

# *The Gospel of John*

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**(1986–1987 Study)**

The following notes on the Gospel of John were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1986–1987. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by **“Comment”** or **“Q”** (an abbreviation for **“Question”**) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

# The Gospel of John

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1986 and 1987)

**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

The *Diaglott* interlinear reads, “In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with *the* God, and a god was the Word.” Nestle’s Greek interlinear translates the Greek differently, causing a problem (some exceptions are made but not with regard to this particular subject). No doubt with good intent on his part, Nestle’s rendition changes John 1:1, as well as other similar passages throughout the New Testament that deal with Deity, in the pursuit and support of Trinitarian doctrine.

The usual procedure with a proper name in the Greek is to insert the article *ho* (“the”) before it. For example, *ho Theos* means “the God.” Many Scriptures in the New Testament do use the title *ho Theos*, but in a number of other cases where there is *no question* as to the identity of Jehovah, the article *ho* is not used. In the latter cases, the context makes plain that the reference is to the Heavenly Father. Therefore, in John 1:1, where *Theos* and *Logos* are used *together*, the omission and the inclusion of the Greek article *ho* take on an important connotation, for *the God* is being compared or contrasted with *a god*.

“In the [a] beginning.” How could the Word be Jehovah God since the Word had a *beginning*? The Father never had a beginning—He is from *everlasting to everlasting*. Of the two, only the Logos had a beginning. One does not have to be a Greek scholar to analyze this text, for the inconsistency becomes apparent when other Scriptures are considered. Two examples follow. Jehovah is the “*eternal God*” (Deut. 33:27). “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel *from everlasting, and to everlasting*” (Psa. 41:13). Trinitarians quote Scriptures in the New Testament to justify a conclusion that is at variance with the proper thought; namely, “In a *beginning* was the Word.”

Why did the Apostle John write this way? He was drawing an analogy with Genesis 1:1. “In the [a] beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” In a beginning was the earth (Gen. 1:1). In a beginning was the Word (John 1:1). In *neither* case does the text say, “In a beginning was *Jehovah*.” In the Fourth Creative Day, or epoch, the light penetrated the veil of clouds so that the sun could be seen with reasonable clarity.

Since there are those who differ with orthodoxy and are not Greek scholars and have no college degrees in this subject, Trinitarians challenge their testimony and logic. However, the best Greek scholars can read the Bible and not understand it. Remember, neither Jesus nor the apostles ever attended any theological seminary. The Holy Spirit is the teacher, not institutions of higher learning.

Trinitarians who use John 1:1 to support their viewpoint can be asked, “*If God is the Word, how could He have a beginning?*” They cannot answer that question. It is difficult to argue in the Greek because many scholars follow Colwell’s Rule, and Bruce Metzger of Princeton University has written on the subject, but the above question cannot be answered satisfactorily. Thus the very beginning of the context of John 1:1 is an argument in itself—simplistic, to the point, and obvious to those who have similar familiarity with Scripture.

The Greek word *theos*, meaning “God” or “god” depending on context, is used in the following texts:

2 Cor. 4:4—“In whom *the god of this world* [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto

them.”

Acts 7:43—“Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of *your [false] god Remphan*, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.”

Acts 12:22—“And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a *god*, and not of a man.”

Acts 17:23—“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”

Acts 28:6—“Howbeit they looked when he [Paul] should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a *god*.” The word “a” is understandably supplied, though it is not in the Greek.

Phil. 3:19—“Whose end is destruction, *whose God is their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” Here *theos* should be lowercase “god.”

An abundance of Scriptures disprove the Trinity, so one need not be a Greek scholar. In fact, going to a university and studying Greek does not give one Biblical understanding. Theological seminaries tend to brainwash their students on the subject of the Trinity. A humble fisherman, if Spirit-begotten, can set forth what the Bible really teaches. Some Scriptures that bear on the matter are listed below:

1. Jesus is personified in Proverbs 8:22,23,30. “The LORD [Jehovah] possessed [created] me in the beginning of his way [work], before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting [years ago], from the beginning, or ever the earth was [formed].... Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Jesus was brought up as a child by his Father’s side. Trinitarians say this passage is an allegory about *wisdom*, not about Jesus.
2. New Testament Scriptures saying Jesus is the *wisdom* of God would answer the Proverbs 8 argument. “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*.... But of him are ye in *Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Cor. 1:24,30).
3. The Apostle John began his first epistle with wording similar to the way he started his Gospel. “That [the Logos] which was from the [a] beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word [Logos] of life” (1 John 1:1). Trinitarians use this verse to show that Logos as wisdom had a beginning. However, it actually refers to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry.
4. Jesus is called “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). In other words, Jesus *was created* by God; Jesus is NOT God.
5. Jesus is “the [express] image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Col. 1:15).
6. A contrast between God and Jesus is shown in the Book of Revelation, where God is described as “him which is, and which was, and which is to come” (Rev. 1:4). In other words, God had no beginning. He was (in the past), He is (in the present), and He will be (in the future). He is the unending One, from everlasting to everlasting. He has always existed and never had a beginning.

7. In Revelation 1:18, Jesus said, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.” When Jesus was dead, he was *not*; that is, he did not exist.

Revelation 1:4 and 1:18 *cannot both refer to Jehovah*. Only God is the ever-living One. Jesus is a great one, a mighty God, but not the Almighty God.

8. “For there is one God, and one mediator *between* God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus is *between* God and men, and hence cannot be the same as God.

9. “The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). The comparison is between man and woman. Man is the head of the woman, and these are two *separate* individuals. By extension, then, Paul was talking about four *separate* personalities: God, Christ, man, and woman. God is the *head* of Christ—that is, He is *superior* to Christ.

Creeds could be used in the future to separate out those who deny the Trinity. To say that Jesus is coequal with God when God is the *head* of Christ is untenable. When Jesus died and was raised from death, it was *God* who highly exalted him—*Jesus did not exalt himself*. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9). “For he [Christ] must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). When this work is accomplished, Jesus will turn over the Kingdom to his Father. A premise is laid down in 1 Corinthians 15:27: “But when he [God] saith all things are put under him [Christ], it is manifest that he [the Father] is *excepted*.”

10. John 14:28 reads, “My Father is *greater* than I.”

11. In Matthew 19:17, Jesus replied, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.”

12. Jesus cried out on the Cross not to himself but to the Father: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46).

Trinitarians also ignore the realization that the word “everlasting” in the Old Testament can mean “age-lasting” (Hebrew *olam*). When we say “everlasting,” we think of an *eternity*, of that which is *unending*, but the Scriptural thought can be “age-lasting,” that is, lasting for a period of time until the consummation of a purpose. The Hebrew has no word for “eternity,” so the thought is conveyed in other ways. For example, Jehovah is the great “I AM.” But even here they err. They take the New Testament text where Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am,” to try to prove that both “I AM’s” are God (John 8:58). However, Jesus was simply saying that he never had a cessation of life from the time of his creation through the time he uttered the statement.

It is not worth trying to rebut the Greek scholars, for one would first have to get a degree to even approach them. They will not discuss with such as equals, yet throughout history, many who lacked degrees achieved great things and had remarkable capabilities. All things being equal, education is of value, but things are not always equal.

13. In Isaiah 42:1, the word “servant” is used to describe Jesus. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” If the Father and the Son were coequal, Jesus would not be called a “servant.”

Satan has blinded man. The fact is that Satan distorts God’s character with the doctrines of the

Trinity and hellfire, and as a result, many reject both God and the Bible.

Nestle's translation of John 1:1 contains a footnote that is based on a very weak argument concerning Colwell's Rule. (Colwell himself has a modifying clause, admitting there can be an exception, but Trinitarians do not quote the clause.) The footnote is as follows:

“And God was the Word [interlinear Greek].” Note that the subject has the article and the predicate has it not; hence translate “the Word was God.”

In other words, Trinitarians try to say that even though the Greek lacks the article, it cannot say “a god.” Then they try to discuss subject and predicate, but they contradict themselves right here in the Gospel of John. For instance, Nestle said that the subject has the article. He had “the Word” as the subject, but the Greek has, “And God was the Word”; that is, Nestle called “the Word,” which occurs *after* the verb, the subject. Greek scholars will concur because they are all blind on this topic.

Notice the previous clause, which is right in the same context: “And *the* Word was with *the* God.” This is the same type of sentence, but here *both* the subject and the predicate have the Greek article *ho*. “And the [*ho*] Word [*Logos*] was with the [*ho*] God [*Theos*].” The Greek article occurs before both nouns. In the clause “And the Word was God,” the subject contains the article *ho* but not the predicate. Therefore, the proper translation should be, “And the Word was a god.” The two clauses side by side thus contradict their very rule. It makes no difference how the sentence is switched around. In other words, it makes no difference which noun is subject and which noun is predicate. The first clause has *two* articles; the second clause, only *one*. If Trinitarian reasoning is correct, why wasn't the extra article in the second clause?

The Bible interprets itself. *Contextual* evidence is the *strongest* kind of evidence and should be considered first. Then other, or supportive, evidence helps to back up or refute a conclusion. “In a *beginning*” is contextual evidence, for only God had *no* beginning. Hence “the Word” cannot refer to God, for the Logos had a beginning. And the grammatical argument also contradicts.

### **John 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.**

According to Trinitarian thinking, verse 2 would be redundant. If God *is* the Word (and vice versa), why would the Word be “*with* God”?

The following footnote is on page 313 of the *Diaglott*:

“In Abyssinia, there is an officer named *Kal Hatze*; the *word* or *voice* of the king, who stands always upon the steps of the throne, at the side of a lattice window, where there is a hole, covered in the inside with a curtain of green taffeta. Behind this curtain the king sits; and speaks through the aperture to the *Kal Hatze*, who communicates his commands to the officers, judges, and attendants.”

God Himself is like the king, and the Word, the Logos, the Voice, who speaks *for* the Father, is like the chief officer, the *Kal Hatze*. The words spoken by the *Kal Hatze* were every bit as authoritative as if they had come directly from the mouth of the king himself—because they *were* the king's words, merely being transferred to others through the medium of the *Kal Hatze*.

This explanation helps us to better understand the Old Testament statement that God spoke to Moses face to face, whereas John 1:18 says that no man has seen God at any time (Exod. 33:11). Thus we know that an agent of the Father, that is, the Logos, did this work on behalf of the Father.

**John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

This verse should read, “All things were *done on account of him*; and *apart from him* was not any thing *done* that was *done*.”

The *Diaglott* has a helpful footnote for the word “made”: “*Ginomai* occurs upwards of seven hundred times in the New Testament, but never in the sense of *create*, yet in most versions it is translated as though the word was *ktizo*. The word occurs fifty-three times in this Gospel, and signifies to be, to come, to become, to come to pass; also, to be done or transacted. All things in the Christian dispensation were done by Christ, i.e., by his authority, and according to his direction; and in the ministry committed to his apostles, nothing has been done without his warrant. See John XV. 4, 5, “Without me ye can do nothing.”” Then the following Scriptures are compared:

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.... If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.... Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:7,10,16).

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me” (John 17:8).

“For by him [on account of him] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by [on account of] him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:16,17).

All things in the *Christian* dispensation were and are done by Christ. That limitation is important, for much was done without him in the past. Jesus certainly did not create God or the spiritual universe. Six Creative Days have been completed, and we are still in the seventh, which will not terminate until the end of the Millennial Age. At that time, when Adamic death is destroyed and the Kingdom is handed over to the Father, then God’s purpose in the Seventh Creative Day will have been accomplished. He will then pronounce regarding the Seventh Creative Day, “It is good”—the expression He used at the conclusion of the preceding six days. At the end of the Millennium, with all those who are amenable to the Lord having proven themselves faithful—the incorrigible having been removed—God’s purpose for the Seventh Creative Day will be finished, and the result will be a perfect human race with no evil existing.

**John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.**

The Sinaitic Manuscript says, “In him *is* life.” In other words, Jesus is a *living* Savior.

Verse 4 is an analogy to the first chapter of Genesis. “And God said, Let there be *light*” (Gen. 1:3). John was saying, “That is what has happened. God sent Jesus to be the *light* in this Gospel Age. Jesus is the one who came to his own, but they received him not.” Jesus is the *spiritual* light, for just as the physical, natural light dawned on the human race back in Genesis 1, so in John 1 in the New Testament, Jesus is set forth as the spiritual light. What a beautiful analogy! None of the other Gospels took this tack. Although they do show that Jesus had a preexistence, John’s emphasis is a little different.

John's Gospel is the least understood. Because he used a different type of language and a different type of thinking, we have to dig into it more. The other three Gospels are a narration of the *man* Christ Jesus—what he did and said and how he behaved—whereas John used a different perspective. Incidentally, the author of this Gospel is John Zebedee. John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark.

In John 8:12, Jesus said, "I am the *light* of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the *light* of life." Here again Jesus stressed his role as the *light* of the world.

**John 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.**

A person has to be almost hit over the head to see some things. Consider Jesus' own family. Prior to his death and resurrection, two brothers believed and two brothers did not believe that he was the Messiah. (Subsequently, all believed.) They watched Jesus grow up. Familiarity may not breed contempt in some instances, but there is a disrespect because of being too close to the individual. It is hard to realize the greatness of the person. Hence some of the greatest people who ever lived were appreciated more by succeeding generations than by their contemporaries. The former have a better perspective of the real worth, whereas the latter see the humanizing aspect. Generally speaking, a prophet is without honor in his own household or country.

Probably the event that triggered Jesus' two reluctant brothers into accepting his Messiahship was the raising of Lazarus, which was a bigger event than is normally considered. Lazarus was dead for *four* days when Jesus resuscitated him. No wonder the people were wild with emotion! They would have jumped up and down like lunatics and run into the city shouting, "The Messiah is here!" Then Jesus rode into Jerusalem meek and lowly, riding on an ass, and the multitudes cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" They were thrilled. The miracle had awakened them.

God is dealing with us in a *miraculous* manner whether we realize it or not—because His dealing occurs in such a quiet, reasonable way. It is like the sun coming up slowly over the horizon and the rays shining out. We take the sun for granted and do not see the miraculous aspect: that we do not burn to a crisp or freeze to death, that there are modification and beauty, that nature is supplied with photosynthesis, etc. All these are *miracles*, yet many people do not believe in God. However, if something miraculous were done that was very *startling*, then, yes, the people would believe, but this is not the class God normally deals with in the present age.

**John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.**

This was John the Baptist.

**John 1:7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.**

John "came for a *witness*" in that he both saw and proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. "To bear witness" means "to testify." Thus John the Baptist was a *testifying* witness. Of his own free will, he gladly pointed out the true Light.

All men were in expectation of Messiah, but in addition, they were expecting the Prophet Elijah. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Mal. 4:5). Elijah was known to have worn rough clothing, and now along came

John the Baptist wearing rough clothing and speaking with authority. Hence many thought he was the predicted Elijah. John spoke with such conviction that the people were willing to be baptized. And they assumed he was doing the very “Elijah” work predicted: “He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (Mal. 4:6). The point is that the appearing of John the Baptist in this manner alerted and awakened the nation of Israel so that he could introduce Jesus as someone different.

“That all men through him might believe.” “Him” can be *either* John the Baptist or Jesus. If considered to be John, the thought would be “all men of the current generation” to whom John was witnessing. If “him” refers to Jesus, then there was personal responsibility back there to recognize the true Light. In regard to the pronoun “him” applying to John the Baptist, John was sent forth as an instrumentality, as a light in a *lesser* sense. He was the means by which the nation was alerted that Jesus was the Messiah. Therefore, the two options are as follows: (1) “that all men through *John* might believe in Jesus” or (2) “that all men through *Jesus* might believe unto salvation.”

**John 1:8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.**

John the Baptist was not “that Light,” but he bore witness of it. The Apostle John frequently used the word “light.” The Bible was written to appeal to those who do not have too much education, yet some who lack higher education are very wise. John spoke to such in simplistic terms.

**John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.**

“The true Light ... lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” This statement is *prophetic*. Ultimately, *every person* who has ever lived is guaranteed to *know* that Jesus is the Savior. Stated another way, sooner or later this knowledge must come to all.

If we did not see this portion of verse 9 as prophetic, we would have to write off the large portion of the human race who lived and died before Jesus ever gave his life on Calvary—or even subsequently those who never heard the gospel. And during Jesus’ ministry, he preached only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. How beautiful it is to realize that all in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth!

“Lighteth” means “enlightens.” Jesus is the Light of the world in the sense of enlightening the mind to comprehend that he is the Messiah. He said of his Father, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the *living*”; hence there *must be* a resurrection (Matt. 22:32).

**John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.**

“The world was made by him.” The context for verse 10 starts with verse 6. What bearing does verse 10 have on the earlier verses? “World” is the Greek word *kosmos* in each case; that is, the reference is not to the planet but to the *order, the arrangement, the human race, the society*. The word “made” was added by the translators, even though it is not italic. With “was” being a form of the verb *ginomai* (“to be”), “made” is not the proper thought, for the reference is not to the creation of the planet.

Of the more than a hundred uses of the Greek word *kosmos* in Scripture, all refer to *earth’s society*, and not to planet Earth. Usually the context will make this clear. In the few cases where the context would justify either thought, the same phrase is used elsewhere in Holy Writ to mean society. The word “cosmetic” comes from *kosmos*, meaning something superficial or on the outside. When the planet is the intended meaning, *other* Greek words are used.

A footnote in the *Diaglott* substantiates this thinking: “*Ho kosmos*, the order, arrangement of things, the human race; here it evidently means that *kosmos* of human beings which he came to enlighten and to save.”

One translation has “became” for “was made.” “Became” is an accurate literal translation, but what is meant by that word? It is important to grasp John’s thought here, which the *Diaglott* does. “He was in the world, and the world was (enlightened) through him; and yet the world knew him not.” In other words, the *Diaglott* properly added the word “enlightened” for clarity. With *ginomai* (the verb “to be”), the thought often needs to be completed with a supplied word.

For proof that the *Diaglott* is correct in saying “was enlightened,” notice the emphasis on “light” and “(en)light(en)eth” in verses 7-9. Jesus was the *Light* of the world. He came to the world and enlightened it, but except for a few, the people did not see that Light. They did not recognize him as the Savior.

We should keep in mind that the Apostle John was basing his thoughts on the creation account in Genesis. In the beginning, God said, “Let there be light; and there was light.” In using the Genesis account as a preface before getting into the narrative of what Jesus did, John was likening Jesus to when God said, “Let there be light.” Although the sun did not shine through until the *Fourth Creative Day*, it was there, but it was obscured or diffused on the earlier *Creative Days*. And the statement about light was made on the *First Creative Day*.

**John 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.**

Jesus came to the nation of Israel, but the nation rejected him. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matt. 23:37). In the final analysis, prior to Pentecost, only 500 were really converted by Jesus at his First Advent (1 Cor. 15:6). And three years of his ministry of 3 1/2 years were spent in the Galilee region.

Later, of course, 8,000 (3,000 + 5,000) accepted Jesus and consecrated on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41; 4:4). However, as great as the light was when Jesus came into the world, *few* believed. And if he had not done the miracles, how many would have believed? The miracles helped to awaken the nation to the fact that someone unusual was in their midst—they “advertised” his presence, as it were. True, thousands followed him, but they followed him for the loaves and the fishes and also out of curiosity.

What amazed the Apostle John was the *paucity* of reaction—how *few* responded. For 8,000 to respond at Pentecost, Peter must have spoken with extraordinary power. Imagine speaking to 5,000 people at the same time! Peter spoke in the Temple area, probably from the place where Jesus was tempted in vision to cast himself down. (Every seven years the Law was read from that same high corner of the Temple. And the Apostle James was pushed off that high Temple promontory or precipice after he had given a sermon. He fell down into the valley below and died.) And another point: In addition to the 5,000 who responded by consecrating, there would have been many who did not consecrate. Therefore, imagine the *total* size of the crowd addressed!

**John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:**

Verse 12 applies from Pentecost on. At Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit first came in the sense of adoption to sonship.

“Even to them that believe on his name.” The word “on” should be “into” (see *Diaglott*). More than just a nominal belief in Jesus is required. In other words, “As many as received him [by consecrating], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe *into* his name.” Many believe Jesus is the Messiah, but few, relatively speaking, believe *into* Jesus.

**John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**

“Which were born [Greek *gennao*, begotten] ... of the will ... of God.” Whether *gennao* means “begotten” or “born” depends on context. Here John was talking about the begettal or *beginning* aspect.

“Not of blood” means not according to family pedigree. The privilege to become a son of God was not automatic due to family lineage.

“Nor of the will of the flesh.” Jesus was *offered* as the Savior. The *Heavenly Father* made this possible, not the efforts of sinful flesh. The *opportunity* to partake of this gift now is a blessing whether or not it is received. *In this age only, those called or drawn of the Father get the opportunity to become sons.* The *grace* of God allows us the opportunity to even *hear* the call and message of truth. Then it is up to us to respond.

“Nor of the will of man.” This category is similar to “the will of the flesh” but is slightly different, for the will of the flesh can refer to *self*, whereas the will of man refers to *any other human being*. For example, a father may want a daughter to be converted and consecrate, but it would depend on *God’s* will, for He may not draw that individual. Another example is when the eleven apostles met and selected Matthias to replace Judas, but *God* did the appointing and ignored their choice by converting Saul (Paul).

“But of God.” These three words are the key. We are begotten of *God*.

**John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.**

“The Word” is a title. The Logos was made flesh—a very *direct* statement—and dwelled (tabernacled, tented) among us. John did *not* say that the Word became *part* flesh or *half* flesh. He said the Word became a *human being*.

According to the Catholic teaching, “incarnate” means a divine being wrapped in flesh (or clothed in a human body) and hence a *dual* person, both man and God. But this is really the doctrine of Antichrist. In his epistle, John said, “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh* is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:3). In other words, the mixed idea that Jesus was God and yet down here appearing as a human being is an antichrist doctrine.

“The only begotten of the Father.” The Greek word for “begotten” refers to the genes, having to do with that which determines life.

Thus far the theme of the first chapter of John’s Gospel pertains to Jesus’ being the Light, his being made flesh, and his appearing in the glory of the only begotten of the Father. John wrote his Gospel quite late—much later than the other Gospels—after reflecting on what the other writers had omitted. For example, Matthew and Luke treated Jesus’ early life and gave lineages, his birth, early years, etc. But John took a different tack and likened Jesus’ coming to earth to the creation account in Genesis. Just as light came into this planet, which in the beginning was darkness and confusion, so *the Light* came into the sin-darkened world. John

had a grand and noble outlook. He said later that Jesus *spoke* and *acted* like the Father because he was sinless and had come from the Father, meaning they had been closely associated together. (That is why Jesus testified, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” His perfect words and actions were such that they *proved* he had come from God.) And then John said, “We even touched him!” How marvelous! Whatever Jesus did and said confirmed his Messiahship in John’s eyes. John stood back and observed the *effect* of Jesus’ life and ministry. The other Gospels give running narratives of what Jesus did and where, but John treated the subject from a more sublime standpoint.

Jesus had “the glory as of the only begotten of the Father”; that is, he was the one nearest to the Father in heaven—right next to Him. He knew and observed his Father more closely than any other being. Jesus was so affected by the relationship that when he came down here, it was as though God Himself were present. Having imbibed the characteristics of the Father, Jesus could say, “What I say comes from the Father, who sent me. I am speaking *His* words. It is *His* miraculous power that enables me to raise the dead.” Jesus credited all of his activity to the Father. He either looked upward before praying or doing miracles, or he verbally gave credit. “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28; 12:49,50).

In later years, John thought back on what Jesus had said and commented in effect, “Yes, it is true!” In studying Jesus’ life, John concluded it was as if God Himself had come down here. However, most translators do not see this aspect, for they think that Jesus was/is God. Such thinking is so foolish. If true, who took care of all the heavens when Jesus was on earth? The heavens would have been in jeopardy, especially with Satan loose.

**John 1:15** John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

John *the Baptist* was speaking. The setting was when Jesus returned from the wilderness. Notice the tense: “This *was* he of whom I *spake* [earlier].” John had *previously* spoken of Jesus and had *previously* known he was the Messiah.

Incidentally, the word “preferred” is supplied. Jesus was “before” John in two ways: Jesus existed before John and was more important.

When John was baptizing, some thought he might be the Messiah. John was a man of the desert, eating locusts and honey, and he was hairy like Elijah. Because of his appearance, others thought he might be Elijah. Knowing Malachi 4:5 (“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD”), the scribes and Pharisees also came to be baptized just in case John the Baptist was Elijah and the dreadful day of the Lord was coming. And what did John say? “You generation of vipers! Why do you come?” Later, when priests and Levites asked John if he was the Messiah or Elijah or “that prophet,” he denied such identity and said he was “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (John 1:19-23).

**John 1:16** And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

The *Apostle* John was now speaking. Writing at a *much later* date, he was musing and reflecting upon the beginning of Jesus’ ministry at Jordan. We know these are the Apostle John’s words here in verse 16 because John the Baptist was not Spirit-begotten and hence did not receive of Jesus’ “fulness.”

**John 1:17** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The Law was given *through* Moses, just as grace and truth came *through* Jesus. Both Moses and

Jesus had roles as *mediators*.

There was a time when Aaron and Miriam questioned Moses' relationship and wanted to share the leadership. Their rationale was that all *three* were of Amram, and Miriam was very talented and Aaron was high priest. Later Korah, as a Levite, thought Moses should share the office. In the experience, it was as though God Himself got angry: "Who are you to presume these things? I am dealing with *Moses* and speaking to him face to face. You have some nerve even entertaining such a thought!" The expression "face to face" shows that Moses was a mediator through whom God dealt with the nation of Israel. It is true that Moses was a remarkable person, but Jesus was even *more* remarkable. Moses brought the good Law, but Jesus brought something grander: grace and truth—an *escape* from the *bondage* of the Law.

**John 1:18** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

A human being cannot look on the divine nature, but what about Moses, who saw God "face to face," and Enoch, who "walked with God" (Gen. 5:22)? These expressions must be considered in a *modified* sense.

John said in his epistle, "No man hath seen God at any time" (1 John 4:12). In other words, it is *impossible* for a human being to look on God as He really is. When He dealt with Moses, He did it in several ways:

1. Through the Logos. For example, the Logos was the "angel" in the burning bush who said, "I am Jehovah." As the "angel of God," the Logos was speaking on behalf of Jehovah (see Exod. 3:2; compare Acts 7:30-32). The Logos was the mouthpiece.
2. Through *visions*. For example, Moses went up into the mountain with Joshua and Aaron and some nobles of the nation. There they saw a vision of a throne scene and a pavement—a pictorial *representation* of Jehovah that was like a three-dimensional hologram (Exod. 24:9-11). Another example is Exodus 33:18-23, where Moses saw God's glory and "back parts" but not His face.

Elijah, too, saw a vision—of wind, earthquake, fire, and a still small voice—but not God Himself (1 Kings 19:9-12). Both Elijah and Moses were in a cleft or cave when the visions occurred.

3. Through a *cloud*. God gave Moses a glimpse of His glory by revealing His *character* through a pronouncement (Exod. 34:5-7). In that incident, Moses heard a voice but did not see God's face because God appeared wrapped in a cloud with His face hidden. In other words, with His face masked or covered, God spoke to Moses "face to face."

The point is that *in none of these cases* was God's face seen—because no man can behold the divine nature and survive.

God's voice was *literally* heard on two occasions, but He remained invisible: (1) When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, his garments got whiter and whiter and whiter until they exuded a *brilliant* light. On one side of Jesus in the vision was Moses, and on the other side was Elijah. God said, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 17:1-9; Mark 9:1-10) (2) At Jesus' baptism, God's voice was heard: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

"The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Notice the very close "bosom" relationship between Father and Son. The Son fully represented the Father for the 3 1/2 years of his ministry on earth.

**John 1:19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?**

**John 1:20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.**

Why did the Apostle John write, “This is the *record* of John [the Baptist]”? The apostle wanted to show that John the Baptist went out of his way to prevent any misunderstanding on this particular issue. John the Baptist could have pretended he was more important than he was by just *keeping quiet* and not saying whether or not he was the Christ. Then, by innuendo, others would have assumed he was the Messiah. However, he did the right thing by *denying* the matter. Here is an important lesson, namely, that silence can improperly give consent to or muddy a situation. By John the Baptist’s answering so strongly in the negative, the tendency was for his followers to leave him and go to Jesus. His replies helped to cover all bases in regard to the Jews’ knowing who the Messiah really was.

Some writers, especially those who are Jewish, feel that the Apostle John was anti-Semitic. Of the four Gospels, they feel that his is the most objectionable because he used the expression “Jews” over and over. They are supersensitive along this line. The Jewish priests and Levites of verses 19 and 20 were sent by the Pharisees. The fact that they were from Jerusalem simply means they were from the tribe of Judah. Nothing in these verses is derogatory.

Those who would try to discredit Jesus must also try to discredit John the Baptist, who was a well-known figure back there. Thus there are two testimonies from two unusual contemporary personages: John the Baptist and Jesus. John’s testimony was in favor of Jesus, and that fact should be considered. His existence cannot be denied, nor can his testimony.

Notice the peculiarity of the Apostle John’s language. His is the *most misunderstood* Gospel because he stated things in a very unusual fashion. He expressed his point this way to make it more *emphatic*. In other words, John the Baptist did not remain silent on this issue. He could have refrained from confessing or given an evasive answer, but instead he *boldly and definitely* said that *Jesus* was the Messiah, and not himself.

**John 1:21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.**

Elijah’s name was mentioned because of Malachi 4:5,6, which we will quote again: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” This prophecy at the end of the Old Testament was outstanding, and the Jews were looking for Elijah to come before “the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

“Art thou *that* prophet?” The question referred back to Moses’ statement in Deuteronomy 18:15,18, where God had promised to raise up “a Prophet” in Israel like unto Moses. John the Baptist was not the prophet Moses had spoken about.

John the Baptist knew what prophecies the questioners had in mind. He denied that he was the fulfillment of such. And then the questioners continued (verse 22).

**John 1:22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?**

**John 1:23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of**

## the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

John the Baptist did admit that he was the “voice of [that] one crying in the wilderness.” The prophecy, which is back in Isaiah 40:3-5, reads as follows: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” In other words, while denying that he was the Christ, Elijah, or “that prophet,” John the Baptist did admit he was the one Isaiah had spoken of.

However, this prophecy in Isaiah has *multiple* fulfillments, of which John the Baptist was only the *beginning*. Throughout the Gospel Age, the Church has been “the voice” crying out in the wilderness, and in the Kingdom, The Christ will be “the voice” preparing the way for Jehovah. (In the larger fulfillment, the “highway” of Isaiah 40:3 is the “highway of holiness” in the Kingdom; see Isaiah 35:8.) What John the Baptist was doing back there in presenting Jesus to the nation of Israel at the First Advent is very much like what The Christ will do in the Kingdom to prepare the world of mankind for their recognition of Jehovah. In other words, John the Baptist is a miniature picture of The Christ in this instance.

The word “LORD” in Isaiah 40:3-5 is in all capital letters and thus refers to Jehovah. Although John the Baptist prepared the way of Jesus and although The Christ will prepare the way of Jehovah, preparing the way of Jesus was the beginning of preparing the way of Jehovah. The Gospel and Millennial ages are both included.

Silence is not necessarily a proof of humility. Here John the Baptist’s *speaking out* manifested his humility—his denial that he was Christ, Elijah, or “that prophet.” However, he did confess he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Not a rug on which others can walk and wipe their feet, humility is a sober self-examination. “Let a man examine himself” as to the measure of faith he has received of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5). We must neither exaggerate nor undervalue ourselves but should make an *honest* examination. Humility and honesty are twin brothers, as it were.

Moses, the *meekest* man in all the earth, led millions out of bondage and broke the golden calf and made the people drink it. Therefore, a *great leader* can be meek. Incidentally, when gold is imbibed, it is a powerful cleanser or purgative for trichinosis and snail parasite disease.

John the Baptist delivered *strong* messages (for example, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand—repent!”), yet his humility is beautifully apparent here. He also told the Israelites about their baptism of “fire” in the coming trouble of AD 69-70. And he called the Pharisees a “generation of *vipers*.” He was very blunt yet *humble*.

Matthew 17:11-13 reads, “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.” On the surface, this Matthew text would seem to contradict John the Baptist’s testimony that he was not Elias (Elijah). Jesus had just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration. While on the mountain, the three disciples saw, *in vision*, Moses and Elijah. The topic of discussion between Moses, Jesus, and Elijah was the decease of Jesus at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Jesus was in their midst, and his garments glistened. Of course Moses and Elijah were not literally there. (Moses was dead, and Elijah had been translated years before.)

At the end of the vision, as Jesus and the three disciples came down from the mount, they

asked him, “Why do the scribes say that Elias must first come?” (Matt. 17:10). (The disciples had momentarily forgotten about the prophecy in Malachi regarding Elijah’s coming before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.) Jesus’ reply is interesting: “Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.” However, the restoration will take place in the *Kingdom*. Thus the main thrust of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5,6 did not pertain to John the Baptist but started with *The Christ* in the flesh. Jesus is the Head of the Elijah class, and the Church is the body in its earthly sojourn. But it is the Elijah class *glorified* who will, in the next age, truly restore all things; that is, those of the Elijah class who are faithful in the *present* life will, in the Kingdom, restore all things.

This is really a discussion of Malachi 4:5,6. Elijah is to be sent *before* the great and dreadful day of the Lord, that is, *before* the great Time of Trouble at the end of the age, the final trouble through which the new order will be born. From this standpoint, Elijah truly must first come. But in the next age, this same class will restore all things—in the times of *restitution*, the times of *refreshing*, the times of *restoration*.

Now we can understand why Jesus said, “Elias has come already.” In the final analysis, John the Baptist will not be a member of “the Elijah,” which consists of Jesus the Head and the Church as his body members, but the *nature* of their work was pictured by John’s ministry. John the Baptist’s work was in complete harmony with what the symbolic Elijah will do, as mentioned in Malachi 4:5,6. Elias was to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Hence John the Baptist is a miniature picture of the reality (The Christ). From John the Baptist’s standpoint, the great and dreadful day was AD 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed. He talked of the coming baptism of fire, and his ministry beautifully pictures the warning that The Christ gives about the future Time of Trouble, which is necessary to humble mankind to submit and consecrate. The Elijah class has preached about the trouble down through the age but has lacked the *power* to enforce a bowing of the knee to Jesus. In the Kingdom, there will be power. Hence the Elijah work in the Gospel Age is preparatory—like a doctor in practice. The Christ will be the ministers of the New Covenant in the next age, but the practice takes place now. The *spirit* of the work applies in this life, but the *actual* work will come in the Kingdom. Then Elias will restore all things. In the practicing era, *some* are converted. In the future, *all* will be converted (but of course only those who obey will get life).

Although John the Baptist was *successful* in preparing the right-hearted Jew to accept *Jesus*, this acceptance is not the full picture. The full picture is the accepting of *Jehovah*, a work that will embrace the Millennial Age. This picture is complicated. For further information, see the chapter entitled “Elias Shall First Come” in the *Second Volume*. In Jesus’ day, John the Baptist was a *partial* application of Elijah, but in the larger picture, the Church with her Head is “Elijah.”

Other aspects of John’s ministry will be treated later. For example, he announced the presence of Christ. When his life is studied as a type, he pictures the *feet* members at the *end* of the age. Just as John the Baptist, at the end of the Jewish Age, announced the presence of Jesus, so the John the Baptist class, at the end of the Gospel Age, announces the second presence of Christ. Incidentally, Jesus’ statement in Matthew 17:12,13 was limited to John the Baptist’s ministry and his announcement of a coming time of trouble on Jewry, which did occur.

John the Baptist’s work was successful to those who accepted him. And some of those disciples left John and followed Jesus. Actually, that was the point of John’s ministry—to prepare the hearts of the Jews (through repentance) to receive Jesus. John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

**John 1:24** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

The priests and Levites sent by the Jews from Jerusalem were of the Pharisaical persuasion. The

difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees is like the difference between Orthodox Jews and the Conservative or Reform Jews. The Orthodox believe in a personal Messiah to come, whereas the others believe the nation of Israel is the Messiah. Hence there are varied beliefs in regard to the interpretation of prophecies. The Sadducees were more like a “Reform” type of Jew who philosophizes on the Word and regards it as a storybook that teaches certain principles and tenets. Reform Jews are the radical left of the spectrum, Conservative Jews are in the middle, and Orthodox Jews are way to the right. The Orthodox accept the Old Testament as the Word of God.

The Pharisees believed in a resurrection; the Sadducees did not. But they were all Jews, and some of each category were even priests. The same spectrum and variance exist among the clergy of Christendom today. Many do not believe in the Virgin Birth, the preexistence of Christ, etc., but all are called “Christian” ministers.

The Sanhedrin were judges in a court, as it were. The members did not have to be of Aaron, that is, Levites, but could be of other tribes. However, they had to be learned in the Law.

**John 1:25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?**

In other words, “*By what authority do you baptize? If you are not one of the three personages, then who are you? What authority do you have to institute baptism?*” Baptism was the real issue, for even if John had been one of the three, the Pharisees still would not have been expecting baptism.

**John 1:26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;**

Compare Matthew 3:11.

**John 1:27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.**

Just as the majority back there did not recognize Jesus at the First Advent, when he was *present*, so most today do not discern his presence at the *Second* Advent. Because Jesus no longer has a body of flesh and is not visible, people find it hard to believe he is present. Also, they have been indoctrinated to believe that when he comes, they will actually see him. Back there the Jews did not have this concept and were all in expectation of him, yet they still did not recognize him because of the nature of his advent; that is, he was born in a cave stable, of humble parents, and with questionable circumstances surrounding his birth. The people expected him to come not as a baby but as a warrior, a king, who would be visible, proud, strong, and brilliant and would deliver them from the Roman yoke of bondage. Moreover, Jesus came from Nazareth. Thus everything about Christ at the First Advent belied his Messiahship, unless one was in the right heart condition to be led and instructed that these qualities and events were in harmony with Scripture. Similarly down here, none can really appreciate the manner of our Lord’s Second Advent except those who are humble and get rid of preconceived opinions as to how that Second Advent would take place. The point is that at both advents, Jesus was “announced” but not recognized.

This realization helps us to appreciate more fully the power of Peter’s confession that Jesus was the Christ—that he was *more* than a prophet, that he was the One sent from God. The two walking to Emmaus said they had trusted that Jesus was the Messiah, and after his crucifixion, they still called him “a prophet mighty in deed and word” because of the miracles he had previously performed and the nature of his doctrine, but it was hard for them to accept that

Messiah had to be *crucified* (Luke 24:19).

A “shoe’s latchet” is a sandal strap (see *Diaglott*). John the Baptist could speak *thunder*, yet look at his deep humility. He had such an appreciation of the Messiah that he felt unworthy of even loosening his sandal strap. This insight into John’s character makes apparent the reason why God chose him to introduce Messiah. He was strong, outspoken, blunt, and courageous, yet he was exceedingly humble regarding Jesus.

**John 1:28** These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Where is Bethabara? Notice that the very next day (verses 29 and 30) John the Baptist saw Jesus approaching and said, “Behold the Lamb of God.... This is he of whom I [*previously*] said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me.” This incident took place quite some time after Jesus’ baptism because immediately after Jordan, Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days. Therefore, verses 28-30 took place *after Jesus returned* from the wilderness, and this is a completely different picture. Bethabara was not near Jerusalem/Jericho, where Jesus was baptized, but was at the southern outlet of the *Sea of Galilee*. (In other words, the part of the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized was a much different area.)

John did not baptize in one spot but throughout Israel all along the Jordan River. Three different sites are mentioned in the Bible. John 3:23 mentions “Aenon near to Salim” as one site. This location was farther south than Bethabara but also up near the Sea of Galilee. Bethabara is where many baptisms take place even today.

“Beyond Jordan” indicates that Bethabara was a town east of the Jordan River. Therefore, the setting here in verses 28-30 was not lower Jordan but upper Jordan. The name Bethabara means “a place of crossing”; that is, John the Baptist was on the east or Transjordan side of the Jordan River.

**John 1:29** The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

The setting was now the next day. (Notice the paragraph mark in the King James.) The day before, some of the Pharisaical element sent from Jerusalem had questioned John the Baptist as to who he was. The questioning took place in Bethabara near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had not yet arrived on the scene. John emphatically denied that he was Elijah, Messiah, or “that prophet.” He would only admit to Isaiah 40:3—that he was “the voice” crying in the wilderness.

The next day Jesus appeared on the scene. The Apostle John wrote dramatically: “The next day John [the Baptist] *seeth* Jesus *coming* unto him.” Then he added the words of verse 30.

Jesus was the “Lamb of God.” This was a reference to both the paschal lamb (the one slain for Passover) and the daily burnt offering (the lamb that was slain morning and evening). Jesus was *the* Lamb.

Isaiah 53:7 reads, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a *lamb* to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” This Scripture shows that the mystical lamb in Scripture was somehow identified with the cancellation of sin and also the coming Messiah.

Jesus takes away “*the sin of the world*,” that is, *Adamic* sin, the sin common to the whole world. He does not take away sins against light.

**John 1:30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.**

“This is *he* of whom I said [*previously*], After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.” John spoke these words as Jesus was returning from the 40 days he spent in the wilderness after his baptism. In saying that Jesus was “before” him, John was referring to Jesus’ preexistence (compare verse 15).

**John 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.**

“And I [John the Baptist] knew him [Jesus] not [as the Messiah].” Of course John knew his cousin personally, but he did not know Jesus as Messiah until the dove lighted on him.

**John 1:32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.**

Why did the Holy Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and abide on Jesus? It was because God had previously told John that a *literal* manifestation of a dove would identify Messiah by alighting and abiding on him. Hence the dove was a mark of identification. The Holy Spirit is an *invisible* power, but in transferring the Holy Spirit, God chose to use a dove to manifest the Spirit (as opposed to the tongues of fire that appeared at Pentecost).

Why was a “dove” used to represent the Holy Spirit? The dove is a symbol of peace, humility, and purity. When Noah sent the dove out the second time after the Flood waters had abated, it returned with an olive branch in its beak. The olive “peace” branch represents Jesus; the dove pictures the Holy Spirit. In regard to the dove symbolizing peace, when the dove returned to Noah with the olive branch, the signification was that not only had the waters assuaged, but they had dried off the face of the ground. With the waters having destroyed the ungodly, a new era was beginning.

**John 1:33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.**

Notice that the dove *remained* on Jesus for a while. The thought of the dove (the Holy Spirit) *abiding* or *remaining* on Jesus was foretold in Isaiah 11:2, “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” Of course this prophecy applies primarily to the Kingdom. Jesus’ disposition helps the Church now, but it will especially help the world in the next age. Jesus will be the wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, and the everlasting (age-lasting) Father to the world.

**John 1:34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.**

After his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days, but now, upon his return, John the Baptist had the opportunity to introduce him to those nearby.

**John 1:35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;**

**John 1:36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!**

**John 1:37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.**

Those in Jesus' day who were familiar with Scripture would have known that a lamb prefigured Messiah, even though they did not understand the suffering aspect. It is strange, really, that the suffering aspect was not understood better. This shows that we can be familiar with something, see it all the time, read it, etc.—like the blood of the lamb on the lintels of the door at Passover implying a suffering death—and yet not get the point.

