jesus had risen (John 20:8)" (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 239).

**Verse 7, "folded up"** - An orderly arrangement, not in disarray, as would have resulted from a grave robbery.

**Verse 8, "He saw and believed"** - John did not say what he believed, but it must have been that Jesus was resurrected.

**Verse 9, "Scripture"** - First they came to know of the resurrection through what they saw in the tomb; only later did they see it in Scripture. It is obvious they did not make up a story of resurrection to fit a preconceived understanding of Scriptural prophecy.

**"had to rise"** - It was in Scripture and thus the will of God. There are many resurrection theories:

- 1 **Swoon** - Christ not really dead, but Joseph's and Centurion's testimony and construction of tomb.
- 2 **Wrong grave** - Mary went to the wrong place, but she had been there on both Friday & Saturday.
- 3 **Jews Stole Body** - Why? Why didn't they produce it?
- 4 **Romans Stole Body** - Why? Why didn't they produce it?
- 5 **Christians Stole Body** - How?

- 6 **Hallucination** – Mary (Jn 20:10-18); 500+ at once (1 Co 15:6)
- 7 **A Hoax** - Willing to **die** for what they knew was a **lie**?
- Verse 11, “Mary”** - Perhaps Jesus appeared first to Mary because she needed him most at that time.  
**“crying”** - As in 11:33, it means “wailing,” a loud expression of grief.
- Verse 12, “two angels”** - Matthew has one angel (Mt 28:2), Mark a young man (Mk 16:5) and Luke two men who were angels (Lk 24:4, 23).
- Verse 14, “did not realize that it was Jesus”** - A number of times the risen Jesus was not recognized (21:4; Mt 28:17; Lk 24:16, 37). He may have looked different, or he may intentionally have prevented recognition (Cf. Lk 9:45).
- Verse 16, “Rabboni”** - A strengthened form of *Rabbi*, and in the NT found elsewhere only in Mk 10:51 (in the Greek). Although the word means “(my) teacher,” there are few if any examples of its use in ancient Judaism as a form of address other than in calling on God in prayer. However, John’s explanation casts doubt on any thought that Mary intended to address Jesus as God here.
- Verse 17, “Do not hold me”** - “The force of Jesus’ words apparently was to inform Mary that he was not returning to the old life as Lazarus had (cf. Jn 12:2; 12:9). By holding on to him, Mary responded to his presence as though he were. His post-resurrection appearances were to occupy only a brief time because he must soon return to the Father’s house (Cf. Jn 14:2). He therefore instructed Mary to go and tell the disciples this” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 239).
- Verse 18, “have seen the Lord”** - Although Mary was the first to see the risen Lord, others would soon follow (vv20, 25, 29).
- Verse 19, “Jesus came and stood among them”** - “This section reveals several things about Jesus’ resurrection body. In this verse he was able to pass through a locked door. The wounds of his crucifixion were still visible (Lu 24:39; Jn 20:20). The body was composed of material substance that could be felt (Lu 24:39). It was capable of consuming food as a mortal body does (Lu 24:43)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 242).
- Verse 20, “his hands and side”** - Where the wounds were (John does not refer to the wounds in the feet). According to Lk 24:37 they thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus was clearly identifying himself.
- Verse 22, “Receive the Holy Spirit”** - Thus anticipating what happened 50 days later on the day of Pentecost (Act 2:2-38). The disciples needed God’s help to carry out the commission they had just been given.
- Verse 23, “If you forgive”** – Literally, “*If you forgive anyone their sins, they have (already) been forgiven; if you do not forgive, they have not been forgiven.*” The intent of this word of Jesus has been much debated, but it seems right to say that God does not forgive people’s sins because the apostles (or we) do so, nor does he withhold forgiveness because the apostles (or we) do. However, through the Holy Spirit (v22) the apostles and all believers do participate in Christ’s saving mission, which has as one of its crucial effects God’s forgiveness of the sins of all who repent and believe in Jesus as God’s Son and the Savior of the world (Cf. Mt 16:19; 18:18).
- Verse 25, “Unless I see . . . I will not believe”** - Hardheaded skepticism can scarcely go further than this.
- Verse 28, “My Lord and my God”** - “Once he overcame his skepticism, Thomas made the strongest confession of all. Prior to this no one had addressed Jesus in this way. To call Jesus God put him on an equal plane with the Father (Cf. Jn 5:23)” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 243).
- Verse 29, “those who have not seen and yet have believed”** - Would have been very few at this time (v8). All whom John mentions had seen in some sense. The words, of course, apply to future believers as well.
- Verse 30, “miraculous signs”** - John had selected from among many.  
**“in the presence of his disciples”** - Those who could testify to what he had done. John again stresses testimony.