John the Baptist's humility is again apparent. He was happy to have his disciples transfer over to Jesus and was not just trying to gain numbers for himself. Later he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." The humility of Elisabeth, John's mother, was impressed upon him. When she was pregnant and Mary came to her house, Elisabeth remonstrated with her: "You are the mother of my Lord. What are you doing here? I should be visiting *you* because you are carrying the one who is preferred." John's background was prepared from the womb, as was that of Moses, Paul, Timothy, Jeremiah, etc., because they had a special function to perform.

The "two disciples" were John Zebedee and Andrew (verse 40). It was characteristic for the Apostle John not to identify himself in his Gospel.

**John 1:38** Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

**John 1:39** He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

The "tenth hour" was 4 p.m. Notice Jesus' method. As he was walking along, John the Baptist pointed to him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Two of John's disciples then began to follow Jesus. (This incident is being *visually* presented, as opposed to the other Gospels, which are more historically presented. John's Gospel reads as if we are *right there*.) Jesus *turned* (this little detail enlivens the narrative) and asked, "What seek ye?" The two disciples responded, "Rabbi, where do you dwell?" Jesus answered, "Come and see." Those who had fellowship with Jesus could sense a difference right away—he was a different personality from any they had known previously.

**John 1:40** One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

Andrew was one of the two disciples. By implication, John (the apostle-to-be) was the other disciple. We can be sure of this conclusion because the incident is recorded only in his Gospel.

**John 1:41** He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

Andrew first found "his own brother Simon."

**John 1:42** And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.

Notice Andrew's reaction. Presumably this all happened the same day. When John and Andrew saw where Jesus would stay, it was 4 p.m. Then, with a point of contact, Andrew would have *run* to his home to get Simon Peter, and both came back to the place where Jesus was abiding.

Next Jesus looked at Peter and made a seemingly strange announcement—without any introduction being given. "You are Simon, the son of Jona. You shall be called Cephas." Later, in recording this incident, John commented that Cephas means "a stone."

Probably Andrew had not discussed with Jesus that he was going home to get his brother Peter. Thus Jesus' announcement of Peter's name (Simon) and his kinship was *startling*. This would be a sign to Peter that the Master knew him and his background even *before* his arrival. Jesus used this technique several times to prove his Messiahship, and especially in connection with gathering his disciples.

The second part of Jesus' statement regarding Simon being called Cephas was meaningless for the moment but very startling at a later time. Peter was impetuous. He did what he pleased and was no man's lackey. He feared no one according to the flesh, yet ultimately this one would be called "a stone."

Jesus wanted to impress upon the apostles that they were *foreknown*, that he knew about them *before* they contacted him. That is an important point.

**John 1:43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.**

**John 1:44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.**

**John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**

**John 1:46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.**

Jesus sought out Philip, who was of the town of Bethsaida at the *north* end of the Sea of Galilee. Bethabara was at the *south* end of Galilee. Evidently, the first day, when Andrew and John saw Jesus, he was going along the eastern shore and stopped somewhere en route for the night. In the meantime, Andrew ran as fast as he could to the northern end of Galilee to get Peter. Except in rare instances, the Gospels suppress too much emotionalism, but there is much drama in Andrew's getting Simon, their return, and Jesus' prophecy about Peter. A lot of activity occurred that day!

The next day Jesus went to Bethsaida—a little jaunt—and hunted up Philip. Nothing is recorded as to how Jesus convinced Philip of his Messiahship, but we know there was a conversation because right after that, Philip ran to get Nathanael, saying, "We have found the Messiah."

The pronoun "we" suggests that there was now a tiny nucleus following Jesus: John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and then Nathanael. Notice that Jesus sought out Philip, and not vice versa as with the others. Actually, with *all* of them, there was a "planned" contact, and Jesus knew in advance where each one would be. The formal call to apostleship would come later. At this point, the apostles were being attracted to Jesus like a magnet. It is interesting that they found him but then returned to their fishing business. These early moments are exciting—we can see interest building in regard to the Messiah.

"Philip findeth Nathanael." It is natural to seek your best friend first. And we can see there was a close relationship here, which is not always true of brothers and/or sisters.

When Philip found Nathanael, he said to him, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Philip's words reveal that there had been a discussion with Jesus earlier. That is how Philip knew that Jesus came from Nazareth and that he was ostensibly the son of Joseph. The Law spoke of Jesus in the sacrifices primarily. Also, Moses said a prophet would be raised up like unto him of the Jewish brethren

(Deut. 18:15,18).

If we put ourselves in Nathanael's place, we can better understand the situation. Philip rushed up to him excitedly to announce that the Messiah had been found. Nathanael's immediate reaction was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nazareth was looked down upon because no prophets had come from there. It was a barren territory in the Old Testament, whereas Bethlehem, Judah, Benjamin, etc., were origins of important personages. Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem, he was considered to be from Nazareth, showing his long-time residency there—20 to 22 years, from his return from Egypt until age 30.

Probably, too, there was a personality difference between Philip and Nathanael, Philip being enthusiastic by nature, whereas Nathanael was more of a quiet thinker. On other occasions, Nathanael might have said to Philip, "Calm down. Let's think this matter over and reason on it." Nathanael wanted to be convinced with reason.

Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see." In other words, Philip had sufficient confidence in Jesus' being the Messiah that he felt they should not tarry and discuss the matter but should just go to Jesus so that Nathanael could see for himself.

Why was Nathanael also called Bartholomew? Bartholomew was Greek, and Nathanael was Hebrew. Names were given when the apostles were on a mountain (Mark 3:13-19).

**John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!**

**John 1:48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.**

**John 1:49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.**

**John 1:50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.**

With Nathanael, Jesus used the same technique of indicating foreknowledge that he had used with Peter: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" However, Nathanael felt a little resentment: "How do you know who I am? Whence do you know me?" Jesus' answer about Nathanael's being under the fig tree was a mark of identification that floored Nathanael. (Romans 2:28,29 defines a true "Jew"/Israelite.)

Jesus had been residing in this area for 36 hours after his return from the wilderness. It is very possible that, before Philip came, Nathanael had already heard that an unusual personage was in the area and that possibly he was the Messiah. Nathanael would have taken the matter to the Lord in prayer. He went under the foliage of a fig tree and prayed in privacy regarding the veracity of who Messiah was, for he did not want to be deceived.

When Philip came along, he would not have known about Nathanael's praying. Philip called, "Nathanael! Nathanael!" With that, Nathanael emerged from the fig tree, and the rest of the incident is recorded. But Philip had to *search* for Nathanael in order to find him.

When Jesus mentioned the fig tree, it was as convincing of his Messiahship as was his appearance with a wounded body to Thomas after the resurrection. "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God!" Nathanael knew this was a supernatural revelation. Jesus then told Nathanael that he would see *greater* things than the answer to, and knowledge of, prayer under the fig tree.

**John 1:51** And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Verse 51 not only was a further sign to Nathanael but also is a prophecy of the future. Jesus gave two signs to Peter: (1) “Thou art Simon the son of Jona,” and (2) “Thou shalt be called Cephas.” Jesus gave two signs to Nathanael: (1) “I saw thee under the fig tree,” and (2) “Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon [before] the Son of man”—a prophecy to be fulfilled in the Kingdom.

The “angels of God” who will ascend and descend will be the Great Company in the Kingdom. (In this age, the holy angels ascend and descend, but Nathanael would not see these. Hebrews 1:14 is the Scriptural proof regarding the holy angels at the present time: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”) The real fulfillment will occur in the Kingdom. At that time, the Great Company will supersede the other angels in ministering. They will be the messengers, the go-betweens, between the Ancient Worthies and the glorified Church. Incidentally, the Greek preposition translated “upon” should have been rendered “before.”

How do these thoughts pertain to Jesus’ conversation with Nathanael? Just as Nathanael’s own prayer (of faith) was answered, so he will see prayers of mankind answered in the Kingdom. Communication in the next age will be, to a great extent, through prayer. Just as Philip was an “angel” calling Nathanael because Jesus had indirectly, through foreknowledge, sent Philip, so the Great Company will be “angels” in the Kingdom. In other words, Nathanael’s *miraculous* answer to *secret* prayer will occur on a *large* scale in the Kingdom.

The *ladder* of communication is that the Great Company will be the go-betweens for the spiritual Church and the material (or human) Ancient Worthies. For a communication link to be established, there would have to be spirit beings—just as now spirit-being holy angels connect us with the heavenly realm. “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chron. 16:9). The same principle will apply in the Kingdom. The Great Company will descend *before* Jesus, up and down the “ladder.”

The Levites (the Great Company) will be given as a gift to the priesthood (the Little Flock). Because the Great Company have one foot with personal attachments down here and the other foot with personal attachments to the Lord Jesus, they are hindered from attaining the Little Flock. Since they have that disposition in the present life, their reward (presuming they renew their consecration and are deemed worthy of life) will be along these same lines. What proves to be a hindrance in the present life will, in the final analysis, prove to be a blessing, nevertheless. *No* member of the Great Company will ever attain to the stature of *any* member of the Little Flock, no matter how long eternity is. Jesus said of these, “I never knew you [as Little Flock]”; that is, he never recognized them because they never attained to that stature (Matt. 7:23). The Great Company get to a level of fellowship, friendship, and sonship but not to the elite Little Flock level.

**John 2:1** And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

On the “third day,” Jesus left the northern part of Galilee and traveled to Cana, a little town about halfway between Capernaum and Nazareth that was within a day’s journey from Bethsaida. And Bethsaida and Capernaum were next to each other at the north end of the Sea of Galilee, where the Jordan River enters.

In his various excursions, Jesus probably followed the route on the back side of the Horns of Hittim. This shortcut required a little climbing, but it saved a couple of hours.

**Q:** If we trace Jesus' itinerary, John 1:29 mentions "the next day" when John first saw Jesus after the latter's return from 40 days in the wilderness, John 1:35 says "again the next day," John 1:43 says "the day following," and John 2:1 reads "the third day." Were four days involved here? Was the term "the *third day*" used in John 2:1 because of the antitype, with the tie-in between the First and Second Advents?

**A:** Calling it "the third day" could very well be because of the antitype. The three days began to count with John 1:35 because that is when Jesus started his *activity*. The day before he merely arrived on the scene. In other words, John 1:35 is day 1, John 1:43 is day 2, and John 2:1 is day 3.

Day 1: John Zebedee, Andrew, and Peter associated with Jesus. (John 1:35)

Day 2: Jesus found Philip, who found Nathanael. Both followed Jesus. (John 1:43)

Day 3: Wedding in Cana. (John 2:1)

The "third day" can also be reckoned from the following standpoint. The first 1,000-year day started with Adam, and there are seven 1,000-year days in all. Jesus' First Advent occurred in the fifth 1,000-year day.

Number of years that Jesus was born after Adam:	4,128 years
Jesus' age at this time:	+30 years
Total years:	4,158 years

In the seventh 1,000-year day, which began with the Harvest period, the Church will be complete. Therefore, if we consider the fifth day as the *first day* regarding Jesus and the Church, then the seventh day would be the *third day*.

1,000 years	=	1st day	
2,000 years	=	2nd day	
3,000 years	=	3rd day	
4,000 years	=	4th day	
5,000 years	=	5th day	or 1st day
6,000 years	=	6th day	or 2nd day
7,000 years	=	7th day	or 3rd day (when marriage of The Christ takes place)

**John 2:2** And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

**John 2:3** And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

Jesus was among the guests at the wedding when the limited supply of wine ran out. His mother Mary said to him, "They have no wine," expecting him to do something about the situation. Her expectation was based on her experience with Jesus prior to his beginning his ministry. Evidently, Joseph had died, and she looked to her son for her livelihood and support. She was probably about 55 years old now.

**John 2:4** Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

Notice how Jesus addressed Mary: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" This text puts the relationship in perspective. Mary is *not* the mother of God, and Jesus did *not* reverence her as a superior. Hence this verse should curb the worship of Mary (the doctrine of Mariolatry). Roman Catholics look to Mary more than to Jesus, thinking that if they pray to her as a tender woman, she will be more amenable to a sinner approaching God. She has even been called the Mediatrix, but the man Christ Jesus is the *ONLY* Mediator between God and man.

Jesus similarly addressed Mary in what might seem to be a curt manner when he was on the Cross. He said to John, “Behold thy mother!” and to Mary, “Woman, behold thy son!” (John 19:26,27).

Why did Jesus say, “Mine hour is not yet come”? He was not prepared to start his miracles yet, and when the time came, it would be his *Father’s* bidding, not his mother’s. Perhaps, too, he wanted more of the disciples with him before beginning his miracles. Thus far there were only five, and Jesus had not yet started his public ministry.

Jesus could also have had in mind that he would not drink wine with his disciples at a *marriage* until the Church was complete and beyond the veil. Then the greatest “marriage” of all eternity would take place. It was Jesus’ custom to drink wine during his ministry but not necessarily at a marriage.

Nevertheless, Jesus did go ahead and perform the miracle, thus providing wine. Apparently, he reflected on the matter and then considered the circumstances providential. At first, he did not respond, but then he changed his mind.

The *Diaglott* has “O woman,” which is a little softer. “Woman,” a common form of address back there, was not disrespectful, but neither was it as familiar as “Mother,” the natural form of address. Jesus was not rude in using the common courteous address.

Although Jesus did not use this address at age 12 when his mother found him three days later in the Temple asking advanced questions, even there he did not address her as “Mother.” His reply, “I must be about my Father’s business,” was a *tender rebuke* (Luke 2:49). Normally, a mother would have been quite within her rights to seek her child and reprimand him for disappearing for so long and having the audacity to talk with the priests in the Temple, but Jesus did not apologize and say he was sorry. This, too, put Mary in her proper place in the relationship and helps to offset the worship of Mary. Just recently the Roman Catholic Church made the doctrine of Mary’s *bodily* ascension to heaven a cardinal tenet.

Of course Mary had no idea that Jesus would or could perform the miracle of turning water into wine, but she obviously had confidence in him as being an unusually capable and sensible person. He was the best one to ask to solve this problem.

**John 2:5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.**

Mary did not let the matter drop but gave another little push.

Pastor Russell suggested in regard to other occasions—and it would also apply here—that Jesus was accustomed to reflecting on circumstances that arose from day to day as possibly being something the Father was initiating. In other words, he did not look on anything as just happenstance. First, he calmed his mother down, as it were, but then he thought, “This is an unusual circumstance. Maybe God wants me to supply the wine.” Then Jesus saw the water pots, each about three feet high.

**John 2:6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.**

**John 2:7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.**

**John 2:8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.**

And they bare it.

**John 2:9** When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

**John 2:10** And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

**John 2:11** This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

While the governor, or ruler, of the feast acted as the host, the responsibility for the marriage feast seemed to lie on the bridegroom's side. (See footnote in the *Diaglott*, page 317.) Evidently, the ruler was not the bridegroom's father, although his identity is not given. One translation calls the ruler the "steward" of the feast. At any rate, he was appointed to that task, just as we might appoint a master of ceremonies today.

At the feast, the tables and/or couches were arranged in a crescent or U-shape so that the servants could walk up the middle of the U with the food. In this practical way, when the guests lay on one elbow with their feet extending outward, the servants had no trouble serving around the feet of the guests. They merely entered the U and served.

Apparently, the water pots were not empty but were in various states of fullness. Jesus commanded that they be filled up not just to the neck but to the brim. Then liquid was drawn out and borne to the governor/ruler/steward.

Bro. Henry Sontag gave a beautiful application to the six water pots in suggesting that they represent the six Volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*. His reasoning was based upon three points: (1) the third day (the Harvest period), (2) the proximity to the marriage (of The Christ), and (3) the fact that water represents truth and wine pictures the *joys* of the truth. Bread and water have been supplied to the Church all down the age, even though they were scarce at times, but in the Harvest period, that which was truth became *exhilarating* truth. The present Harvest message is not just truth, but truth with a ring, sound, and melody it has not had since the First Advent. When Jesus said, "I will drink the wine anew with you in the Kingdom," he was referring not to the wine of suffering, death, and blood but to the wine of JOY. A marriage is a time of joy. The "wine" goes beyond the Memorial to the Kingdom.

Thus the changing of water into wine was the "beginning of [Jesus'] miracles" at the First Advent. And when truth came at the Second Advent with regard to Jesus' invisible presence, that very truth (plus many other truths) evidenced the Second Advent. "That servant" and the abundance of truths served are *proofs* of the Second Advent (Matt. 24:46). A blessedness and a joy await those who come to the end of the 1,335 days of Daniel 12:12.

A confirmation of the six water pots being the six Volumes is the seven-plague picture in the Book of Revelation. Just as the six water pots were vessels *containing* wine, so the seven vials *contain* seven plagues and the Volumes *contain* exhilarating truths.

The original purpose of the water was for the guests, upon arrival, to wash the dust of the way off their feet and hands. And so the Word of God is sometimes pictured as a laver in which one cleanses himself by imbibing the truth. That cleansing and refreshing are along one line, but the wine has a different effect—it brings exhilaration, joy, and enthusiasm. Thus the water of purifying becomes the wine of joy. The same element is converted, having a *new* effect.

The usual strategy was to serve the best wine first and the lesser wine later when taste buds were dulled. It is interesting not only that Jesus created the miracle but also that the quality of the wine was vastly superior to the wine served earlier. Since this was not the normal procedure, here is another clue that there is an antitype. An additional clue for an antitype is the fact that the miracle was called the “beginning of miracles.” And it is significant that such specific details were recorded.

*Smith’s Bible Dictionary* has some interesting comments about Cana. John 21:2 states that Nathanael came from Cana, and this could well be the connection as to how the disciples received invitations to the wedding there. Also, the name Cana means “place of reeds.” We think of reeds as *writing* instruments or the ingredient for making papyrus *paper*. This would be significant in light of the six water pots representing the six Volumes. The Pastor was the man with the *writer’s inkhorn*, and Cana was the place of reeds, or *writings*. Also, “cane” is a dried reed—something like a bamboo shoot (soft or hollow inside and light in weight).

The five disciples (John, Peter, Andrew, Nathanael, and Philip) already believed on Jesus, so this miracle was a *confirmation*, establishing *more* faith. However, of the five at this time, Nathanael’s faith seemed to be the greatest, for he called Jesus the “Son of God” and the “King of Israel” (John 1:49). Seeing this miracle at the wedding was very reassuring to the disciples, and Jesus bore a lot of watching thereafter.

Another application of the water being changed into wine could pertain to the Kingdom. After the marriage of The Christ, the Old Law Covenant (the “water”) will be exchanged for the New Law Covenant (the “wine”). The *stone* water pots picture the *stone* tablets of the Law.

Jesus “manifested forth his [future] glory” in this miracle. This phrase suggests that the incident is typical, that there is a lesson in regard to Jesus’ *future* glory.

**John 2:12** After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

Cana, which was near Nazareth, was on an elevation; thus Jesus went “down” to Capernaum. “Not many days” is a colloquial expression meaning “not a long time.” Jesus probably dwelled in the Galilee area about three months and then went to Jerusalem. His “brethren” were his fleshly brothers and sisters.

**John 2:13** And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

**John 2:14** And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

**John 2:15** And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables;

**John 2:16** And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.

**John 2:17** And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

Jesus was in Capernaum not too long, and then he went to Jerusalem for the Passover; that is, verse 13 occurred approximately six months after Jesus’ baptism. In the meantime, he had been

in the wilderness for 40 days, seen John where he was baptizing at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, and stayed a short while in Capernaum.

There were *two* cleansings of the Temple, one at the beginning and one at the end of Jesus' ministry. This cleansing was the earlier one. Both cleansings have antitypes.

Only John's Gospel shows that Jesus' ministry was 3 1/2 years long, and the mention of this first cleansing of the Temple helps to establish that length of time or chronology. John inserted many facts, events, and details that the other writers omitted, and every insertion is significant. For example, John's mention of four Passovers proves that Jesus' ministry lasted 3 1/2 years.

John 2:13	-	6 months after Jesus' ministry began
John 5:1	-	1 1/2 years after Jesus' ministry began
John 6:4	-	2 1/2 years after Jesus' ministry began
John 11:55	-	3 1/2 years after Jesus' ministry began

Luke was very careful in other ways—mathematically, chronologically, etc.—but he omitted proofs along this line. Hence *all* of the Gospels are needed. Luke pinpointed events according to the year of a particular Caesar's reign, and he mentioned the officials in a way that is important, whereas John was very observant on other points.

This earlier cleansing of the Temple was tied in with John's statement that the "Jews' passover was at hand" (verse 13). Of the four Passovers during Jesus' ministry, this one was the first. Incidentally, John called three of them "passover," and one he called the "feast."

Jesus used a "scourge of small cords" to drive out the sheep, the oxen, and the money changers. Imagine Jesus' overturning the tables with the money still on them! His righteous indignation here reminds us of Moses' reaction when he saw the golden calf.

The word "sitting" in verse 14 implies *habitual, established* practices. *Reprint* article No. 4122 states that what Jesus did to the money changers any Jew could have done because under the Law, these abuses should not have been permitted. But no one did the right thing until Jesus came on the scene. Leviticus 19:30 reads, "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD." Jesus was angry at the lack of reverence for the sanctuary.

The money-changing tables would have been in the Court of the Gentiles, the outer court near the Sheep Gate. This "business" could have been set up right outside, and then it would not have been in the Temple precincts.

The same *Reprint* article said that the shekel of the sanctuary had to be used. Hence the money changers exchanged Roman money or coinage for the shekel. The shekel was made more than a century earlier and thus was scarce at this time. As a result, the money changers charged a high exchange rate.

Roman money had wings on it, and Roman coins had imprints of the Caesars. Since the Israelites were looking for Messiah to deliver them from the yoke of Roman bondage, they forbid the use of Roman money in the Temple. Although the Old Testament "shekel" was of a certain value, size, and weight, coins other than the shekel could be used in the Temple under other circumstances. In other words, it was because the Israelites were subjected to Roman (*foreign*) rule that the shekel was required at this time.

It is claimed that the imprint of coins placed on the eyes of Jesus' crucified body authenticates the shroud of Tourin. The coins are even narrowed down to the era of Pontius Pilate, but how *preposterous* to think that coins with symbols of *Roman* authority were placed on his eyes! *If* coins had been used, they would have been the shekel of the sanctuary.

The doves of the money changers were not released from their cages because recovering the birds would have been difficult if not impossible. Hence Jesus was not indiscriminate in his actions. On the other hand, looking for the scattered coins would have kept the money changers busy. The account is stated briefly—it is not overdramatized—so there are many additional details if the account is considered in depth. John was not appealing to the masses *per se*. Rather, the *condensed* account is for the humble, the truth-seeker.

“The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” is a quote from Psalm 69:9. The disciples associated this Scripture with Messiah’s having a consuming zeal. Psalm 119:139 is similar in regard to Jesus and the Church: “My zeal hath consumed me [cut me off—King James margin], because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.” Our zeal should lead to our being faithful *unto death*.

**John 2:18** Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

**John 2:19** Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

**John 2:20** Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

**John 2:21** But he spake of the temple of his body.

**John 2:22** When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

The “Jews” here would be the bystanders who witnessed Jesus’ overturning the tables, not the ones looking for the scattered coins on their hands and knees. The bystanders could have included some of the scribes and Pharisees, but mostly they were the common people.

Even today among the Orthodox, Jews tend to look for “signs.” Jesus’ boldness was apparent; that is, he felt compelled to overturn the tables of the money changers. The sign Jesus gave was his statement, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Some of the signs will take a long time to prove, and this sign is *yet future* in fulfillment. The “body” is the mystical body, the Church. One clue that Jesus was not referring to his own literal body is that he said, “I will raise it up,” and *God*, not Jesus, raised the Son from death. (We are reminded of the sign Jesus gave in regard to his crucifixion: Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days.)

It took Herod 46 years just to make the additions (such as Solomon’s Porch) to Zerubbabel’s Temple. Therefore, Jesus’ statement about “three days” was not understood because he was speaking of *thousand-year* days. There are 7,000 years in the Seventh Day of the Creative Week. As already explained, the last three thousand-year periods are the fifth, sixth, and seventh (or the first, second, and third) “days.” From the creation of Adam until Jesus’ birth was 4,128 years. Adding the 30 years Jesus lived before his baptism makes 4,158 years. Being over 4,000 years, the time setting was the *fifth* day. The year 1872 marked the end of 6,000 years from the *creation* of Adam, and since that time, we have been in the *third* day.

Verse 22 shows that the disciples applied Jesus’ statement about raising up the body the third day to him (the Head) literally. They did not realize the breadth of the statement.

**John 2:23** Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

Jesus did many miracles at this time. John 4:54 is *not* a contradiction: “This is again the *second*

miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into *Galilee*.” Little is written about the time Jesus spent in Judea. He did many miracles in the Jerusalem area and in Judea. However, the bulk of his ministry was up in Galilee, and the fourth chapter of John relates the second of these miracles in that vicinity.

**John 2:24** But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

**John 2:25** And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

Some liked the miracles Jesus performed. In addition to his disciples, pious Jews observed them. Some would think, “Thank God, the miracles are being done. Jesus must be a prophet or even possibly the Messiah.” But it was too early for Jesus to reveal his Messiahship, for he had not even started his ministry in force yet or gotten all 12 apostles. Thus he quieted the people down. In short, the timing was premature for him to be introduced as the Messiah.

Also, people are very fickle. For example, one could be a famous matador for years, but as he got older and made a couple of mistakes in the ring, the crowd would boo him. Being emotional, the masses are neither dependable nor principled. When things do not proceed as they wish, they readily vent their disapproval.

Thus Jesus knew that the timing here was abortive and that it would fizzle. His time was not yet. He had even said earlier, “Mine hour is not yet come” (John 2:4). He had a purposed ministry, and his apostles had to be selected. As a Jew, he had to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, and he began his ministry in force right after that.

Verses 23-25 were observations of John, who realized that Jesus had savvy. Paul also used savvy on occasion—for example, in discussing the mind of the carnal man versus the mind of the spiritual man. An experienced spiritual man perceives that which is natural as well as the spiritual. But the natural man—no matter how outstanding—cannot understand the things of the spirit. Stated another way, the spiritual man has the advantage of two viewpoints: the former and the present. That is somewhat the point here. Jesus knew how to properly balance the two, and how they would affect his ministry.

**John 3:1** There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

**John 3:2** The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

The Pastor suggested that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night because then the Master was freer to talk with him. Another thought is that this detail was inserted because Nicodemus, being a Pharisee, was not willing at this point to totally embrace Jesus and his teaching, and thus he came somewhat secretly. There was some intimidation on the part of Nicodemus, but of course, since he was a great teacher himself, it took much humility for him to go to Jesus, even at night. In view of his position, Nicodemus exhibited courage in going.

The statement “We know that thou art a teacher” shows that among the Pharisees, more than just Nicodemus were in sympathy with Jesus. In fact, the Scriptures say that many of the chief rulers believed on Jesus (John 12:42). The many were not a majority, but of the few individuals who accepted Jesus, a considerable number were priests. If even 5 percent of the priests accepted him, that would be quite remarkable, since even the majority of the common people came for superficial reasons: loaves, fishes, healing, and curiosity. Very few of the nation became disciples, so if a small percentage of the priests did so, it could be described as many.

Joseph of Arimathea was probably another early sympathizer. Gamaliel, although he did not become a disciple, was also a sympathizer. When some wanted to put Peter and the other apostles to death, Gamaliel stepped in and advised caution. He also raised the possibility—faint as it might be—that if the apostles were of God, no one could stop them. If not, the movement would “come to nought” (Acts 5:38,39). Thus Nicodemus could say “we”—not that he was appointed or coming on the basis of a commission but that he was not alone in harboring some sympathy for Jesus.

**John 3:3** Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

**Q:** We usually say that the word “born,” from the Greek root word *gennao*, should be translated “begotten.” “Except a man be *begotten* again, he cannot see [perceive, understand] the kingdom of God.” But couldn’t we use this Scripture in *both* senses because it would also be true that unless we have the spirit birth, we cannot “see,” or be part of, the Kingdom of God? The same Greek word (*eidon*) that is translated “see” is used, according to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, for a *literal* seeing as well as for a *figurative* understanding. Two examples of the literal meaning are “he saw Simon and Andrew” and “we have *seen* his star in the east” (Mark 1:16; Matt. 2:2).

**A:** Yes, *both* applications apply because of the illustrations used, the appropriateness both ways, and the fact that *gennao* can be used *either* way based on context. *Gennao* can mean either “begotten” or “born.” Context usually determines which of the two to use, and the context here in the third chapter of John is suitable for both lessons.

**John 3:4** Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?

The Pastor assumed (probably properly) that other remarks occurred between verses 3 and 4 in regard to Jesus’ Kingdom and his followers, but the Scriptures only call attention to being born of the Spirit. There was a lot in Nicodemus’s questions. His questions might seem rather foolish to us, especially since they came from a teacher of the Law, but actually, it is only by a miracle that we understand.

A certain naiveness was in the questions. With teachers or the wealthy and powerful who are attracted to the truth, a strain of humility is revealed in even their initial response to Jesus. Another example was Zacchaeus, the wealthy Jew who climbed a tree to see Jesus. To do that type of thing would normally be beneath the dignity of such an individual, but Zacchaeus did not care what others thought because he was interested in seeing Jesus. He climbed the tree because he was short in stature and he knew Jesus would go by that way. Therefore, this incident with Nicodemus revealed his humility. The three H’s—humility, honesty, and hunger—are essential for making progress in truth, and Nicodemus manifested all three characteristics here. Incidentally, when Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born *when he is old?*” he was probably putting *himself* in the picture.

Nicodemus approached this subject from the *natural* standpoint, although he did suspect that the great teacher Jesus had a reason for making the remark. Nicodemus wanted to know, so he inquired further. And of all beings, he said this to the *great* Logos, who had been reduced and transferred to Mary’s womb to be born as a human being!

Jesus did not pursue the line of reasoning that Nicodemus was presenting, although he did show the impropriety of such reasoning a little later in the conversation. Instead Jesus *drew out* Nicodemus. Evidently, Jesus knew that the initial comment Nicodemus made, and then his own response, would lead Nicodemus to make the query “How can a man be born again?”

**John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

Jesus answered that a man must be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Again there is a *double* application of *gennaō*. In fact, the double application applies *throughout* this incident. From one standpoint, we are begotten through full consecration (symbolized by water immersion) and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. From another standpoint, we are begotten of the “water” of truth, accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. These two things are necessary in order to make any real progress.

If we consider again the first standpoint, this would show the propriety of symbolizing the consecrated condition of heart in an *outward* manner. Water immersion, an act of humility, usually brings a reward—just as after his baptism, Jesus received the Holy Spirit and the dove came down. Many Christians have testified that when they took the step of water baptism, particularly those who were initially averse to it but who agreed at a later time, the immersion resulted in a further blessing.

Water is a symbol of the deeper truth of being buried into Christ. The Lord Jesus, Head of the Church, had water immersion. John the Baptist initiated water baptism but said, “He that cometh *after* me ... shall baptize ... with the Holy Spirit, and with fire” (Matt. 3:11). The “fire” had a *double* connotation: (1) It was unfavorable to be baptized with fire at the end of the Jewish Age in AD 69. The nation of Israel was baptized with trouble for having crucified Jesus. (2) The baptism of fire in the favorable sense occurred with the tongues of fire at Pentecost. The type of fire baptism—whether it would be favorable or unfavorable, a blessing or a curse—depended on the individual’s heart condition. Nicodemus, knowing about John’s baptizing, probably mentally associated verse 5 with water baptism.

Again Jesus mentioned the “kingdom of God.” He was showing how to be a member of that Kingdom, how to be blessed by it, and how to enter it. And that was the problem Nicodemus had—he wanted to know *how to become identified with the Kingdom*.

**John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

Verse 6 applies to *both* begettal and birth. When Jesus was on the earth, he was born of flesh and was *flesh*, but at his resurrection, he was born of the Holy Spirit and hence was *spirit*. He was begotten of flesh when implanted in Mary’s womb and born of flesh nine months later. He was begotten of the Spirit at Jordan and born of the Spirit 3 1/2 years later when raised from death following his crucifixion. Because Nicodemus was able to comprehend the begettal aspect better, Jesus’ emphasis was probably more along the lines of *begettal*, although he used the birth aspect later in his argument.

It is in the *present* life that we become identified with the Kingdom. We “enter” *now*. When discussing the same subject matter, Matthew’s Gospel uses the term “kingdom of *heaven*,” whereas John’s Gospel says “kingdom of *God*.” Jesus came to seek the Kingdom class; hence the important entry is in the present life. In the next life comes the reign.

**John 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.**

Again *both* begettal and birth would be true. However, the weight seems a little heavier toward begettal. “Begotten *from above*” is the thought.

Jesus’ words “Marvel not” imply that Nicodemus was marveling. In verse 8, Jesus used an illustration of the wind to show that there was credibility to the reasoning.

**John 3:8** The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Jesus was saying, “This subject is difficult to understand, Nicodemus, but you must admit we have an illustration in nature of something we cannot see that has power and reality. The wind is an invisible power. We can hear it howl and see it blow trees, but the power itself is invisible. Thus we can know of the existence of something, even if we cannot see it.” Certainly Nicodemus could say, “That is true.”

Jesus’ words would have helped Nicodemus greatly, even though he did not fully understand because he was thinking of the natural mother, the literal womb, etc. (that is, along *physical* lines). Jesus gave an illustration from nature of the wind to teach a *spiritual reality*. Jesus’ wisdom—to give such remarks on the spur of the moment—was remarkable. The power and the simplicity of his argument are astounding in talking to a man like Nicodemus.

Even here in verse 8, *gennaō* could be properly rendered *either* “born” or “begotten.” The reality of a physical begetting is a physical birth. The wind, an *invisible* power, is also a reality in what it is able to do, but the sound or the sight of what the wind can do is necessary to realize the existence of the power. What happens when the wind does not howl and the trees do not sway? Does that mean there is no such thing as wind? No! The wind *exists* regardless, but the sound and the sight of something being blown by the wind are *manifestations* of its existence that the human mind cannot fail to comprehend, even if it cannot be fully explained.

“Wind,” the Greek *pneuma*, can also be translated “spirit,” and the same illustration is true with regard to the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit breathes where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but thou knowest not whence it comes, or where it goes” (see *Diaglott*). The same principle that applies to the wind also applies to the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus had just said he had seen many miracles (verse 2); thus he had seen an *invisible* power in operation. And the Spirit is like the wind in that sometimes it is active and sometimes it is not—but it *always* exists.

Obviously, the conversation was much longer than what is recorded. As Nicodemus went home, he *reflected* on the conversation. The seed thoughts *percolated* and had a beneficial and remarkable effect as time went on. Nicodemus took the initial step of going to Jesus, and he was rewarded by the conversation. Later, after the Crucifixion, he and Joseph of Arimathea *boldly*, in the *sight* of the nation, took Jesus’ body down from the Cross in the daytime and wrapped and anointed it. The point is that at the initial meeting, Jesus used the best possible technique with Nicodemus, and Nicodemus was *benefited*.

**John 3:9** Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

Although Nicodemus did not fully understand, he could not deny the logic that an invisible thing can move and be heard. But his original question still did not seem to be answered: “How does one enter the Kingdom of God?”

**John 3:10** Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Jesus gently prodded Nicodemus. The Lord gives humiliating experiences to those who are very capable, not only in the beginning but all along life’s journey, to keep them humble. Consider the Apostle Paul. He had an infirmity in his flesh that constantly kept him in line for the duration of his life. The “infirmity” was weak eyesight plus a pathetic frame and a weak voice. Paul was an intellectual *giant*, a man of *tremendous* resources, yet these weaknesses continually reminded him of his imperfection in one way or another. That is how the Master

dealt with Nicodemus, and that is how God deals with us, yet we are told that we should *never* hurt the feelings of others. Sometimes people unconsciously hurt the feelings of others, but it works out for good. We should respect the feelings of others and give honor to whom honor is due, but there are times when it is necessary to make a remark—no matter how wonderful a person is—to bring that individual into line. Of course the thought is not that we should feel superior, for it is shameful to hear someone say, “I stumbled him on that point” or “I asked him a question that he could not answer.” That attitude is a mark of smallness or meanness and is in very poor taste. The point is that the bringing down of Nicodemus was *beneficial*. It was *necessary* for Jesus to make this remark in verse 10.

**John 3:11** Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

Why did Jesus use the pronouns “we” and “our”? (1) He was referring to his relationship to the Father. The Father knew—and Jesus knew because he spoke the words the Father had given him. (2) Jesus used the pronouns as the counterpart of what Nicodemus had said (verse 2), “We know you are a teacher come from God because of the miracles you have done.”

Jesus had the amazing ability or capability to retain all the comments Nicodemus had made. Jesus was saying, “You came to me with the expression ‘We know,’ and now we know.” He was referring to the Heavenly Father and the other angels, who would know of the existence of some of these things. Thus Jesus answered Nicodemus on the same level of scholarship. The level on which an argument is presented should be the same level on which it is answered. For example, we should talk to an uneducated person on the same level. God condescends in approaching all He draws on *various* levels of communication. The humblest plowboy is approached differently from the intellectual. Nicodemus, a doctor of the Law, approached Jesus with a “We know,” so Jesus kept the rapport on that same level.

Conversely, in approaching the Heavenly Father in prayer, we must be reverential and show proper respect for His lofty level and station: “*Hallowed* be thy name.” We should not rush into His presence unless there is an emergency.

**John 3:12** If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

This remark is similar to what Jesus said to his own disciples: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). In other words, Jesus was saying to Nicodemus, “I have much to tell you, but ye cannot receive it at this time. I would be wasting my effort and time to explain *heavenly* things to you if on the *earthly* illustrations used to open your mind (such as the wind), there is not full understanding. It would be foolish for me to go to a higher level of reasoning.”

**John 3:13** And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

The clause “which is in heaven” is spurious. Incidentally, there are quite a few little spurious parts in the Gospel of John.

Jesus was giving the reason why he *knew* and could speak with such *authority*. He was the only one—he was the exception to the rule of all humanity—who had been up in heaven and come down from there (compare Acts 2:34).

**John 3:14** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

**John 3:15** That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**John 3:17** For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Why did Jesus, in this setting, make the comment that (1) Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, (2) God loved the world, and (3) the purpose of the Son's mission of coming into the world was not to condemn it? Of course the serpent on the pole alluded to Jesus' coming crucifixion. In verse 2, Nicodemus had said, "We know that thou art a teacher *come from God.*" Now Jesus was explaining that he did come from God, that he had been up in heaven but came to earth. God had sent His own Son, and just as the people who looked at the serpent on the pole were spared, so those who *faithfully* believe into Jesus will get everlasting life.

What did Jesus mean when he said, "The Son of man [must] be lifted up"? When the serpent in the wilderness was raised on a pole, if any of the Israelites who had been bitten by poisonous vipers looked steadfastly on that serpent, their malady was cured and they lived. But what did this incident have to do with the reasoning with Nicodemus? When Jesus met anyone—Nathanael under the fig tree, Peter, etc.—he gave "advance" information that was known supernaturally. Nathanael was startled to hear Jesus mention his being under the fig tree (in prayer). Simon was told that his name would be Cephas. Jesus gave each one something that would help his belief. When Peter later accepted his name, he realized to a greater depth Jesus' power of perception—and thus that he was the Messiah. In each case, it was a *delayed* response, realized sooner (Nathanael) or later (Peter). Here Jesus told Nicodemus something to help him later on, something to establish his faith. One such remark was about the power of an *invisible* Spirit and how its existence can be known. Jesus was also telling in advance that he would be on the Cross. Although Nicodemus did not grasp the point at that time, when he later saw Jesus on the Cross, as being accursed on the tree, he recalled this conversation and believed. And Jesus had given the *reason* for the curse. As the serpent was put on the pole in the wilderness as an offset for sin, so Jesus had to die as a serpent—as a curse—in the eyes of fellow man. Beholding Jesus on the Cross, Nicodemus got the point: Jesus was the Messiah! In both cases—with the serpent and with Jesus—the purpose of being lifted up was *salvation*. Then Nicodemus boldly rushed to get the costly spices and help Joseph of Arimathea take the body off the Cross and prepare it for burial. These incidents show Jesus' *perception* of those who are drawn of the Father and come to him. What profound wisdom! Incidentally, Nicodemus brought *100 pounds* of myrrh and aloes (John 19:39).

Thus there were *delayed* benefits to those who came to Jesus. He could see that the Father had prompted Nicodemus to come for that conference. Nicodemus's reason for coming at night was partly wisdom and prudence, for until he knew for sure about Jesus, why should he stick his head in a noose?

According to the Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial, the whole council of the Sanhedrin concurred with the judgment of Annas and Caiaphas in condemning Jesus (Matt. 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:70,71). However, Joseph of Arimathea did not consent, and probably Nicodemus did not agree either (Luke 23:50,51). They may have dissented by their *absence*. The Gospel accounts do not give the specifics. Perhaps Nicodemus just said, "I cannot go along with this."

**John 3:18** He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

As shown in the *Diaglott*, the words “on” and “in” should have been rendered differently in verse 18: “He that believeth on [*into*] him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in [*into*] the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Anyone who does not make a full consecration remains under Adamic condemnation. This principle would apply on into the Kingdom, for sooner or later each member of the human race must consecrate in order to have the Adamic condemnation removed.

**John 3:19** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

**John 3:20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

As in the first chapter of John, verses 19 and 20 are an allusion to the first chapter in Genesis. Just as God was developing the earth and in the process brought forth light, so Jesus' coming at the First Advent was a further development in God's plan. Without the proper appreciation, the blessing is missed, for *those who love darkness miss the light*.

The word “hate” in “hateth the light” can be meant in the sense of Jacob and Esau, that is, “love less.” Many do not hate the light in the fullest sense, but they lack a sufficient appreciation or respect for the light. In other words, there are different degrees of hating the light. Thus many lack a sufficient interest in or affinity for righteousness. With some, there is an element of fear, a lack of faith, or some other reason for not responding to the light.

**Comment:** Another factor could be the degree of sin in the individual. Light exposes sin, and the greater the sin, the less the person would want the light to reveal it.

**Reply:** That would probably be the rationale of the majority. However, some respond exactly the *opposite* way, such as Mary Magdalene.

**Comment:** That principle is shown by Jesus' parable about two debtors in Luke 7:41-43. “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.”

The word “reprov'd” can also be rendered “discovered.” Both words would be appropriate. Sometimes it is the fear of discovery, and sometimes it is, additionally, the fear of reproof.

**John 3:21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

This is an opposite experience from those in verse 20. The experiences of the two classes are summarized. Those who are right-hearted want the light to search them out. They hope that their deeds will be approved of the Lord and that they will be to His glory in the final analysis. They want to know about anything that is amiss, and then they work to get rid of the fault. They want the wrong deeds to be eliminated, forgiven, purged/cleansed, and then replaced by other deeds that are acceptable to the Lord.

Such should be our feeble efforts to know and to do God's will. That was David's heart attitude: “Cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Psa. 19:12). We should want the light to come into our lives and make the faults manifest so that they can be corrected.

“He that doeth truth” applies *prior* to consecration. The Apostle Paul is a good example. He was

actually doing something very reprehensible in the Lord's sight by persecuting Christians, but his heart was right, for he truly believed he was serving God. And that can happen to others. We may not even know our own hearts, but the Lord does. If we want to do right, we just need to be guided and redirected.

Colossians 1:21 carries on this thought: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." A person might at heart and in conscience want a better way of life, but he realizes he is in a prison house of sin. He finds he cannot do what he wants to, and he gets addicted to bad habits of all kinds, yet he is not at heart in harmony with these bad habits. The mind is searching for the right thing, but the flesh does not know Christ as the way of victory and escape. This is the class the Lord is looking for.

And even when one consecrates, the battle continues. Paul said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.... For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:19,22-24). We want to be perfect and to fulfill the ideal. Although we cannot do this in the flesh, we should be running in that direction. In spite of the intensity of our desire, a just man falleth seven times, but he gets up and presses onward, still running toward the goal (Prov. 24:16). We walk not after the flesh but after the spirit (Rom. 8:1).

Let us consider Colossians 1:21 again. Prior to consecration, the mind of this class is right, but the mind has a conscience that tells the individual his deeds do not square with his mind. Consequently, his mind is troubled because of the flesh. However, others are not inhibited at all. Either their consciences are seared, or they are so wicked and/or incorrigible that nothing bothers them. There are no brakes or restraints.

**John 3:22** After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

**John 3:23** And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

Aenon (near Salim) was near Galilee but not quite as far north as Bethabara. Two different kinds of baptism were going on simultaneously: John's and Jesus'. Of course Jesus' baptism was on a higher plane: immersion into his death—full consecration.

We are living at a peculiar time in the end of the age. The risen saints are present with Jesus on the other side of the veil in the air (earth's atmosphere), not in heaven (1 Thess. 4:17). Other saints are still in the flesh on this side of the veil. This condition was typified by John the Baptist and Jesus both being on the scene at the First Advent (see verse 30).

**John 3:24** For John was not yet cast into prison.

Verse 24 helps to set a *time* framework by confirming that the casting out of the money changers in John 2:13-17 occurred at the *beginning* of Jesus' ministry. Thus there were *two* cleansings of the Temple, one at the beginning and one at the end.

**John 3:25** Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

**John 3:26** And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

**John 3:27** John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

**John 3:28** Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

**John 3:29** He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

According to the *Diaglott*, the question about purifying arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew (singular). Near the end of John the Baptist's ministry, this discussion developed between, evidently, the Pharisees, who had agitated the issue of purification on other occasions, and John's disciples. The disciples returned to John, addressed him as "Rabbi" out of great respect, and then recounted how he had borne witness of Jesus, who now also baptized and "all men come to him." At this time, John was baptizing up near Galilee, far to the north, whereas Jesus' disciples were baptizing in Judea.

It is interesting that some stayed with John the Baptist, even though he had pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. They did not want to progress beyond John; they did not desire a separation. The same thing happens in the Christian household of faith. Many are believers, but they do not give their heart to the Lord.

In regard to purifying, whenever, for example, the Jews went to the market to buy vegetables, they ceremoniously washed their hands upon returning home to get rid of the filth from possibly dealing with a Gentile. And before eating, they ceremoniously washed to prevent pollution. Hence they had a "form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5). For the same reason, they publicly fasted and uttered long prayers. Jesus, on the other hand, was not given to rituals. John's disciples were now questioning him about purification, an *outward* sign of godliness that was not necessarily indicative of a proper condition *inside*.

John the Baptist's reply (verses 27-36) is beautiful. It reveals not only his faithfulness and humility but also that he stuck to his commission to *introduce* Jesus, to go *before* him, to *prepare* the way. John did not presume to go beyond that commission. His life work was to introduce Messiah. (By the way, the Christian's main work is to witness and to edify.) In addition, John the Baptist's reply was almost like a gentle rebuke to his disciples for questioning Jesus' role.

The Lord tries His people to see the mettle of their character, and this incident was a test on John the Baptist for jealousy. His disciples were really saying to him, "Jesus is baptizing. What are you going to do about it?" The true mettle of John's character was revealed in the fact that there was not a shred of jealousy. In fact, John commended Jesus. And this can happen to a Christian. If fair-minded, we should recognize a Christian who is more important than we are. This attitude would show our native humility. Or we can recognize a Christian as being superior in a specialized field. Even among the apostles, Peter recognized Paul's superior reasoning and humbly accepted correction. By digging out these lessons, we do more than just read the Bible because we get the *spirit*, not just the letter, of the Law.

Also, the disciples' use of "Rabbi," a title of respect, added to John the Baptist's test. John could have retained exclusive respect for himself among his disciples, but he stood up to the test brilliantly. Probably his mother's rearing had helped to develop the native humility. Elisabeth's humility was apparent when she was carrying John in her womb and Mary came to see her. Elisabeth felt she should have gone to see Mary instead. Similarly, Timothy's mother and grandmother had good qualities that passed on to him (2 Tim. 1:5). Thus faith and humility can

come down through the generations. Incidentally, Christ went to John for baptism just as Mary had gone to Elisabeth.

John recognized Jesus as being the Messiah. God gave signs to this effect, saying that upon whom John would see a dove alight and remain during his baptisms, that one would be the Messiah. When Jesus, John's cousin, came to be baptized, John said, "Why are you here? You do not need to be baptized." Although John recognized Jesus as not being a sinner in need of repentance, he did not, at that point, know him as the Messiah. Following Jesus' baptism, the dove came down, and henceforward John knew Jesus not only as a just man but also as the Messiah.

John the Baptist's background is interesting. When Herod gave the decree that all babes in Bethlehem and environs should be slain, John's parents took him into the desert lest he be killed. ("Bethlehem Ephratah" means Bethlehem and environs.) Both Zacharias and Elisabeth were old, so possibly they gave John over to the custody of a sheik or bedouin. The decree of Herod was in effect for a period of time while a house-to-house search was conducted. The fact that Joseph and Mary did not return until that particular Herod was dead shows that the mandate was in effect for a while. Anyway, John was in the wilderness without his parents and was thus raised in a desert environment.

What a beautiful attitude is expressed in verse 29! And John was no mild personality. For example, he had said to the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him for baptism, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7). John was a strong individual, dressing in rough clothing and eating wild locusts and honey, yet when he saw that Jesus' station was higher, he knew his place. In that generation, of those born of women, Jesus said there was none greater (excluding himself, of course).

How would John know about the "bride" and "bridegroom"? The Scriptures do not enlighten us on some matters because our attention might be diverted away from more salient points, more pertinent issues, but different individuals were afforded certain information as an encouragement and an evidence of the Lord's dealing with them. Enoch, for example, back before the Flood, had a lot of information about Christ. Abraham "rejoiced to see my day ... and was glad," and he looked forward to a city to come that has foundations in heaven (John 8:56; Heb. 11:10). Hence some individuals were afforded private, privileged information, and it is pleasing to think that John the Baptist had more information than just the barest of facts. God somehow encouraged him and gave him consolation.

### **John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.**

John the Baptist had considerable intelligence. He may have had a rough exterior, but inwardly he was a giant. His life is a picture of a class at the end of the age who introduce the invisible presence of Christ. "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not" (John 1:26). This message is given forth at the Second Advent just as John the Baptist gave it back there. Many came to John to be baptized, but how many subsequently went over to Christ? All those who were really being *called* made the change. Thus John's mission was successful from one standpoint. At any rate, his ministry was now beginning to diminish. Evidently, at this juncture, fewer were coming to him than at the first.

### **John 3:31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.**

Now John gave the explanation for his decreasing and Jesus' increasing. He compared his own ministry with that of Jesus, showing the superiority of the latter. John was not speaking mechanically here but was rationally explaining his role in contradistinction to that of Jesus.

John was of the earth, earthy—for a while anyway.

**John 3:32** And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

**John 3:33** He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

“And what he [Jesus] hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony [relatively speaking]. He that hath received his [Jesus’] testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” Multitudes came to hear John and be baptized, but those multitudes did not follow Jesus as disciples. We would think that when John the Baptist pointed out the Messiah, multitudes would throng to Jesus, but only two followed him initially (John 1:35-37).

From *this* standpoint, Jesus’ ministry would *seem* to be a failure, but actually it was a success because all those whom the Lord was truly looking for did respond. One class did not receive Jesus favorably (verse 32); the other class did (verse 33).

Those who consecrated were first drawn by the Father to Jesus. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me [first] draw him” (John 6:44). Thus the drawing work precedes consecration. All kinds of conflicts and distractions try to divert the attention of such individuals, but those who finally respond can look back in later years and put some of the pieces together in the seemingly conflicting experiences.

**John 3:34** For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

**John 3:35** The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

**John 3:36** He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Notice that John the Baptist was still speaking. Hence we know that God not only called John for his particular ministry but also confided considerable information to him.

“The Father loveth the Son.” It would be interesting to know how John got that impression. Obviously, something had happened previously that enabled John to deduce this affection of the Father for the Son. Perhaps it was God’s audible voice at Jesus’ baptism, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

Verse 36 is prophetic, projecting on into the Kingdom. The *Diaglott* has “disobeys” in the clause “he who *disobeys* the Son shall not see life.” Sooner or later every human being must consecrate lest the wrath of God abide on him (which is *Second Death* ultimately). Both the Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age are embraced here. Those who do not consecrate now are shifted over into the next age, when they will have to bow the knee and confess that Jesus is Savior. To get life in any age, one must believe *into* Jesus, which is full consecration.

The Pastor gave an interesting translation of verse 36: “He that hath the Son may have the life, and he who does not obtain an interest in the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (see *The Atonement Between God and Man*, page 468). Those who believe into Jesus and obey either now or in the Kingdom will get the reward of life—immortality or everlasting life depending on the age and the degree of faithfulness. Those who do not believe into Jesus will ultimately perish.

For Christians of this age, “believing into Jesus” means being faithful to the end of their course.

Both the Great Company and the Little Flock believe into Jesus and both are overcomers, but the Little Flock are more than overcomers. No matter how late into the age one is called, he would not be called unless there was time to make his calling and election sure.

“The wrath of God [*still*] abideth on him,” that is, on the one who does not consecrate. God’s wrath *remains* on him.

In regard to refuting the Trinity, if God and Jesus were coequal, why would God give the Holy Spirit to Jesus without measure? And how or why would God the Father give all things into the Son’s hand? Wouldn’t the Son already have all things? In confrontations of the future, we will have to use arguments like these. Since Trinitarians are prepared for theological reasoning (some on spurious texts) and Greek and Hebrew etymology, we must not be sidetracked in this way. Rather, we should counter their questions with questions, as Jesus did. We should use simpler reasoning and ask questions to defuse the topic.

**John 4:1** When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

**John 4:2** (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

**John 4:3** He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

Why did Jesus leave Judea when he realized that the Pharisees knew more were being baptized by his disciples than by John? Jesus did not want their envy or his fame to spread too quickly, for these had to culminate at the end of his ministry of 3 1/2 years. By leaving the scene at that time, Jesus eliminated a premature problem. He knew what was in man and thus acted accordingly.

**John 4:4** And he must needs go through Samaria.

**John 4:5** Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

**John 4:6** Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

To go from Judea to Galilee, Jesus traveled through Samaria, which is Nablus today. He came to Sychar, Samaria, which was near a parcel of ground with a well that Jacob had purchased many years earlier (Gen. 33:19). When Jacob gave the land to Joseph in the deathbed prophecy, Joseph got a double portion, or inheritance, through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:22). The blessing was pronounced orally, and the Holy Spirit switched Jacob’s hands.

Instead of the tribe of Joseph, there were the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. No other son of Jacob got a double portion. Hence it was as if Joseph got the firstborn portion. He was Rachel’s firstborn but not Jacob’s, for Leah had Reuben first and other sons followed by her and the two handmaids before Joseph was born.

The “sixth hour” was Hebrew reckoning and hence noontime, the middle of the day. Jesus was weary and the disciples went to get food. Because the water pitchers were heavy, water was customarily drawn either early in the morning or near dusk when the temperatures were cooler. In this case, however, the time setting was at midday.

**John 4:7** There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

**John 4:8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)**

**John 4:9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.**

Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Observing that he was Jewish, she was surprised and asked why he would have a *woman of Samaria* serve him. Her *humility* shows through in that she readily stated she was a Samaritan. Of course she did not know that Jesus could read her mind.

**John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.**

What *profound* wisdom Jesus had on the spur of the moment! *Reprint* No. 3495, "The Satisfying Water of Life," is a good article. "Water" is the gift of God. One who literally thirsts finds that nothing will satisfy better than water. Water has real significance for those who live a bedouin type of existence.

All those whom the Father draws to Jesus have a characteristic in common: naiveté. Consider even Nicodemus. Most in his position would have been too proud to come to Jesus and phrase the questions he asked. And Zacchaeus, a wealthy man in his own right, humbled himself to climb a tree to see Jesus. Here the Samaritan woman was likewise naive. She was puzzled by Jesus' statement and asked him questions.

**John 4:11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?**

**John 4:12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?**

The Samaritan woman said, "You have no bucket and no rope, and this is a deep well. How can you suggest that I should ask you for water when you do not have the proper equipment? Are you better than Jacob?"

Her naive questions remind us of Nicodemus, who asked, "How can a man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" He was very puzzled, and so was the Samaritan woman. He would have wondered how Jesus could set up his Kingdom when he had no army. The Samaritan woman wondered how he could dispense living water when he had no bucket.

**John 4:13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:**

**John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**

Because of Jesus' reply, she probably thought of him almost like a philosopher. She would certainly have puzzled over the words of this stranger. And he would have spoken with *assurance, authority, and conviction*.

**John 4:15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come**

**hither to draw.**

**John 4:16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.**

**John 4:17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:**

**John 4:18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.**

**John 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.**

Just like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman took Jesus literally. But in her puzzlement, she continued to draw him on, probably speaking almost mechanically (and thus foolishly) just to keep the conversation going in order to better grasp the concepts. She said, "I would like that water so that I do not have to daily come and draw water." (Drawing water was an onerous task.)

Normally the Jews were too proud to ask the Samaritans for a favor under any circumstances. In fact, the Jews were so proud that very few were attracted, or drawn, to the truth. Especially in the beginning, one must recognize his lack, inquire further, and then be willing to receive instruction.

**Comment:** A *Reprint* article suggested that Jesus mentioned her five previous husbands, plus the current sinful arrangement, because one must recognize that he or she is a sinner before receiving any of the "living water."

Jesus was making the truth more important than his natural thirst. He used the opportunity to enlighten her. When Jesus originally came to the well and was resting, and then noticed the woman approach, he sensed (as on numerous other occasions) that an unusual happening in his life was of God's providence. Then he proceeded from that standpoint. No doubt he was tired and thirsty, but he used the opportunity to introduce the woman to the truth. In fact, we can be sure he recognized this experience as being of the Father, for by witnessing to the Samaritan woman, he was going contrary to his own instruction. This incident occurred early in his ministry, and he had said, "Go not into the way ... of the Samaritans" (Matt. 10:5).

Jesus' comments certainly whetted the woman's appetite for truth, but then he changed the subject to her husbands to help her understand more about the living water. Jesus was speaking allegorically or spiritually, and she began to grasp the point that he was not referring to literal water.

In regard to Jesus' talking to the Samaritan woman versus telling the apostles *not* to go to the Samaritans, there was a difference. Jesus did not go *into* the city; he did not go *to* the woman. Rather, the woman came to him. Hence there are rare occasions in life where a policy we might thoroughly endorse and advise others on would be contradicted because of an unusual or peculiar situation. Another exception was the Syrophenician woman who begged for crumbs from the master's table. Jesus was not ready to give her the truth, but she insisted. Thus there can be exceptions to the general rule. And Jesus had such close communion with his Father that he could discern the divine will. Moreover, his ministry was so short (only 3 1/2 years), and so much had to be accomplished, that he realized many events were shaped around him so that everything could be fulfilled. Hence he recognized her approach as something unusual.

When she said, "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet," she would have spoken with AWE! Imagine a *stranger* telling her of her background! There would have been *emotion* in her words. "Oh, sir!

... I perceive you are a prophet!" We must study the Bible in order to get the emotion, for it is intentionally written low-key so as not to attract the demonstrative and/or curiosity seekers. Nevertheless, the emotion is there, and it is to be tapped and realized.

Now the Samaritan woman turned the conversation into a religious discussion. Also, she probably did not want Jesus to delve any further into her secret life. Perceiving that he was a seer or holy man, she switched the conversation to things pertaining to worship. However, even though the conversation was changing, she had been touched to the quick, and she was honest enough to admit the charges by saying, "I perceive that thou art a prophet."

**John 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.**

**John 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.**

**John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.**

**John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.**

**John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.**

The woman referred to the fact that the Samaritans revered Mount Gerizim, which was a quarter to a half mile from the well. To the Jew, Jerusalem was the center of worship. To the Samaritan, Mount Gerizim was the center of worship.

What "hour" was Jesus talking about in verse 21 "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father"? This was a deep and far-reaching statement, for the "hour" is ongoing, reaching *far* into the future. It is progressive, starting at the First Advent ("the hour cometh, and *now* is") and extending beyond the Millennial Age. In the ages of ages, Jerusalem will become of no consequence but not during the Kingdom, when at the Feast of Tabernacles, all nations will have to recognize Jerusalem as the center of God's dealing with man lest rain be withheld. Beyond the Kingdom, there will still be a city of Jerusalem and a Temple, but they will not have the same significance. When all those living on into the ages of ages will have demonstrated their worthiness to receive everlasting life, they will no longer need education from Jerusalem in regard to the moral precepts of God and bringing their characters into harmony with them.

The "hour" began at the First Advent in Israel, and Jerusalem did become a center of attraction in the beginning of the Gospel Age. After AD 69, Jerusalem lost significance for the Christian, and the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth became paramount. In the Kingdom too, Jerusalem will be the center of worship, education, etc., but it will fade out in time.

The Samaritan woman must have been unusual to be the recipient of such a sermon, short as it was. And there were psychological factors as well. She ran back to tell the townspeople before Jesus could get away.

We can assume that she had a sinful past—five husbands could not have all died—yet her heart condition must have been right for her to be the recipient of such a profound lesson. Jesus honored her with a *one-to-one* conversation, whereas he often spoke to multitudes or to his disciples (plural). It is interesting that John recorded the few private conversations such as Nicodemus and this woman. Other Gospel writers were aware of the conversations, but John

was impressed enough to record them.

**John 4:25** The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

**John 4:26** Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

The woman was a harlot—having had five husbands and now living with a sixth man. How unusual it was for Jesus to reveal his identity to *her*, *early* in his ministry, when Peter’s acknowledgment that he was the Christ came later! Jesus did not even talk like this with the apostles at this point in his ministry. To address such remarks to her privately was very significant. The woman wanted to share this experience with the townspeople, for she realized that the information was too valuable to keep to herself.

**John 4:27** And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

**John 4:28** The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

**John 4:29** Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

**John 4:30** Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

The disciples returned from town with food as Jesus concluded his conversation with the woman. She then left to get others. Had she delayed and satisfied herself, Jesus might have gone on his way. Instead she *left* her water pot (so as not to be encumbered) and *ran* to get the townspeople. (When she saw the disciples returning with food, she realized that they would stay for a while and that she had time to get others.) The townspeople, knowing the woman’s past, would have noticed the remarkable change in her and desired to see this stranger.

This incident created a seedbed that grew later, after Jesus’ death and resurrection. The apostles were to go first to Jerusalem, then to Judea, and next to the Samaritans. In fact, Philip the evangelist had headquarters in Samaria (Acts 8:5). When it was testified that Jesus was resurrected, the Samaritans already had some information, and this new fact kindled their faith.

Thus a providence underlay this whole incident, and Jesus realized it. This was no ordinary woman in spite of her past. She addressed him as “Sir” three times as a mark of respect and decorum (verses 11, 15, and 19).

In due time—whether in the Gospel Age or in the Millennial Age—all will be weaned away from Jerusalem, the natural aspect, to the spiritual, and will worship God in spirit and in truth. Jerusalem will fade as the center of worship, and all will look to the center of the *universe*.

One lesson: The fact that Jesus called the well “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” is significant (verse 14). A well is a *source* of water, so the implication was really more than everlasting life. The Little Flock will have *immortality*, and thus be the source of life—they will impart life to others.

Although a well is a source, *effort* must be exerted in this age to get the water from the source. Even after we have truth, we must *dig* for the silver and the gold. If faithful, we will become a source of water to others.

Here, too, was a *miraculous* aspect. With Nicodemus, Jesus prophesied of being on the Cross.

This truth struck home with Nicodemus when the event actually occurred. Here the miraculous aspect was instantaneous—Jesus told the Samaritan woman of her past. His one-on-one dealings included miraculous statements. With Zacchaeus, who secretly climbed a tree to view Jesus, the Master called up, “Zacchaeus, I am having supper with you tonight.” Simon’s being given his future name—“Thou shalt be called Peter”—was a delayed bomb, as it were, that later energized him. Not only were the one-on-one dealings fraught with meaning and explanation, but there was a *personal* aspect as well. Each one realized something miraculous had entered his life—which is what we have to be assured of when we consecrate. We have to know that this is the real thing, that we have not been mesmerized into some strange teaching. We must truly know that Jesus is the Messiah so that in later periods of life, when discouragement and loneliness set in, we can turn and look back and see various landmarks where we know God was dealing with us. Then, in the present strange experience, we will know that God is dealing with us because He did so step by step in the past. Past experiences, which are called Eben-ezers, are invaluable for faith (1 Sam. 7:12).

**John 4:31** In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

**John 4:32** But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

**John 4:33** Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

**John 4:34** Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Jesus’ disciples returned with food and beseeched him: “Eat.” He replied that he had meat to eat that they did not know about. If we put ourselves in the disciples’ position, we will understand their puzzlement. Evidently, they had walked a long time and were weary and famished, so they went into the city to get food. When they returned with the food, they knew Jesus should be hungry, as they were. Therefore, when they besought him to eat, his remark surprised them and they wondered if someone else had brought him food. Jesus’ words were *not* a rebuke, but he was showing the disciples that sometimes spiritual needs take precedence over physical needs, even if the physical needs are crying out for satisfaction.

We have the Gospels to study, but the disciples did not, and they were hearing these remarks for the first time. If we had been in their place, we would have been puzzled too—and would have reacted similarly. Another example is Jesus’ admonition, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” (Matt. 16:6). Taking Jesus’ remark *literally*, the disciples could not understand what he was saying because no bread was present. Being natural men, not yet begotten of the Holy Spirit, they reacted in a normal or expected manner.

Jesus was training his disciples to realize that his “meat” was a commission to do the Father’s will. After saying he had meat to eat that they did not know about, he paused for a little time lapse, during which he let the apostles think about and discuss the remark. Then he explained that his “meat” was to do the Father’s will. Since his “meat,” or mission, would last only 3 1/2 years, he had to cover the nation of Israel with his doctrine, as it were, before the Crucifixion, the *climax* of doing the Father’s will.

**John 4:35** Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

**John 4:36** And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

**John 4:37** And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

**John 4:38** I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

The fields were not literally white for harvest when Jesus spoke. At that time of year (the spring), the crop was only beginning. Hence the comparison was to be understood spiritually. The *spiritual* harvest was white already, whereas the literal ingathering was four months hence. The Jewish Age “harvest” was a period of time beginning then, whereas the Gospel Age “harvest” has been going on since 1874. More than 1,800 years separate the two. The Pastor estimated that one third of the Little Flock was developed in the Jewish harvest, one third of the Little Flock is developed in the current harvest, and one third of the Little Flock was developed in the interim of 1,800+ years.

Jesus was saying that the disciples could start to do a harvest work right then and there; that is, they did not have to wait four months for the spiritual harvest. John the Baptist had already done a preparatory sowing work, and some were ready to be harvested, or reaped. Those who had truly repented were ready to accept the *white* robe of Christ’s righteousness (the fields were “white”). “Four months” not only gave a practical lesson back there but also furnishes a time period at this end of the age ( $4 \times 30 = 120$  years).

He who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit unto life eternal; both sower and reaper will rejoice together. We are reminded of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. At the end of the age, the emphasis changes to a *reaping* work.

The Apostle Paul described the ministry of Apollos, Peter, and himself. Each had a specific function. One sowed, another watered, and somebody else reaped, but *God* gave the increase, for in the final analysis, the development of the Little Flock is a miracle. Even though there are those who witness, labor, edify, etc., the increase is of God.

“One soweth, and another reapeth” was a colloquial saying, a well-known proverb back there. Paul used sayings too—for example, “All men are liars”—and then developed a sermon around them.

Of the “other men” who labored (verse 38), John the Baptist and his disciples were the most recent. And previously, the Logos would have assisted in the sowing work of the Jewish Age, that is, with the earlier prophets. Here Jesus was referring to the sowing and preparing work all down the Jewish Age through Israel’s prophets, to be benefited through reaping a class at the First Advent. The principle is, “Light is sown for the righteous” (Psa. 97:11). There can be a long time lapse between putting the seed in the ground and seeing the crop grow to maturity. Light was sown back in the Old Testament in all the types and prophecies. However, this “seed” light was not understood, even by those who did the sowing. Light is sown especially for the righteous class upon whom the ends of the age come. From this larger standpoint, Jesus did not include himself as doing a sowing work during his First Advent. He did primarily a reaping work at that time.

**Q:** Some brethren have felt that there is no longer a need to do witnessing work but that our mission is to instruct those who have already accepted the truth. Thus they feel we should do only a “reaping” work. How do we refute this imbalance?

**A:** Ecclesiastes 11:6 states, “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” In other words, it is always proper to do a sowing work. In a harvest period, the primary emphasis is on reaping, but that does not exclude the sowing. Nurturing

those already in the truth may be a most important work, but it does not exclude the other.

**Comment:** Jesus said his meat was to do the will of the Father. Eliezer illustrated this same zeal when he went to seek a bride for Isaac. He refused to eat until his mission was performed and he had recounted the purpose for his coming. With Eliezer representing the Holy Spirit, his attitude should be characteristic of those who have the Holy Spirit.

**John 4:39** And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

**John 4:40** So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

**John 4:41** And many more believed because of his own word;

**John 4:42** And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

How remarkable that in such a short period of time, there was this great heart response! And these were *Samaritans*, not Jews but a mixed people through intermarriage. It would be interesting to know what Jesus said during the two days he abode with them.

It is also interesting that some tested further and had to hear with their own ears, while others accepted Jesus as Messiah based on the woman's testimony (and obviously the radical change in her). And they recognized him as the *Christ, the Savior of the world*—how remarkable! Similarly, there were cases when Gentiles showed unusual, extraordinary faith, which the Jews resented. Jesus' own people rejected him. Had he gone to others, they would have been more responsive in some respects.

It is a strange thing how so often the ones closest to us, our own families, are reluctant to accept the truth, yet there are notable exceptions in Scripture where whole households accepted the truth and consecrated. Examples are Cornelius, Lydia, the jailer when Silas and Paul were saved by an earthquake, and the nobleman (Acts 10:24,44-48; 16:15,31,32; John 4:53).

The Samaritan Bible is one of the oldest in existence. Both the Samaritan and the Septuagint versions predate the oldest Hebrew manuscript in existence.

In review, Jesus first came to Samaria and sat down on Jacob's well "about the sixth hour," which was noon, Jewish reckoning. Jesus recognized the approach of the Samaritan woman as providential because to come in the heat of the day to get water was unusual. Jesus' witness to her was probably short because of the question-and-reply format. In other words, Jesus did not give her a long sermon. And once her past was revealed, she departed almost immediately, leaving her water pot behind.

The water pot can be considered from two aspects, as follows. (1) *Practical aspect.* By leaving the water pot, the Samaritan woman manifested how absorbed she was in running back to the city to tell others about Jesus. (2) *Spiritual aspect.* Her own vessel was being filled with "water" (truth), and hence the natural water was secondary. She left the earthly, natural, literal vessel behind because her own earthly nature was filled with this new message.

Probably the townspeople, knowing the sinful background of this woman, were impressed when she ran to them so excitedly and obviously deeply affected and repentant. They wanted to see the one responsible for this change in her. The men had had some interest in her but along other lines. When she came back all excited about this new experience, they would have

given some credence to her account. And probably all five of her previous husbands had not died, let alone the one who was not her husband.

If we contrast the woman's attitude with that of the one who said he wanted to first bury his father, she did not procrastinate but relinquished her previous purpose for the truth (Matt. 8:20-22). The woman knew when the disciples returned with food that Jesus would be there a little while, but she had better get going as *fast* as possible so that others could see him before he left.

**John 4:43** Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

**John 4:44** For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.

**John 4:45** Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

After two days, Jesus left Shechem (Nablus/Sychar) and went north to Cana of Galilee, where he had performed his first miracle (verse 46). The time setting was now a half year or more into Jesus' ministry. He had gone to Jerusalem for the Passover (verse 45), come back through Samaria, and was now going to Cana. John's Gospel moves quickly through Jesus' ministry, for he concentrated on the last week.

"A prophet hath no honour in his own country." Jesus made this statement because *many* Samaritans believed on him in just *two days*. Coming from Samaria en route to Cana on the upland route, Jesus evidently did not stop at Nazareth but went on to Cana. The Galileans received Jesus because they had seen all the miracles he did in Jerusalem (John 2:23). The "feast" was the Passover.

**John 4:46** So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

**John 4:47** When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

**John 4:48** Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

**John 4:49** The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

**John 4:50** Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

**John 4:51** And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

**John 4:52** Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

**John 4:53** So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

Jesus arrived at Cana after a long journey from Jerusalem, where he had gone for the Passover. En route he stayed for two days at Sychar, Samaria. Coming from Sychar, Jesus intentionally bypassed Nazareth and traveled on to Cana of Galilee, where this incident

occurred. The nobleman, whose son was dying, left his home in Capernaum at the north end of the Sea of Galilee and traveled to Cana (about 25 miles) to a considerably higher elevation halfway to Nazareth. It probably took him a whole day to thus go on foot uphill to specifically request that Jesus heal his son, who was so sick that “he was at the point of death.”

The nobleman’s initial words were not given, but Jesus said, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” The son was *dying*, and the nobleman wanted Jesus to come down to Capernaum and heal him, yet Jesus gave a rather brusque reply—why? We recall how in the private conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus needled him to a certain extent. Jesus did not coddle Nicodemus but, as here, gave a curt remark that was intended to benefit the hearer. John 3:10 records Jesus’ words to Nicodemus: “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” Jesus used this technique in many experiences to sensitize the other party or parties to the quick *before* he rendered the balm of Gilead.

The very fact that the nobleman came to Jesus evidenced faith. With his son dying, the nobleman might have hesitated to leave home, wanting to be there when the son actually did die. It seemed risky to make that long journey, but having heard that Jesus had come north into Galilee, the nobleman planned to go and intercept him. And what did the nobleman expect Jesus to do? He wanted Jesus to accompany him as quickly as possible back to Capernaum and there cure his son, but such was not Jesus’ intention.

We are reminded of the centurion, who had even more faith. He said, “I am a man of authority. I tell my men what to do, and they do it. Since you are a man of authority, all you have to do is make the pronouncement, and the healing will be accomplished” (Matt. 8:5-13 paraphrase). We do not want to minimize the nobleman’s faith, however, for his son was dying, and the situation was desperate. And he did have faith to even make the journey, but there are different *degrees* of faith.

Jesus did eventually heal the nobleman’s son by remote control, as it were, and instantly. Since the son was cured “at the seventh hour,” or 1 p.m. Jewish reckoning, the nobleman’s approach to Jesus and the entire incident took place shortly after 12 noon.

Why did Jesus issue the little rebuke “except ye see signs and wonders”? The nobleman replied, “Sir, come down ere my child die.” Didn’t the nobleman hear Jesus’ rebuke? Yes, so what is the lesson? The nobleman’s faith was not yet whole, even though he “believed” (verse 50). Hence he inquired when his servants met him, “What time did my son begin to mend?” When the time of healing was seen to be *exactly* the time of Jesus’ pronouncement, the nobleman’s faith was whole. In addition, Jesus’ words were (and are) instructive for all Christians subsequently.

How did the nobleman originally know about Jesus’ miracle-performing power? Verse 45 says that the Galileans who had gone to Judea for the Passover had seen Jesus do many miracles. They would have returned quickly to their homes after the Passover because of various responsibilities, whereas Jesus, having a public ministry, traveled more leisurely and stopped to witness to the Samaritan woman. When the Galileans got home, they spread the word that Jesus had performed many miracles at the Passover.

Jesus’ pronouncement “thy son liveth,” accompanied by the instant cure, was designed to help not only the faith of the nobleman but also our faith and the faith of others. It shows that Jesus does not have to be present in order to keep a person from dying. We are reminded of a similar case when Jesus was even rebuked a little, namely, when Lazarus died. Martha commented, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21). Jesus deliberately tarried until Lazarus died, and then he returned. Mary and Martha were a little disturbed that Jesus had not responded sooner. This incident shows that even the closest of

Jesus' disciples need instruction, as given in these two accounts, so that faith can be mature and whole.

By curing the nobleman's son in this manner, Jesus was setting a precedent—that a miracle could be performed merely by his speaking the word. We should keep this precedent in our mental library so that it can be recalled when our own faith is at a low ebb with regard to our Master's capabilities.

Verses 51-53a took place the next day, probably in the morning. We know this because the cure occurred "yesterday" at the seventh hour. The servants reported that at 1 p.m. the previous day, there was a definite improvement.

As a result of the cure, the nobleman *and his whole house* believed. Reading the Gospels direct gives *power* to the incidents. With Nicodemus, the private conversation led to his becoming a *disciple*. The incident with the Samaritan woman was the next private conversation with Jesus—and she responded and *believed*. When she returned to the city and told what had happened, the townspeople came to Jesus, and upon hearing him speak, they *believed* that he was the Messiah (a fact his own people, the Israelites, were slow to accept). The Syrophenician woman and the centurion also *believed*. Thus *outsiders* responded with faith, while most of Israel hearkened not.

We can be very thankful that John wrote on the personal experiences he felt were needful to complete the Gospels. Otherwise, we would have missed some significant accounts. John narrated very few miracles compared to the other Gospel writers, but apparently, he recorded the personal experiences in order for us to see certain aspects of Jesus' ministry.

Reprint No. 4132, "The Rewards of Faith," suggests that the nobleman was Chuza, Herod's steward, and that his wife was Joanna, the follower of Jesus who was present at both his crucifixion and his resurrection. To be Herod's steward was a very high position. And there is a faint possibility that Cornelius, the first Gentile to receive the Holy Spirit, was the individual who paid for synagogues in Galilee and that it was his servant who was healed.

**John 4:54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.**

Healing the nobleman's son was the second miracle Jesus performed in Cana, the first being the changing of water into wine. In between, many miracles were done in Jerusalem at the Passover. Generally speaking, faith had to be exercised for a miracle to be done, but there were exceptions.

**John 5:1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.**

Jesus went up to Jerusalem at the time of "a feast," which was Passover No. 2 in his ministry. When the account says simply "feast" without a descriptive word, it usually refers to Passover. An exception would be when, for example, the circumstances and context show it was the Feast of Dedication.

**John 5:2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.**

Jesus went to a pool called Bethesda, meaning "house of mercy" or "place of mercy." At the pool were five porticos to shelter and give shade to the sick and the lame. The pool had a reputation for curative effects.

**John 5:3** In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

In the porticos, or porches, lay a multitude of impotent people. The word “great” is spurious and should be omitted (see *Diaglott*). Moreover, the nature of the pool itself precluded having a great multitude there.

What a sad condition existed at the pool! If we put ourselves in Jesus’ place, with the blind, lame, withered, etc., before us, it would be like the ward of a hospital with pathetic cases. No doubt Jesus went there *intentionally*. Although “the moving of the water” is a spurious phrase, the thought is Scriptural (see verse 7). A whirlpool bath, which simulates the action of warm waters agitating from a natural spring, would be comparable today. A curative effect is the result for certain infirmities.

**John 5:4** 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.

This entire verse is spurious. Furthermore, the thought is not even logical for healing to go to the individual who could get into the troubled water the fastest. Verse 4 was either an exaggeration or a fantasy that was added for emotionalism. In either case, it was wrong to add inaccurate emotional intensity. John 8:1-11 is another example of emotionalism being introduced as an interpolation. That account is also spurious.

**John 5:5** And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

For 38 years, this man had been suffering from a serious health problem.

**John 5:6** When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

In other words, Jesus *previously knew* about this person. Extending this reasoning, we realize that Jesus knew about all of us even before we came to him. “We love him [God, and by extension Jesus], because he *first* loved us” (1 John 4:19). And since Jesus was about 31 years old here and the man had been in poor health for 38 years, Jesus as the Logos would have known about his condition. In addition, not only are the intuitive powers of Jesus shown here, but also his *sympathetic eye* for *noting* certain conditions. Some people could see such a scene and take no special cognizance of it, but Jesus noted the man’s continual disappointment, his long-standing disease, and the repetitive nature of the disease.

Jesus dealt with this man a little differently than he did with the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus, and the nobleman. He asked, “Wilt thou be made whole?” Now suppose we were that man. For 38 years, we would have been frustrated in going to this pool to get the benefit of the waters. And even having made it into the waters at times over the years, we still had not been cured. This man was a bulldog: persistent, persevering, and tenacious like the importuning widow. That is a good quality. Drive and tenacity can be harnessed into a wonderful asset when one has the spirit of the truth. The man desired exceedingly to be healed.

**John 5:7** The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Notice how the impotent man answered Jesus. His reply indicates that he thought his cure was predicated upon his being put into the pool, and he hoped Jesus—obviously an unusual personage and kind—would assist him into the pool.

**John 5:8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.**

There is no evidence that this man had faith, but let us speculate that Jesus was aware, as the Logos, of this man's condition as well as subsequently when he went to Jerusalem during his First Advent as a man. The suggestion is that the miracle was *prearranged*. Jesus knew the man was there and did not try to draw out his faith. When Jesus asked if he would be made whole, the man's reply shows he misunderstood. He was not expecting a miracle, but was hoping to get a cure from the waters of the pool.

Apparently, this miracle was very noticeable to others, for many would have known about his 38-year infirmity and his repeated struggle to get into the pool. Hence his health problem was well known. Out of a group of infirm people, Jesus selected this one and asked the question and effected the cure. When Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," electricity would have surged through the man. Sensations would have gone through his system—and he *rose and obeyed*.

**John 5:9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.**

Since Jesus evidently intended in advance to cure this man, he also intended to cure him on the *sabbath*, but why? To heal on the sabbath would bring up an issue he could then address. Jesus knew what would happen following this experience. He knew a "forum" of interested people would listen to his reasoning. It is true that the sabbath was to be observed, but the people needed to be educated about circumstances that could be attended to on the sabbath.

It is impressive that Jesus did not just say, "Arise and walk." Here was a man who had been crippled for 38 years, and Jesus told him to *pick up his bed*. What a dramatic effect on those observing!

There is an antitypical reason for miracles being done on the sabbath. In earth's Sabbath Day, the Millennium, such cures and miracles will abound. The miracles at Jesus' First Advent were advance samples of future power and glory to come on behalf of the world of mankind.

Ordinarily, it would have been permitted and/or overlooked for a crippled person to carry something or to be carried on the sabbath. Hence the scribes and Pharisees were hypercritical and hypocritical to seize on this incident and similar incidents as sabbath-breaking. That is why Jesus, on another occasion, asked, "Which of you, having an ass or an ox fall into a pit on the sabbath, would not pull it out?" (Luke 14:5). *Of course* they would have rescued the animal.

**John 5:10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.**

Some Jews accosted the cured man for carrying his bed on the sabbath day. Their spirit was contrary to God's intention regarding the sabbath. As Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The sabbath was not meant to be a burdensome stone on their backs.

There is no law in the Bible against carrying one's bed, and Jesus perfectly obeyed the Law. In fact, he came to fulfill it. The Law prohibited "work" on the sabbath, meaning that the Israelites were not to do *laborious* work. For example, it was not permitted to gather sticks to cook with on the sabbath, but if the sticks were already gathered, one could light the fire and do the cooking. Eating was also permitted but not laboring for it—shopping, etc.

Jeremiah 17:21,22 reads, “Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.” This text is what the sabbath was based upon, and then the Pharisees added picayune restrictions. Some arguments Jesus used against the Pharisees’ interpretation of the sabbath are as follows:

1. If any of you have an animal that falls into a pit, would you not retrieve it? The instinct of the Pharisees would be to immediately pick up the animal and/or get it out of the pit, and they would not give the matter a second thought.
2. David, out of hunger and desperation, entered the Holy and ate the shewbread. Normally, this would be unlawful for any but the priests to do.
3. The disciples picked and ate as they walked along in a grain field on the sabbath. This was permissible because they were not harvesting and storing up the grain.
4. The priests worked on the sabbath. Preparing animals for sacrifice was *hard physical* work in the religious realm, and Jesus’ healings on the sabbath were acts of mercy and blessing on a higher plane. John 7:21-23 uses this line of reasoning in regard to the priests doing circumcision on the sabbath. Circumcision took place on the eighth day, *whenever* that day occurred, sabbath or not.

The following Orthodox practices today show the inordinate degree to which the sabbath is observed by some. Toilet paper is torn the day before. Water cannot be boiled on the sabbath, but one can start the pot boiling before the sabbath begins and continue on through. Elevators can be used on the sabbath if they *automatically* stop at each floor so that the person is not doing work by pushing buttons.

Jesus’ critics probably knew the healed man in his former condition. For 38 years, it was his custom to go down to the pool of Bethesda. They should have rejoiced at his restoration to health instead of hypocritically finding fault.

**John 5:11** He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

**John 5:12** Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

**John 5:13** And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

The Jews had said, “What are you doing carrying your bed? Don’t you know this is the sabbath?” The cured man’s answer incensed them. Instead of rejoicing over the cure, they responded, “Who had the nerve to tell you to pick up your bed and carry it?” The man did not know, for he had not asked Jesus his name.

Jesus had *intentionally* gone to the Pool of Bethesda, knowing in advance about the man being infirm for 38 years. Jesus did not ask the man to exercise faith. The man had yearned to be cured and was tenacious in his purpose of getting to the pool. He did not remain there overnight, for he had to go home to eat. Jesus’ purpose in healing that particular man will come out as the account proceeds.

**John 5:14** Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art

**made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.**

Jesus did not just happen to find the man in the Temple, but purposely *sought* him out. Jesus *knew* what would ensue after he said, “Take up thy bed and walk.” He *realized* that the super-Orthodox Jews would question him for acting on the sabbath, but their questioning would raise an issue he *wanted to address*. The stage was thus set for some wonderful sermons, especially since others knew of the man’s being ill for 38 years.

Jesus’ admonition to “sin no more” indicates the man’s illness had been the result of a *sinful past*—and the man knew it. All have sinned and gone astray, but this would have been something more than the usual. (Jesus similarly told the Samaritan woman of her sinful past—five husbands and the current man not being a husband.)

The fact that the man went to the Temple in thankfulness after being healed shows that good character developed during the years of illness. Under the Law, some sins required going to the priest for examination. Therefore, the “Jews” of verses 10 and 12 could have been priests.

**John 5:15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.**

Why did the man go back and tell the identity of Jesus? Rather than trying to shift blame to Jesus, he was probably so thankful that he wanted proper credit to be given and did not intend to cause a repercussion.

Sin is sin, and reciprocity occurs to offset it in one way or another. The man felt that the disease was a form of retribution, especially in view of Jesus’ words and caution to “sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.” One leper out of ten came back to thank Jesus, but this man could not do that, for he did not even know Jesus’ name, let alone where to find him. Therefore, if he was trying to express his thankfulness, the next best and logical thing to do was to go to the Temple. If he was truly thankful and right-hearted, he went and told the Jews about Jesus out of enthusiasm (and not from an evil motive). Probably he meant to give honor. An *instant* cure after 38 years of illness would no doubt result in thankfulness and gratitude, not a desire to shift blame to Jesus.

**John 5:16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.**

Notice, the Jews did not seek to kill the cured man but the one who had *done* the curing. Jesus was considered the perpetrator of the crime, and the Jews feared that he would heal others on the sabbath. They could not kill Jesus publicly but needed some kind of court first—unless he was caught actually doing the healing.