**Verse 31, “that you may believe”** – “Some manuscripts *may continue to*” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>). Expresses John’s evangelistic purpose.

**“the Christ”** - This whole Gospel is written to show the truth of Jesus’ Messiahship and to present him as the Son of God, so that the readers may believe in him.

**“that by believing you may have life”** - Another expression of purpose - to bring about faith that leads to life.

**“name”** - Represents all that he is and stands for.

## CHAPTER TWENTY- ONE

### vv1-25 - APPEARANCE TO THE SEVEN DISCIPLES WHILE FISHING

**vv1-6 - THE DISCIPLES GO FISHING** - The disciples then returned to Galilee to wait for Jesus as they had been instructed (cf. Mt 26:32; 28:10). Seven of them had spent unsuccessful night fishing on Lake Galilee when Jesus appeared at the shore. He called out some directions to them, and although they did not recognize Him they did as He said. The result was that they could a large number of fish.

**vv7-14 – BREAKFAST** - No doubt the disciples recalled a similar incident years earlier (cf. Lu 5:1-11) and this may have led John to recognize the person on the shore was Jesus. The disciples were reminded again of the authority of Jesus and their dependence on Him. They were also reminded of His care for them, as he prepared and served them breakfast.

**vv15-19 - THE CHARGE TO PETER** - Peter had once boasted that he loved Jesus more than the other disciples did and that although they might fail Him, he would not (cf. Mk 14:29). Yet three times he had disowned Jesus, Three times, therefore he was asked publicly if he loved Jesus, as a reminder to him of the danger of over-confidence. Jesus' public conversation with Peter also showed the others that He had forgiven him. More than that he had given Peter the responsibility to care for His people through the difficult days of the church's beginning (cf. Lu 22:31-32). As a leader in that early group, receiving the full force of Jewish persecution, Peter would need more love for Jesus than the others. If Peter was to follow Jesus, he would no longer be able to live the independent life of an energetic young fisherman. His life would be one of constant sacrifice and hard work in caring for Jesus' people. In the end he would be captured and killed on account of his loyalty to Jesus.

**vv20-25 - JOHN'S FUTURE** - As for John, Jesus refused to give any indication of how his life would end. Some misinterpreted this to mean that John would never die, so John added a note at the end of his book to correct this misunderstanding. He also pointed out that he had made no attempt to give a detailed account of the life of Jesus, but what he had given was to be believed as the testimony of an eye witness.

### EXEGETICAL NOTES

**Verse 1, “afterwards Jesus appeared”** - “The viewpoint that makes John 21 a later addition to the fourth gospel cannot be substantiated. The absence of manuscript support for this theory and the fact that the writing style used in chapters 1-20 continues in chapter 21, strongly support the traditional position that this chapter was an integral part of the gospel from the time John the apostle penned it” (Thomas and Gundry, 1988, p. 243).

**“by the Sea of Tiberias”** – “another name for the Sea of Galilee” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 2, “Thomas (called Didymus)”** – ‘*Didymus*’ means ‘*twin*’ and seems to have been his nick-name (Cf. Mk 3:17, which tells us that James and John were called ‘*Boanerges*’, which means ‘*Sons of Thunder*’).