**John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.**

The *Diaglott* rendering is, “My Father works till now, and I work.” Jesus was justifying his actions. His words incensed the Jews all the more (verse 18), but he knew in advance what the reaction would be. Those who impartially meditated on the events and Jesus’ words would have understood, but it was *impossible* to reason with those who were emotionally charged and distraught. In addition to the emotionally involved “Jews” who were singled out here, others were observing this interchange, for Jesus was accosted publicly.

What bearing did Jesus’ remark have on the issue at hand? Different translations imply that the Father is still working but that Jesus now has to work too. It is true that God rested from the *natural* creative works in the Seventh Day, but He did not rest from the *spiritual* or New Creation. God is the Author of the New Creation, and He is working in that regard. Individuals

are drawn by the *Father* and begotten by *His Word*. It is *God* who selects certain individuals to hear the truth and then sends Jesus to those individuals. Whether or not one reacts favorably depends on the person, but it is an honor to even hear the truth.

The concept that God is working in *spiritual* matters was new to Orthodox Jews. Certain types of laborious work on the sabbath were prohibited under the Law, but not healing, eating, services of the priesthood, etc. In other words, *spiritual* work was permissible on the sabbath.

Jesus was saying, "My Father works right up to the present. He stopped His physical creative work but now works spiritually." God rested from physical creation at the end of the Sixth Creative Day and left matters in the hands of the Logos until the end of the Kingdom, which will coincide with the end of the Millennium, when the Father will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

Of course the Jews did not grasp the real import of these words under the emotionally charged circumstances, but they did grasp the fact that Jesus called God his "Father." They thought it was blasphemous for Jesus to put himself on a higher plane than they. A Father-Son relationship would be intimate, and it was foreign for the Jews to think of God as "Father." Even Daniel, Moses, and other faithful ones of the Old Testament did not address Jehovah in such an endearing term. Yes, they addressed Him with reverence, awe, and esteem, but not as "Father." The Jews were supposed to be defending God and His Law in regard to the sabbath, and they were incensed that Jesus claimed such a close relationship.

The Father takes an active interest in us, His children, and has agencies that hearken to our prayers, causing providences on our behalf. "The Father himself loveth you [that is, us]," not just Jesus (John 16:27).

**John 5:18** Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Trinitarians use this verse, but Jesus did *not* say he was equal to the Father. His words in subsequent verses explain the Father-Son relationship, showing that they are two *separate* beings, with the Son subordinate to the Father.

Succeeding verses are excellent for refuting the false charge of the Jews. They wanted to kill Jesus earlier, but now, after he called God his Father, they sought "*the more*" to kill him.

*Strong's Concordance* shows that to be "equal" means to be of the same amount or kind; that is, by calling God his Father, Jesus was making himself similar. A later incident will clarify the Jews' charge of blasphemy in another way, for they did *not* understand Jesus to be saying he was God. In fact, not at any time did they think Jesus meant he was the same being as the Father. Jesus was saying there was a similarity and a *close family relationship* on a high plane. To think of such familiarity was repugnant to the Jews, who considered it blasphemy for Jesus to call himself the "Son" of God. But to Trinitarians, these Scriptures have a different connotation than they did to the Jew. Trinitarians read this (and the later) account and draw a *wrong* lesson of coequality and coeternity.

**John 5:19** Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

Evidently, Jesus paused a little after his statement of verse 17 to let the hearers reflect on his words. The Jews reacted with indignation. Then Jesus continued to speak (verses 19-47).

Verse 19 says in effect that the Son *is nothing* and *cannot do anything* without the Father. Jesus

was *denying* the thought of *equality*. He was saying, “There is no equality because I can do nothing without the Father, who is *far superior*.” Jesus characteristically used “*verily, verily*” to precede a very important statement, the thought being, “Take special notice!”

When the Jews became incensed at the thought of Jesus’ claiming to be on a high plane with the Father, he replied that the *Father* was *the One, the God*, and without Him, the Son could do nothing. Jesus answered two points, of which this was one.

What was the other point? Jesus was not so humble that he did nothing, but when he acted, it was in harmony with God’s will. What he did was with the Father’s consent and power. Jesus has the authority to do certain things (see verses 21 and 22). In other words, Jesus has authority, but *of himself*, he can do nothing. Verse 19 modifies Jesus’ later *strong* statements.

In John 14:28, Jesus said, “My Father is greater than I.” He always respected the Father’s superiority, and he taught his followers to pray, “Our *Father*, which art in heaven.”

A *false* concept of humility says that one should always be in the background. There are certain circumstances where we have a responsibility to speak out. To hide the responsibility under the cloak of humility can be wrong. For example, Paul spoke out to great, notable men yet was *humble*. He realized that what he said and did was by the *Lord’s* strength, not his own. We can easily misjudge pride in others. Just because an individual speaks boldly does not mean he is proud. Sometimes the guiltiest people appear the best.

Jesus did only what the Father trained, instructed, and taught him to do. When the Father explained something, Jesus acted accordingly. He said, “The words that I speak are not mine but the Father’s who sent me” (John 5:19; 12:49,50 paraphrase). Because of his previous training, Jesus knew what to speak and do. When he spoke strongly, it was not because he felt equal to God but because he knew he was acting in harmony with the Father’s will. How galling Jesus’ words were to the Jews who were accusing him!

**John 5:20 For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.**

These words were like heaping coals of fire on the Jews’ heads, and their anger increased. Sometimes, as on this occasion, that which is considered a lack of tact is actually the proper thing to do. Others were no doubt listening as these aggressive, hypocritical Jews attacked Jesus.

The sideline listeners would have observed that Jesus was a leader, and the lost sheep needed leadership. Jesus said he and the Father are one, and he begot hope in the right-hearted Israelites by saying they could become one with him and the Father (John 10:30; 17:21).

The “greater works” the Father will show the Son will exceed what was done for the man who had been impotent for 38 years, and they will occur in the Kingdom. Jesus was saying to the Jews, “You will marvel in the Kingdom when even greater works are done than what you have just witnessed.”

**John 5:21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.**

The word “quicken” means “to make alive.” Jesus was making himself somewhat comparable to the capability of the Heavenly Father; that is, the power of the Father had been transferred to the Son so that the Son could do likewise.

The Son will quicken whom he will in the Kingdom—the time when the Father will commit all judgment to the Son as regards the world of mankind. However, the Son always acts in harmony with the will of the Father. Stated another way, when the Son quickens “whom he will,” he will not be acting independently but according to the Father’s will.

These verses must be considered and harmonized *together* in order to get the proper perspective. The theme of Jesus’ discourse was that “of mine own self, I can do nothing” (paraphrase of verse 19). Then in the next breath, he said, “The Father makes alive, and I can make alive.” If the *context* is read, the verses are not contradictory. Jesus was saying, “I will not exercise powers and capabilities given to me unless they are expressly in harmony with the Father’s will.” In other words, Jesus has been given certain prerogatives and liberties that he will exercise, but he will always keep in mind the Father’s objectives and will use the power, etc., accordingly. Even though the Father gives much power to the Son, it is the Father who has mapped out the program in which the power will be used.

The statement “the Father raiseth up the dead” applies especially to Jesus and the Church in the Kingdom, whereas the statement “the Son quickeneth whom he will” applies to the world of mankind. The *Father* calls and draws the disciples to Christ, and Jesus said he would reject none whom the *Father* sent him (John 6:37). The Christian is begotten with the Word of *God*. As the Author and Selector of the New Creation, the *Heavenly Father* now quickens those who previously were dead in trespasses and sins and gives them a new life. This new life is *very real*, even though they must still die in the flesh. Incidentally, in the Greek, things still *future* can be spoken of as past or as currently occurring. An example is the reference to the Son’s doing quickening in the Kingdom.

**John 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:**

This verse applies to the Kingdom, for the Father is judging the Church class, the New Creation, during the Gospel Age. Moreover, the Son’s judgment of the world will terminate when the Kingdom is turned over to the Father and He is all in all at the end of the Millennium. As proof that the Father judges the New Creation, Jesus said that he does not give positions of honor in the heavenly realm and that His Father will decide who sits on the right and left hand of the Son (Matt. 20:23).

**John 5:23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.**

Verse 23 applies to the New Creation now, but especially to the world in the Kingdom, when all will have to bow the knee and confess that Jesus is the Savior. It is like Joseph in Egypt. Pharaoh made the pronouncement to the nation of Egypt that all must bow the knee to Joseph as prime minister. In the future, God will manifest to mankind that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. Jesus will be endued with power from on high to perform his Kingdom work in that age, whereas in this age, Jesus is relatively unrecognized by the mass of mankind.

This verse alone, taken out of context, seems to support the Trinity. It sounds as if Father and Son get equal honor, glory, and praise, yet elsewhere Jesus said, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17). Similarly, the Apostle Paul on one occasion said he was the least of the apostles, but on another occasion said he was not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles. Jesus was saying that he deserves honor but not to the same degree that the Father is honored. In other words, a *chain of command* is laid down in the Scriptures.

Many “proof” texts that Trinitarians use are estranged from the context. To refute them, we must read a few verses before and a few verses after the particular Scripture. Jesus’ statement

(verse 19) “The Son can do nothing of himself” modifies the type of honor that is given to the Son. The illustration of Pharaoh and Joseph is excellent. The people had to bow the knee to Joseph and even acknowledge him verbally, giving deference and honor. All except Pharaoh, who had delegated that prerogative to Joseph, had to obey the arrangement.

**John 5:24** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Many misunderstand this Scripture and think that the Christian’s new relationship in Christ means “once saved, always saved.” They say, “We have passed from death unto life, so there is no condemnation in us. We are assured and guaranteed a future life in heaven.” How do we refute this type of thinking?

The verses just preceding refer to a broader work that will occur in the Kingdom. Jesus was saying that those who hear his word now, ahead of time, and believe will not come into “judgment” (Greek *krisis*) with the world in the Kingdom. Again we must consider the context. Two verses further on (verse 26), Jesus began to show what he will do in the Kingdom, when he gets “life in himself.”

The Apostle John’s technique in explaining various subjects is often misunderstood. Certain statements of his have a ring of finality that must be harmonized with the context and/or other Scriptures. In his epistles, especially the first epistle, John made several statements that apply to only that moment of utterance. For example, John said that the young men who remained faithful when the ecclesia divided had overcome Satan (1 John 2:13). It is true that they overcame in that *particular test*, but John did not mean they had overcome until the end of their course. Whether or not that was the case remained to be seen. The same principle applies here in verse 24. At the time one consecrates, he passes from death unto life, but faithfulness must be maintained until death for this *reckoned* condition to become permanent. Moreover, the multiplicity of “if” clauses (for example, “if we suffer [with him], we shall also reign with him”) modifies Scriptures such as verse 24 (2 Tim. 2:12).

In his Gospel, John recorded the utterances of Jesus. In his epistles, John spoke from a more personalized viewpoint and gave his own advice (which is really the Lord’s advice). Studying John’s epistles helps us to understand his Gospel—the type of language he used, what weight to give his statements in applying them, etc. John might have been referring to the future, or he might have been referring to the immediate present. Those who respond now to Jesus’ message have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, but while in the kingdom of light, they can fall away if they do not remain faithful (1 Pet. 2:9).

**John 5:25** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

Notice the use of “verily, verily” again. In fact, the expression was used three times in this discourse (verses 19, 24, and 25). These words were a natural characteristic of Jesus (like Paul’s saying, “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant,” and John’s saying, “little children,” a term that so impressed him when spoken by Jesus at the Memorial).

Verse 25 has a double application. In the present life, those who are dead in trespasses and sins can respond to Jesus. In the Kingdom, those who live through the trouble, as well as those in the grave, will have the opportunity to obey when they hear the voice of Jesus.

“And now is” is *authentic*, not *spurious* (see *Diaglott*). The previous verse (verse 24) has a present application. Verse 25 also has a present application but a future one as well; that is, it

has a *double* application.

**John 5:26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;**

Verse 26 is a good definition of immortality: “to have life in himself.” One who has immortality has no need for any sustenance in order to live. The Father has always had immortality. Jesus receives immortality for faithfulness unto death on the Cross. In regard to the account of the Samaritan woman, the water welling up within the individual who proves faithful in this age is a reference to immortality. The Church will receive life in themselves as the Son receives life in himself—from the Father.

Jesus slid from verse 24 (which applies to the present age), to verse 25 (which applies to both the present age and the Kingdom), to verse 26 (about Jesus’ immortality, which will be particularly used for the world of mankind in the Kingdom), to subsequent verses (which apply to the Kingdom).

**John 5:27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.**

In still talking to the Jews, Jesus showed that his judgment authority comes from the *Father* (compare verse 22). Jesus has the liberty to do certain things but *within* broad outlines set by *God*.

Why did Jesus mention “because he is the Son of man”? (1) Because Jesus had firsthand experience as a human being, because he was born as a human and was touched with a feeling of man’s infirmities, he is the most qualified one to execute judgment (Heb. 4:15). He is sympathetic to what the human family is experiencing. (2) Perfect Adam had dominion before he fell, and now the Son, the perfect man who paid the Ransom price, has earned the authority to execute judgment. Jesus is the Son of *the* man (Adam). When Adam fell, he lost his standing before God, but Jesus came down here and partook of the human nature and perfectly fulfilled the Law. Thus Jesus inherited the life promised in the Law. He replaced Adam, who was the father of a potential living race until he fell and plunged the whole human race into sin. (Mankind is judged in Adam.) Jesus became the *second* Adam, taking the *first* Adam’s place when he proved faithful unto death (1 Cor. 15:45). He came to give his life as the Ransom for the man who had fallen (1 Tim. 2:5,6). (3) Volume 5, *The Atonement Between God and Man*, gives further reasons.

In the Book of Daniel, Jesus was called “the Son of man” as the one brought before the Ancient of days (God) and given dominion, power, and judgment—the Kingdom of the most High (Dan. 7:13,14). The context shows that “the Son of man” is *The Christ*, Head and body, for the Kingdom will also be given to “the saints” of the most High God (Dan. 7:22). Jesus, the Head, is the chief “saint” over the Melchisedek priesthood, just as Aaron, also called a “saint,” was the head of the Levitical priesthood (Psa. 106:16; 110:4; Heb. 5:6,10). Although their understanding was limited, the Jews whom Jesus was addressing knew that the term “the Son of man” was in the Book of Daniel, and they knew that its use was related to Messiah and the Kingdom. Just as the Father gives to the Son here in the fifth chapter of John, so the Ancient of days gives to the Son of man in Daniel 7:13,14,18.

**John 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,**

**John 5:29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.**

In verses 28 and 29, Jesus was speaking primarily of the Kingdom Age. Notice the two component parts: those who “have done good” and those who “have done evil.” Those who have done good would be the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the Ancient Worthies (the “spirits of just men made perfect”—Heb. 12:23). The Ancient Worthies will be raised perfect, having already proven faithful. When the Kingdom is established, the *krisis* period for each of these three classes will already have occurred, whereas the world will get their *krisis* period in the Kingdom.

“Damnation” (Greek *krisis*) means “judgment.” *Krisis* is translated “condemnation” in verse 24 and “judgment” in verse 27. The thought is of a *trial period*, not just a verdict. The Revised Standard Version has “resurrection of judgment,” that is, a resurrection of stripes and disciplines. Thus the *nature* of the judgment is shown rather than just final judgment.

In regard to those who “have done good,” there is a *krisis* period in which the pros and cons of each individual are weighed. At the end of the period, a verdict is rendered as to whether one is considered worthy of life. The verdict takes place *before* the individual is raised from the grave. If the decision is favorable, the individual gets perfect life upon being raised. If the decision is unfavorable, the individual does not come forth.

Those who “have done evil” are the world of mankind, who are not on trial for life now as *individuals*. (Nations and institutions are on trial in the present age in a *collective* sense.) Those of the world who have not merited Second Death will come forth to a resurrection by judgment, testing, and correction.

Notice that in these verses, Jesus did not take an abject, humble attitude and lay himself down as a doormat but told *who* had come to planet Earth. The Royal Majesty of heaven had now appeared! If the Jews had known that a *sure heir*-apparent to a future Kingdom was in their midst, they would probably have treated him well, hoping that when he came into his power, he would remember them in a very favorable way.

Healing the impotent man on the sabbath brought up this whole subject. The Jews found fault with Jesus, their attitude being, “By what authority do you do these things? You take too much upon yourself.” Jesus said that the Father *continues* to be active and the Son is also active. Jesus tried to reason that there is more to this subject than their narrow vision on the principles of sabbath-keeping. Some people think of the letter of the Law and do not realize there are times when the spirit supersedes the letter, such as healing the sick and David’s eating the shewbread when he was famished. Hence there are times when technically breaking the sabbath is not a violation.

**John 5:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.**

It is almost as if Jesus anticipated the doctrine of the Trinity, for this is the third time or so on the same occasion that he included this thought. With Jesus giving so much information about events all down the Gospel Age in Matthew 24 and 25, he no doubt knew the Trinity would become a factor as well as wars, rumors of wars, false prophets, etc., but he did not want to demean his position as *Head* of the body and *Judge* of the world in the next age. As the chief member of that class, Jesus could rightly apply the title “the Son of man” to himself.

**John 5:31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.**

This statement was based on the Law, which taught that to be properly established, a matter must come out of the mouth of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15). The New American

Standard reads, “If I *alone* bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.” That is the correct thought, for one witness is not sufficient.

John 8:14 might seem to be a contradiction: “Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.” Here in verse 31, Jesus said that the testimony would not be true if he bore witness of himself. The context of Chapter 8 is important, for Jesus certainly knew he had come from the Father and would return to the Father. What he meant was that *others* would not accept the testimony as true if *he alone* bore witness. The proper way for others to be convinced was by two or three witnesses.

**John 5:32** There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

**John 5:33** Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

**John 5:34** But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

**John 5:35** He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

**John 5:36** But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

**John 5:37** And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

**John 5:38** And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

Three witnesses testified that Jesus is the Christ: (1) John the Baptist, a contemporary witness; (2) Jesus’ works; and (3) the Word (Moses, that is, the Old Testament, the [Word of the] Father). The Old Testament told of a coming Messiah, and Jesus fit the descriptions. The people should have recognized Jesus as Messiah by analyzing his life, character, deportment, and miracles—all of these were *in addition to* his words. Jesus did not often say he was the Christ, the Messiah, but he frequently called himself “the Son of man,” which, to the Jews, was synonymous with being the Messiah.

The thought of verse 34 is, “I receive not testimony from man [*only*],” for Jesus did receive testimony from John the Baptist. Jesus said these things so “that ye might be saved”; that is, Jesus went out of his way to reason with those who heard him. Paul also used reasoning to help others and to exercise their minds to perceive. He humbled himself on several occasions to help others. For example, he reviewed his life—persecutions, fastings, healings, shipwrecks, etc.—to show that he was a bona fide apostle. He used this reasoning to rebut the arguments of false apostles who felt they were superior to him.

Coming down to the level of our thinking is very helpful because most of us do not reason. If we had lived back there, Christ could have been in our midst without our recognizing him unless he called attention to the Old Testament prophecies and to what John the Baptist had said. In other words, the miracles alone might not have been enough to convince us.

**Comment:** Since Jesus was addressing Jews who wanted to kill him, the meaning would seem to be “that ye might be saved [*ultimately*],” for surely Jesus did not expect this element to become his followers back there. If, however, they would moderate their hateful heart

condition, it would at least be favorable toward their ultimate salvation. Otherwise, this verse would seem to imply that now is the only opportunity for salvation.

**Reply:** That principle will become a little more visible later in regard to whom Jesus was dealing with and why.

**Q:** The Bible calls the Jews “stiffnecked” (Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6,13; 10:16; Acts 7:51). In spite of all the miracles that were done in connection with the Exodus and during the 40 years in the Wilderness of Sinai, they continually strayed, disobeyed, and murmured. Now with Jesus, in spite of all the miracles, relatively few really believed. Are these national traits?

**A:** Yes, they were common characteristics in Moses’ day and at the First Advent. The Israelites “forgot his [God’s] works, and his wonders that he had showed them” (Psa. 78:11). Paul explained why: the word preached to them was not “mixed with *faith*” (Heb. 4:2). In other words, a lack of faith is related to forgetting. Faith is the exercise of the mind with regard to God and His promises. If we are *familiar* with God’s Word and are *eager* for its fulfillment, we have been developed in faith and will not forget as readily. Through the fall, we were born with the tendency to forget, but faith, which comes by hearing and considering the Word of God, helps us not to forget the leadings of Divine Providence. At times, the Israelites seemed to forget *overnight* even the most stupendous miracles. We should remember the kindnesses done to us by others—consecrated or not—as well as the blessings we receive through Providence.

It is interesting how the Apostle John used light in verse 35. John the Baptist was called “a burning and a shining light.” In the first chapter, the apostle said that Jesus was *the* Light. And elsewhere God is called “the Father [the source] of lights” (James 1:17). As bright as the light of John the Baptist was, the apostle differentiated him from Jesus. The Sinaitic manuscript states that Jesus “*is*” the Light.

**Q:** In regard to verse 36, when do Jesus’ works finish?

**A:** The works continue right on to the end of the Millennial Age. Jesus had a work to do when he came at his First Advent; that is, he came to die and to teach those who had a hearing ear. After his resurrection, he had to prove that indeed he had risen from the dead. Then he ascended on high and sent the promised Comforter. During the Gospel Age, he has been in the midst of the candlesticks (Rev. 1:13). These are all a part of the works the Father gave Jesus to do, and in the Kingdom, Jesus will deal with mankind. Therefore, in verse 36, Jesus was just saying that since his initial coming at the First Advent up to the time of this discourse, he was trying to do the Father’s works. Of course the primary work was his dying because all other works are contingent upon that faithfulness. “It is finished,” his words on the Cross, meant that his primary mission to pay the Ransom was accomplished.

Verse 36 helps to clarify the earlier Scripture “My Father worketh hitherto, and [now] I work” (John 5:17). The Father’s sabbath with regard to physical creation occurred way back with Adam and Eve. Subsequently Jesus takes a primary role with the human race—prior to his coming, at the First Advent, with his death and resurrection, during the Gospel Age, and during the Kingdom Age. All of these works are a process of the long interim in which the Father deals through the Son—up until the time the Kingdom is handed over to the Father and He is all in all. At that time, the Seventh Day will be complete, and God will no longer “rest.”

“Ye have neither heard his [the Father’s] voice at any time, nor seen his shape” (verse 37). Although the Jews being addressed did not hear the Father’s voice, Jesus heard it at Jordan saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Hence we know that God can speak. By inference, then, we also know that God’s divine spiritual body has a shape, a form.

**John 5:39** Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

**John 5:40** And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

**John 5:41** I receive not honour from men.

**John 5:42** But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

**John 5:43** I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

**John 5:44** How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?

**John 5:45** Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

**John 5:46** For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

**John 5:47** But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Notice how blunt Jesus was. Many think that he was always gentle, quiet, and kind at his First Advent and that we should be the same. However, the majority of his declarations to others were *mighty, mighty strong!* How would we like to be told that Moses' words are not in us or that we err and do not know the Scriptures? The *truth*—even if it is strong—is also Christlikeness. There is a saying: “The truth hurts.” We do not have the liberty to criticize individuals, but we can criticize conduct, habits promulgated erroneously, false doctrines, and false applications of doctrine—all of which are not personal. Here Jesus did not use the name of an individual but addressed a group. There are times when this should be done. The ecumenical spirit of today is so pervasive that it has gone from religious circles to the world. No ruffling of feathers is wanted, but to have no discrimination in lifestyle, for example, is *license*, not liberty. The tolerance of immorality and false doctrine has crept into nominal Christendom whereby everyone wants to be “buddy-buddy” (Protestant with Catholic), and such tolerance has even crept into our circles. We must be careful, for it is NOT Christlikeness to never say anything to ruffle anyone.

In verses 39 and 40, Jesus was saying, “You boast of the Scriptures by saying you believe Moses, whereas actually you *do not know* Moses!” We could make comparisons like that today. For instance, some may boast about Pastor Russell and not really know his writings in a comprehensive sense. Therefore, just to make a statement can be very superficial.

These Jews claimed that they were children of Abraham and that they were standing up for Moses in contradistinction to Jesus' different teachings. Jesus encouraged them to go back and search the Scriptures and find that they really do testify concerning his works.

In verse 42, Jesus told the Jews, “You do not have the love of God in you.” That was *strong* talk. And Jesus even said some strong things to his disciples. For example, he said to Peter, “O thou of *little* faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matt. 14:29-31). And to the disciples, he said, “Because of your *unbelief*: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith [even] as a [tiny] *grain* of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20). Neither of these statements was complimentary, but they were helpful as *constructive* criticism. As a result, the disciples

realized they needed more faith and they prayed, “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). It is helpful to *know* what we lack, to know wherein lies our need.

Jesus said to the Jews, “I receive not honour from men [as *you* do]” (verse 41). In other words, “I am not looking for applause, commendation, or flattery from any man, for I speak what is truth. The Father sent me to deliver His message, and I am trying to do that to the absolute letter. Whether or not men receive it is *their* problem.”

Jesus said, “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive [acknowledge, recognize]” (verse 43). Protestants have applied this statement to false Christs, but the main application is to Papacy because it took over in Christ’s stead, with the pope claiming to be the vicar of Christ. Another application is to false apostles who tried to deny Paul’s apostleship—and to any others who promote self rather than really teaching Scripture.

In verse 45, Jesus said, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.” How do we harmonize this statement with the fact that Jesus did criticize the Jews—for not really searching the Scriptures, for not really believing Moses, and for not having the love of God? One way to answer this question is to say that the criticism of Moses was sufficient, so Jesus did not dwell on the matter, although he did voice his opinion, his criticism. Another way of answering is to say that the Word is even higher than Jesus, for it represents God’s Holy Spirit. Those who sin against Jesus can be forgiven, but those who sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven; that is, some opposed Jesus from a *personal* standpoint, and this type of opposition could be forgiven.

Jesus stated in verse 46, “He [Moses] wrote of me.” Moses said, “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, *like unto me*; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deut. 18:15). The New Testament paraphrases this text, as it does many other Old Testament Scriptures. It is important to realize that the apostles *correctly* paraphrased. Some apologists say these are fallible quotations, but no! These paraphrases are adapted to apply to the subject at hand. Jesus did this too. Also, in the Pentateuch, Moses wrote down many types and shadows of Jesus, one example being the Passover lamb.

**John 6:1** After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

**John 6:2** And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

**John 6:3** And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

**John 6:4** And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

This is the *third* Passover John mentioned, establishing the chronology (John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4). Therefore, five chapters of the Gospel of John cover 2 1/2 years of Jesus’ ministry. Stated another way, the beginning of Chapter 6 occurred about a year before his demise. John 11:55 mentions the *fourth* Passover, so approximately half of John’s Gospel concentrates on just the *last week* of Jesus’ ministry. (John 11:55 and 18:28 both refer to the fourth Passover.)

John covered the last week of Jesus’ ministry from a discourse standpoint. The other Gospel writers treated mostly where Jesus went and what he did, but not the discourse en route to the Garden of Gethsemane. John also told about incidents at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry that were omitted by the others, for example, the *first* cleansing of the Temple and the first six months or so of Jesus’ ministry in Judea including Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria. Then John jumped to the end of Jesus’ ministry. In other words, John filled in significant omissions.

The feeding of the multitude, about to occur, took place on a grassy plain on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee near the upper, or northern, end. Historically, there were no cities on the grassy plain, even though this and another plain were broad and they embraced almost half of the land along the Sea of Galilee on the east.

**John 6:5** When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

**John 6:6** And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

**John 6:7** Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

**John 6:8** One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

**John 6:9** There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

**John 6:10** And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

This incident was the feeding of the 5,000. (The later feeding was of 4,000.) The pronouns in verse 6, which can be confusing, are as follows: "And this he [Jesus] said to prove him [Philip]: for he [Jesus] himself knew what he would do." It is interesting that John had the insight to realize Jesus addressed the question to Philip to "prove" or test him. Philip was very practical-minded. Another factor is that Philip came from Bethsaida (John 1:44), and the feeding took place in the "wilderness" near Bethsaida. The Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee at the north end between Capernaum on the left and Bethsaida on the right. Bethsaida was large, extending almost a quarter of the way around the north end of the sea.

Because Philip lived in Bethsaida, the nearest city, he knew where to buy bread, but Jesus had an ulterior motive, even though the other apostles would have thought the reason was just Philip's familiarity with the area. Jesus knew in advance that he would perform the miracle of feeding the multitude. Incidentally, bread and fishes were the common staples of that area. A humble type of life was led by Jesus and his apostles.

Why did Philip say that "two hundred pennyworth" was not sufficient for such a multitude? The value of 200 pennyworth was 200 denarios, or 200 days' labor, that is, the wages of an average worker for 200 days. There were 5,000 men plus women and children—therefore, probably at least 6,000 people. Looking at the 5,000-plus people, Philip said that the amount of money in the apostles' "treasury" was not enough. (Obviously, Philip knew how much money they had.) And the amount of money was not enough for each of the multitude to take even "a little," let alone have a regular meal—or even a snack.

The Master had been doing miracles all along, and here was another opportunity. Jesus was testing Philip's *faith* and confidence that the needs of his people can be satisfied. If we seek *first* the Kingdom of God, the necessary things of life will be furnished (Matt. 6:33). Our "bread and water" are assured.

According to the *Diaglott*, the "lad" (verse 9) was a little boy. Andrew remarked spontaneously, "A little boy is here who has five barley loaves and two small fishes to sell, but what good will that do?" The latter part would have been said shamefacedly or naively, even though Andrew was older than Philip. These replies were insights into Philip's and Andrew's characters. Incidentally, people in middle age or older can be naive.

Adding the figures of the two feedings numerically indicates that the world of mankind in the Kingdom will be nourished and fed through The Christ. The feeding was a miracle of multiplication (five loaves fed 5,000, so the bread was multiplied as it was handed out, and the two fishes likewise increased). The math emphasizes the 144,000.

$$5,000 + 4,000 = 9,000 \quad 2 \text{ fishes} + 5 \text{ loaves} + 2 \text{ fishes} + 7 \text{ loaves} = 16 \quad 9,000 \times 16 = 144,000$$

The feeding of the world in the next age is based on the character development of Christians in the present age; that is, the Christian's main purpose in this age is sanctification and becoming qualified for the elect body, who will feed the world of mankind in the future. Hence the feedings of the 5,000 and the 4,000 are mainly a picture of the next age.

**John 6:11** And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

An insight into fallen humanity's nature will come later by comparing the testimony in verse 14 that these "men" thought Jesus was the Messiah with verse 30, which gives their remarks the next day. Mankind are fickle, often thinking one way one day and another way the next day.

Jesus gave the instruction, and the apostles carried out the order, so that the people sat down or reclined on the grass in an orderly fashion. Although there would have been some faith for all (apostles and people) to sit down as Jesus had directed, they must have wondered what would follow. The stage was being set. No doubt Jesus had a definiteness in his manner for others to obey so readily.

Jesus gave thanks to God, the Author, and then performed the miracle *through* the twelve apostles. In other words, Jesus distributed the loaves and the fishes to his disciples, who in turn gave food to the people. A Gospel Age application is that the bread represents God's Word, which was first given to the twelve apostles, who became channels of truth to others. Another Gospel Age lesson is that the bread of life comes from Jesus and from the writings and teachings of his apostles.

In the Millennial Kingdom, the same channel of blessing will apply. One proof is that Jesus told his apostles they would be seated on twelve thrones judging the children of Israel (Matt. 19:28). At that time, all will eat and be full, whereas in the Gospel Age, relatively few receive (eat) of the Word. In the present age, the Church is fed dispensationally through seven pipes, or channels (Zech. 4:2). In the next age, the feeding will be primarily through the twelve apostles.

The order or hierarchy of those who were present was God, Jesus, the twelve apostles, the men (as head of their families), wives, and children. A current application would be God, Jesus, the twelve apostles, and the brotherhood (which is neither male nor female but is organized through the male). In the wilderness, *God* sent the bread of heaven through Moses to the children of Israel, who had to gather the manna to satisfy their daily needs. The manna was also a miraculous feeding. Incidentally, of the nominal mass who were there for the loaves and the fishes, some were sincere.

**John 6:12** When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

**John 6:13** Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

**John 6:14** Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

All of the remaining fragments were gathered up so that “nothing [would] be lost.” We are reminded of Samuel, of whom it was said, “[He] did let none of his [the Lord’s] words fall to the ground” (1 Sam. 3:19). The Lord’s words were not wasted on Samuel. Also, the thought that God’s Word does not return to Him void but will accomplish all that is purposed shows great *economy* (Isa. 55:11). And Jesus said that every jot and tittle must be fulfilled (Matt. 5:18). Nothing of the Lord’s Word is wasted, for it will reach the class for whom it is intended. God is not stingy, and neither should we be stingy. However, He is economical, and hence we should not waste.

The leftover fragments were collected in “baskets” (knapsacks). With most transportation being on foot in those days, people carried knapsacks with their belongings when they were covering distances. Since the majority of people walk no faster than 2 1/2 miles an hour, most had containers for carrying bread. However, in this case, the multitude, who lived mainly on the west bank of Galilee, did not anticipate that Jesus would cross the sea and hence did not bring their knapsacks.

Generally speaking, the multitude (“the men”) recognized Jesus as the Messiah at this point. They said, “This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

The multiplication took place in the baskets after Jesus blessed the five loaves and the two fishes. Like what happened with the widow’s cruse, as the disciples removed bread and fishes, there was a continuous multiplication. The 5,000-plus would have realized the baskets could not originally hold enough food for all of them. Hence they slowly recognized the miracle. Each person must have thought, “Perhaps the food will run out before the disciples get to me.” When the food not only did not run out but had leftovers, all knew it was a miracle. Truly the Lord’s Word is a mine that is deeper than mortal man can ever go. No matter how much we are fed, more truth remains.

How were the fragments gathered up? Where did they come from? Probably the fragments were gathered up from the ground, but we do not know for sure. A practical reason for the leftovers is that the disciples themselves had to eat, and they ate last. They first sought the Kingdom of God and then got side benefits (their own feeding) from the feeding of others.

**Comment:** A possible lesson seems to be that there is a sufficient feeding for Christians in each age, dispensationally speaking. When the feeding for that age is complete, some remains for the next age.

Moses fed the Israelites with bread that fell from heaven, and Jesus fed the multitudes with bread blessed from heaven that multiplied. Hence there was this similarity between Moses and Jesus. Those Jews who earnestly studied Moses’ life should have recognized the similarity with “that prophet” (Jesus), who was “like unto” Moses (Deut. 18:15,18). Another similarity is that Moses walked across the bottom of the Red Sea dry-shod, and Jesus walked across the top of the Sea of Galilee. In both cases, a miracle was involved, and mastery of the sea was illustrated.

**John 6:15** When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

**John 6:16** And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

**John 6:17** And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now

**dark, and Jesus was not come to them.**

Jesus had just fed the multitudes on the grassy plain. Impressed by the miracle, the crowd was thinking of him as Messiah and wanted to start a movement to declare him “king.” Since they were going to Jerusalem for the Passover (No. 3) anyway, they reasoned that they could proclaim him King while they were there, thus forcing the issue. However, Jesus wanted to circumvent this thinking, so he went up into a mountain *alone*, without the disciples. (A famous painting shows the mountain near the grassy plain.) The other Gospels tell that he had instructed the disciples to get into a boat and head across the Sea of Galilee. Of course the disciples did not want to leave Jesus, so his instruction was contrary to their desires.

**John 6:18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.**

While Jesus was on the mountain and the disciples were in the ship out on the sea, a “great wind” came up. The wind probably arose from Mount Hermon in the north and came down between the mountains like a funnel, blowing with fury on the sea. This type of wind is known as being especially treacherous.

**John 6:19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.**

The disciples were rowing to Capernaum on a northerly diagonal course. Jesus, up on the mountain, could see that the disciples had rowed about 25 or 30 furlongs (three miles), and they were now at midpoint on the sea. In other words, there were still three miles to go, even though the disciples had been rowing for about nine straight hours—a long time. They were out in the wind, being blown contrary to their destination of Capernaum.

Incidentally, when Capernaum and Magdala were occupied, they covered much more territory than today. In fact, they practically bordered each other. Capernaum means “village of Nahum,” and Nahum has the thought of “comforter.” Hence Capernaum means “village of comforter.” This signification was appropriate, for Jesus comforted the disciples with the words “Be not afraid” (verse 20), and the disciples were going to Capernaum.

The disciples had departed the grassy plain in late afternoon, when it was just beginning to get a little dark. Now it was the darkest part of the night. They had anticipated arriving at Capernaum by dark, but such was not the case. Around 3 a.m., Jesus intercepted them. Imagine rowing for nine hours and being only halfway—at the point of no return!

The fact that Jesus could see the disciples means that he had a good view from the mountain and there was *moonlight*. Thus, also, the disciples could subsequently see Jesus approaching them on the water. The artist’s conception in the famous painting shows Jesus approaching on the path of moonlight on the water, and the very mountain is in the background.

**John 6:20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.**

**John 6:21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.**

“It is I; be not afraid.” Jesus’ words signify that the disciples were afraid, for they thought they were seeing an apparition or a spirit being walking on the water. These characteristic words of Jesus probably had an intonation of his personality that strengthened the disciples. (By the way, the Egyptian hieroglyph for a “miracle” or something impossible is a foot on choppy water.) Following Jesus’ words of comfort, the apostles willingly received him into the boat. Mark 6:48 tells that Jesus would have passed them by if they had not cried out to him. He

replied with these words, and then Peter walked out to him, etc.

Notice the word “immediately.” The disciples received Jesus into the boat, and *immediately* the boat was at their destination. As the writer of the last Gospel, John did not repeat all the details of the other Gospels but added *new* information, and this important detail had been overlooked. Apparently, the other writers just saw Jesus as stopping the wind and calming the elements. However, as Jesus stepped into the boat, it was at land—immediately. This incident shows his control of the elements (as does his walking on the sea). It also has an antitypical fulfillment (as does the earlier incident where he was asleep in the boat during the storm).

This experience illustrates the way the Lord deals with his people. Jesus allowed the apostles to struggle for nine hours in the fierce wind and waves before he intervened. The men and the boat were strong, but the waves really buffeted them. The bow had to be kept in the right direction lest the boat capsize or get swamped. Finally Jesus came and stepped into the boat, and they were immediately at their destination. What is the lesson? With *Jesus’* assistance, *all* obstacles can be overcome.

The time of Jesus’ coming was the fourth watch (Matt. 14:25). The watches were as follows:

1st watch: 6 to 9 p.m.	2nd watch: 9 p.m. to midnight
3rd watch: midnight to 3 a.m.	4th watch: 3 to 6 a.m.

Jesus came to the disciples in the fourth watch, that is, before dawn. Hence they had been rowing for *at least* nine hours. In antitype, the time element of the fourth watch is significant.

Luke 12:38 mentions not knowing what watch Jesus would come. In the parable that follows, if the good man of the house (Satan) had known what hour the thief (Jesus) would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken up. Since the time of this coming is unknown and the second and third watches are suggested, then by implication, Jesus will come in the fourth watch, that is, at the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth watch. Incidentally, there are different comings: (1) October 1874 was the beginning of the *parousia*. Jesus came to feed his people in the Harvest period, and no one knew Jesus was present until the faithful and wise servant served meat in due season. (2) He will come for his Bride (still future). Several dates already suggested have ended in disappointment, but he must come before the *sunrise* to the world. In connection with this prophetic event, the winds and the waves will rage.

The following are a few examples of type and antitype:

Type

Jesus went to the mountain alone.  
Jesus came to his disciples.  
The ship was immediately at shore.

Antitype

Jesus ascended to heaven at his First Advent.  
Jesus will come for the feet members.  
The feet members will have an instantaneous change when they are caught up in a cloud to their haven of rest (Capernaum/heaven).

The change of the feet members will be a *collective* rescue, for there will be no last individual member of the Little Flock. Elijah’s being taken up into heaven by a whirlwind pictures a *class*. Noah represents Christ, and Shem, Ham, and Japheth (the *three* sons) picture the feet members. All were in the Ark of salvation. *Three* Hebrew children (feet members) were cast into the furnace of fire. Gideon fought the battle with *three* bands of 100 each. All of these are *group* or *collective* pictures of the feet members going violently as a class. The heel members (plural) will be bruised by the Adversary. The picture here of Jesus and the disciples in the boat harmonizes with these other types.

The first and last “Passovers” corresponded with the calendar in every respect. The lamb was selected on the tenth day, slain on the 14th day, and eaten on the 15th day. In the morning of

the same day (the 15th), the Israelites exited from Egypt. The last Passover/Memorial even corresponded with the day of the week of the First Passover. Jesus died on a Friday, the 14th of Nisan. On the 16th of Nisan, the sheaf offering was waved, corresponding with Sunday, when Jesus was raised from death. The first Passover in Egypt corresponded (both numerically and on the same day of the week) with Jesus' institution of the Memorial. At the end of the age with the feet members, the Memorial will probably again correspond.

In AD 69, Jerusalem was attacked on the Day of Atonement by the Roman army because the Romans knew many Jews would be congregated at that time for religious purposes. A cordon was drawn around the city, and then it took several years to subdue the city. In modern times, the Yom Kippur War occurred. Strategically, the Arabs knew the Jews' celebration of Yom Kippur would make them especially vulnerable. At the end of the age, Satan may select the Passover for destroying the Jews.

Darkness was on the land from 12 noon to 3 p.m., which corresponded with the time Jesus was on the Cross, and he died at 3 p.m. Adam fell in the "cool of the day," which was late afternoon, perhaps 3 p.m. (Gen. 3:8).

A convenient time to imprison the brethren would be at the Memorial, when they customarily gather together. Those who are fearful will stay away on that occasion. Only the brethren who are courageous will meet. At that time, the test will be NOT to compromise, and the mettle of our characters will surely be tested. Theoretically, it is easy to die for the Lord, but whether one is faithful under such testing remains to be seen. Our families may be threatened, but we *must* be faithful—regardless—to be of the Little Flock. Satan used all kinds of techniques in the past to make the consecrated compromise either directly or through their families. No doubt under those circumstances, many brethren will be fearful to congregate. Health, family, etc., may seem like logical and prudent reasons to refrain, but the faithful will meet.

What about the logistics of Jesus' walking on the Sea of Galilee? The wind was sufficiently strong to hold back the waves where he walked (as with the crossing of the Red Sea), and then the wind froze, or congealed, the water to make ice so that Jesus walked on a frozen path. Moreover, the wind kept the water off the ice so that it was not slippery. Especially a "frosted" freezing would not be slippery, and it is probable that this phenomenon was miraculously provided for Jesus. Peter no doubt saw the frozen path and started out on it to meet Jesus. As he became fearful, however, the ice softened and wavered, and he started to sink. When he called out to Jesus, his faith strengthened, the ice resolidified, and he could again walk above the water.

Waves in the prophetic aspect picture the Church's time of trouble. The subsequent world's time of trouble will start with the fall of the nominal systems. The escapees will be the Great Company class, among others, and they, too, will have a time of trouble. And so will Israel. With the Church, however, the time of trouble will be a *deliverance*, a *privileged* experience for those who have a sufficiency of faith and exercise it at that time.

When we approach this incident as a *moral* lesson, as opposed to a prophetic lesson, the boat in the sea can be the Christian in the world, and the waves are the trials of life. The Christian is not of the world if the water stays out of the boat.

**John 6:22** The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone;

**John 6:23** (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did

eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

**John 6:24** When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

**John 6:25** And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?

This was the day following the miraculous feeding of the 5,000-plus and the night when Jesus walked on the sea to the apostles in the boat during the storm. The people on the other side of Galilee where the feeding had occurred now realized that Jesus was not there. Several details become apparent. *These* people (but not necessarily all of the 5,000-plus) had stayed there overnight because they did not see Jesus depart. They saw the disciples leave in the boat and Jesus go up into the mountain, but that was all. Therefore, the people waited until morning. However, Jesus, having walked on the sea the night before, was already on the other side.

Because John's style of writing was very different from that of the other Gospel writers, he is often misunderstood. Part of verse 22, paraphrased, is as follows: "the people who stood on the other side of the sea, when they saw that there had been no other boat except the one the disciples had entered"; that is, when the multitude was fed, only *one* boat was there. In this *one* boat, Jesus and the disciples had traveled to the grassy plain in the wilderness. In this same (and *only*) boat, the disciples had departed in late afternoon for the other side of the sea.

The *next* morning other boats came from Tiberias. Some of the people requisitioned these boats to take them back to the other side (to Capernaum). As "ferries," the boats made several trips to Capernaum. This information tells us that the trip was a distance of only five to six miles, which could be covered relatively quickly by rowing under normal circumstances. What a contrast the night before when it took the disciples nine hours to go about three miles to the midpoint of the distance to their intended destination!

When the people found Jesus at Capernaum, they said, "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" They had been waiting for Jesus to descend the mountain. When they realized he had left, they were puzzled—hence the question.

**John 6:26** Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

**John 6:27** Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

**John 6:28** Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

**John 6:29** Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Verses 26 and 27 give Jesus' answer to the people's query "When camest thou hither?" In other words, he *ignored* the specifics of their question. Many feel they are required to give an answer, but the Scriptures do not so teach. Yes, we are to be always ready to give a reason for our faith, but there are times when it is proper not to answer. Why did Jesus ignore the question? He disapproved of their reason for pursuing him. Their motive was not pure, for they wanted him to provide food, and Jesus was looking for a higher motive than feeding their stomachs.

Jesus' words would be considered uncouth by many if we uttered them today. In addition to

ignoring the question, we would be accused of being impolite and speaking too bluntly, yet Jesus did the proper thing. Having a ministry to fulfill, he was not to be sidetracked needlessly, so he came directly to the point. And this method produced an effect (verse 34).

Jesus said the motivation in seeking him was for the loaves and the fishes. Isn't this rather surprising? When the 5,000-plus went around to see him initially, they did not know he would feed them miraculously out of compassion. Originally, their motive in seeking Jesus might have been *curiosity* (as opposed to real sincerity), but after the miraculous feeding, the motivation changed to one of food—a selfish motive along temporal lines. Instead we are to seek “first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these [temporal] things shall be added” (Matt. 6:33). Thus Jesus gave a *rebuke* to the people, for their labor should have been for “meat which endureth unto everlasting life.”

“Him hath God the Father sealed.” The Father had appointed Jesus as the channel to dispense this higher “meat.” The word “sealed” means “impressed with an insignia.” When one sent a letter anciently, he sealed it with hot wax and his insignia to authenticate that it was truly from him. The fact that the *Father* had “sealed” Jesus unto this work or ministry authenticated Jesus' being the Messiah. The people should have recognized this from Jesus' miracles. He bore credentials in more ways than one: the miracles he performed plus his teaching. Elsewhere Jesus said, “If you do not believe me, at least believe the works that I do” (John 10:38 paraphrase); that is, the works should have awakened the people to his Messiahship.

Verse 27 reminds us of the Samaritan woman. Jesus spoke bluntly to her, using no flattery. “You have well said that you are not married, for he whom you now live with is not your husband” (John 4:17,18 paraphrase). This instance of Jesus' speaking with authority (because he was sealed of the Father) evoked a favorable response, for exposing her sin convinced her that Jesus was more than a prophet. And Jesus then said, “I am that Messiah.”

In the present incident, there was a favorable response briefly: “How do we labor to get this higher food? We want to know more about this meat, but you speak mysteriously.” The Samaritan woman had said similarly, “Give me of that water that I may drink and live forever.” She was rather naive, and so were the people here. They were sort of mesmerized momentarily. With the Samaritan woman, the results were positive. With the people here (except for *individuals* perhaps), the results were not so favorable.

Notice John's observation that in almost every instance, Jesus *first* gave credit to God. This is true of the Book of Revelation as well as of John's Gospel. Jesus first mentioned the Father and His service, and then spoke strongly, and with authority, about himself.

Jesus' answer (verse 29), “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,” implied something the people should have grasped. Nominal Christendom teaches, “Just believe on the name of Jesus, and you will be saved,” but *more* than mere mental assent is needed. The *Diaglott* shows that the work of God is to believe *into* Jesus, that is, to *continue* to follow Jesus, which costs something. The people were not willing to take that step. Jesus had revealed truth, and now the responsibility lay with them. It was up to the people to respond to the necessary information they had received by becoming *followers* of Jesus. “Belief” is more than an intellectual acceptance, for it involves making a commitment. Even Satan and the demons recognized that Jesus was the Son of God and shuddered (James 2:19). The group here still did not get the point but were thinking on an earthly plane, probably because they were used to the works of the Law; that is, their question in verse 28 was, “Just tell us what we have to do. How do we *earn* this miraculous feeding?”

Jesus used the word “work.” To merely believe that he is the Messiah without doing anything about it—without consecrating—would not get them the bread they were asking for. Jesus

whet their appetites for something mysterious above and beyond literal eating for the natural body. The people said they were interested and asked, "How do we obtain it?" Jesus did not answer, "Just believe," for a *work* was involved and there was responsibility. A superficial acknowledgment was not enough.

**John 6:30** They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

**John 6:31** Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

The people's reply in verses 30 and 31 shows that they knew what Jesus meant, but they were not ready to comply. They realized that to obtain the "meat" would mean giving up something—a *cost* was involved.

Proof that their heart attitude was not right is their question "What sign will you show that we may see and believe?" Just the day before, Jesus had created a miraculous feeding, which was witnessed by all, and he had healed many sick, yet now they had the nerve to compare Jesus' miracles with Moses' providing of manna in the wilderness and to give *Moses* the higher priority. They probably reasoned this way: "Moses fed millions on a daily basis for 40 years. You fed 5,000-plus on one occasion for one meal. Hence there is no comparison." The real problem was that they had reservations and did not want to fully commit. To hide this attitude, they tried to save face with these comments. They were trying to justify their reservations because they were not ready to take the step of consecration.

**John 6:32** Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

**John 6:33** For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Jesus' reply is interesting, but a proper emphasis is needed to get the point. In verse 31, the people were emphasizing Moses' role and heaven—that *Moses* supplied the bread from heaven. Jesus said, "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven." In the Wilderness of Sinai, the manna was supplied almost like distilled dew on the *ground*. Nehemiah 9:15 calls the manna "bread from heaven" because *God* was the source of the bread, yet it did not come down from "heaven"—it did not fall on the ground but sort of came *up* from the ground.

On the other hand, Jesus had come *down* from heaven. He said, "I have been in heaven, and I have come down." Yes, God supplied the manna, but it did not come from heaven. However, Jesus, the *true* bread from heaven, came down from the Father. Jesus said in effect, "I am the true bread that you are inquiring about." The true bread was more than the manna—it was higher than just temporal security. Now the people realized that Jesus' thinking was on a higher plane.

**John 6:34** Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

The people said (paraphrased), "Yes, we would like to know more about this new bread." Although they naively said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," their motivation and thinking were still mixed up, for they expected Jesus to *hand* them something. Again we are reminded of the Samaritan woman, who said, "Give me that water, Lord, so that I will not have to draw water at the well anymore." It was laborious work to carry heavy jugs of water.

**John 6:35** And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never

**hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.**

**John 6:36** But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

Here was a penetrating thought. The people asked an ostensibly desirable question, which seemed to be pure and spontaneous, but Jesus, knowing they still did not have the proper motivation, said, “Ye believe *not*.” Their hearts and minds were not ready to follow his instruction. On many occasions, however, when Jesus gave similar instruction, there were *some* who benefited. John showed this in various ways. For example, the Samaritan woman at the well went into the city and got many others to come out and hear Jesus. Our Lord was very blunt with Nicodemus. His method here and elsewhere produced results, but it was contrary to the prevailing opinion that one should always speak gently and softly with tactful, measured words. A proof of results with Nicodemus is that he and Joseph of Arimathea begged Jesus’ body, removed it from the Cross before the whole nation, and wrapped it.

To “never hunger” and “never thirst” referred to the *higher* plane. If one finds the source of answers for questions he has long asked—what is man’s purpose? who is God, and where is He?—he should be fully satisfied. Those who “believe” *into* Jesus and work “the work” no longer hunger and thirst. Jesus satisfies!

**John 6:37** All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

**John 6:38** For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

**John 6:39** And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

**John 6:40** And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In verse 40, the word “on” should be “into”: “And this is the will of him [God] that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on [into] him, may have everlasting life.”

Why did Jesus say, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me”? Although Jesus addressed these words to a *mixed* multitude, he knew that his ministry would be a success in the final analysis. *Thousands* followed him from all parts of Israel and the Middle East, but except for a few, they did not continue with him. People listened only up to a point because they had other motivations such as healing, curiosity, and receiving the loaves and the fishes. Consider the lepers: nine of them were thankful they were cleansed, but only the tenth came back to express his appreciation. So here Jesus was saying, “Those who observe my ministry will see multitudes following me and deserting me, following and deserting, etc.” Those who came only for the healing returned to their homes after it was accomplished. Only a relative handful, as it were, became disciples. Therefore, Jesus was saying, “My ministry is a success.” No matter how his ministry was viewed, the few who adhered to his doctrine (compared to the thousands who heard him) were those the Father was “giving” to him—just as intended. Jesus “came unto his own, and [except for the intended few] his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (John 1:11,12). In fact, throughout the Scriptures, we see the concept of a *remnant*. Of all who receive a blessing, only a remnant go on to receive the *maximum* blessing through consecration and *faithfulness unto death*. In other words, not all who are drawn of the Father fully appreciate the drawing. It is a *miracle* to even understand the truth that Jesus is the Messiah. One who does not realize he is being miraculously drawn, and thus fails to act on it, loses the chief promise.

Jesus was exercising faith in his Father, so he did not have to be too concerned about who his followers would be. Some missionaries and ministers get frenzied and anxious in exhorting people to accept Jesus lest they perish, but Jesus was not worried. He knew that out of the multitudes, all whom the Father wanted would come to him.

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Some merely become acquainted with certain doctrines and others truly “come” in a deeper sense. The same distinction applies to hearing. There are two kinds of coming (out of curiosity and out of sincerity) and two kinds of hearing (superficial and obedient). All who are in their graves shall hear the voice of Jesus, but only the right-hearted will hearken in the sense of *obedience* (John 5:28). As for Jesus’ consecrated followers, these words are very comforting, for regardless of past background and inherent weaknesses, Jesus will not cast out his little ones.

Let us consider Jesus’ words again: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Later Jesus explained that he lost none except the “son of perdition” (Judas), yet here and in verse 39, he said he would lose nothing: “And this is the Father’s will ... that ... I should lose nothing.” How can the two thoughts be reconciled? Here Jesus was speaking of a *finished* work. He will “raise it [the body complete, the 144,000] up again at the last day.” *Individuals* may end up as Great Company or go into Second Death, but the *body* will be completed. God’s plan will not fail, and all of the very elect will come through Jesus.

The Apostle John made strong statements, especially in his epistles, that must be considered against the whole. Other verses are buffers or modifiers, and these must be regarded lest false concepts be taught. Here Jesus was saying that he would do his utmost to see that we make our calling and election sure. If anyone fails to obtain the chief prize, he has only himself to blame, for Jesus wants us to succeed. Doubts may occur where we want assurance that we are still under God’s watch-care, but such trials are permitted so that our faith can be developed by *exercise*. Doubts are necessary to create faith. Opposites create the struggle, and in the struggle, faith is enhanced *if* we are rightly exercised by the experience. Incidentally, the “son of perdition” is a class, a Second Death class. Judas represents the Second Death element, which is an appreciable number.

Earlier Jesus said that those who believed into him would never hunger or thirst. In verse 40, he supplemented that thought. Even though the Christian seems to die like others, if he is a faithful overcomer as part of the Great Company or the Little Flock, Jesus promised to “raise him up at the last day” to everlasting life. He will die in the present life, but when raised from that death, he will never die again.

“Everlasting life” includes the Great Company, the great mass of Christians who are faithful to their covenant. Only the Little Flock will receive immortal life. Those who consecrate can be assured of getting *everlasting* life if their continuing desire is to do God’s will, but they will not necessarily receive immortality, which is reserved for the *more-than-overcomers* (Rom. 8:37). John was showing that life itself is a privilege. From the dungeon of despair and misery down here, we have the hope of a high calling—and *life*. The raising up to everlasting life by Jesus is one plane, but the giving of immortality comes *only* from the Father—for both Jesus and the Church. Resurrection to spirit nature is one thing, and resurrection from spirit nature to immortality is another. Divine nature will be given later—probably at the marriage—for the Father has some gift to give, in addition to the Son. The Son welcomes the Little Flock members individually and personally *first* with a “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). In other words, the personal, private audience with Jesus will occur at the moment of resurrection, before one sees the apostles or any of the other saints. Later Jesus will acknowledge the Bride before the Father.

**John 6:41** The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

While Jesus was talking, the Jews murmured. Jesus not only had a clear voice but a penetrating emphasis, and he probably used the following emphasis here: “I [pause] am the bread of life.” This statement rubbed the Jews the wrong way. They felt he had a lot of nerve to equate *himself* with the miraculous manna.

Evidently, with a perfect mind completely free of disease, one can perceive a lot of things from a natural standpoint. While talking, Jesus was conscious of the murmuring and what bothered the Jews. No doubt he *intentionally* used the emphasis, knowing that the effect would be good on some and poor on others.

**John 6:42** And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

The Jews reasoned this way because Jesus kept calling God his “Father,” a term they were not accustomed to use. Also, they had not seen Jesus come down from heaven. To them, he was apparently born like all mankind—of an earthly father and mother. With regard to Almighty God, “Father” was too intimate and endearing a term for the Jews. Notice that they went back *two* generations to the grandparents. Jesus was the “son of Joseph,” and they knew Joseph’s *parents*. (Of the four Gospel writers, only John noticed this point.)

**John 6:43** Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

**John 6:44** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In replying to the murmurers’ question “How can he say he came down from heaven?” Jesus was saying, “Your words expose your wrong heart condition, and that is why the Father is not drawing you.” Jesus knew that his remarks would not make sense to most of those listening to him, but the ones who were drawn of the Father could overcome that obstacle.

Earlier Jesus said that those who ate the manna died, but those who followed him would never die, yet he died and so did his disciples. The clause “and I will raise him up at the last day” shows Jesus meant that his followers would die but that when he raised them at the “last day,” they would have everlasting life, including both the Little Flock and the Great Company. Those who are raised in the Kingdom, that is, the world, will be raised to a *temporary* life that will become permanent *only if they obey* the rules of the Kingdom and make full progress. But those who are raised to spirit life, having had their trial in the present life, will not die. Only those of the world who enter the ages of ages will get everlasting life. Although it is true that everlasting life is *conditional*, the probability of death from that point on is minuscule. Every human being will get *one* trial for life, and the vast majority of the trials will be in the Kingdom.

**John 6:45** It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Jesus backed up verse 44 with this statement. “They [the class who come and cling to Jesus] shall *all* be taught of God.” True, we must *hunger* in order to be fed to the fullest on meat in due season, but nevertheless, all who consecrate—the class who are being drawn—are being personally and individually dealt with whether or not they appreciate that fact. They may not react favorably to certain experiences—they may take a step in a wrong direction—but they will get opportunities of retrieval. All are being personally superintended whether or not they realize it. The Father desires that none should be lost (John 6:39). God is *for us*, so if we go

astray, it is completely our responsibility. How comforting to realize that whatever degree of development a Christian is in, *help will be provided!*

Those who truly came to Christ had *previously* “heard” and “learned” (that is, been “taught”) of the Father. This shows that even *before* consecration, a providence is exercised over those who are being drawn. When one consecrates, the individual attention continues but on an even *more personal* basis.

**John 6:46** Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Jesus was saying, “I do not mean that any man has literally seen the Father, for that is not necessary. Nevertheless, there is a personalized dealing with those who are being drawn. I am the only one who has seen the Father.” John was picking up loose ends from the other Gospels. His Gospel is difficult to understand, but then our Lord is also difficult to understand unless we weigh and consider all that he said.

However, there is *figurative* sight, for we figuratively see the Father by studying Jesus. For example, Philip said to Jesus on another occasion, “Show us the Father.” Jesus replied, “He who has seen me has seen the Father”; that is, the character of God could be seen demonstrated in the life of Jesus, for Jesus said and did the things the Father would have done under the same circumstances (John 14:8,9).

**John 6:47** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

**John 6:48** I am that bread of life.

**John 6:49** Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

**John 6:50** This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

Lest a wrong conclusion be drawn from the last statement, “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die,” we must go back to verse 44: “I will raise him up at the last day.” We must consider all remarks in order to see that the “not dying” applies *after* literal death and resurrection. And the being raised up is *conditional*, for it applies only to overcomers and more-than-overcomers of the *present* age, who will get everlasting life on the spirit plane.

**John 6:51** I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Jesus again compared himself with the bread/manna in the Wilderness of Sinai. The Israelites ate that bread and continued to die. To get life, one has to figuratively eat (appropriate to himself) the merit of Jesus. In the days of Moses, the Israelites had to gather daily a homer of manna from the ground in order to have enough food for the day. That quantity sustained life for a period of time, and then the people died. But Jesus was saying, “What occurred back there was a type, which I am fulfilling. That bread represents *me*.” Jesus’ comparison of himself to the manna also indicated more than a nominal acceptance of him. We must “feed” on Jesus on a day-to-day basis.

**John 6:52** The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

The Jews could not accept the thought that Jesus' flesh must be eaten and that he would give his flesh for the life of the world. Right away there was a tumult.

**John 6:53** Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

**John 6:54** Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

**John 6:55** For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

**John 6:56** He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

**John 6:57** As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

**John 6:58** This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

The Jews were already upset, but when Jesus added more fuel to the fire by saying, "In addition to eating my flesh, you must also drink my blood," they were horrified. Although the Mosaic Law absolutely forbids the drinking of blood, anyone with common sense should have realized that Jesus did not mean to take a *literal* bite out of him. If one wants to find fault, he will find fault—even in Jesus Christ. The odd thing is that the doctrine of Transubstantiation is really teaching that very thing—that the bread becomes Jesus' literal flesh and the wine his literal blood, and these must be consumed.

The disciples who remained loyal to Jesus had followed him for a while and knew he spoke above their heads on many issues. Great men do not lower their capabilities but give others something to aspire to. As Christians, we are to teach the *gospel* and not lower ourselves to the level of the decadent in trying to reach others. Jesus used the terminology of the *Father*, and so should we. We are not to compromise and popularize Scripture, leaving out valuable spiritual "vitamins."

Jesus spoke opposite to what is considered decorum and tact. He constantly intentionally rubbed many the wrong way. His very words here (to the effect that all who were of the Father were drawn to him) excluded most of the listeners. Although these words could be offensive, they were not "hard sayings" to those who continued to be drawn and led of the Father, for *faith* overcomes natural prejudices. The right-hearted knew his "mysterious" sayings could be explained, even if they did not understand them.

Mostly, Jesus talked of his followers' obtaining everlasting life (which included the Great Company), but in verse 53, he referred to having "life in you," that is, *immortality*. Those who obtain spirit nature as the Great Company, plus those who get everlasting life here on earth, will "eat the flesh of the Son of man"—they will partake of the bread of life—but *only* the Little Flock in the final analysis will partake of the blood, which means they will be part of the sin offering.

We are to run the race with *all diligence* to win it. We must stretch forth as if there is only *one* prize. Setting our sights any lower can be dangerous, for we could get tired and give up. Any who are called *can make* their calling and election sure. If we fail, it is our own fault.

Verse 57, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me ...

shall live by me,” shows a *chain of command*. Jesus lives through the Father, and we live through Jesus. Thus this verse disproves the Trinity, for it shows *levels of life*.

**John 6:59** These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

The setting for many of Jesus’ remarks was the synagogue. Following an Old Testament reading, it was customary for a discussion to take place in the synagogue. Perhaps the lesson that day was on the manna in the wilderness. The Apostle Paul also had opportunities to read and discuss in the synagogue.

**John 6:60** Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

Evidently, others had turned away earlier. Now some of the disciples were also having a problem with Jesus’ teachings.

**John 6:61** When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

Jesus asked the disciples, “Doth this [teaching] *offend* you?” In other words, he *accentuated* their difficulty. Similarly, with the importunate widow, the judge kept stalling. The delay was for her ultimate good, for it brought out her hunger and desire. Thus a *delayed* blessing is a better blessing.

**John 6:62** What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

Why did Jesus ask this question? A few verses earlier, he had said he would give his flesh for the life of the world (verse 51). Now he was saying that he would be raised from death and they would see him ascend to his Father. He told these things in advance so that when they came to pass, the disciples would recall these words and realize Jesus’ foreknowledge of certain events.

“What” is a supplied word that should be deleted, and the word “and” should be changed to “even” or “suppose.” “Does this offend you? Even if you see me go up into heaven, will that still offend you? Will you still doubt?” No, of course not! Jesus repeatedly used the technique of predicting what would come to pass, especially with regard to his crucifixion. Although not understood at the moment, the words would be grasped at (or shortly after) the time of fulfillment. Jesus often said something startling to “score” it in their minds for later recall.

**John 6:63** It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Jesus explained what he meant by “eating his flesh” and “drinking his blood.” Jesus’ “spirit” was his doctrine, his words, that is, the *message* that he preached. Therefore, to “eat Jesus’ flesh” means to feed on his message. And to “drink Jesus’ blood” means to make his message and doctrine the center of our life; it is like *draining* the cup, wanting every last drop. Many were turned off rather quickly by Jesus’ words, but those who stayed and persisted were rewarded with the explanation of his symbolic and enigmatic words.

**John 6:64** But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

John repeatedly referred to Jesus’ foreknowledge of Judas’s betrayal. John had insight, but Jesus had *far more*. These observations are important. Notice the plural “they” versus the

singular individual (Judas) who would do the betraying. In the Greek, the difference in number is very apparent. The point is that Jesus was aware of who did not believe him and particularly of who would betray him.

At the end of the age, there will be a Judas *class*. Some who are intimate disciples of the Lord—closely related to the brethren—will betray their brethren to the authorities, much as Judas betrayed the Master but for different motivations.

**John 6:65** And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Jesus advised us to count the cost before we consecrate, for it is better not to consecrate than to do so halfheartedly. But when we consecrate, we must rely on Jesus and have FAITH in him, for we cannot slay the giants alone. For example, David was no match for Goliath but went out in the strength of the Lord. Although Goliath had defied the Lord of hosts, no one challenged his blasphemy until David came along. David's faith made him strong, for physically he was *greatly* outmatched.

It is important to keep in mind that we would never have been drawn and led up to the step of consecration unless we could actually make the grade. It is not by our own might or birth or influence but by *God's* "spirit" (doctrine, teaching, reasonings of Scripture) that we get the necessary strength to make our calling and election sure.

**John 6:66** From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

**John 6:67** Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

**John 6:68** Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

**John 6:69** And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

When Jesus asked earlier, "Does this offend you?" and then added, "Even if you see the Son of man ascend to heaven?" his words stumbled some. He had said he came down from heaven, and now he inferred that he would go back up to heaven in a visible ascent. Of those who had followed him for some time, there was a separation, with "many" turning back. First, there was a separation among the multitude, and now there was a separation among the *disciples*, who previously had faith in him. This latter forsaking left only the apostles and a very few others.

Following the separation, Jesus asked the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" Jesus kept asking questions. Hence penetrating words and experiences come into the lives of Christians to test them as to whether they *really* love the Lord. We do not understand some experiences and words at the time, but *eventually* we will. Meanwhile, we accept *by faith* that they are superior to the capability of our own brain to grasp.

Peter's reply was delightful—honest, simple, and with such high hopes: "Lord, to whom shall we go? *thou* hast the words of eternal life." He had learned far too much to forsake the Master, even if he could not understand the current words. And Peter added, "We believe and are *sure* you are the Messiah."

**John 6:70** Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

**John 6:71** He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him,

**being one of the twelve.**

If all of the instances are considered together, Jesus certainly gave many warnings about one of the Twelve not having the right heart condition. Jesus used strong language here: “One of you is a *devil*.” Jesus’ words should have pricked the conscience of Judas, but instead he became more and more hardened up to the point of incorrigibility at the Cross.

“Have not I chosen you twelve?” Although Jesus selected the apostles, they were previously appointed by the Father.

**John 7:1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.**

Verse 1 is a preface to the rest of Chapter 7. “After these things” would mean after the feeding of the multitudes and the subsequent explanation on the other side of Galilee with regard to Jesus’ being the bread from heaven, etc. In addition, the other Gospels tell that Jesus then went to Jerusalem to observe the Passover, after which he returned home to the Galilee area. Thus there was a six-month time gap between the end of Chapter 6 and verse 2 of Chapter 7.

“Jewry” was Judea. When Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover, some of the Jews sought to kill him. Therefore, he did not linger there but returned home before they could make plans to apprehend him.

**John 7:2 Now the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand.**

Passover was the 14th day (followed by a week) of Nisan, the *first* month of the religious year. The Feast of Tabernacles began on the 15th day of the *seventh* month, six months later. Therefore, verses 2-9 took place about four days before the Feast of Tabernacles began.

**John 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.**

Jesus’ *natural* half brothers, Joses and Simon, were speaking to him. (Jesus’ other two brothers were apostles: James of Alphaeus and Jude—Matt. 13:55.) They said in effect, “If you want to be known, go right to the heart, to the capital, to Jerusalem, and do these miracles. Why do miracles up here in Galilee? You will prosper if you perform the miracles in Jerusalem.” They could not understand Jesus’ logic in limiting himself to that area.

**John 7:4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.**

Joses and Simon continued to speak. A paraphrase of the end of verse 4 is as follows: “Since you claim to give eternal life to others, do not act as if you are afraid you will lose your life. Go ahead down to Jerusalem.”

Sometimes called “Galilee of the Gentiles,” Galilee was considered off-limits to a certain extent (Matt. 4:15). It was like a year-round resort for the Roman army, especially Tiberias with its mineral baths. The Romans occupied most of the southern half of the lake, the Jews the northern half. From a religious standpoint, many Jews did not want to be ceremoniously contaminated by going to the Galilee area where there were so many foreigners.

Jesus’ natural brothers were speaking to him in a taunting, derogatory, sarcastic manner. “Secret” was an exaggeration, for a number of Jews were up in Galilee. However, *relatively speaking*, that area was a more out-of-the-way place. If one wanted to be king, he certainly

would not waste his time in Galilee but would go to Jerusalem to get notoriety. The words of Joses and Simon were quite a dig, which Jesus would have felt. He was extremely courageous, yet he never deliberately exposed himself to danger *unless* he knew that it was God's will for him to do so. For someone who was so *courageous*—with *no fear*—it would hurt to be the object of such sarcasm. Joses and Simon denigrated his character, and no doubt others were listening. But Jesus had to curb his feelings, and he gave a controlled reply (verses 6-8).

**John 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.**

Verse 3 alone is not sufficient to determine what brethren of Jesus were being referred to, but verse 5 clarifies that they were Jesus' *natural* brothers, for surely his disciples ("brethren") did believe in(to) him. Jesus' natural brothers did not believe he was the Messiah.

Joses and Simon were with Mary, the mother of Jesus, quite frequently. When Jesus was giving a sermon one time and they desired to see him, he replied, "He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven is my mother and my brethren" (Matt. 12:50 paraphrase). The brothers were of his *own* household, yet they did not believe he was the Messiah at that time. Not until Jesus was raised from death did they realize he was Messiah. Acts 1:14 shows that they eventually accepted him, for at Pentecost, they waited in the room with Mary for the Holy Spirit to come.

**John 7:6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.**

**John 7:7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.**

**John 7:8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.**

Notice the way Jesus responded to the sarcasm. It took constraint for Jesus to answer in such a dignified way. We are reminded of Moses' composure when the nation criticized him at the Red Sea as Pharaoh's chariots were approaching. Moses felt the criticism keenly but ignored it. Hence Moses showed himself to be a true messenger of the Lord. Jesus, too, stifled his own feelings and answered in a controlled way.

Jesus answered the taunt—yet he did not answer it. He admitted there was hatred against him, and that was why he did not recklessly expose himself. Then he told *why* the "world" hated him—because *he was forthright*. He did not speak smooth things to tickle the palate of his hearers. If one wants to be a leader, the easiest way is to please the audience and thus gain popularity, but Jesus did the opposite. When he spoke, he *intentionally antagonized* the majority because their works were "evil."

A good example of the wrong attitude is the way Absalom waited in the gate, trying to win the people away from his father David. When the people came to Jerusalem to plead their cause, Absalom intercepted them with sweet mannerisms, kisses, promises, and insinuations that if *he* were king, things would be handled better. And his beautiful, long hair made him an idol before the people. Incidentally, the very thing that he used to influence people and that was a source of pride—his hair—became his pitfall. When his hair got entangled in the low boughs of an oak tree, his pursuer slew him (2 Sam. 18:9,10).

"I go not up *yet* unto this feast; for my time is *not yet full* come." Jesus did not lie, but his brothers could have understood him to mean that he did not intend to go to the feast at all. Actually, he meant, "I am going but not yet." If Jesus had accompanied them to Jerusalem and done miracles, the two brothers would have shared in his popularity as members of the same family, and that was a wrong motive for desiring his going to the feast. Although they did not

believe he was the Messiah (verse 5), they could believe in him as a hero. The words “full come” show Jesus recognized that the time for his death was nearing—it was only six months hence.

“Your time is always ready.” There were no restrictions on when the two brothers could go to the Feast of Tabernacles. It made no difference because they were not exponents of truth and righteousness, and hence had no enemies.

Not only did Jesus have to be faithful unto death (like all Christians), but he had another restriction as well. He *knew* he had to die at a certain hour on a certain day in a certain year. Hence he could not injudiciously expose himself before that time. He had to be faithful day by day but also refrain from needlessly exposing himself to death before the *due* time. When the time was right, then the apostles tried to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem, and he rebuked them. With us, too, the consecrated sometimes give improper suggestions.

Consider how the Apostle Paul exposed himself to danger many times, for he knew no fixed hour for death. He was not foolishly reckless, but neither was he fearful. As for us, we cannot assume we are feet members, and even if we do become part of the Little Flock, our time to go might be sooner than the end of the age. Moreover, the feet members will not be all in one geographic location or in one ecclesia. They will die collectively but in different locations. As individuals, they will probably be quite well dispersed geographically.

It is true that we are to use wisdom in regard to situations we get into, but we must also be careful that the flesh does not keep us from witnessing faithfully. An occasion might arise *before* the end of the age when we must speak out to be faithful, and it might be *our* time to go as an individual. The Scriptures say to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16). And we should not cast our pearls before swine (or wolves), lest they devour us (Matt. 7:6). Hence a certain discretion should characterize our whole life. We must be careful, though, not to plot our time to go as a special date, for we could go sooner or later than that date. We should just try to be faithful day by day and be forthright as occasion demands. An example of un wisdom would be to take our Bibles into a bar where the notorious Hell’s Angels were meeting, but if we were somewhere else reading the Bible and the Hell’s Angels walked in, we should not stop reading.

**John 7:9** When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

The two brothers left, and Jesus stayed behind. It *appeared* to them that Jesus was weak and cowardly. Big words but small action, they thought.

**John 7:10** But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Jesus went separately to the Feast of Tabernacles, incognito, as it were. Others would have wondered when Jesus’ family came to the feast without him.

**John 7:11** Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

Those plotting to kill Jesus would have watched for his family, for the feasts were family gatherings, more or less. According to the Law, all males were required to attend three feasts each year (Deut. 16:16).

**John 7:12** And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

In moments of leisure, the people talked among themselves. There was a division of sentiment. Some said, “He is a good man” (notice that they did not say “prophet”), and others said, “He is a deceiver.” Those who said Jesus was “good” would have based their opinion on his miracles, healings, expending of energy for others, and sympathy for the ills of the people.

**John 7:13** Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Verse 13 particularly applied to those who said Jesus was a good man, for they did not want to be overheard by the scribes and Pharisees. Even though these people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, just their saying that he was good would have angered the religious leadership, who had a “contract” out on his life. The scribes and Pharisees truly wanted Jesus off the scene.

**John 7:14** Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

Since the feast was a week long, this event would have occurred two or three days into the feast, that is, on the 17th or 18th day of the seventh month. Why didn’t Jesus teach in the Temple on the *first* day of the feast? (1) The scribes and Pharisees were looking for him at that point. (2) The people were more preoccupied with offering sacrifices at the beginning of the feast. (3) As the feast was starting, Jesus did not want to destroy the procedure of the devout as ordered by the Law.

Jesus “taught.” Meanwhile, when not teaching, he may have been on the Mount of Olives, at the home of Lazarus, or at Simon the Leper’s home.

**John 7:15** And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

Jesus spoke with profound Scriptural wisdom, yet he had never been educated with the Pharisees, sat at Gamaliel’s feet, etc. Moreover, his childhood was known—he came from a lowly family and was a carpenter. The Galileans could speak of his background from firsthand observation. Joseph had probably died, and then Jesus supported his mother. He certainly was not formally studying to be a religious teacher.

The Jews’ question was based on Jesus’ language, knowledge of Scripture, understanding, recall, and reasoning power. The people wondered at such profound words, and they knew he did not have continual, ready access to the Scriptures. Of course they did not realize that as the Logos, he had had access to the Scriptures for centuries. For example, he could quote Isaiah and *know* Isaiah, and he *knew* Abraham, Noah, and the other faithful ones of old, for he had *seen* them and *heard* them speak. The people marveled that his abilities *far surpassed* those of the rabbis. And he could speak in the pure Hebrew with an extensive vocabulary—much beyond what a Galilean carpenter should have been able to do.

While Jesus was teaching, the populace were saying these things on the side, yet he knew their words and thoughts. When he finished his discourse, he addressed these side conversations (verses 16-19).

**John 7:16** Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

**John 7:17** If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

**John 7:18** He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

**John 7:19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?**

Jesus showed humility by time and time again putting the *Father* first. He honored the Father, not himself. He said the doctrine was not his but the Father's, yet he did not minimize his own authority. He was the *Messiah*, the Lord, the Son—and as such, it was right for him to speak aggressively. He was loyal to his calling, but here, as so often happened, he prefaced his remarks by acknowledging the Father as being superior. Sometimes he looked to heaven and prayed before performing a miracle.

Verses 16 and 17 directly refute the Trinity. Trinitarians use John's writings to prove their doctrine, whereas his writings do the opposite if the spurious passages are omitted and all texts are honestly considered.

If any man does the Father's will, he *shall know* the doctrine. What confidence Jesus had in the Father! *All* who are of the Father *shall be taught* and *shall hear* the message of truth (John 6:45). God's work cannot fail. Therefore, we (as Jesus did) can rest assured that the truth will reach whomever it is meant to reach. Jesus had no anxiety regarding the ones the Father would draw, but he did feel a responsibility toward those already drawn. Of those the Father gave him at that time, he lost none except Judas (John 17:12).

The assurance that all who are of the Father shall be taught casts reflection on those who profess to be serving God but do not know the doctrine. This was true of the scribes and Pharisees back there, and it is true of professing Christians today. Jesus' words hurt some and draw others like a magnet.

In verse 19, Jesus was saying, "Didn't Moses give you the Law, yet none of you obey it." These words were cutting but "Christlike." Not all of Jesus' remarks tickled men's ears. Smooth things have their place, but so do hard truths. A true prophet speaks the *whole* counsel of God (Acts 20:27). A person in the right heart condition would admit the *truth* of these words.

"Why go ye about to *kill* me?" While the general populace would have said or thought, "We are not doing that," some of the hearers were of that murderous sentiment—whether they were the perpetrators or just some who wanted to curry favor by snitching. Jesus was addressing this latter element, not those who had said he was "a good man" (verse 12).

Jesus' criticism in verse 19 was especially pointed too, because one of the specific accusations against him was that he was violating the sabbath by healing on that day. Now he said that none of them obeyed the Law (perfectly), even though the Pharisees thought they did.

**John 7:20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?**

Not understanding Jesus' technique, the people said, "He is crazy. To kill you is *far* from our thinking." Jesus was clever, for he knew his time had not yet come. He was in Jerusalem, in the wolves' den, as it were. By his speaking this way, the crowd was unaware of the purpose of his words, but those who were plotting his death knew he was right. Jesus thus alerted them that he knew their thinking, and thus, for now, he nipped their evil designs in the bud. By this method, Jesus was protecting himself from unnecessary danger. How astounding that he could think like this on his feet in the midst of tumult and yet have so much composure!

**John 7:21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.**

The "one work" done on the sabbath is not specified, but evidently, it was an outstanding miracle comparable to the man by the Pool of Bethesda who was made whole (John 5:2-9),

which occurred much earlier. In subsequent verses, Jesus justified the performance of this current miracle on the sabbath. In verse 23, the miracle is simply described, without elaboration, as making “a man every whit whole on the sabbath.”

**John 7:22** Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

**John 7:23** If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

The word “therefore” is not in the Greek and should be omitted because it detracts from the *direct force* of Jesus’ words. The scribes and Pharisees did not understand the *principles* underlying the Law. The rite of circumcision was performed on the eighth day from birth. Thus approximately one seventh of the time, the seventh day (the sabbath) was the required time for circumcision. In fact, the eighth day occurred more often on a sabbath because additional days were also sabbaths.

Jesus tried to reason that there are different types of laws—higher and lower ones. For example, the propulsion of an airplane overrides the law of gravity but does not nullify it. The law of gravity always operates, but a higher “law” can supersede it so that the plane will not fall to the ground. What is the lesson for the new creature? As Christians, we should weigh the circumstances under which we are trying to apply the letter of the Law.

Jesus referred to Moses a number of times during his earthly ministry. The Jews revered Moses and associated him with the Law. Although he is one of the greatest Ancient Worthies, they gave him undue respect in view of Messiah’s being among them. Therefore, Jesus gave the proper slant here. Not only was God the Author of what Moses did, but the rite of circumcision *preceded* Moses, for it was given to Abraham. The sabbath, too, was before the Law; that is, several parts of the Law given at Sinai had *previously* been given, even the sacrifices. For example, Abel’s offering of a sheep prefigured the coming redemption—that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.

Jesus reasoned, “Don’t you circumcise on the sabbath? Isn’t that work? You do not criticize Moses for that, so why criticize me for healing on the sabbath?” The point was that some things could be done on the sabbath without violating the Law, such as healing, sacrificing animals, circumcising, and picking kernels of grain, rubbing off the chaff, and eating them. Some work was permissible on the sabbath, but the scribes and Pharisees were hypercritical. We must weigh matters and judge *righteously*.

**John 7:24** Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

In other words, we are not to judge superficially, prejudiciously, according to appearance, etc. The Scriptures guard us against wrong judgment. For example, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:20). A wolf in sheep’s clothing will inadvertently betray himself sooner or later, but for a while, he will fool some—perhaps because of a gentle manner. However, what a person is by nature cannot be hidden indefinitely. Hence we should wait and *weigh* matters, and not judge by one act but by a manifestation of the true self.

In matters of judgment, we are to ignore wealth and poverty. We should not sympathize with a person just because he is poor but should judge the issue only. “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.... Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure” (Lev. 19:15,35). We are

not to judge a matter on personality, influence, appearance, etc., but are to render a *righteous* decision. That is hard to do, but we are called to be judges and must get the Lord's mind on these matters.

Today individuals often sue a corporation, and almost invariably the jury rules against the corporation. People reason, "Corporations have millions," and the awards are enormous. In many cases, however, the decisions and awards are unjust. People reason that a corporation has no soul but that the claimant does.

**John 7:25** Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

**John 7:26** But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

**John 7:27** Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

A *mixed* multitude of Jews from different regions and backgrounds were at this Feast of Tabernacles. Some of the Jerusalem Jews were speaking here. They noticed that Jesus spoke *boldly* and with emotion. Part of the mixed multitude was sympathetic to Jesus, and part was not. Earlier some had said, "He is a good man," and others had said, "He is a deceiver." Some of the Jews who lived in Judea were plotting to kill him—specifically, a certain element of the scribes and Pharisees who felt that their position was being threatened.

Verses 25-27 show mixed opinions. One opinion was, "Is not this he? This is the very Christ." Another was, "Howbeit we know this man, and no man knows whence Christ is." The former opinion was sympathetic to Jesus; the latter was not.

Since the people knew Jesus' "parents" and that he was from Galilee/Nazareth (they probably did not know that he was born in Bethlehem), they had doubts about his being the Messiah, as indicated by their saying, "When Christ comes, no man will know where he came from." This thought was probably based on Malachi 3:1, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall *suddenly* come to his temple." They expected Messiah to appear suddenly, not having been there previously. They also thought he might come in rough garments like Elijah and from the desert, that is, not from a specific geographic location.

**John 7:28** Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

**John 7:29** But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

"Ye both know me [as a man], and ye know whence I am [that I come from Nazareth]." In addition, there was a responsibility for them to recognize Jesus as Messiah either because of the miracles he did or because John the Baptist had said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" However, they did not know or believe that he had come from the Father. The people knew some of Jesus' temporal circumstances but not his *true* origin.

Of the four Gospels, John's Gospel (and also his epistles) is the most difficult to understand, yet Jesus' words were probably closer to what John recorded. *Inflection* is important in reading the Gospel of John, for we need to understand the *emphasis*. Jesus stressed certain words so that the people back there understood what they were supposed to grasp. Therefore, we must try to read with the proper inflection in order to understand the message.

Many resented Jesus' words in verses 28 and 29. "I know where I am from. The Father sent

me. I speak truth.” Jesus was implying that the others did *not* know, did *not* love, and did *not* appreciate the Father. Many of Jesus’ words were not tactfully spoken—he announced the truth as it *really is!* As the Lord from heaven, he was not to assume an inferior attitude. The *Father* had sent him!

**John 7:30** Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

Those in the mixed multitude who were turned off by Jesus’ remarks and, in analyzing them, felt he was too presumptuous sought to apprehend him. Only a most honest individual would have said, “That is true.” The majority resented his words. With the scribes and Pharisees having a contract out on Jesus’ life, those in the crowd who felt he was a deceiver knew they would have the backing of the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus’ “hour was not yet come,” for it was six months hence. Therefore, no man could lay hands on him, but in what way could they not apprehend him? He probably mesmerized them and/or looked on them, and they fell backwards (as in the Garden of Gethsemane).

**John 7:31** And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

Here again is proof of a mixed gathering. Some wanted to seize Jesus, and some believed he was the Messiah. The word “many” does not mean a majority, however. If, say, 100,000 were present and only 25,000 supported Jesus, the 25,000 could be described as “many,” even though they were a minority. Incidentally, if Jesus used power to prevent apprehension, those who experienced the power had an *added responsibility* to reconsider their actions. In fact, they had *six months* to reconsider.

**John 7:32** The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

The scribes and Pharisees sent out emissaries to do their dirty work.