**Verse 3, “I’m going out to fish”** - (Present Infinitive) - "The idea that Peter, for the time being at least, had given up his Kingdom-activities, and had returned to his former occupation cannot be entirely dismissed" (Hendrickson, 1967, p. 479).

**“that night”** – Night-time was favored by fishermen in ancient times (as Aristotle, e.g., informs us).

**Verse 4, “did not realize that it was Jesus”** - Cf. Mary Magdalene (20:14).

**Verse 5, “Friends”**- “*Fellows*” (NLT); “*Greek children*” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 7, “his outer garment”** - It is curious that he put on this garment (the word appears only here in the NT) preparatory to jumping into the water. But Jews regarded a greeting as a religious act that could be done only when one was clothed. Peter may have been preparing himself to greet the Lord.

Note that Peter **acts before** John, but  
John **understands before** Peter.

**Verse 8, “about a hundred yards”** – “Greek *about two hundred cubits* (about 90 metres)” (NIV<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 9, “burning coals”** – Literally, “*charcoal*,” as in 18:18.

**Verse 11, “the net was not torn”** - In contrast to the nets mentioned in Lk 5:6.

**Verse 14, “third time”** - The third appearance to a group of disciples (20:19–23, 24–29), though there had been other appearances to individuals.

**Verse 15, “love”** - The Greek word for “love” in Jesus’ first two questions is different from that in his third question and in all Peter’s answers. It is uncertain whether a distinction in meaning is intended since John often made slight word variations, apparently for stylistic reasons. Also, no distinction is made between these two words elsewhere in this Gospel. The more important point is that Peter’s threefold denial of Jesus (18:16–18, 25–27) is now reversed with Peter’s threefold affirmation of his love for Jesus.

**“more than these”** – The Gender of “these” is uncertain, and so Jesus could have meant:

- 1 “more than these others do” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>); or
- 2 “more than you love these men”;
- 3 “more than you love these things”, i.e., the fishing gear, etc.

There are a number of similarities between this story and that of Peter's denial, e.g.,

- 1 **a fire of burning coals** (9) cf. 18:18, "stood around *a fire* . . . Peter also was standing with them, warming himself"
- 2 **The three questions** Christ asked Peter, reminds us of his three denials of Christ (Cf **Jn 18:18, 17, 25, 27**, "It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself . . . "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "*I am not.*" . . . As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it, saying, "*I am not.*" . . . Again **Peter denied** it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow").
- 3 **I tell you the truth** (18) - The prediction of Peter's denial had been similarly introduced (Cf. **13:38**, "Jesus answered" . . . I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!)
- 4 **Following** and **cross** both occur here and in 13:36-38:

**Verse 17, “you know all things”** - Peter’s replies stress Christ’s knowledge, not his own grasp of the situation.

**Verse 18, “stretch out your hands”** - The early church understood this as a prophecy of crucifixion.

**“someone else will dress you”** – “others will dress you” (NLT<sup>mg</sup>).

**Verse 19, “the kind of death”** - Peter would be a martyr. Tradition indicates that he was crucified upside down.

**Verse 20, “was following”** - He was doing what Peter was twice told to do (vv. 19, 22).

**Verse 22, “until I return”** - A clear declaration of the second coming (Cf. Jn 14:3).

**Verse 23, “among the brothers”** – “among the community of believers” (NLT).

**Verse 24, “disciple who testifies”** - Testimony is important throughout this Gospel. We now learn that it was the beloved disciple who was the witness behind the account.

**“who wrote them down”** - The beloved disciple was not only the witness but also the actual author.

**“We know”** - Evidently written by contemporaries in a position to know the truth.

**Verse 25, “many other things”** - As in 20:30 we are assured that the author has been selective.

**“even the whole world would not have room”** - Hyperbole. Our historical knowledge of Jesus is at best partial, but we have been given all we need to know.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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