**John 7:33** Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

**John 7:34** Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

Jesus spoke unto “them,” that is, the mixed multitude. His words here are similar to those he used the night of the Memorial. Jesus was preparing some in the mixed multitude for a radical change of events. If we had been in the crowd and heard these words, we would have been very puzzled. “To whom is he speaking? How does he know I will be seeking him and want to go where he is?” Jesus knew that at *that* moment, none had a desire to seek and find him, but as events occurred subsequently, some in that group would want to find him. He was really *prophesying* what *some* of them would do later.

**John 7:35** Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

**John 7:36** What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

The whole group was truly bewildered. Even his own disciples did not understand, for when he talked specifically to them a little later, they were perplexed. Thus many of Jesus’ statements

were not meant to be understood at the time of their utterance. The same is true of many of Jehovah's statements in the Old Testament. "Light is sown [as a seed] for the *righteous*," and it may have been sown a thousand years earlier (Psa. 97:11). The light is sown as a seed, but it does not grow above the surface until it is meat in *due* season for a *righteous* class many years hence.

**John 7:37** In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

**John 7:38** He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

This incident occurred on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, that is, on the 22nd day of the seventh month. A seven-day feast began on the 15th day, followed by a holy convocation on the eighth day (Lev. 23:34-36).

It was customary on this day for the high priest to pour out an oblation of water. The procession was timed so that when the *water* was secured from the Pool of Siloam (also called the Virgin Fount) in a *golden* pitcher and carried into the court of Herod's Temple, the burning of the sacrifice on the altar was taking place. Everything was timed to become a *climax*. Several thousand people would have been present. Even though they were attentive, there would have been noise from such a crowd. As the water was being poured, no doubt the people felt thirsty, since Israel was a fairly dry land. At this very moment, Jesus stood up to speak. His action would have been considered audacious, for this was a most solemn moment and Jesus was not of the orthodox clergy.

Then he cried *aloud*. He must have had a marvelous, powerful, clear voice to be heard over the crowd in an area without natural acoustics. What an exciting and daring act—especially since his natural brothers had insinuated he was somewhat cowardly not to go to Jerusalem for the early or beginning part of the feast and thus make himself known!

Jesus' words created a shock effect that was beneficial. This was a well-timed theatrical moment, yet the Bible relates the incident (and other such incidents) in a very low-key manner, lest some become attracted to the Gospel for superficial reasons. We must consider and meditate upon the Word in order to understand its POWER! "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"; that is, "If you thirst, come to me!" This was indeed strong language.

Note that verse 39, which is *John's* explanatory comment, is properly enclosed in parentheses. However, that is not always the case. For example, he also interjected a comment in verse 38—"as the scripture hath said"—but there are no parentheses. In other words, Jesus' words were, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on [into] me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." In red-letter editions, John's parenthetical insertions should be in black print.

The "scripture" John was referring to in verse 38 pertained to the incident with the Samaritan woman. Jesus had said he could give her *living* water that would be within her "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Since John wrote his gospel 50 or 60 years after the First Advent, he inserted an explanatory comment in verse 38.

The word "belly" is a proper rendering in verse 38 according to the *Diaglott*. It fits with Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman ("a well of water springing up"). We think of the belly, the bowels, as being the depth of our bodies.

**John 7:39** (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for

the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Of course Jesus spoke “of the [Holy] Spirit.” If, in the *present* life, we are faithful to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, then in the *future* life, we will be enabled to give life to others from our own “belly,” the source of life. Other pictures show the Church as a mother—Mother Eve.

The Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus died, was resurrected, and had ascended to the Father. The coming of the Holy Spirit *proved* that Jesus’ sacrifice was acceptable. It is significant that the Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus was *glorified*, and he was not glorified until he had ascended to the Father and received the *divine* nature. When raised from the grave, Jesus had spirit nature. When he ascended to the Father, several things happened, all pertaining to the *divine nature*: he was glorified, he was made the *express image* of the Father, and he was put on the right hand of power of the Father. The divine nature was a gift given *personally* by the Father when Jesus ascended on high. “Glory” is an aspect of the divine nature, and to be the “express image” of the Father means to have the divine nature.

**John 7:40** Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Because Jesus dared to *stand up* and *cry out* at the climax of the Feast of Tabernacles, many thought he was the great Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15 or Malachi 4:5,6, that is, the prophet like unto Moses or “Elijah the prophet,” who would be sent before the “great and dreadful day of the LORD.”

**John 7:41** Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

A real stigma was attached to Galilee.

**John 7:42** Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

To solve the dilemma, all the people had to do was to *ask* Jesus about his background. He was “of the seed of David,” and he had come out of Bethlehem in his infancy and babyhood. Therefore, he would have said, “Yes, I was born in Bethlehem.”

These people had *some* knowledge of Scripture in order to ask the question. The parallel today is as follows. Just because a person has *some* religious background does not mean he has a good understanding of the Bible.

**John 7:43** So there was a division among the people because of him.

**John 7:44** And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

Some of the people would have “taken” Jesus to apprehend him and deliver him to the scribes and Pharisees, who wanted to kill him. They wanted to curry favor with the religious leaders by seizing him.

**John 7:45** Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

**John 7:46** The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

The officers had been sent out not only to apprehend Jesus but also to get evidence against him—to audit his words to find a reason to arrest him. Instead they were *enthralled* at what

they heard, and now they commented, “*Never man spake like this man.*”

The Roman government supplied the officers, called “temple officers,” to the priesthood to appease them. Although the officers took orders from the priesthood, there were limitations on what they could do, for their highest authority was the Roman government. Only subordinately, therefore, could this military contingent take orders from the priesthood.

**John 7:47** Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

**John 7:48** Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

**John 7:49** But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

First, the Pharisees said to the officers, “Are ye also deceived?” Then the Pharisees gave as a justification for condemning Jesus: “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? [No!] But this people who knoweth not the law [that segment of the crowd who listened to Jesus and considered him to be ‘the Prophet’ or ‘the Christ’] are cursed.”

The officers were sent out to seize Jesus, but they needed a statement from him to justify their actions; that is, they needed a legitimate excuse to take him before the people. However, they found no such evidence. Instead Jesus overwhelmed them with his reasoning. The priesthood responded, “These people who are listening to Jesus are cursed, and the more so if they believe into him.”

The priesthood and the scribes considered themselves to be on a higher level than the people—they were the *teachers*. We are reminded of Papacy, whose communicants are merely “children” of the church and not the church itself. According to church dogma, the Roman Catholic Church comprises only those who are wed to it (priests, nuns, etc.). Verse 49 shows the superior attitude of the scribes and Pharisees, who said in effect, “The *people* do not know the Law, but *we* do.”

**John 7:50** Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

**John 7:51** Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

**John 7:52** They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

Again John interjected an explanatory comment, this time to identify Nicodemus: “(he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,).”

The Pharisees were violating the Law themselves by wanting to arrest Jesus without two or three witnesses and “hearing” him. In their superior attitude, they felt that they did not have to obey the Law and that they were not to be questioned. However, they felt that all others had to obey every jot and tittle of the Law, or they were sinners.

Nicodemus was pounced on and insulted for bringing up the embarrassing question and for wanting Jesus to have a *fair* trial. He asked, “Do you judge someone without first giving him a hearing?” The Pharisees replied, “Are you also of *Galilee*?” If it were not for John’s Gospel, we would have lost something by not knowing Nicodemus. Based on the dealing with Nicodemus, it is encouraging to see the Lord’s patience with some who are in the system yet not at heart wed to it. Such individuals, who may even be in a high position, support the system for want of more understanding.

John mentioned Nicodemus earlier in regard to his private nighttime questioning of Jesus, here in his questioning of the Pharisees, and later in connection with the Crucifixion. It is interesting that John followed through. From statements at the time of the Crucifixion, we realize that John knew Nicodemus personally and respected him and the stand he took as a *Pharisee* of high standing. Before the *whole nation*, Nicodemus risked everything, as it were, to go up and prepare Jesus' body for burial. In contrast, most of us have no standing to start with. And yes, we give our all, but for those who are wealthy and/or have power and prestige, to consecrate is even more meritorious—and if *faithful unto death*, they deserve a higher reward. “Unto every one that *hath* shall be given” is the principle (Matt. 25:29). The word “hath” implies a lot.

How did John know Nicodemus? By marriage or some other way, he had access to the priesthood, even though he was a fisherman. It was John who later opened the door to let Peter into the palace where Jesus was being tried.

At *this* point in time (Chapter 7), Nicodemus was not all for Jesus. He had some doubts, but he wanted Jesus to have a fair trial, for there was something different about him. It was just that he did not want to be too hasty in judging him. The principle is stated in Proverbs 18:13, “He that answereth [judgeth] a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” When Nicodemus saw Jesus on the Cross, his decision was made instantly. In the private conversation earlier, Jesus had said that the Son of man would be lifted up, and recalling these words was the clincher (John 3:14).

Again these matters are stated low-key. If the Bible had been written to convey all the power and drama, many would consecrate hastily without giving proper consideration. We must *analyze* the message and *count* the cost. Nevertheless, it is helpful to reflect on the power and drama.

**Comment:** A *Diaglott* footnote states that the Pharisees were wrong to say no prophet ever came from Galilee. According to the *Diaglott*, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, and *Young's Analytical Concordance*, Jonah came from Gathhepher, which is in Galilee (2 Kings 14:25). (Joshua 19:13 calls it Gittah-hepher.) The *Diaglott* also suggests that Nahum and Malachi came from Galilee.

**Reply:** Nahum was a prophet from Galilee.

**John 7:53** And every man went unto his own house.

This statement is not true. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the Feast of Tabernacles, and it was now the last day of the feast (John 7:37). If the Jews went to their own houses, it means they returned to Galilee and other lands and could not possibly have been in Jerusalem for the rest of the feast (which was actually a *continuation*, that is, the eighth day of the seven-day feast). Just as the tone of this verse is wrong, so is the sound of the Apocryphal books in Roman Catholic Bibles.

**John 8:1** Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

**John 8:2** And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

John 7:37 said it was the *eighth* (or last) day of the Feast of Tabernacles. If Jesus had gone to the Mount of Olives to spend the night and the incident with the adulterous woman occurred the next day, the feast would have been over. This discrepancy proves that John 7:53 through 8:11 is spurious because John 8:12 *continues on* with Jesus' words on the *eighth* (last) day of the feast.

**John 8:3** And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and

when they had set her in the midst,

**John 8:4** They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

**John 8:5** Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

**John 8:6** This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

A woman taken in the *act* of adultery would not have been brought into the holy Temple precincts. The RSV, the NIV, and the *Diaglott* all have notes saying that John 7:53 through 8:11 is spurious. Moreover, the three most ancient “complete” manuscripts (Sinaitic, Vatican, and Alexandrian) do not contain this passage. Many want this passage included because it emphasizes forgiveness. However, the forgiveness is on *improper* grounds, and there are noticeable flaws in the account and contradictions with other Scriptures—all being *proofs* that the passage is spurious. John 7:53 through 8:11 was probably introduced by the Roman Catholic Church at the time of Jerome, for subsequent to his day, this passage was included in some Latin and Greek manuscripts.

If the scribes and Pharisees were so fastidious as to require hands to be washed before eating, then surely they would not have brought a woman *caught* in the act of adultery (that is, not merely a reported matter) into the Temple. Also, Jesus was sinless, which means he obeyed the Law perfectly. Therefore, if this account were true, he would have been obligated to agree to the stoning.

On rare occasions, an *individual* who was seeking to trap Jesus addressed him as “Master,” but it would be incongruous for the scribes and Pharisees to do so as a *group* when they wanted to kill him. So here is still another flaw.

**John 8:7** So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

**John 8:8** And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

**John 8:9** And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

**John 8:10** When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

**John 8:11** She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Here is another flaw, for nothing was said about the woman’s asking for forgiveness. There was just a blanket statement, “Go, and sin no more.” Nothing was said about her repentance, and repentance is *essential* in order for forgiveness to be extended. We *ask* God to forgive us: “Forgive us our debts [trespasses]” (Matt. 6:12).

Notice what Jesus supposedly did. When he was asked this question, he did not answer the scribes and Pharisees immediately. Although it is true that Jesus often used the technique of waiting awhile to let certain things sink in, here he supposedly stooped down and wrote on the ground with his finger. To do so would have been *impossible*, however, for he was in the

Temple in a *paved* court. He usually taught in Solomon's Porch, which was *stone*. Incidentally, paintings of this incident show its taking place by the seashore where there is *sand*. The spurious account itself denies this setting by saying that Jesus was in the Temple (verse 2).

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” The principle in the Law contradicts the possibility of Jesus' saying, “Let the one without sin cast the first stone.” Under the Mosaic Law, if a person hid his eyes from a sin as serious as adultery, he was considered to be as guilty as the one who committed the act. And there is another fallacy with this supposed statement; namely, it would stop *any* criticism, for it implies that reacting to any sin—no matter how blatant—is a wrong attitude, since we are *all* sinners (Rom. 3:10). This spurious statement is a very nice way of telling others to keep quiet.

This incident about the adulterous woman is realistically portrayed with *drama*. Jesus sat and taught; he stooped down and ignored; he lifted up himself—that is, at first, the account would *seem* to be authentic, but it is flawed in many ways.

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” If the incident in the eighth chapter of John were authentic, it would contradict and thus *destroy* the Law.

Jesus had also said that not only was the act of adultery wrong but even looking upon a woman with the *desire* to commit adultery was wrong (Matt. 5:28). In other words, he equated the desire with the spirit of adultery. An evil thought is one thing, but to *entertain* the thought is more serious, for it is entering further into the sin. And actually *committing* the act would be “*sinning* the sin.” Thus there are degrees of sin.

Verse 9 states, “They ... went out one by one, beginning at the eldest.” This is too fictional to be credible. Did the scribes and Pharisees all stand there and inquire who was the oldest so that they could exit in this order? Of course not!

**John 8:12** Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

This verse should follow right after John 7:52. Jesus was still in the Temple, and it was still the last day of the feast. He had said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). Then discussions ensued, some saying one thing and some another. While Jesus was speaking, activity and comments were going on in the background. On the side, for example, Nicodemus said to the chief priests and Pharisees that they were being too hasty in judging Jesus. Things happened contemporaneously, so John 8:12 took place very shortly after John 7:37,38.

At the end of the feast, there was a final ceremony of lights. Other practices and traditions, including this one, had been added to the Law. Not all of the additions were harmful, for some, such as the ceremony of lights, were in harmony with what was occurring. However, the Word of God *always* comes *first*. Jesus capitalized on this traditional ceremony of lights to announce that *he* was the light of Israel.

Paul used this same tactic in Greece when he said to those present, “I was looking at all your statues of gods. You Grecians have many gods, but I would like to speak to you about the unknown God” (Acts 17:22,23). Hence Paul took the liberty of using a custom to introduce truth. It is permissible to capitalize on a custom to give a witness. Sometimes an inroad can be made in this manner, whereas a too direct or too abrupt approach would lead nowhere.

Water was used at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus also capitalized on that custom (John

7:37,38). Water from the Pool of Siloam was put in a golden pitcher and brought to the Temple Mount. The timing was such that when the water was carried through the gate of the Temple to where the people were assembled inside, it was apparent that the bringing of the water was a climax to the ceremony. The water was poured out as an oblation on the sacrificial altar.

For Jesus to say he was the “light of the world” was really saying he was the Messiah because a prophecy of Messiah alludes to this: “I the LORD [Jehovah] ... will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a *light* of the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6).

Therefore, Jesus took advantage of two customs at the Feast of Tabernacles: the water and the light. It is even possible that the ceremony of lights took place at night or dusk. Then it would have been *very impressive* after seeing this display—and even more startling—for the people to hear Jesus say, “I am the *light* of the world!”

**John 8:13** The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

**John 8:14** Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

Jesus continued a line of reasoning used earlier. Normally, if we defended ourselves by saying, “I did not do such and such” or “I did do it,” the statement itself would not be sufficient in a court of law. A witness is needed so that there will be at least *two* testimonies—ours and that of another individual. When Jesus said he was the light of the world, the Pharisees replied, “That is what *you* say. Your testimony is not true.” Jesus answered, “Yes it is.”

Jesus continued, “What I am saying is true. And my Father bears witness of me.” This saying was too hard for the Pharisees to accept because Jesus was referring to an *invisible* personage. They did not consider the evidence creditable, but Jesus had said something earlier that supported this thought. He said (paraphrased), “Moses in the law spoke of me”; that is, the Old Testament testified, and the Old Testament is the *Father’s Word* (see John 5:45-47).

We are getting only a *brief* summary of what Jesus actually said to the Pharisees. If he taught them for, say, one hour, his words would have been *far more* extensive. John recorded only the pertinent and *startling* statements.

**John 8:15** Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

**John 8:16** And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

The thought here is that *God* judges. Jesus does not judge independently but judges as the Father directs. In other words, “The *Father*, who has taught me, does the judging.”

We can understand these verses based on other things Jesus said, both earlier and later, such as in Chapters 15-17. Verses 15 and 16 harmonize with Isaiah 11:3,4, “He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge.” In that same context, the Prophet Isaiah indicates that Jesus judges thus because it is really *God’s* judgment. Jesus conforms to what he thinks the Father would do; that is, Jesus pronounces judgments, but since they are the *Father’s*, it is really the *Father* who judges.

Verse 15 expresses a *profound* principle in a simple statement: “Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.” The Pharisees judged *outward appearance*. They were partial to the wealthy, for

example. Deuteronomy 1:17 and 16:19 warn us not to regard the poor in judgment. Just because one is poor does not establish his innocence before a court of law. A poor person can be just as guilty. Conversely, the person of the rich is not to be regarded in judgment. In other words, emotions should not override judgment. God judges the sincerity of the heart, and we are to judge *righteous judgment*.

Sometimes the most vicious criminals are handsome—which proves we cannot judge by looks, generally speaking. Also, even if we saw something happen with our own eyes, there might be extenuating circumstances. Circumstantial evidence is not incontrovertible.

Sometimes we *must* make a judgment, and to do *nothing* is also a judgment. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me”; that is, “If you are not for me, you are against me” (Luke 11:23). The point is that *inaction* can be counterproductive.

**John 8:17** It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

**John 8:18** I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

In the fifth chapter, Jesus showed that others bore witness of him: John the Baptist, the testimony of the Law, and Jesus’ own life (his works). Incidentally, when Jesus healed, virtue went out of him (Luke 6:19). Evidently, he was renewed overnight with the Father giving him strength. However, the healing did cost Jesus.

Verses 17 and 18 show a *separateness of being* between Jesus and the Father, and hence disprove the Trinity. Jesus used the example of *two men under the Law*, that is, two *separate* individuals, and then applied the principle to himself and the Father. The doctrine of the Trinity is scandalous, for it has no Scriptural foundation. Two of the three or so main texts quoted are spurious, whereas literally *hundreds* of Scriptures show the separateness of the Father and the Son. It is impossible for them to even be coequal, let alone *one being*.

We should beware of cliché statements that sound good and not accept them just because of the sincerity of the individual. Sincerity is not a proof of correctness, for one can be sincere in error. The *Bible* is our *only* standard.

**John 8:19** Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

The pronoun “they” referred to the Pharisees (verse 13), who had said, “Your testimony is not true. You are bearing record of yourself.” However, the pronoun also included other Jews who had an attitude of disbelief and were sympathetic to the Pharisaical viewpoint. In the crowd that was listening, some were wholly sympathetic to Jesus, some were prone to be sympathetic, and the disbelieving element were his critics.

The crowd certainly knew that Jesus was not speaking about Joseph when he said, “my Father,” “the Father,” etc. Jesus’ level of teaching was high and of great depth, and the people knew it.

**John 8:20** These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

This scene took place at the Feast of Tabernacles about six months before Jesus’ “hour” was come. The treasury was a conspicuous location in the Temple, and the people gathered around him.

“No man laid hands on him.” Jesus’ apprehension was not permitted here because the timing would have been premature. How his apprehension was prevented on this occasion is not explained. In the Garden of Gethsemane, near the time of his death, Jesus used the power of charisma. His apprehenders came at night to take him as if he were a common thief. To show this was not true, he looked on them, and they *all* fell backward. Thus we know that he possessed the power to “magnetically” repel them. Perhaps he used that power here, while talking, so that no one could seize him. Other methods or techniques were used on other occasions.

**John 8:21** Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

With these short, terse statements, we must use a reasonable amount of conjecture to figure out what Jesus had in mind. He was still addressing those of a questioning or disbelieving attitude.

Just six months hence Jesus would be talking about the destruction of Jerusalem and saying, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” When the things he predicted would begin to come to pass, the disbelieving element would start to see the veracity of his statements, for he had warned of impending disaster. Then they would see that he was the Messiah or some *great* prophet, but it would be too late to go to him personally and say, “I am sorry.” Many do not have the faith to believe in a *living*, resurrected Lord, but if he were here as a person whom they could see, hear, and touch, they would be more apt to believe. Realizing their loss later when Jesus’ predictions came to pass, they would *then* seek him and *not* find him. Any who made a consecration would also die sooner or later but not because of personal sins, which were covered by Christ’s robe of righteousness. They would die as a *new* creature, and death as a new creature in Christ is not Adamic death. However, this disbelieving element would later “seek” Jesus, not to consecrate but to pay more attention to his words. Some would even “seek” him upon hearing the news of his resurrection.

“Whither I go, ye cannot come.” Jesus made this same statement on other occasions, for example, to his own disciples (believers) at the time of the Memorial. “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 13:33). Thus there were differences in depth of meaning behind the same remarks made on various occasions.

**John 8:22** Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

In other words, the Jews were asking, “Where will he go? Is he contemplating suicide?” In John 7:34-36, at the same Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus said similarly, “Ye shall seek me, and not find me. Where I am then, ye cannot come.” The Jews responded, “Where will he go? Will he go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles? Will he leave Judea and go to teach the Gentiles?” Evidently, because of their response here, the Jews decided that that was not the case. Now they thought Jesus must be contemplating suicide.

**John 8:23** And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

“I am not of this world [Greek *kosmos*, arrangement].” The Jews knew that Jesus was flesh and blood and that he had a “father” and mother here on earth. Hence they realized he was talking about the mysterious beyond. Even though “born” here, he was originally born elsewhere (“above”). Though in the flesh now, he was pointing back to an earlier origin, the “heaven” to

which he would be going. From Jesus' remarks, the Jews understood him to be saying, "I came from elsewhere, and I am returning to that place."

**John 8:24** I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

Jesus continued to address the element that "believe[d] not."

**John 8:25** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

Notice Jesus' reply: "Even the same that I said unto you *from the beginning*." The Jews' question is astounding: "Who art thou?" Not only had Jesus been telling them all along, but they should have been able to figure out who he was because of his miracles. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he asked his apprehenders, "Why do you come after me at *night*? I have *boldly*, throughout my ministry, stated these things to you frequently, yet you apprehend me like a thief." And at his trial, they asked what he had been saying when he had taught over and over, and they should have known. He spoke openly of his purpose in appearing before them as a teacher. The point is, if one is not sympathetic to the words spoken by another, it is like talking to a *stone wall*. The reasoning will not get through no matter how plainly stated.

**John 8:26** I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

What are some of the "many things to say and to judge"? It is true that the scribes and Pharisees neglected the weightier things of the Law and paid attention to superficial matters. They swatted a gnat and swallowed a camel. However, here Jesus was referring to things yet to be uttered in the remaining six months of his ministry, especially at the time of Passover. At the *beginning* and at the *end* of his ministry, he spoke the most parables. At the upcoming Passover, he gave them parable after parable after parable, as well as answered questions they posed to try to trap him and thus have an excuse to openly apprehend him before the people. For example, Jesus said, "What about John the Baptist? When he spoke of me, was he telling the truth or not?" The Pharisees were afraid to say yes or no. If "yes," then Jesus was the Messiah. If "no," then they would be denying that John was a true prophet, and the people would be angry. So the Pharisees said, "We cannot answer that." Jesus replied, "Neither will I answer you" (Matt. 21:25-27).

Thus Jesus still had many things to say, especially at the Passover six months hence. The other Gospels relate his sayings. He spoke a great deal publicly in the Temple, and many heard him.

The "judging" at the Passover included "woes" to the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus also cast out the money changers, using a whip. This action was a rebuke to the priesthood, who should have banned the existing practices that made the Temple a "house of merchandise" (John 2:16; Matt. 21:12). Instead of remaining outside, the commercial practices encroached on the Temple precincts. Jesus' rebuke was a judging work. He judged in words, parables, and actions.

Just as in the populace there were different degrees of motivation, so this was also true of the priesthood. Some of the scribes and Pharisees were sympathetic to Jesus, and some sinned greatly against light and will even merit Second Death. In between, there were varying degrees. Some of the Pharisees will be resuscitated from the grave but be so hardened in character that they will prove to be beyond retrieval.

**John 8:27** They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

**John 8:28** Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

How would they know that Jesus was the Messiah when he was crucified? Jesus prophesied of his crucifixion beforehand, so when it came to pass, a few remembered his words and believed. Although the scribes and Pharisees were conniving in the background to trap him in his words and/or secretly apprehend him, many of those listening were unaware of the scheming. For the most part, however, the Jews did not believe on Jesus when he was crucified. Therefore, this prediction will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). Ultimately, *all* will know, for they will see a replay of the Crucifixion scene.

Remember, a *mixed* audience was listening to Jesus. Some were sincerely troubled as to whether he was the Messiah, others believed he was the Messiah, and still others were trying to trap him. Here, therefore, Jesus might have been addressing that element among the scribes and Pharisees who were not so prejudiced that they would utterly condemn him. Examples are Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

It is significant that the sign above Jesus’ head on the Cross (a characteristic practice) stated his crime as “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” In other words, the sign did not say “blasphemer” or “false Messiah” but actually stated the fact that he was their Messiah. This fact, coupled with Jesus’ prediction here in John 8:28, indicated a very peculiar circumstance. In addition, the earthquake, the darkening of the sun, the rending of the Temple veil, etc., added to the *accumulative* effect to convince those who were *sincerely* questioning and wondering if Jesus was the promised Messiah. Then, hearing about his subsequent resurrection would be the clincher—they would want to become his disciples.

Notice, even though Jesus spoke *strongly* against the scribes and Pharisees, he usually made a very constructive statement as well to the honest-hearted. Thus even his opposers, if they were honest and just, would have their thinking awakened. Sometimes hard statements are the best kind because they expose iniquity.

**John 8:29** And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

Jesus *always* pleased the Father. With us, *in proportion* as we endeavor to please and serve God, He appreciates our efforts in a similar proportion. The principle “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” operates not only prior to our consecration but afterwards, *throughout* our consecration (James 4:8). The Father will not forsake us unless we first turn our backs on Him. Such turning away would not be a single misdeed or a slip of the tongue but a serious deflection, such as a dog returning to its vomit (2 Pet. 2:22).

When we fall, the reaction of our conscience is very important. We should recognize the wrong and seek redress and forgiveness. In some cases, mental weakness hereditary factors may be permitted to take over momentarily. Or another illustration could be used. Sometimes we pray for patience, and to develop patience, we are given frustrating circumstances in which we are prone to become impatient. If we act impulsively, we are then made aware of our lack of patience and realize even more that we need it. Thus we can pray for something and then get trials that are exactly the opposite; that is, instead of getting peaceful circumstances to develop our patience, we get the opposite. Hence our true disposition is revealed regardless of hereditary factors. Then we pray for forgiveness and struggle to overcome. Our struggle is pleasing to the Father. We cannot be perfect—we need the robe of Christ’s righteousness—but our desire to do better is very much appreciated.

God is a master lapidarian or jeweler who can look at the gold, silver, and precious stones and know just what is needed to remove the dross. How we *react* to circumstances is very important. It is as if God looks into the fire and says, "That is enough!" or "More heat is needed."

We are to *wrestle*, not box. In boxing, one good blow can knock out an opponent. "We wrestle not [merely] against flesh and blood, but against principalities ... [and] powers" (Eph. 6:12). Wrestling generally requires stamina, agility, strength, and endurance. Then, *later*, a pruning may occur quickly. Jacob wrestled all night with the angel. After a half hour of wrestling, one is usually tired, so we can imagine how *exhausted* Jacob must have been. But that length of time was considered very important in developing Jacob, in crystallizing his character. And a wound left in his loin as a result of the wrestling served as a constant reminder of his previous conflict. In addition, a mark was left on the Apostle Paul, and the importunate widow had to almost cry to get an answer. Sometimes the delay factor is extremely important.

The thought of *abiding* is also here. Just as the Son abides in the Father, so we abide in Jesus (John 15:5).

**John 8:30** As he spake these words, many believed on him.

As Jesus spoke these words, "many believed on [into] him." Did Jesus' words in verse 29 constitute sufficient evidence for some to make this decision? No, these words alone were not enough. The decision to consecrate was based on the *accumulative* words and actions of Jesus that led up to his statement about the Father being with him and his always doing the things that please the Father. Of course the miracles were part of the cumulative effect. And his always giving *God* the glory was observed. Jesus' humility was apparent. Although he stated forcefully that he was the Son of man (that is, Messiah), he also said that the words he spoke were from the Father.

**John 8:31** Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

The clause "those Jews which believed on [into] him" shows a mixed audience: some who did not believe, some who already believed, and some who were not quite sure. The latter category were not convinced until they saw the Cross. The element being addressed here already believed. A real disciple would *continue* in Jesus' words. One cannot hear, believe, consecrate, and then return to a previous existence and still be Jesus' disciple.

Depending on the *individuals* who were listening, Jesus would tear down like a lion and then build up. "If the shoe fits, wear it" was the principle.

**John 8:32** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness... But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:18,22). "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). The truth makes us free from sin and allows us to be exercised in other avenues of life: holiness, righteousness, learning the truth, and ultimate salvation. These are progressive. First comes freedom from Adamic death at consecration. Then come other kinds of freedom. There will be trials and self-denials, but for every self-denial, there is compensating grace along another line. Ultimately comes the salvation all are looking for: freedom from death eternally. For the Jews whom Jesus was addressing, there was freedom not only from sin but also from the yoke, or bondage, of the Law.

Psalm 27:1 mentions another kind of freedom: freedom from fear. “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” We should want to let our light shine; we should want to talk about the truth. There should be no reason to fear talking about the truth if we are sincere. “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7 paraphrase). The truth frees us from fear of the unknown—fear of death, the wrath of God, etc.

In verses 31 and 32, Jesus was giving a “formula”: “If you *continue* in my word, you shall know the truth. Knowing the truth is conditional and progressive, leading up to, hopefully, graduation.”

**John 8:33** They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

The Jews resented Jesus’ statement that the truth would make his disciples free. Also, they claimed Abraham as their father, whereas Jesus called God his Father.

**John 8:34** Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

**John 8:35** And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

The Israelites were a house of *servants*; Christians are a house of *sons*. Sons get an inheritance; servants do not.

The human race was condemned to death in Adam. Hence they went into the tomb, awaiting a future far-off resurrection some day. (The Jews back there believed the dead were truly dead until that appointed time.) Jesus, too, would die, but his resurrection was almost immediate, relatively speaking, and no more would he see death. He is “alive for evermore” to succor his followers and later the world (Rev. 1:18). Israel, a house of *servants*, would have to wait a long time in the grave. *All* were servants of sin, appointed to death until the general resurrection, but the Son is alive in the interim period. Meanwhile, Christians, followers of the Son, will come forth first. Christians are on a higher level of fellowship.

**John 8:36** If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Followers of Jesus, who become sons of God, are free from servitude to sin. It was a grievous error for Christian Jews to subsequently try to force all Christians back under the Law, which would bring condemnation. In fact, Jews were under *double* condemnation. They were condemned in Adam and also under the Law and hence were servants of sin from both standpoints.

**John 8:37** I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

These Jews were natural Israelites but not Israelites indeed. It does not really matter who one’s father is if the heart is not right. One could literally be of Abraham’s seed yet not be a spiritual child of Abraham. In other words, Jesus was saying, “I know you are Abraham’s seed in a *natural* sense, but the Scriptures speak of Abraham’s seed in a *spiritual* sense.” Jesus spoke *truth*, but because some of the mixed multitude who were listening had wrong heart conditions, they wanted to kill him—both his influence and literally.

**John 8:38** I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen

with your father.

Two fathers were being contrasted here: God and Satan. The Jews were still thinking of Abraham as their father and did not get the point (verses 33 and 39).

**John 8:39** They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

Jesus questioned whether they were *really* Abraham's children (in a *higher* sense because, of course, they were the *natural* children).

**John 8:40** But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

Verse 40 is one of *many* texts in the Gospel of John that show Jesus' *subserviency* to the Father. Although Abraham was a friend of God, he did not have the direct, personal, intimate communication with the Father that Jesus had.

**John 8:41** Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

Jesus continued, "Ye do the deeds of your father [the devil]." Then the Jews switched the subject: "We be not born of fornication." Thus they cast aspersion on Jesus' background, that is, on Mary's pregnancy before her marriage to Joseph. This rumor, which still existed, was used here to stigmatize Jesus and kill his influence. Moreover, the Jews denied their father was the devil with the statement "We have only one Father: God."

**John 8:42** Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

John's Gospel is used to support the Trinity, yet there are many verses, of which this is one, to show that Jesus is subordinate to the Father. Jesus was saying, "In proportion as you love God, in the same proportion you will love me, because I say and do the things He would say and do if He were here."

**John 8:43** Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

"Hearing, they do not hear, and seeing, they do not see" is the thought of verse 43. If one is highly prejudiced against another individual, nothing that individual can say or do will make an inroad.

**John 8:44** Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Verse 44 is an insight into Jesus' appraisal of Satan's character. Through and through, Satan was and is a deceiver. His purposes are for *self-satisfaction* and *self-grandeur*, not to please God or to make known the truth. Satan was a murderer and a liar from the beginning, that is, in the Garden of Eden, where he said, "Ye shall *not* surely die" (Gen. 3:4). That is where lies *began*, for previously, no rebellion had been voiced. It is true that Satan premeditated what he would say for a while and nurtured the rebellion, but in making the actual pronouncement, he sinned a sin: a lie. That lie later led to Adam's sin.

"There is *no* truth in him [Satan]." Satan has used truth mixed with error, especially when

posing as an angel of light, but the fact that he is a deceiver would override any truth he might use. Such truth would be used for a *wrong* purpose, so in essence, it is *no* truth at all.

**John 8:45** And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

The way to be popular with this audience would be to *not* tell the truth—to tell pleasant things and tickle their ears. Then they would believe what was said.

**John 8:46** Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

“Which of you convinceth [convicts] me of sin?” The Jews could not find fault with Jesus’ deeds or his words, for he had *not* sinned. “So why do you not believe the truth that I speak?” he asked.

**John 8:47** He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

This was strong talk—not at all diplomatic! Hence to be Christlike is not always to be soft-spoken and tactful. There is a time for tact and a time for bluntness.

**John 8:48** Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

Based on this question, Jesus can be identified as the good *Samaritan* in the parable (Luke 10:33). Again the Jews pressed the charge that Jesus was a devil. Because they did not sufficiently probe into matters, they could easily conclude such a thing. If they listened to rumors and surmised that he had too high an opinion of himself, that he was too young and/or too boastful, etc., then his words would sound strange to them and quite offensive.

**Q:** On what basis could they accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan? They knew his background was purely Jewish.

**A:** The Samaritan, who believed in animal sacrifices and the Pentateuch, for example, was considered a half-breed, one who ostensibly followed the Law but was not a Jew. Those of pure Jewish descent considered the mixture inferior. They likened Jesus to a Samaritan because although he obeyed the Law, he was not a Jew in their eyes.

**John 8:49** Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

**John 8:50** And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

*God* is the One who seeks honor and judges.

**John 8:51** Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Jesus knew this statement would be misunderstood. He spoke the truth from *his* perspective, knowing that many listening would find fault and think he was crazy. “If a man obeys *your* words, he will never die?!?” they would say. What Jesus really meant was that those who obey his commandments will not see “*second* death” (Rev. 2:11; 20:6; 21:8).

The disciples would have gone privately to Jesus to ask him what his words meant. When he said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you,”

those with a sincere heart pursued the matter (John 6:53). Others were turned off and went their way. Therefore, provocative statements were of value to those who would seek further information, but the effect was the opposite to those who were critical and looking for flaws.

In verse 51, Jesus was saying that the *resurrected* Christian will never see death any more henceforth. Actually, under the Law, anyone who could perfectly obey would never have to die at all.

**John 8:52** Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

**John 8:53** Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

Jesus knew his remark would turn many off and convince them he was mad, but there was a beneficial effect upon others who would later ask him privately what he meant. The function of the sickle of truth is very interesting: it repels one group and attracts another class.

**John 8:54** Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

**John 8:55** Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

Sometimes Jesus' sayings were not understood, but he felt duty-bound to speak the truth rather than to be quiet, for he felt that quietness would be a disservice to God. He came here to teach and do God's will regardless of persecuting repercussions on himself. The principle was expressed by Paul: "I have not shunned to declare unto you *all* the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Jesus repeatedly said words to the effect, "As I have heard of my Father, so I speak"—whether or not his sayings were appreciated or perceived (John 8:28; 12:49,50; 14:10; 15:15). By speaking the *truth*, Jesus was really speaking for the *hearing ear*, the *minority*. Even when he rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, he kept in mind the "hearing ear" class, who would later come to him privately. "Unto you [those with hearing ears] it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God," he said (Mark 4:11).

**John 8:56** Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

According to *human* philosophy, this was the *last* thing one would say, even though it was true. This statement convinced the scribes and Pharisees more and more that Jesus was mad—but not the honest-hearted. It is true that the saying was a hard one, but based on Jesus' former works, miracles, sayings, teachings, and his life, the honest-hearted would at least go to him to inquire further what he meant. Few would take this step, for it would put them in an *inferior* role of asking to be taught instead of doing the teaching. The same principle applies today; namely, if we want to know the truth, we will humble ourselves and expend the effort. We should desire to know Jesus better so that we will know the Father better.

Even here the Jews were responsible for knowing the Abrahamic promise, that in Abraham and his seed will all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 22:18; 26:3,4; 28:14). The "gospel" was preached to Abraham, and Jesus was the chief seed (Gal. 3:8).

**John 8:57** Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

Again Jesus' statement turned them off.

**John 8:58** Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

And this statement was the clincher! They were ready to stone Jesus. Many Trinitarians use the "I am" to prove that Jesus is Jehovah, but all we have to do is go back to the context of the entire discourse. Jesus was taught of God, given the words to speak by Him, sent by Him, etc. Jesus plainly had a *subservient* role. Here he was merely saying that he had a *prehuman* existence, that he existed before Abraham did.

**John 8:59** Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

The words "going through the midst of them, and so passed by" are spurious. Jesus frequently spoke in Solomon's Porch, which was filled with colonnades that made it easy to evade others. It was not time for his death. Six more months remained.

**John 9:1** And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

This incident took place after the Feast of Tabernacles, which is recorded in Chapters 7 and 8.

**John 9:2** And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Verse 3 is predicated upon this verse, for *all* have sinned.

**Q:** The Law states that the sins of the fathers can be visited on the children up to the third and fourth generation. Was that principle active at this time?

**A:** Yes. Back there the Jews were a religiously oriented people, whereas today such an association would be very unlikely.

**John 9:3** Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

"But that the works of God should be made manifest in him." In other words, Jesus realized that this circumstance was providential—that the man had been providentially brought to his attention. God was affording Jesus the opportunity to heal this man for reasons that will develop as the account continues. Both the blind man and Jesus were providentially guided to the *same* place at the *same* time.

**John 9:4** I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

**John 9:5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

The "night" when Jesus could no longer work was when he was apprehended in the Garden of Gethsemane, followed by a kangaroo court and crucifixion. Any witnessing, healing, etc., would have to come before his trial. Later, following the Dispersion of AD 73, his apostles also had a "nighttime" experience. Many were martyred in different countries. Thus a progression of fulfillment can be seen.

The "night" for Jesus is prophetic for the feet members as well. It will occur at the end of the Gospel Age: the night wherein no man can work. Hence the clause "the night cometh, when no

man can work” is more embracive to include not just Jesus but also his feet members. *Public* witnessing will cease then—temporarily.

How was Jesus the “light of the world” at the end of his ministry? As long as he was present, his *disciples* could ask him questions and also the *public*. He truly was the light of the *world*. At his First Advent, many incidents, questions, etc., were slanted in his direction, and he could explain them. However, once he was removed from the scene, there was the loss of a *great light*. When he was no longer visible, the disciples experienced a sense of *loss*.

Jesus’ followers are also called the “light of the world.” “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). From one standpoint, they have the opportunity to testify about Jesus and the truth. From another standpoint, as each of Jesus’ followers dies through persecution, illness, or whatever, he experiences his own personal “night” of trouble. At the end of the age, when the feet members are put to death, the general public at large will also feel a loss, for the preservative quality of the “salt” will be gone from the earth.

**John 9:6** When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

**John 9:7** And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The human race is made of the earth, earthy. Jesus’ spit represents the Word of truth. When truth is applied to the eyes of the world of mankind in the Kingdom, they will no longer be “blind” but will *understand*.

Here was a unique procedure that was observed by others. Jesus spat on the ground and mixed his saliva with clay to make a paste, which he applied to (or spread on) the eyelids of the blind man. The paste dried on the man’s eyelids (like blinders or being *doubly* blind). He had to follow Jesus’ instructions to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. This was no easy task for one who was blind, for he had to make *inquiry*, exert *effort*, exercise *faith* to *obey* the instructions, and then *wash* away the clay from his eyes. *Instantly*, when he had done all these things, *he could see!*

The clay pictures the substance from which man was originally made (“the dust of the earth,” “earthy”). The spittle represents truth, that is, the message of truth from Jesus’ mouth. The clay, in combination with the spittle, effected the cure when *applied* to the individual who was blind. What is the symbolism? The Lord uses *human beings* (clay) as his agents or messengers of truth (spittle). God’s words and commandments are mixed into the hearts and minds of his people. The application of that mixture to someone else is the factor that opens the eyes of the blind. For example, sometimes the Lord uses one of his children to witness the truth to someone who is blind, and in the witnessing, the blind eyes are opened to see.

“Washing” is also a factor. If one wants the truth, he must exert effort and also accept the cleansing aspect of the Word. Repentance, conversion, baptism, and understanding are the sequence.

Siloam means “sent,” and John observed that Jesus *sent* the blind man to the pool. For the name Siloam to be given to the pool indicates that God overruled the name *in advance*. In those days, the Pool of Siloam was customarily used to get drinking water and water for Temple services, not for washing. The pool looks like an ideal baptismal site.

**John 9:8** The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

**John 9:9** Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

**John 9:10** Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

**John 9:11** He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

**John 9:12** Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

Starting with verse 8, details are given of what transpired when the healed blind man returned.

John had an unusual way of presenting matters. A *mixed* crowd had questioned Jesus in preceding chapters: some who believed, some who were borderline, and some who did not believe. A *mixed* crowd also responded here. Some said, “Aren’t you the blind man?” Others said, “He looks like him but cannot be.” Then the healed blind man said in effect, “Yes, I am that one.” Notice that in verse 9, he said, “I am”—the word “he” is supplied.

When questioned further, the blind man told the crowd the name of his benefactor: Jesus. His answers were forthright. Even though he did not necessarily know that Jesus was the “despised one,” he did not mention the spittle, probably because he did not want to cast aspersion on his benefactor. He simply said, “Jesus anointed my eyes with clay.”

Spiritual lesson: One who is spiritually blind from birth can have a miraculous confrontation with one who has the truth and, as a result, have his eyes opened. Usually, however, spiritual sight is a *slow process* of reading, having several discussions, etc. Here the blind man obeyed with startling results.

**John 9:13** They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

**John 9:14** And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

**John 9:15** Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

**John 9:16** Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Isn’t it *startling* that some of the Pharisees concluded Jesus was not of God because he healed on the sabbath? This reply shows how *bigoted* people can be. They should have rejoiced and been convinced that Jesus was of God because of such a miraculous cure of one who was blind *from birth*.

There was a division among the Pharisees (the priesthood), as well as among the common people. Credible evidence, such as this cure, should have convinced the Pharisees that Jesus was the Messiah.

**John 9:17** They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

It was wise for the blind man to omit the part about Jesus’ sputum, for the Pharisees were prejudiced enough without that detail.

**John 9:18** But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

**John 9:19** And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

**John 9:20** His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

**John 9:21** But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

**John 9:22** These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

**John 9:23** Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

Notice that the parents of the healed blind man “*feared* the Jews.” The parents knew about Jesus’ reputation, and the fact that enemies sought his death was the basis of their fear.

The Pharisees wanted to minimize the blind man’s claim and thus evidently put pressure on the parents. If they had denied the blind man was their son, the Pharisees would have been delighted, but the parents would not compromise in this way. Instead they stood their ground: “Ask him, for he is of age and can speak for himself.”

**John 9:24** Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

What hard hearts! A man born blind could now see, and the Pharisees were trying to pressure him into altering his account.

**John 9:25** He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

**John 9:26** Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

**John 9:27** He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

Notice the blind man’s directness: “*Now I see.*” He apparently took the cue from his parents, for he followed their example in his reply, but he went one step further in asking a *sarcastic* question (verse 27). If one does not want to hear a matter, repetition will not help.

**John 9:28** Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples.

**John 9:29** We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

As a result of the blind man’s sarcastic question, the Pharisees *reviled* him.

**John 9:30** The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

**John 9:31** Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

**John 9:32** Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

**John 9:33** If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

**John 9:34** They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

How marvelous that this humble soul could answer so eloquently! No wonder Jesus had said that the works of God would “be made manifest in him” (verse 3).

The Pharisees “cast ... out” the blind man; that is, they *excommunicated* him. Excommunication back there was *meaningful*; it could even affect one’s livelihood.

**John 9:35** Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

Now we start to find out how Jesus dealt with this situation. When he heard that the blind man had been excommunicated, he took the time to search him out because he realized what was in store for the man unless he became Jesus’ disciple.

**John 9:36** He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

**John 9:37** And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

**John 9:38** And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

The blind man became a disciple of Jesus. His faith progressed—from telling his neighbors the account about “a man that is called Jesus,” to calling him a “prophet” with the Pharisees, to saying that Jesus was “of [from] God” or else he could not do the miracles, to believing that Jesus is the “Son of God.”

Spiritual comparison: In confrontations with others, especially ministers, those who have the truth are viewed as follows: “Are you teaching us?” “You were not ordained.” “You did not graduate from a seminary.” “You were not trained in Hebrew and Greek.” Ministers are hostile to the consecrated teaching the people.

**John 9:39** And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

**John 9:40** And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

**John 9:41** Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

The name “Pharisee” is an interesting play on words: *Phar* means “I see.” Because the Pharisees claimed to “see,” they were responsible, culpable, guilty of sin.

The Pharisees were insulted, thinking Jesus had said they did not see. But Jesus turned the matter right around and said, “You *do* see, and because you see, you *are* responsible and commit *sin*.” In other words, he turned the insult around and criticized them even more severely.

Jesus said, “For *judgment* I am come into this world.” But what judgment? When? Israel was unique in that God chose that nation for His kingdom. He sent prophets, judges, kings, and the Law. Hence the “world” here was 99 percent Jewish—hence Israel—and the people had a responsibility. Judgment came on Israel in general, then on the Pharisees (the teachers, who were even more responsible). All—Pharisees and public—were judged *in proportion* as they did “see.” Here was a test, and judgment can be for good or for bad. The blind man *succeeded*. In addition, seeds were sown to be acted on *later*.

**John 10:1** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

This parable was uttered on the same occasion as the healing of the man who was blind from birth, and the two are related. Those who climb into the sheepfold other than by the door are thieves and robbers of the sheep. The nation of Israel was under the Law Covenant, and Jesus was criticizing the scribes and Pharisees for not properly discharging their duties. They added burdens and traditions to the Law and also sought honor and wealth for themselves. They were not good shepherds, for instead of helping the people, they hindered them. The scribes and Pharisees closed the door to heaven; they did not enter themselves and they forbid others.

The sheepfold pertained to those in special covenant relationship with the Lord God in Jesus’ day, that is, to Israel. There is a parallel to nominal spiritual Israel in the Gospel Age, of which Jesus is primarily concerned with the robbing of the true sheep.

**John 10:2** But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

In verse 7, Jesus said he is “the *door* of the sheep,” whereas according to verse 2, Jesus, the Shepherd, *enters by the door*. What is the distinction? Jesus had to perfectly obey the Law and be faithful unto death before he could become the *real* door, the *real* Shepherd.

The Jewish priesthood were the supposed shepherds of the flock prior to Jesus, but they did not properly discharge that duty. Instead of telling the Israelites how to enter the door, they devised other methods—human theories and traditions such as the Talmud. By doing this, they not only blocked the way for others but failed to enter in themselves. The true Shepherd, Jesus, entered the door by fulfilling the requirements of the Law. It was necessary for him to do this before he could bless and redeem Israel, for the people not only were under the curse of Adam but also were condemned under the Law.

**John 10:3** To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

“To him [Jesus] the porter [the Law] openeth [the way to the sheep].” In fulfilling the Law, Jesus had the right to redeem Israel. In fact, that is how he gained the life rights that constitute the Ransom as far as Israel was concerned. Jesus had to perfectly obey the Law before he could redeem those under the Law. Others, who were condemned only in Adam, could have been redeemed another way, but not Israel, who was doubly condemned.

The “porter” was the custodian of the life rights of the Law. Expressed another way, the porter was Justice. When Jesus fulfilled the Law, Justice said, “Okay. Now the sheep are yours.” Evidently, the picture is progressive as far as the Shepherd is concerned. First, Jesus had to

enter in and gain access by the porter. Once having done that, Jesus had the key to the gate of the sheepfold. Hence the picture changes from the porter *being at the door* to Jesus now *being the door* (verse 7).

“And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.” The sheep are on the *inside, in the pen*. When the sheep hear Jesus’ voice, he leads them out of the bondage, or yoke, of the Law. The sheep escape, as it were.

Jesus calls his own sheep “by name.” This shows a very *personal* relationship with regard to the call. The Christian is singled out in a personal way. In the Mideast, there was an experiment with sheep. The shepherd changed clothes with a stranger, who then called the sheep, but the sheep would not respond until the *real* shepherd called them. An entire herd of sheep can be individually named, and each will respond to the calling of its name.

**John 10:4** And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

The shepherd can walk ahead and not even look back, for the sheep will *voluntarily* follow him. The lesson is that now, during the Gospel Age, the call is voluntary, and those who respond *follow* Jesus. However, in the Kingdom, the call will be mandatory, and the world will hear a voice *behind* them giving instruction (Isa. 30:21). Now individuals spontaneously give their heart in a freewill offering—and that is the subsequent relationship all through life too. If Christians want to go astray and stop heeding the Master’s voice, they will. (Sometimes there are mitigating circumstances that distract, and the Lord, realizing the individual is still loyal, will give a little prodding to wake him up to the situation lest he lose out.)

Jesus goes *before* the Christian in another sense too. From a *dispensational* standpoint, he is the beginner or front runner who pioneered the high calling, the Christian calling. Jesus finished his course and set an example for the sheep to follow.

Thus, from an *individual* standpoint, Jesus calls each of his followers by name and deals individually with each. Of course other Scriptures tell that the *Father* actually initiates the call, but the cognition is tendered through Jesus. We walk in the footsteps of Jesus—he leads and we follow. The sheep do not know where the shepherd is leading them—they just follow *blindly* and *trust*. When we consecrate, we do not know the path we will take—we just make a covenant and *trust*. “I know not what awaits me” are the words of a hymn.

Earlier the Law was the porter, the means of access to God. Then Jesus became the door, the means of access. The hierarchy of “shepherds” is as follows: Jehovah is the *Great Shepherd*, Jesus is the *Good Shepherd*, and the Church are the *undershepherds*.

Although the parable was not understood at the time, it would later be of comfort to the blind man who had just been excommunicated by the scribes and Pharisees yet refused to be intimidated by them. As soon as Jesus identified himself as the Son of God, the blind man joined himself to Jesus. This parable about the sheepfold would have comforted him, for he was hearing the voice of the true Shepherd and did not have to be concerned about not responding to the thieves and robbers.

**John 10:5** And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

“And a stranger will they [the sheep] not follow.” Verse 5 suggests an acuteness of hearing on the part of the sheep, for they can differentiate between the true Shepherd and strangers. Sheep (antitypically, the true followers of Jesus) are not dumb animals. Down through the

Gospel Age, many have looked for leadership without discriminating between proper leaders and leaders with improper motives such as money, honor, etc. The true sheep of Jesus' fold exercise discretion between proper and improper leadership. These sheep hunger and thirst after salvation and knowledge of God. Those who sincerely, humbly, and meekly seek for this guidance are able to discriminate, for their ears are attuned to the answers of their heart's desire. There is a *ring* to the message of truth, which Jesus' followers realize is sound and true and based on Scripture.

Jesus had no fear that he would miss some who were hungering, for God would make sure they came to him. The true sheep hunger and thirst and hear Jesus' voice and know that it has the ring of truth; they will not listen to the voice of a stranger. The implication of verse 5 is that there are "strangers" who try to climb up another way than by the door and are thus thieves and robbers.

This parable addresses two classes: the guides (shepherds) and those being guided (sheep). There are false shepherds and false sheep, some with evil motivations and some without evil motivations. The latter class are not really cognizant of what is going on, whereas the evilly motivated ones are more aggressive. And there are true shepherds and true sheep. Hence there is responsibility on *our* part, and Jesus continues to fulfill the responsibility on *his* part.

**John 10:6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.**

Who understood not? Scribes, Pharisees, Jews who were on the fence, Jews who believed Jesus, his own apostles, and even the blind man—none understood initially. It took time for such instruction to percolate in their minds, and the same is true today. When we consecrate, we have a little understanding, but it takes time to realize the depth of truths we thought we already knew. Here, too, there was subsequent understanding.

**John 10:7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.**

"Verily, verily," which was characteristic of Jesus, means that he had given considerable thought to this theme. For a long time, he realized that he was the door to the sheep. He came to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," and in the parable under consideration, he referred to the *true* sheep of the house of Israel, who hunger and thirst. Throughout his entire ministry, he had the thought of being the Shepherd to the sheep. Jesus said again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."

**John 10:8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.**

Prior to Jesus, false shepherds came; they were false messiahs. Matthew Chapter 24 shows that there were (and are) false messiahs subsequent to the First Advent as well. In contrast, true prophets continually remind the people not to attach too much importance to them personally but to hear the *instruction* received of the Lord. Consequently, the ones listening develop an affection for God. They appreciate the messenger, but the messenger is continually saying, "Thus saith the *LORD*."

We should weigh the advice, counsel, etc., of those who present themselves as proponents of truth. If the instruction is *self-centered*—not based, strictly speaking, on Scripture but on imaginations and doctrines foreign to the Word—they are not true representatives of the Lord. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak [and teach] not according to this word, it is because there is *no light* in them" (Isa. 8:20).

Here in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel, we see the concern of the Shepherd for the true, eternal, lasting welfare of the sheep. And we see the condition of the true sheep. They are careful to listen to the true voice, the voice of the Lord. The true sheep shall all be taught of God.

**John 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.**

“By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved [from *Adamic* condemnation], and shall go in and out.” The sheep were already *in* the pen. To go “in” the door means to exit the sheepfold; to go “out” means to *return* to the sheepfold. The Jews were under the Law, and that Law was good. If they accepted Jesus, they were no longer under its bondage but could still appreciate and live by the principles of the Law.

When a Jew was freed from the Law by accepting Christ, he could still go back to that Law by studying, consulting, and meditating on it—but on a different basis. Although such Jews were no longer prisoners under the Law, they could still get benefits from it as well as pasturage. In other words, there were blessings and pasturage *both* in and out of the Law to the Jew in Christ (and to us too). We study the Law to see certain pictures and principles. This parable is *deep*. The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4).

**John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.**

“The thief cometh ... to *steal*.” The thief steals the affection of the sheep for the Lord by turning it to *himself*. By directing the sheep to himself, the thief alienates them from a true covenant relationship with God. Thus the thief robs God of His children by destroying the relationship. Matthew 23:15 would apply: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [Gehenna] than yourselves.”

“The thief cometh ... to *kill*.” The thief can, by evil speaking and false accusation, kill the reputation of the true undershepherds, so that the sheep do not benefit from their instruction. The thief also kills the reputation of the sheep who will not listen to him. The thief wants to minimize the influence of those not in harmony with his false precepts.

“The thief cometh ... to *destroy*.” Even after a person dies, the thief wants to make sure his reputation is destroyed forever. Thus a stigma is cast on the memory of the deceased one who was previously slain (literally or figuratively). Even if one dies a natural death, his memory can be desecrated. For example, Wycliffe's remains were dug up, burned, and cast into a brook.

The thief finds out who is for him and who is against him, and exerts opposition accordingly. The motivation of the *true* shepherd is the opposite; namely, he wants the sheep to have life—and *more abundantly* (immortality, divine nature).

**John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.**

**John 10:12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.**

Verses 11 and 12 are common-sense reasoning. One who is hired to tend the flock of another

person is not apt to risk life and limb for the sheep if a wolf comes along.

**Q:** Do both the “wolf” and the “hireling” represent the scribes and Pharisees?

**A:** In regard to the “hireling,” many of the scribes and Pharisees looked upon their position as a secure, comfortable form of life. They liked the admiration of others in connection with the office they held and the robes they wore, but they did not have a sense of responsibility for the welfare of those they were instructing. They lacked a personal concern for the sheep.

Now consider the wolf, which can picture many things. The term “wolf” refers to someone who has a disposition with the traits of a wolf *whether in or out of the priesthood*. A wolf eats and takes advantage of the sheep. An example of such tactics is an individual who pressures others to make out their wills to him. The scribes and Pharisees devoured widows’ houses; that is, the religious element finagled to get property, money, etc., regardless of a widow’s needs. Under duress from the loss of her husband, a widow might deed over to the priesthood things she really needed—at *their* urging. Properties were seized *ostensibly* in the name of the Lord but in *reality* for their own pocketbooks. Another wolfish trait is manifested when an individual wants to build up a following or a congregation and in so doing promotes *himself*.

Jesus called the sheep *his own*, but he purchased them with *his own life*. The Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep. Getting the sheep *cost* him something, whereas there was no cost to the hireling. The hireling was on the *receiving* end, not the *giving* end; consequently, his rapport with the sheep was much inferior (there were far less concern and interest).

Under the Law, if a wolf came and devoured a sheep, the shepherd was required to bring back a piece of the sheep to prove that he had risked his own life to try to save the sheep. *Spiritually* speaking, one might risk his own reputation to defend a brother who is being attacked.

**John 10:13** **The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.**

“The hireling fleeth.” To “flee” would be to disregard a matter, to turn one’s back on sheep that are in jeopardy, to not want to get involved where duty dictates standing up for principle, to turn a deaf ear to avoid an issue when the sheep are being threatened. The hireling can see that a situation is about to develop—a wolf is coming—but he does not want to get involved.

**John 10:14** **I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.**

A *two-way* recognition exists between Jesus and the individual under his charge. From experience, the individual realizes that the Lord is dealing with him, that Jesus has a *personal* interest in him. It is a back-and-forth, mutual understanding.

Verse 14 suggests the Parable of the Hundred Sheep, in which one sheep goes astray. Logic would say that if the shepherd goes to save the one sheep, the other 99 are left unattended. Suppose a person is drowning and you are a good swimmer. The normal emotional impact is such that, hearing the screaming, you would forget your own circumstance and concentrate all your energy on saving the drowning person. And so the good shepherd would go to the rescue of the one sheep in trouble. The other sheep are just *temporarily* left unattended, for the shepherd is concerned with *all* of the sheep. Sometimes immediate action is required, for the longer a matter is procrastinated, the greater the damage. Procrastination can be dangerous.

**John 10:15** **As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.**

The sheep belong to both the Good Shepherd and the Great Shepherd. As the intermediary,

the Son is more directly involved with caring for the sheep. Just as the Good Shepherd knows his sheep and cares for them, and the sheep know the Good Shepherd and his concern for them, so the same relationship exists between Jesus and his Father. “The Father knows me, and I know the Father” is the thought. It is a reciprocal relationship. Because we know the Good Shepherd, we also have an insight into the Father. Jesus is our Advocate in the sense of interceding for us, but he is also our link to the Father.

Only six months hence Jesus would literally give his life on the Cross. It is interesting how many times he alluded to that sacrifice in this chapter: verses 11, 15, 17, and 18.

**John 10:16** And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

While it is true that there will be others in the Kingdom in the sense of the pyramid figure (all things will be gathered under the one head, Jesus), the reference here seems to be more specific and *limited*. Jesus administered to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel* at his First Advent. Hence the “other sheep” here are those not of Israel who would become his subsequently during the Gospel Age. While on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20,21). This text specifically refers to all who would take up their cross and follow Jesus during the Gospel Age.

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.” “This fold” refers to the *Jewish fold*—the lost sheep of the Jewish fold were to be added to by the “other [Gentile] sheep” to come, so that all of the Christian sheep would be of “one fold.” The expanded picture is also true. All things in heaven and in earth will ultimately be in the one fold, including reconciled fallen angels.

Earlier in this tenth chapter of John, a door to a sheepfold, or pen, was mentioned. There are sheep inside this pen. When Jesus came, the porter (the Law) opened to him. The Law had been a barrier, keeping the Israelites under bondage, unable to be rescued, but by obeying the Law and obtaining the key to life, Jesus replaced the porter and became the door himself. As a result, not only are the sheep led from the pen, but they can go in and out as they please—because Jesus, not the porter, is now the custodian of the door. The explanation is that we, as Christians, have access to the beauties of the Law given to the nation of Israel; that is, we can study the precepts of the Old Testament. Even though the precepts are not obligatory in the sense that they are to the Jew, we can study the Law and imbibe the *principles*. Hence the sheepfold pertained to the Jews—it was the *Jewish fold* (John 10:1). Jesus freed from the Law those Jews who accepted him, and now (verse 16) he referred to others who would become his sheep during the Gospel Age.

**John 10:17** Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

Other Scriptures tell us that the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Certainly Jesus did not raise himself. Thus verse 17 refers to the life rights that Jesus laid down faithfully at Calvary, and now he has them again to pay over to Justice in due time. In a unique way, the Pastor explained about the life rights of Jesus. He could see that the Law had a prize: *life*. And Jesus obtained the right to human life when he died. Of course it was necessary for the Father to raise him, but Jesus had the understanding *before* he came down here that the Father would raise him. From that standpoint—if we knew we were going to die and we were laying down our life for the sheep, but we also knew that the Father would awaken us after we had fulfilled our obligation—we could speak the way Jesus did here; namely, it was a *sure* thing that Jesus

would lay down his life and take it up again in the sense that, when raised, he would have the right to *two* lives: a right to life in the spirit realm as well as his human life that he never forfeited. Jesus *allowed* his human life to be taken, but he did *not* forfeit it—it is his. That very right to human life Jesus will give to humanity. The life rights are the prize, the *Ransom* value that will be given to the world. “I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” In short, the Father having subsequently raised him, Jesus has the life rights at his disposal.

Not only did Jesus have love for the sheep, but the love originated with the Father. John constantly mentioned the rapport between Jesus and the Father. Whenever Jesus talked about how much love he has, he included the Father. Jesus was following the Father’s yearning for the salvation of others, and he was merely acting as the go-between to accomplish that salvation. God is the only Savior, as it were. “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God” (Matt. 19:17). John’s Gospel is remarkable.

**John 10:18** No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Jesus’ life was a *willing* sacrifice. It was *not forfeited* through disobedience. The *Father* authorized Jesus to pay the Ransom price—He gave Jesus *power* to lay down his life and to take it up again. Jesus did not presume to do this but was called of God just as Aaron was (Heb. 5:4). Jesus waited to be invited.

“This commandment have I received of my Father.” Jesus’ life and ministry were thoroughly discussed before he came down here: the nature of the work, the objective the Father had in mind, the suffering that would be entailed, and also the reward for faithfully performing this work. Jesus received “this commandment” from his Father; that is, the Father *assured* him. The Father not only laid out the work to be done but also gave Jesus additional assurance. Yes, Jesus needed instruction, but he also needed definite, concrete assurance of what he would do.

**John 10:19** There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

**John 10:20** And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

**John 10:21** Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

Previous chapters showed a division in sentiment among the people. A little earlier there were three classes; now there were two. The three classes were (1) those Jews who believed Jesus, (2) those who did not believe him, and (3) those who were wavering and needed confirmation. The two classes were (1) those who said Jesus had a devil and (2) those who said he did not. In other words, some were truly sympathetic to Jesus, and others were polarized into opposition. The latter were convinced he was a false prophet. The former felt that, in view of his works, he must be a great man of God.

This incident with the two classes occurred at more or less the same season or time, for there is no distinct breakdown chronologically except that the events beginning with Chapter 7 all took place approximately six months prior to the Crucifixion.

**John 10:22** And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

Verse 22 can be taken two ways: (1) as the introduction of that which follows or (2) as the insertion of a statement to show that a time period had elapsed. The second option seems more likely.

The Feast of Dedication was observed annually in December. Three official dedications are mentioned in Scripture: the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and Zerubbabel's Temple. When Herod's portion of Zerubbabel's Temple was completed, there was also a dedication. It is uncertain which dedication they were celebrating here except that it was celebrated annually. Of the one unofficial and the three official dedications, this one may have been Solomon's.

Notice that John's style was to use "and" repeatedly (verses 20, 22, 23, 40-42). The whole Gospel of John needs to be studied from a certain standpoint in order to get his type of reasoning. John was a little different from the other apostles in his mannerism of thought.

**John 10:23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.**

**John 10:24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.**

The Jews wanted a simple yes or no. It was for this reason that the previous verse about the Feast of Dedication was inserted. The Feast of Tabernacles had taken place much earlier (John 7:14). Then, in the beginning of Chapter 9, there was a break. From then until now, Chapter 10, was more or less the Feast of Dedication period. Verse 23 in regard to Solomon's Porch and verse 22 about the Feast of Dedication seem to tie in what was said earlier. A division existed in which some were for Jesus, thinking he was a prophet, and some were definitely against him. The ones who were questioning Jesus were of the latter category (see subsequent verses). They were trying to get Jesus to openly declare himself so that they would have something specific against him: "I am the Christ, yes" was what they wanted him to say so that, from their perspective, he would ensnare himself.

**John 10:25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.**

Earlier Jesus had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," etc. He had certainly given enough information that he should not have had to boast about his being the Messiah now. Jesus was walking, and we can picture his opposers circling around him in Solomon's Porch. Then they said in effect, "Tell us plainly. Are you the Christ or not?"

**John 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.**

Jesus had just said this earlier, so these verses are a tie-in. It was the Feast of Dedication. Some statements on this same occasion were made prior to verse 22, and some were made after. Verse 22 was merely inserted to give a proper time perspective. No doubt some in the crowd were of Jesus' sheep, but those who were pressing him to entrap him were not.

**John 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:**

Verse 27 is similar to verses 3 and 4 of this same chapter.

**John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.**

**John 10:29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**

**John 10:30 I and my Father are one.**

How do we understand the statement "they shall never perish" in view of the fact that Jesus'

followers did die? This statement must be considered in context with his general teaching; it cannot be isolated. “They shall never *perish*” is the emphasis. Jesus did not mean they would not die but that they would not go into *everlasting* oblivion, into perdition.

Jesus and the Father were *one* on this issue—that none would perish or that none would be able to pluck them out of either his or the Father’s hand. The thought is that none *others* could pluck Jesus’ followers out of his or the Father’s hand, but *we* could remove ourselves. Romans 8:35,38,39 expresses a similar thought: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Nothing *external* can separate us, so there is one obvious alternative left: *self*. Therefore, the Scriptures urge us to *keep ourselves* in the love of God (Jude 21).

Probably when Jesus spoke, he spoke *slowly*. He made a statement and then paused to let it sink in. Otherwise, his hearers could never have grasped the depth of his meaning in any significant sense. To just ramble along as if reading the statements would have been too much. For one thing, his hearers did not have the Holy Spirit. Secondly, the words would have been too fast to think on each of the points he brought up. By pausing, Jesus enabled others to grasp at least some of his points. Even if their understanding was lacking, they retained what he had just said. Therefore, Jesus was very unusual. He spoke slowly yet did not drag his statements. Clarity and distinction were important.

**Comment:** First, Jesus stressed *himself*: “No one can pluck them out of *my* hand.” Then he went one step *higher*: “My Father, who gave them to me, is *greater* than all. No one can pluck them out of *His* hand either.” It is evident there is *not* equality between these two beings.

**Reply:** Yes, Jesus kept bringing in the Father. A reasoning mind sees that there is a *higher* meaning than just literally accepting the statement “I and my Father are one.” This statement follows the comment “My Father ... is greater than all.” *Context* is so important. We should not isolate a statement.

Jesus always honored the *Father*. When he said, “My sheep follow me,” one might think he was boastful, but immediately afterward he said, “My *Father* gave me this commission. It is *His* doing.” A *false* humility so deprecates self that the individual allows others to walk all over him and give no credence to his statements. The Apostle Paul frequently had to remind others with the words “I, an *apostle* of Jesus Christ,” not just “I, Paul, am writing to you.” Any one of us could make a statement, but to add “an apostle” gave added weight to Paul’s writings.

When a person advances a reason, his past must be taken into consideration. For example: Is he reliable? Are his arguments reasonable? What is his motivation? Each of us must think on these things and weigh the reasoning used.

John recorded Jesus’ statement later on, in prayer, that his followers would be *one* with him as *he and the Father were one* (John 17:11,21,22). This statement is in the *same* Gospel by the *same* author as the statement “I and my Father are one.” Trinitarians fail to look further and harmonize line upon line.

Recently the pope had prayers *with* those who worship Buddha and the Great Spirit—heathen religions—yet within the so-called Christian world, the “orthodox” religions are trying to discriminate against “cults.” We must be careful of the “team” spirit that wants all to conform to certain doctrines and practices. “Peace” is an emotional issue. Everyone wants peace. The whole world groans, longing for peace, but we cannot compromise and go contrary to

Scripture in the desire for peace. When Jesus came as “the Son of God,” he was crucified. Now here, at the end of the age, we who are not Trinitarians but say Jesus is “the Son of God” will be persecuted for the *same* reason. The Trinity, a commonly accepted axiom of “truth,” was introduced *subsequent* to Jesus’ and the apostles’ teachings.

**John 10:31** Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

**John 10:32** Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

We can almost see Jesus there. As the Jews bent down to pick up stones, Jesus could have absented himself, but first, he wanted to tell them the *reason* for their actions.

**John 10:33** The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Notice, they acknowledged that Jesus did do good works. Earlier the Jews were annoyed at Jesus’ good works because they were done on the sabbath, but that issue was pushed under the rug because they now had a stronger charge: blasphemy. First, they said the devil was doing the good works, but now they admitted Jesus did them.

“Thou ... makest thyself God.” Did Jesus make himself God? No! According to the original (interlinear) Greek in the *Diaglott*, Jesus made himself a god. The Greek is not *ho theos* but *theos*.

Many will not accept reasoning that is based on the *Diaglott* because they have been warned it is a book used by cultists. However, the *logic* Jesus used in subsequent verses would make *no sense at all* if he were saying he *was God*. Jesus showed that “god” is used for a number of applications throughout Scripture. In fact, his whole argument was based on the understanding that he made himself a god, not the God.

Nestle’s New Testament tried to counteract the *Diaglott* by inserting a blank and a dash and then giving the title. The same is true for John 1:1. However, Nestle’s treatment is not justifiable—the translators are making a mistake. What they want to do is to support the Trinity and to counteract any reasoning along the lines of the *Diaglott* or a study of the Greek. The scholarship and degrees of the translators are emphasized, but the application is improper. In one or two places, the translators cannot improperly apply the Greek. In the meantime, however, the reader has been indoctrinated with footnotes regarding a word being a subject and not the predicate or vice versa, whereas actually the translators were mixing up the subject and the predicate. The reader takes their conclusion for granted because they are Greek scholars. The theological seminaries back up these wrong conclusions.

Proponents of the doctrine of the Trinity tend to take things out of context. The grammar of these “great” students is incorrect, but because they can speak the Greek language, their sophistry is accepted. They have subtly introduced rules and regulations that do not properly apply.

Jesus was a god, a superior being, who did great works with the Father’s power. The Jews back there realized that Jesus did not claim to be Almighty God. He was familiar with the Father and likened himself to a Son, and that was the blasphemy—that he put himself on a “divine” plane of being, having been there previously.

**John 10:34** Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

This statement is found in Psalm 82:6. “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of

the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (Psa. 82:6,7). The Pastor applied verse 6 (“gods”) to the Church. These two verses were inserted in Psalm 82 to explain the experience to be anticipated by the *true* Church in the context of the nominal Church.

**John 10:35** If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

Verse 35 in the King James Version does not quite convey the correct thought because of the verb “came.” The Jerusalem Bible properly uses “was addressed.” Therefore, the thought should be, “If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God *was addressed.*” It is to the *true* Church that the Word of God was, and is, addressed.

Psalm 82 is showing that the last members of the true Church will experience a situation very similar to that of Jesus, “one of the [two] princes.” According to appearances, they will die like ordinary people, like other children of Adam, but actually they will die a *sacrificial* death. When Jesus was on the Cross, the Israelites saw him as just a human being who was put to death, whereas in reality, he was a *sacrifice* on the Cross.

**John 10:36** Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

The *Diaglott* interlinear reads, “... because I said, A Son of *the* God I am?” Jesus did not say he was God. And even if one insisted on using “I am *the* Son of God,” Jesus still was *not* saying he was God. One *cannot* be the “Son” of God and yet be God Himself.

**John 10:37** If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

**John 10:38** But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

Earlier the Jews had said, “For the good works we do not stone thee,” so Jesus was now saying, “All right, *believe* those works. Forget everything else, but *believe* the works.”

**John 10:39** Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,

The Jews had picked up stones to throw at Jesus (verse 31), but then Jesus started to reason with them. “Now tell me, what really is the problem? Give me some substantive evidence that I am an impostor.” The Jews listened at that point and did not throw the stones. When Jesus finished reasoning with them, they resumed their original intent.

**John 10:40** And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

In AD 29, Jesus presented himself to be baptized in the Jordan River near Jericho, but here the Apostle John was picking up a thread of a later event. When Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days and came back to where John the Baptist was baptizing, the latter was way up north at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee near Salim in Aenon (John 3:23). Verse 40 refers to this latter site. Here Jesus abode.

**John 10:41** And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

**John 10:42** And many believed on him there.

John the Baptist did no miracles, yet he was renowned—probably for several reasons. Being brought up in the wilderness, he was a strong character. He dressed like Elijah, wearing rough clothing. The last two verses of the Old Testament are, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Mal. 4:5,6). Hence the Jews were looking for Elijah the prophet. John the Baptist came out of the wilderness dressed like Elijah and had a rugged personality. To the Pharisees and Sadducees, he said, “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for [worthy of] repentance” (Matt. 3:7,8). He spoke strongly also of the coming judgment. Thus John the Baptist had charisma plus a psychological edge, as it were, to prepare the way for the Lord. The common people reasoned very well—they put two and two together and believed Jesus was the Messiah.

**John 11:1** Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

Mary might have been a little more attentive to Jesus’ teaching than Martha, based on Luke 10:38-42, which states that Martha “was cumbered about much serving” and asked Jesus to bid Mary to help her. Jesus replied, “Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” Jesus loved both sisters (John 11:5) but Mary probably a tiny bit more. Mary and Martha were definitely consecrated at this time. We do not know if Lazarus was consecrated. However, Jesus loved all three.

In verse 5, John mentioned Martha first. Here he mentioned Mary first. Apparently, he wanted to give equal importance to both, although probably in Jesus’ sight, there was a slight preference for Mary, one reason being her anointing of his feet (verse 2). Mary had stored up this precious ointment and perhaps even with this motive in mind, which would make her level of affection for the Master very high. Martha was apparently the older sister (Luke 10:38).

Bethany, which is within walking distance of Jerusalem, is on the side of the Mount of Olives. Bethphage and Bethany adjoin each other.

**John 11:2** (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

Mary anointed Jesus with ointment and then wiped his feet with her hair. There were three anointings in all: two of Jesus’ feet and one of his head. All were separate and distinct occurrences. The two foot anointings were quite widely separated in time, but the head anointing occurred within four days of one foot anointing.

This anointing probably took place in Bethany. John was identifying Mary in advance, for she later did the anointing (John 12:3). John wrote his Gospel many years afterward, and the parentheses help us to see that John was only recording an identification point here.

Not only will Mary be remembered for doing the anointing of Jesus’ feet, but also the one who anointed Jesus’ head will be remembered (Mark 14:3). Although the latter is an unknown person *at present*, her identity will be revealed in the future.

**John 11:3** Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

**John 11:4** When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of

**God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.**

Jesus' comment is interesting because Lazarus was only sick at this time, not dead. However, Jesus realized that Lazarus would die and that his death would be a providence of God so that glory might redound unto both the Father and himself. And there is another aspect as well. Jesus knew that Lazarus' death would not be permanent because he would be instrumental in Lazarus' resuscitation. This is another illustration of Jesus' *far-seeing* ability.

Just how Jesus had that far-seeing ability is not revealed. We do not know if he was audibly instructed in the inner ear or whether he "sensed" occurrences. At any rate, nothing accidental happened to him. When something untoward took place, he knew there was a meaning. Although Jesus knew such things privately, by his making a statement aloud (such as here), his disciples were informed and realized that he was not caught off-guard.

John was *very observing*. He noted events, actions, words, etc., that others overlooked. For instance, the other Gospels do not mention this incident or about Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman at the well. Each of these incidents had to do with *individuals*.

**John 11:5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.**

**Q:** Verse 3 uses *phileo* love; verse 5 has *agape* love. Is there a reason?

**A:** Jesus loved Lazarus. There are some people we really like personality-wise, and there are others we respect on a higher level who do not have the personality. It is proper to have such respect not based on preference. Jesus really did *phileo* love Lazarus for reasons not enumerated here.

**John 11:6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.**

**John 11:7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.**

Lazarus had a mortal illness, but Jesus stayed where he was. In other words, hearing about the sickness of Lazarus, whom he *loved*, Jesus remained where he was for two more days. This fact caught John's attention. None of the others had such fine powers of observation to notice little things that are really significant.

Therefore, hearing about Lazarus' illness, Jesus took his sweet time to respond. And he knew the illness was serious; otherwise, the messenger would not have been sent all the way up to Salim and Aenon at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee where the Jordan River resumed. According to the Talmud, Nazareth was a three-day journey from Jerusalem. Although Jesus was not that far north, he was still about a three-day journey away. After the time delay, Jesus said, "Let us go into Judaea again." How did his disciples respond?

**John 11:8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?**

We should keep in mind that this incident occurred only about four months before Jesus' crucifixion. His disciples replied in effect, "You just came from Judea in order to avoid it. Why are you now going back into the fire?" The disciples apparently expected Jesus to heal Lazarus "long distance" as he had healed others on occasion. Then he would not have to return. Evidently, the disciples, except for John, did not realize many fine points of the situation. They must have been engrossed in their own thinking.

**John 11:9** Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

**John 11:10** But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

These generally overlooked words preceded the plain statement “Lazarus is dead” (verse 14). What is their import?

In other chapters of John, the same theme was mentioned. For example, in John 12:35,36, Jesus said, “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” Also, in John 9:4,5, Jesus stated, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

When the news of Lazarus’ illness came, Jesus must have been doing a certain work in a certain area. Whatever the hour of day this was, he did not respond immediately for several reasons. One reason was that he had the personal right to do things in his own way and time, for *he* was the *Lord!* (Remember that when the disciples said, “Your mother and brothers are without and would like to speak with you,” Jesus did not stop what he was doing. As the Lord, he could continue and allow the other matter to wait.) Whatever the time of day here, Jesus had determined he would work right where he was for the remainder of that day, while it was yet daylight. In addition to this literal reason, there was a symbolic application as well. Also, Jesus could walk and travel at night, particularly in the valley area and route where he was. He had in mind to finish the work he was doing for that day.

Another reason Jesus did not respond immediately is that he is the *light* of the world. During his ministry, it was primarily during the daylight hours that the people heard him. At night, Jesus (and others) had other responsibilities. At night, therefore, Jesus was not the “light.” Therefore, Jesus was saying that those who wanted to hear his instruction should capitalize on it during the day lest they lose their opportunity—perhaps forever.

Two days later, at the end of the day, Jesus started his journey back to Judea—slowly. Why did he go slowly; that is, why did he proceed at his usual pace instead of hurrying? For one thing, on each day of the return trip, he stopped to preach. The trip was a relatively leisurely three-day journey, but Jesus took *four* days to get to the tomb. Incidentally, Lazarus was not put into the tomb immediately. First, his body had to be anointed and wrapped; then he was entombed by sunset of the same day. Thus Lazarus was in the tomb from sunset through the night and then for four days before Jesus arrived.

Apparently, Jesus decided to return to Judea when Lazarus died. Thus Jesus’ initial delay, which John observed, was very significant. The other disciples were probably preoccupied with other matters, and hence they missed this observation. Jesus’ delay was the same principle as “Let the dead bury their dead” (Matt. 8:22). Our minds should be on the more *important* matters.

There are two ways of viewing Jesus’ statement in verses 9 and 10, namely, from *his* standpoint and from the *apostles’* standpoint. All of them had responsibilities, and there are practical lessons either way. Jesus was saying that he would not waste his time by traveling during the daylight hours. He used the daytime to minister to others as he made his way to Judea. And the disciples should have realized the importance of, and capitalized on, his preaching—on all the *fragments* of opportunity.

At night, when Jesus did not speak, the public was in darkness. Those who wanted to hear him had to wait until daylight. (The apostles were an exception.) Not only would Jesus not minister

to the people at night, but the hearers were *dependent* upon him for light (instruction).

Likewise, we are *ever dependent upon Jesus* for instruction. The only light in us is *supplied* light. We are in *daily* need of instruction and refreshment *from the Lord* and not from or of ourselves. Many get only smatterings of information and feel that is all they need. Being *self-satisfied*, they are not hungry for more information. Hence they make no further progress, yet they may think they are very, very advanced. We need *daily* instruction. The Master supplies the light. Therefore, the people back there should have paid attention to Jesus when he spoke during the daylight hours.

**John 11:11** These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

**John 11:12** Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

**John 11:13** Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

**John 11:14** Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

**John 11:15** And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

Aren't these verses interesting? After Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is *dead*," his next reply seemed to be *opposite* to the emotions of the disciples. They would think (like Martha and Mary) that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died. But Jesus said, "I am *glad* ... that I was not there."

Jesus was about to perform one of the most outstanding miracles of his ministry. Had he been present and healed Lazarus, the grandeur of this awakening would have been lost. Jesus had resuscitated others (Jairus's daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, etc.), but these individuals had *just* died. None had started to decay. Hence many might have concluded that they were not really dead. Jesus was glad because he saw the potential of this miracle—and the healthy scoring in the apostles' hearts and minds of the *power* inherent in him on their behalf.

Jesus was glad he was not there "to the intent ye may believe." Didn't his disciples believe before? Yes, they did believe, but perhaps only to the level of his being a prophet. The *full* recognition of his being the Messiah—that is, in the *fullest* sense, in a very realistic way—would raise their faith a notch higher. It was like Martha's saying, "I know that he [Lazarus] shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (verse 24). Although she believed this and all the things Jesus had taught, she needed to see the *full* power he possessed. The power of the future is one thing, but Jesus had *tremendous power and capabilities* even in the present, that is, during his First Advent. For the disciples not to take advantage of the present, before his absence, would have deprived them of a great joy and increase in faith.

In the 12 hours of "day," the disciples could "see" because Jesus was *present* instructing them. But when the "night" would come, when Jesus would be *absent* from them, the situation would be different. Hence "day" is significant. The Christian should take advantage of imbibing the truth when the opportunity is afforded. We should study and analyze the truth and note God's providences in our lives and circumstances. The quicker we are aware of and think on these circumstances, the better it is for us.

"Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well." We can picture ourselves saying the same thing the apostles did. If Lazarus was sleeping, that seemed favorable.

Since the raising of Lazarus is a sample of Kingdom work, the two-day delay here could picture the period of time from the First Advent to the Second Advent, when the resurrection work will begin. This is tied in with John 5:25,28,29, which states that all in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of man and *come forth*. Jesus gave a practical illustration of this when he called Lazarus to "*come forth*." All in their graves shall hear "the voice of the Son of God," and Lazarus actually heard Jesus' *voice* calling him forth. Thus there are symbolic overtones both timewise and incident-wise.

The holy angels receive instruction as they see God's plan unfolding. As the Holy Spirit has enlightened the disciples down through the Gospel Age, the holy angels have been informed simultaneously. It is advantageous for the holy angels to see these things *gradually* unfold. Each consecrated Christian has several holy angels assigned to him with one guardian angel particularly charged with the responsibility to make sure there is coverage 24 hours a day. While one angel goes to the throne of grace to get certain instructions for a peculiar circumstance, the Christian is not left unguarded.

"Are they [the holy angels] not *all* ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:14). The holy angels have been dispensed as "ministering spirits" all down the age. They receive information *as we do* by auditing the meetings and studies. They hear our discussions. Since they have been "going to meetings" throughout the age, they have the advantage of the cumulative knowledge of 2,000 years of instruction. They are assigned and reassigned to Christians as individuals consecrate and die. What the holy angels hear and see is very educational.

It is a humbling experience for the holy angels, who are *far more* powerful than we are, to see the power of ALMIGHTY GOD work through *little* human creatures and thus provide a source of instruction for them, the angels. How happy the holy angels would be to see one they personally guarded make his or her calling and election sure!

The Lazarus account is often used at funeral discourses to illustrate that death is a "sleep" from which there will be an *awakening*. Death is an unconscious sleep.

**John 11:16** Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Jesus had just said, "Nevertheless let us go unto him [Lazarus]" (verse 15). And the disciples had reminded Jesus that the Jews sought to stone him (verse 8). Now Thomas said, "Let us also go [to Jerusalem], that we may die with him." Verse 16 gives us a clue as to why Jesus subsequently exercised great forbearance with Thomas.

John is the same apostle who later told how Thomas doubted that Jesus had been resurrected and said he would believe only if he saw the wounds. Hence John gave a *balanced* appraisal of Thomas's character. Here John showed the apostle's great courage, and later he recorded Jesus' rebuke: "More blessed are those who believe *without* seeing than those who believe by seeing" (John 20:29 paraphrase). Nevertheless, Thomas is one of the twelve apostles, greatly blessed.

**John 11:17** Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

Verse 17 tells us several things. For one thing, putrefaction had set in by this time. In verse 14, Jesus said, "Lazarus is dead." Only then did Jesus decide to return to Bethany. Since Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus arrived, the journey took four days. With the journey from Galilee to Bethany normally requiring only three days, the obvious conclusion is that Jesus did not hurry back. He could foresee that when he would awaken Lazarus, the

resuscitation would have a great impact on the nation and that God and he would be glorified thereby (verse 4).

**John 11:18** Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

**John 11:19** And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

“Fifteen furlongs” was a distance of about two miles. The fact that “many” Jews came indicates this family was quite well known and prominent to attract a large number of comforters.

**John 11:20** Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

Martha was apparently a little more anxious, whereas Mary waited patiently. Martha’s reaction is a clue as to the difference in the temperaments of the two sisters. Elsewhere we see that Martha was involved in the preparation and serving of temporal provisions. She was hospitable and a doer. Martha and Mary both sat at Jesus’ feet, but Mary was more pensive and thoughtful along other lines.

**John 11:21** Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

**John 11:22** But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

Martha said (paraphrase), “If you had been here, you would have seen that Lazarus was sick and dying, and you would have healed him.” Certainly Martha was aware that Jesus had raised some others from death, but that was after a *recent* death (for example, the son of the widow from Nain and Jairus’s daughter). Lazarus was different, for he had been dead for four days and was decaying. Therefore, Martha must have spoken the remaining words (“But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee”) more or less without thinking. Otherwise, the subsequent conversation would be irrelevant (verses 23-27).

Martha was somewhat perturbed that Jesus had not responded faster, since he was given *advance* notice while Lazarus was sick, that is, before he died. However, her words in verse 22 were uttered without thinking of a resurrection. Sometimes people say things that are deeper than intended, as indicated by Jesus’ statement when he quoted from the Eighth Psalm: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise” (Matt. 21:16). Sometimes the Lord’s people with relatively little knowledge unwittingly make very profound statements.

Incidentally, if Jesus *were* God, why would Martha want *Jesus* to ask *God* to give her what she wanted? To do so would not make sense. The fact that such an enormous deception as the Trinity has pervaded the minds of great thinkers shows that Satan has blinded the minds of men lest they see the relationship of Jesus and God clearly. Seeing the truth on this subject is no credit to us, for it is the power of the Holy Spirit that enlightens us. The understanding is a gift, not our own wisdom. A cloud caused by the Adversary obscures this subject. No matter how brilliant one is, if he looks through cloudy glass, he will not see the clear picture, even if the print is clear. How we are indoctrinated can influence us. It is very hard to view a subject, doctrine, or principle in a truly dispassionate sense. On most subjects, we are already prejudiced, sometimes for the good and sometimes not.

**John 11:23** Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

Jesus' use of the future tense ("shall rise") proves that in verse 22, Martha did not think he would raise Lazarus back there, at that time.

**John 11:24** Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Martha was thinking, "Oh yes, I know that my brother will rise again, but that time is future, a long way off." Thus Martha was not really thinking along the lines that her words in verse 22 seem to indicate.

**John 11:25** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

**John 11:26** And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

"I am the resurrection, and the life"—what profound words! Jesus used *present* tense here, even though he had not yet proved faithful to the death on the Cross. Thus he was saying, "I am the channel through which the resurrection and the life will take place." He was appointed of the Father to come down here and do certain things. When these were accomplished, he would be given the privilege of raising the dead in the next age. He will be the age-lasting Father in the Kingdom, and this role was predicated on his complying with his Father's wishes. At this point in time, Jesus had already come down to earth, and he had now almost completed his ministry of 3 1/2 years. Now he said, "I am the resurrection, and the life"; that is, "I am the means whereby others may obtain the resurrected life."

The Apostle Paul reasoned both ways: from the standpoint of mathematical exactness and also from a prophetic perspective. For example, those who have consecrated and undergone baptism, which evidences the step already taken, have, as it were, already risen and are walking as the children of the light, as having already been resurrected. But this reasoning is from a *prospective* or anticipatory sense. In other words, in view of the things that will later transpire, and even in the *present* life, we can get the benefits in the form of a *partial* payment of the future power of a resurrected life.

What about "resurrection" versus "life"? "Resurrection" is the Greek *anastasis*, but there are different ways to view this word. Sometimes a *process* of ascending order is meant, sometimes the *process* is in descending order, and sometimes the reference is *broad* with regard to things that will happen and thus is not necessarily sequential in either ascending or descending order. "Resurrection" and "life" are very broad terms. The Apostle John frequently talked about "life" in both his epistles and his Gospel.

The prize of the *high calling* is the *highest* form of life, and there are subordinate gradations of life, both spiritual and earthly. But we should keep in mind here that Jesus was talking in connection with Lazarus, who was lying dead in the tomb. Everything was on Jesus' shoulders—his prosperity or lack of prosperity was directly proportional to that which would affect others. Therefore, his being "the resurrection, and the life" was contingent upon his own obedience. Right along Jesus had been blessed of the Father, however, so those who were associated with Jesus were also being blessed *in proportion to their closeness to him*.

In verse 25, the use of "resurrection" seems to be in the *broad* sense of the word. Earlier (in verse 4) Jesus said that Lazarus' sickness had happened for the glory of God—"that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"—for Lazarus' sickness was "*not unto death*." The disciples appreciated the Master for all that he did, but after he raised Lazarus from the dead, all who witnessed the miracle did not merely believe he was the Messiah but were *delirious* with joy over his *power*. The fact that Lazarus was already deteriorating and stinking when he was

raised from the tomb glorified Jesus even more. For Lazarus to come forth after *four days* was *astounding!* If someone had only just died and then was awakened, it would not be as impressive. We might think, “Maybe the party was not truly dead.” But after a person was dead for four days and wrapped in grave clothes, the matter would be incontrovertible.

Jesus saw that this experience would do several things. For one thing, it would enhance his reputation in the eyes of the nation. The nation would become very excited over the event, and hence the wheels of his execution would be hastened. The event would glorify him among those who wanted to have faith in him, and it would make others want to put him to death.

**Q:** Did Martha know about “the resurrection at the last day” through her training as a Jew based on Abraham’s hope?

**A:** Yes, probably. In addition, she knew the identity of Messiah. She realized that Jesus was the channel through which the resurrection would occur but thought of it as taking place in the future, at the last day. Jesus replied, “I am the resurrection and the life *now*.” A blessing would accrue from being so closely associated with Jesus right *then and there* at his First Advent. The lesson is not to overlook the present in view of the farsightedness of the future. If we do, we will lose valuable opportunities. We will overlook the responsibilities, encouragements, and helps of the present, which Jesus was focusing on. Not only was he the resurrection and the life of the future, but even back there blessings would accrue to those who carefully and attentively hearkened unto every word he might utter.

“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” This is what happened with Lazarus. Though he was dead and in the tomb, yet he would live.

**Q:** Is verse 26 a reference to Second Death: “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”?

**A:** If these verses refer to mankind, it could mean that some will never go into Adamic death because they will be living at the time the Kingdom is established. If these verses refer to the Church, then the tense should be changed: “He that believeth in me, though he may die, yet shall he live.” However, the context is about *Lazarus* in the tomb. At the time of his death, it does not seem that he had yet consecrated and become a disciple. He was friendly and hospitable to Jesus, and he had a pleasing character, which added to his popularity. In fact, it was Lazarus who was well known rather than Mary and Martha (we will see why later). Therefore, if Jesus uttered these words with Lazarus especially in mind, the thrust would be a little different, and this was probably the case.

In the interlinear Greek in the *Diaglott*, verse 26 is a little puzzling, for it has a double negative: “All the living and believing into me, not not may die into the age.” And the question would be, Which age? The Greek seems to support the thought about those who live on into the Kingdom and do not die in the Time of Trouble. If those individuals then listen to and obey Messiah, believing *into* him, they will not go into Second Death at the end of the Millennium but will be as the angels. Pinpointing which “age” would be the determining factor, and we cannot be absolutely sure. Hence either of the two thoughts could be correct.

Jesus’ statements in verses 25 and 26 were made with Lazarus especially in mind, and he was in the tomb at this point. Jesus was talking about his capability with Lazarus. The power that Jesus will exercise in the *future* would be representatively used in Lazarus *now* because Lazarus was a picture of the future resurrection. Jesus said earlier that Lazarus’ death had happened in order that the role of the Son of man would be greatly enhanced through the resuscitation. In John 5:28,29, Jesus stated that all in their graves would hear the *voice* of the Son of man and *come forth*. This prophecy ties in with the eleventh chapter of John, the Lazarus account, where Jesus

cried with a loud *voice*, “Lazarus, *come forth*.” In other words, the raising of Lazarus was a mini-sample of what will take place in the Kingdom on a large scale.

Lazarus had been dead a long time, and Martha was thinking, “Oh, yes, in the future, Lazarus will be raised.” But even then, at his First Advent, Jesus was authorized to do certain things. Those who come forth in the Kingdom will likewise have a resuscitated life. It will be an awakening—just like Lazarus—but instead of four days, it can be 2,000 or 6,000 years before the resuscitation takes place. Not until after the Little Season at the end of the Millennium will one enter the ages of ages with *life* and never die. Prior to that time, many things can happen. For example, a person may believe at one time and not at another. Some depart from the narrow way who once believed, and some will likewise fail in the Kingdom. If we *remain* in the love of God, if we *keep* ourselves in the love of God, then salvation will be effected.

**Q:** Wouldn't verses 25 and 26 have been helpful when repeated to Lazarus following his resuscitation? He might have wondered about his destination after his raising, and these words would have helped. He was being given another opportunity to live. It was as if Jesus were saying, “Though you were dead, you now have an opportunity to live and never die the Second Death.”

**A:** Yes, we have thought along the line of Lazarus' becoming a disciple wholeheartedly after this experience. His resuscitation would have been a turning point in his life.

And there is another point. When Jesus gave the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, it was a tie-in with the Lazarus of John 11, the Lazarus who was literally raised from death. When Lazarus' resuscitation was noised about, many Jews went to his house. The news spread throughout Israel that Jesus, with his voice, had raised Lazarus. In the parable, Lazarus was the beggar, the poor man in some respects, who died, but he later ended up in Abraham's bosom. In contrast, when the rich man died, there was a great gulf. Several lessons can be drawn from the parable, and certainly the pragmatic lesson in regard to Lazarus himself should not be overlooked. Lazarus would have identified with the parable, saying, “That is my name. I was raised from the tomb.” Others would hear of Lazarus' awakening and Jesus' saying, “Though one were raised from the dead, the nation still would not believe” (Luke 16:30,31 paraphrase). And that is exactly what happened. In fact, the nation crucified Jesus after that great miracle. (Of course the parable is also designed to have an application of Lazarus representing the Gentiles, but the practical value of literally applying the parable to Lazarus back there should not be overlooked.)

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was given *prior* to the resuscitation, as though Jesus' foreknowledge told him Lazarus was designed to be an illustration. No wonder Jesus said, “This happened for the glory of God and to glorify me”; that is, Jesus knew the time would come in his ministry that Lazarus would die and he would awaken him, so he gave the parable in advance. Lazarus was “poor” at that time in that he did not recognize the true value of Christ, the true value of really being a disciple. It was like the rich nobleman who turned away sorrowing, not realizing he had a golden opportunity if he would sell all he had and follow Jesus. Had he done this, he ultimately would have been far wealthier than anything he could amass here on earth. However, unlike the rich man, Lazarus was probably shaken out of his lethargy and fully consecrated his life. He realized there was a step beyond friendship. We can be very close to someone and not truly realize how valuable he or she is. We can be the closest friend and still not see the party from the true perspective. Lazarus' resuscitation would have been a real shocker to him—and of great benefit.

**John 11:27** She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

**John 11:28** And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, **The Master is come, and calleth for thee.**

**John 11:29** As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

Now Mary, who had previously sat in the house, heard that Jesus was asking particularly for her. She quickly went to him, being alert to do his will. Alertness is a good quality. It is interesting that Martha went to Mary on the side and *secretly* told her.

Verse 27 shows that Martha did not fully comprehend Jesus' words in verses 25 and 26. She said, "I believe you are the Messiah, the Sent One, the Son of God," but that is as much as she was able to say.

The name Lazarus means "without help"; that is, he was helpless without God's power. Thus it is apparent that even the naming of Lazarus was overruled.

**John 11:30** Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

In other words, Jesus remained at the spot where Martha had met him. Jesus had been in transit when Martha came to him and had a conversation with him. After she left, instead of continuing on, Jesus stayed there. Meanwhile, Martha ran back to Mary and said secretly, "The Master is here and calls for you." Now Mary was coming to Jesus at that same place. Jesus used wisdom by talking with Mary and Martha first, and thus dispensing with preliminary conversation before going directly to Lazarus' tomb.

**John 11:31** The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, **She goeth unto the grave to weep there.**

When the Jews saw Mary leave, they followed her. Obviously, the Jews did not hear what Martha had said to her secretly. Thus they assumed she was hurrying to the tomb, and they wanted to accompany her out of sympathy. "The Jews" were probably a mixed group, some being believers and some not. At any rate, they were friends and neighbors who were familiar with the family. Lazarus was a well-known personality, so when news of his death got out, it attracted quite a bit of attention.

**John 11:32** Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, **Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.**

Mary's words here were also Martha's exact words earlier (verse 21), so obviously, they had discussed this matter together prior to Jesus' coming. Their remarks could be considered a gentle rebuke, especially since Jesus had deliberately delayed his return.

**John 11:33** When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

**John 11:34** And said, **Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.**

Jesus saw Mary weeping, and there was a close rapport between them, since Mary was accustomed to sitting at his feet to learn of him. Mary's weeping began to stir him emotionally. Then he saw the Jews weeping too, suggesting there was sincerity in the weeping. Seeing both Mary and the Jews weeping built up a crescendo in Jesus that resulted in his weeping also (verse 35). Jesus was very emotionally stirred as he asked where Lazarus' body was.

Some consider John's Gospel to be anti-Semitic because of the frequent use of the term "the Jews," but "the Jews" were simply the residents in the area of Judea and Jerusalem. In other words, residents in that area were called "Jews" as opposed to, for instance, "Galileans," who resided around Galilee.

**John 11:35 Jesus wept.**

Of course Jesus knew not only that Lazarus will be resurrected in the Kingdom but that shortly he would be resuscitated. Therefore, Jesus was weeping for the pain and loss that the family felt. Although we sorrow not as others, we do sorrow when death occurs—and for similar reasons (1 Thess. 4:13).

Notice the intimacy of expression in this account. It is as if we are living the experience. By being transported back in time to 2,000 years earlier, we are given a touching revelation or insight into the experience. Jesus really wept—not just one sob but a period of weeping as Mary and the Jews walked toward the tomb.

Jesus wept in spite of the fact that he knew the raising of Lazarus would bring *great* joy; that is, he *entered into* the emotions of the experience as it occurred. Apparently, this characteristic was in Jesus' makeup as he viewed the race going down into degradation, sorrow, and death. The Father could not have chosen any being better suited to be man's ransom. Jesus had a *sympathetic* makeup. Thus when the Father proffered the opportunity to Jesus to come to earth and die on man's behalf, He knew that Jesus would accept with joy. In fact, Jesus was only too happy to come down here. He did not weigh all the factors but considered them later as he met them. Moreover, Jesus wept, as it were, *before* he came down here, for the plight of the human family emotionally stirred him. He was not coldly detached like a surgeon.

**John 11:36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!**

The clause "Behold *how* he loved him!" shows that Jesus' weeping was an *emotional outburst*, not restrained weeping.

**John 11:37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?**

This question was much like the comments of Mary and Martha earlier. Now others were taking up the refrain. Because Jesus himself was weeping, the others thought he could not do anything to prevent Lazarus' death; that is, they *misconstrued* the motivation behind his weeping.

Jesus had raised Jairus' daughter from death, but she had just died, which is quite different from being in the tomb for four days. Jesus simply went to the couch and awakened her. The widow's son was also resuscitated when Jesus put his hand on the bier and said, "Arise." But since the burial took place the same day the death had occurred, it was as if the body was still warm. Thus, even though resuscitation had previously been performed, the case of Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, seemed *hopeless*. Therefore, as Jesus walked, weeping, to Lazarus' tomb, the people were unaware of the real power he had.

**John 11:38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.**

This second groaning, a further agitation, was due to the people's misunderstanding of his first groaning.

**John 11:39** Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

Jesus, who was able to perform so many miracles, could easily have moved the stone away, but his asking others to do it shows that we should do for ourselves what we can. Jesus steps in where situations are beyond man's capability. For example, when Peter was shackled to two men next to him, the shackles miraculously dropped off. Then the angel instructed Peter to put on his shoes, walk, and follow him (Acts 12:1-12). When they got to the barred gate, it miraculously opened. Thus we are expected to do certain things, and other things we are not expected to do. The Lord will help us with the latter.

Lazarus' tomb was a cave. The cave had a vertical mouth opening, and the stone would have lain across the opening. When Jesus said, "Take away the stone," the onlookers would have responded, "For what reason? Who wants to enter the tomb with the stench of decay?" To enter several months later would have been all right, for then there would have been no odor. It is very hard to get the smell of death out of the lungs.

**John 11:40** Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

Earlier Martha had gently chided Jesus; now he gently chided her. Martha and the others would subsequently have to admit Jesus told her that if she believed, she would see "the glory of God." Notice that Martha did not reply—she was silenced. Now came a tense moment. What would Jesus do? Mystery was attached to the situation.

**John 11:41** Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

**John 11:42** And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

Present tense should be used in Jesus' prayer in verse 42 as follows: "And I *know* that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I *say* it." Here is a strong rebuttal against the Trinity, for why would Jesus have to thank and talk to the Father if he and the Father were *one*? Jesus knew that *God* heard him, *God* answered his prayers, *God* supplied the power for the miracles, etc., but he prayed or spoke audibly for the benefit of *others* so that they would realize his close relationship to the Father. Even if Jesus spoke about his *own* importance, he always gave the Father the highest credit and showed the Father to be the *source* of his power. In verse 25, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life." However, had he performed the miracle of raising Lazarus without first praying to the Father, the Father's primacy would not have been appreciated.

Invariably, the proof texts of Trinitarians can be discounted by reading a verse or two before or after, or by reading the entire context. The Father's supremacy is shown here. Jesus' words were proper. In fact, it would have been improper for Jesus not to have thus honored the Father.

**John 11:43** And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

Jesus' "*loud voice*" suggests authority, a command, as well as the physical setup of Lazarus' tomb. To see the tomb in Bethany, one must walk up an incline. On the left is the doorway to the tomb. The individual enters a short way into a vestibule and then goes down a circular stairwell. The stairs go down more or less a couple of flights to a short floor level that leads to

the tomb room in which Lazarus' body was laid.

From Lazarus' perspective, imagine being down there dead, clothed in grave wrappings (head and body separately wrapped) and hearing Jesus' voice. Jesus was up above, a fair distance away, separated by a torturous stairway. Jesus yelled, "LAZARUS, COME FORTH!" in a *loud* voice. He had to shout in order for Lazarus to hear way down below in the tomb chamber. The spectators, also realizing the *depth* of the body in the tomb chamber, would have reasoned, "Does Jesus think Lazarus will hear him? A man dead for four days *cannot* hear." It would have taken time for Lazarus to come up the stairs to the entrance of the cave, especially with grave wrappings on him. And with the head napkin covering his eyes, he would have to feel his way up the stairs in the dark. Meanwhile, the spectators were waiting, wondering if Lazarus would respond, yet thinking such a thing would be *impossible*. After 15, 20, 30 seconds (a *long* time when people are waiting), Lazarus appeared at the tomb entrance, still wrapped in the grave clothes. The first reaction of the spectators was fear and the thought "What is this? I cannot believe my eyes!"

In their shock, the spectators forgot certain other things; for example, Lazarus would have to be assisted in removing the grave wrappings. The bandage was taken off his head so that he could breathe more properly. Then the wrappings were removed from his body. Imagine! The shock and fear now became GREAT JOY! Those present probably danced and ran down the streets shouting, "A miracle has been performed! A miracle has been performed!" They would have run hither and yon yelling to neighbors, friends, families, and strangers, "Lazarus is alive!" "We saw the miracle! He is alive!" That miracle would have created a real uproar in the tiny town of Bethany, and there were plenty of eyewitnesses to testify. This most outstanding miracle was the climax of Jesus' ministry as far as the public was concerned.

The Apostle John chose the wording very carefully back in John 5:28,29, where Jesus said the hour would come when all in their graves would hear the *voice* of the Son of man and *come forth*. John repeated the wording here with the sample miracle of such a "coming forth." In fact, this miracle with Lazarus was the basis for John's earlier observation in the fifth chapter.

A deeper significance is now seen in Jesus' statement "I am the resurrection, and the life"—a significance other than the far-off fulfillment. If Jesus had the power to raise Lazarus, then in other ways, he is a *living* Savior who is able to do and save to the uttermost those who come to him (Heb. 7:25).

The manner of Lazarus' burial helps us to understand about Jesus' burial. Jesus was buried according to the custom ("as the manner of the Jews is to bury"—John 19:40). He was not wrapped like a cocoon as in Egypt where both legs are strapped together and immobilized. The Hebrew style was to take the bandage and wrap each leg separately, then the torso, the neck, etc. A *separate* napkin was wrapped around the face. Although there were probably breaks in the bandage about the body, it was like one continuous bandage composed of a relatively narrow cloth. Thus the arms were free and separate from the body, not immobilized against the body.

When John looked into the tomb and saw the bandages lying, he *believed* that Jesus had been raised (John 20:5-8). He realized the body had been extracted miraculously *without* unwrapping because the bandages were intact, just *collapsed*. Thus the condition of the bandages was a proof of Jesus' resurrection. John was very astute and alert—almost like an artist who makes sure that no little detail is wanting. John's perceptiveness is apparent throughout his Gospel.

In ascending the steps, feeling his way in darkness, Lazarus was guided by the voice of Jesus to know the direction. He was attracted to the source of the voice like a magnet. We, likewise, hope to hear the voice of the Master in resurrection when we die: "Well done, thou good and

faithful servant; enter into the joys of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:23 paraphrase).

John’s Gospel beautifully complements the other three Gospels. Being more international in appeal, it crosses all racial, religious, and geographic lines and has been very helpful in converting people.

The account does not so state, but probably much virtue went out of Jesus in performing this miracle. That, plus his emotional expenditure, would have exhausted him.

Much of the acclamation for Jesus in his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem was probably induced by this miracle with Lazarus. Moreover, the idea of a loud *voice* in connection with resurrection ties in with 1 Thessalonians 4:16, which says that Jesus descends from heaven with the *voice* of an archangel, and the *dead* in Christ shall *rise* first.

**John 11:44** And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

When Lazarus came forth, the witnesses were stunned momentarily into a motionless stupor, until Jesus said, “Loose him, and let him go.” They were in shock, forgetting Lazarus’ need to breathe more freely.

Jesus possessed tremendous composure of mind. Even in his emotional trauma and weeping, he was organized in his thinking. With us, any unusual emotion blinds our eyes and our rationale. “Blind with fury” is a saying. If we are very angry, we cannot reason clearly. That is true of joy as well as of anger or sorrow. Things fail to sink in with us because the experience is overwhelming but *not with Jesus*. He always maintained the presence of mind of what to do, what to say, and how to say it, and he took in all of the details. For example, in his agony on the Cross, he said to John, “Behold thy mother” (John 19:27).

**John 11:45** Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

**John 11:46** But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

How incredible that any who beheld such a miracle would tattle to the Pharisees! Although only a minority did this, it is still incredible. Many others believed *into* Jesus at this point and were converted. However, people are different. The same mixed reactions occurred at the Exodus in regard to miracles that took place and subsequently in the Wilderness of Sinai. Some forgot the miracles the *very next day*. One can succumb to evil and reap a destiny of destruction if he is not careful to pursue a proper path.

The evil element was self-seeking. In informing the Pharisees, they wanted to add to their own prestige and advantage. Their motive was wrong! Those who have practiced an affinity for sin and evil must willfully incline their hearts toward reformation in order to break the shackles. They must *implore* the Lord for help. Just seeing miracles will not necessarily change perverts. If such were the case, then *every* Jew living would be a part of the Holy Remnant at the end of the age when God performs *mighty* miracles. The heart condition is important.

**Q:** Why is this most prominent miracle omitted from the other Gospels?

**A:** The four Gospels were each written with different motivations. John’s Gospel was especially written for those more inclined to give their hearts to the Lord. It is more universal instead of being directed just to the Jews, just to the Greeks, or just to the Romans.

Before John wrote his Gospel, he structured in his mind how to treat the subject. The other Gospel writers did the same. Otherwise, a writer can get lost in his subject or frame as he pursues it to a destination. Matthew particularly directed his Gospel to the Jews; thus he was concerned with quoting Old Testament prophecies as having their fulfillment in Jesus' ministry. His motive was also to show that Jesus can reclaim the sinner regardless of background. Mark wrote to appeal to the Romans. Luke's Gospel was written from a physician's standpoint. And John was very observant of details that, at first, might not seem to be related to the incident at hand yet were *startlingly relevant*. For example, he mentioned that the boat in the storm on Galilee was immediately at shore after Jesus entered it.

Because of his powers of observation, it is good that John recorded the raising of Lazarus. To have piecemeal accounts in two or three Gospels, as with some of the other events, would have detracted from this *greatest* miracle. Instead, in the *one* account, we can relive the incident and grasp the startling power. John also wrote of *personalized* experiences, such as the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus, and Lazarus.

Jesus said that this miracle would be done to the "glory of God" (John 11:40). How appropriate that he lifted his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, I thank thee." Jesus always gave credit to the *Father*.

Many cling to the Trinity because "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of *Christ*, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan's power is overwhelming for blinding men. Only if we are providentially led of God is the veil lifted from our eyes to see the truth. If such were not the case, we would be sure and obstinate in our own blindness and thus be the blind teaching and leading the blind (Luke 6:39).

**John 11:47** Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

**John 11:48** If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

Apparently, the chief priests and Pharisees were aware of Jesus' doings, for they observed that he did "many miracles." They were probably keeping track of him. And the raising of Lazarus, a stupendous miracle, took place very close to Jerusalem, about two miles away.

*Antitype:* The counterpart to the Romans is the Communists. The consecrated will give a general worldwide message that will receive relative popularity. Subsequently the powers of Christendom, especially the nominal religious system, will fear that if this message gains too wide a hold, the Communists will take over and Christendom will perish. Like the Romans, Communists are an alien, heathen (godless) power. Today Communism is viewed as a power threatening to take over. Instead of the miracles that Jesus did, the feet members will open blind eyes with their "popular" message. There will be a miraculous understanding of truth. (Note: This study of John's Gospel was done in 1986-1987. Events since the year 2000 indicate the likelihood that Islam and the Muslims will prove to be the antitype of the Romans.)

**John 11:49** And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

**John 11:50** Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

**John 11:51** And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

**John 11:52** And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

These were the remarks of Caiaphas. He spoke artificially as he was moved by God's Spirit because he occupied, ostensibly at least, the office of high priest. (In ancient times, the high priest was looked to for counsel on critical issues.) It is interesting that God used a man with *evil* motives to utter a *prophecy*. Precedents for this are found in Balaam and Saul. Balaam was to pronounce a curse over Israel, but it was overruled that he do the opposite. Instead he pronounced a blessing and prophecy not only with regard to the people of Israel but also with regard to a star rising out of Jacob (Num. 24:1-9,15-24). Balaam possessed a wrong spirit and evil counsel, yet the Lord mechanically used him on that occasion. Saul, too, prophesied on one occasion. The people observing this said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam. 10:12).

Caiaphas said, "Ye know nothing at all." That was a *true* statement. God spoke through Caiaphas in a mechanical fashion. In having evil counsel to put Jesus to death, the priests and Pharisees did not realize that their actions would actually fulfill God's purpose, for Jesus came here to die. Unwittingly, because of their disposition of jealousy, they were really fulfilling God's plan. When the Holy Spirit said, "Ye know nothing at all," the words were almost sarcastic. God was saying, "You do not know what you are doing. By putting Jesus to death to silence his testimony, you will do exactly the opposite. His death means salvation, and it will make the disciples even more fervent and zealous when he is raised." The *entire* statement of Caiaphas was uttered mechanically under the power of the Holy Spirit: "Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." A quick reading gives the impression that the first part of the remark was Caiaphas's own personal statement and the second half was uttered under the Spirit, but the *entire* statement was made mechanically under the Holy Spirit.

**Q:** Back there were the "children of God that were scattered abroad" literal Jews outside of Israel?

**A:** Primarily, this term applied to the Jews who lived outside of Israel. The Apostle James addressed his epistle to both the homeland Jews and the Jews elsewhere (James 1:1). And what applied to the Jews back there applies to Christians today. Here in John, the main emphasis was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but the term also broadened out to include others. Jesus went originally to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but his message was designed to embrace those who did not reside in Israel. They were to be acquainted with the truth, for the disciples took the refrain to others after Pentecost. Many of the Jews from scattered lands were present in Israel for Pentecost, and they were a holy, devout people (Acts 2:5). Peter addressed these zealous ones who had left a foreign land and traveled to Israel to observe the feast. Thousands were converted by Peter's one sermon (Acts 2:41).

**John 11:53** Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

"From that day forth," that is, from the time Caiaphas mechanically uttered this prophecy, the priests and Pharisees "took counsel together" to put Jesus to death. The priests and Pharisees had plotted previously, but *now*, since their chief spokesman had given this advice regarding the expediency of putting Jesus to death lest the Romans come and the nation perish, they heeded the counsel. In a *concerted, collective* fashion, they began to plot Jesus' death.

**John 11:54** Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his

**disciples.**

The location of the city of Ephraim cannot be proven, but the probable location was southeast of Jerusalem, somewhere in the vicinity where Bishop Pike, an Episcopal minister, lost his bearings and died. The Wilderness of Ephraim is near Jerusalem. En route to Jericho from Jerusalem, one comes to sterile desert on both sides of the road but particularly on the east side, only about six miles south of Jerusalem.

**Q:** In regard to the antitype, does verse 54 show that following the general public witness, there will be an indication of aroused antipathy, and that for a brief period, the feet members will refrain from speaking and watch for the Lord to set the stage? (With Jesus, the Passover provided the stage setting.) In other words, will there be a short period of prudent silence until it is apparent that NOW is the time to speak out again?

**A:** Yes, we would think so. In many respects, the feet members will have experiences similar to those of Jesus.

The fact that Jesus “there continued with his disciples” suggests that this was a period of refreshment and enlightenment, a *rest* period with the disciples. Also, this suggests that the feet members will gather together, *knowing* what is impending and *soon* to occur. Some preparation and consolidation will be desired prior to the severe experience. Hence it seems that there will be a period of rest and easement following the relative popularity but before the severe persecution. The brethren will be trying to regroup their resources.

Ephraim means “fruitful”; therefore, the name might suggest a regrouping with consideration being given to the impending doom, as it were, of the true Church. It will be “fruitful” in the sense of a period of refreshment and help. There will be prayer and the seeking of counsel from Jesus and the Lord’s Word as to what to do.

**John 11:55** **And the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.**

This was the fourth Passover of Jesus’ First Advent, the one just prior to his crucifixion. Verse 55 is saying that Jesus would be crucified a fortnight (about two weeks) later. Some who intended to go to the feast went *earlier* than would normally be necessary in order to purify themselves. These Jews were having the discussion in verse 56.

**John 11:56** **Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?**

Those Jews who arrived early wondered if Jesus would come to the Passover feast.

**John 11:57** **Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.**

The chief priests and Pharisees had already taken counsel together, and now they were determined to apprehend and kill Jesus. They wanted to seize him the moment he arrived, but certain providential happenings prevented this. For one thing, there were too many people with him. (Jesus had raised Lazarus recently, and his popularity had grown.) The religious leadership did not want the people to realize they were evilly disposed toward Jesus as an individual, but they wanted to know his every movement in order to apprehend him at the most opportune moment. In other words, they wanted to arrest him *in advance* of the Passover, but they could not.

The chief priests and Pharisees had handpicked sympathizers who acted as informers. (Similarly, today the nominal Church system has laymen who honor the priesthood yet are not part of it, for example, the Knights of Columbus.) Word got out to these sympathetic individuals to watch Jesus and report his whereabouts.

**John 12:1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.**

The time frame is significant: six days before the Passover *feast*. The emphasis by the nation had shifted from the killing of the lamb to the seven-day feast that followed. Jesus was in Bethany at this time.

**John 12:2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.**

The *Diaglott* shows they were *reclining* at the table, lying on their sides with their feet stretched out behind them. By mentioning that Lazarus was one of those so reclining, the account seems to indicate that he now may have consecrated or at least was progressing to that point.

It would seem that the house did not belong to Lazarus but to Mary and Martha because they were doing the serving. Mary and Martha could take the liberty of seating Lazarus at the table with Jesus, for the *family* had this prerogative. Because of Lazarus' raising, it was only natural that he would want to be as close as possible to Jesus. And this was definitely a turning point in Lazarus' relationship with the Master. Previously there was a close rapport and Jesus liked Lazarus, but now the relationship was even closer.

The custom at that time was to seat *men* guests at the table, but we do not know for sure if that custom was followed here. The important thing is that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were all there, and supper was being served when an incident occurred. And the account stresses that Lazarus sat at the table next to Jesus.

**John 12:3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.**

**John 12:4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,**

**John 12:5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?**

Mary had saved up a treasure of spikenard. Whatever her original purpose, she devotedly expended all of it on this one occasion to anoint Jesus' feet. The cost was 300 pence (about a year's salary). Judas, seeing this use of costly spikenard, considered such use a waste of money. However, Mary's act was more important by far than to consider the spikenard from a commercial application and value. The point is that a *great* value was expended at a moment's notice, and to *natural* reasoning, this was a waste.

What was the purpose of spikenard back there? It was used as a perfume, as a medium of exchange if trouble got severe and money was worthless (some collect diamonds or gold for this purpose today), as a dowry, and as a fumigant to kill and disguise odors for such things as burial purposes.

"The house was filled with the odour." The fragrance permeated the whole house to become almost overbearing. From this standpoint, the disciples reasoned, "Mary, couldn't you have

used just a *little*?” Hence the spikenard seemed to be both a waste of money and a waste in the sense of overusage.

Judas’s remark, “Why wasn’t this ointment sold for 300 pence and given to the poor?” sounded very noble, but it was not his *real* reason. His argument seemed to be sensible, for 300 pence could have helped a lot of poor people, but we must watch lest we do similarly in our reasoning. Jesus *cannot* be equated with the poor. Jesus said, “The poor are with you always,” but *he* would not be there with them always (Matt. 26:11 paraphrase). Hence Judas made a *false* appraisal. He was the treasurer—he held “the bag” (John 12:6)—but he was a *thief* as well and hence was really looking for ways to benefit himself. Nevertheless, his reasoning sounded very plausible.

Sometimes Christians also use false reasoning. For example, some are very magnanimous with the property and possessions of *other people*. They are only too willing to sacrifice the property of others, not the property of self. They will control the lives of others, write their wills, etc. This is *greed*, yet their arguments sound good. “Why not write your will for the Lord’s cause?” they ask. But each individual should make up his *own* mind in regard to his *own* responsibility. There are extenuating circumstances in the life of every individual. Each is a *steward* of his *own* time, money, and talents. Therefore, we should not tell others what to do. What each person does is between him and the Lord. Not only should we not sacrifice the things of *others*, but we should beware lest we are either the originator or the beneficiary of such suggestions. Motives must be carefully guided.

This is where Judas had a flaw in his character. Of the twelve original apostles, Judas probably had the greatest potential. He was at the top in capabilities, but the flaw in his character was devastating—it brought him to ruin. The Apostle Paul, who had the same basic personality traits, took his place. Paul also had great potential capabilities, but he was *wholly devoted to the Lord’s service* according to the *Lord’s will*.

**John 12:6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.**

Judas did not even care for the poor, but he used that pretense. He held the money bag but was a thief. Perhaps he even dipped his own hand in the bag and stole some of that money.

Notice that neither Martha nor Lazarus protested about wasting money, and Mary had used *family* “money” (spikenard) to anoint Jesus’ feet. The absence of protest was to their credit.

**Q:** Two *Reprint* articles (Nos. 5540 and 5552) mention sums of money. One article said that the 300-pence value of the spikenard was equivalent to a year’s salary. It also said that using the ointment on Jesus’ feet instead of converting it to money helped incite the greed of Judas. The companion article a few pages later said that the 30 pieces of silver Judas transacted for were worth \$200 to \$300. If this thinking is correct, would the 30 pieces of silver have been equal to many years of labor?

**A:** No, the 30 pieces of silver were not that valuable. One pence equaled a day’s labor. One piece of silver was worth more than one pence, but how much more? Certainly the 30 pieces of silver were more valuable than a year’s labor but probably not too much more, based on some Old Testament Scriptures, such as the price of a servant who was purchased.

Consider the logistics. Those who were eating at the table reclined with their feet extending outward. Mary would have anointed Jesus’ feet in a very *humble* way. She was in the background, and no one would have noticed until the aroma filled the air. Only Jesus would have known what was going on. Mary wiped his feet with her hair, and hair symbolizes

consecration.

**John 12:7** Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

**John 12:8** For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

This—Jesus' appraisal—is the proper equation of value, yet from an earthly standpoint, it could not have been worse. Jesus' words give us a guiding principle and a safeguard against following or advocating a social gospel. Our first priority is to do the *Lord's* work, not to help the poor. However, this principle does not rule out our helping on an *individual* basis. A *group* effort—as a *movement*—should not be to alleviate the poor. The main mission of the Church is to preach the gospel and to learn and understand the gospel before we preach it. We preach what we *do know*, not what we do not know.

Jesus' words also show his foresight—that this condition of poverty would prevail throughout the entire Gospel Age. Many, especially youth, have a utopian goal to eliminate poverty, but that will not occur until the Kingdom.

Mary had been saving up this spikenard for another purpose but then changed that purpose and used the spikenard on Jesus. The fact that she had saved up such a quantity shows it was not being expended bit by bit but was intended for a specific long-term goal. Using the spikenard on Jesus was an evidence of her respect and love for the truth as seen in the person of Jesus.

Jesus knew Mary's heart condition. She had been saving the ointment all along for *another* purpose, but an *overwhelming* outpouring of love for him resulted in her going contrary to her original purpose. We know she was not saving the ointment to pour on his feet in preparation for his burial because none of the disciples fully comprehended that he must *die*. For two reasons, God may have put this thought into her heart and mind at this point, knowing she would heed it, namely, to show (1) her *loving* heart condition and (2) the *evil* disposition of Judas.

**John 12:9** Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

**John 12:10** But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

**John 12:11** Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

The primary concern of the people was to see Lazarus, the one who had died and was now alive. The wording seems to emphasize Jesus first, but that is not the thought. Lazarus had been dead for *four days*; hence his resuscitation attracted many. They wanted to see if he was real, hear him speak, etc. Next they would turn to Jesus, who had performed the miracle.

It is interesting that at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, when he was about to die, the chief priests even plotted to slay Lazarus. John's Gospel is the only one that recorded this fact. John knew of this evil intention because he had contact with some of the priests. When the disciples fled in the Garden of Gethsemane, John and Peter followed Jesus. It was John who was on the *inside* of the *priestly* home and opened the door for Peter to enter. Hence we know that John was related to the priestly family, probably through marriage. As such, he was privy to secret information.

The planning to kill Lazarus was dropped, however, probably because the chief priests became

so engrossed in dispatching Jesus. Also, they could not put Lazarus to death without Pilate's knowing about it—and then a charge would be needed. Lazarus had simply been raised from the dead. Capital punishment had to be cleared through the occupying power: Rome.

Jesus said in the Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus* that even if the Jews saw one raised from the dead, they would not believe—and they didn't. The parable indicates that Jesus knew *in advance* that Lazarus would be raised. In fact, the Gospels can be studied from this standpoint, for Jesus knew much more in advance than we usually realize. In some way—perhaps in his prayer life—he received information we are not aware of, except as we see certain things crop up here and there. For example, Matthew 24 indicates that Jesus clearly knew much about the whole Gospel Age—probably even the year—but the day and hour he did not know. He knew about the wise and faithful servant, about the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and what would be involved with that experience, etc. And certainly he knew that the Gospel Age would be a *long* period of time. His foreknowledge was startling.

**John 12:12** On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

**John 12:13** Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

“On the next day” was five days before the Passover feast (see John 12:1), which was the day after Mary anointed Jesus' feet with the spikenard. This is an important *time* clue, for it was necessary that Jesus be presented to Jerusalem as the Passover Lamb on the fifth day before his death, for in the type, the Passover lamb was selected on the tenth day of Nisan and slain on the 14th day at 3 p.m.

The words “first,” “second,” “third,” etc., can be confusing in the sense that January 1, 1987, means only 1,986 years have elapsed plus a few hours. When the year 1987 is used, are we referring to the beginning, middle, or end of the year? Hence the designation “sixth” or “fifth” day before the Passover feast does not indicate what hour unless we read the detail.

Verses 12 and 13 would make more sense if the following changes were made. A period should be placed after the word “feast.” A new sentence would then start with the word “When,” and it would include verse 13. “On the next day much people were come to the feast. When they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Many people would be at the feast regardless of whether Jesus was there, but when they heard he was coming, they excitedly took palm branches and went forth to meet him.

Today Jerusalem has few palm trees. In past ages, however, this was a fertile area with many trees. Also, there was much vegetation on the way down to Jericho. In AD 70, so many trees were cut down that along the city wall, there was no more room to crucify Jews. The land has been deforested, and today millions of trees are being planted to try to restore productivity.

The cry of the people “Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord” shows the subordination of Jesus to the Father. Since the King of Israel came in the name of Jehovah, Jesus is subordinate to the One who sent him. “Jehovah” is not used in the New Testament, but some uses of “Lord,” as here, refer to Him.

“Palms” are a symbol of victory. A custom in other lands was to strew palm branches before a returning victorious general. This custom showed honor and appreciation and kept the general from sullyng his feet by contact with the ground. (Sir Walter Raleigh did this for the Queen of England with his coat.)

**John 12:14** And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

**John 12:15** Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

**John 12:16** These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

John was not aware of the fulfillment of this prophecy at the time. Just like the others, he was in ignorance. However, years later when he wrote his Gospel, he did understand. Thus he wrote in effect, "We did not understand at the time, including myself, but now, in writing the Gospel, I am recording the event as a fulfillment of prophecy."

In the Old Testament, the judges of Israel rode on white asses as they made their rounds to hear cases. This was the origin of the circuit court, where the "court" traveled into a person's locality for his convenience, although usually only at certain appointed times of the year. Revelation 19:11-14 pictures Jesus and his victorious followers (tried, proven, and faithful) on white horses. Following the wonderful miracle of Lazarus, here came the King like the judges of old. Truly this was the Messiah! Details are provided in the other Gospels.

The prophecy quoted is Zechariah 9:9. We can picture the excitement. The King was coming, and in the people's minds, that meant the Roman yoke was about to be broken. *Here was Messiah*, and he had raised the dead! The people were *jubilant*—so much so, in fact, that the Pharisees could say, "The [whole] world is gone after him" (John 12:19). The ass's colt upon which Jesus rode had never before been ridden, showing that Jesus was Lord over the animal creation as well.

**John 12:17** The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

**John 12:18** For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

**John 12:19** The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

Verse 17 shows that these "people," that is, the *eyewitnesses* of the miracle with Lazarus, chiefly instigated and aroused the tumultuous recognition. When they saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb, they ran down the road almost berserk with joy, proclaiming the miracle loudly to all in Bethany and Bethphage. They "bare record" that Jesus had done "*this* miracle."

The Pharisees reacted, "The world has gone after Jesus." Their hearts were so hardened that they viewed Jesus' miracles with suspicion and even wanted to murder him because of his popularity. Envy was the root cause of their opposition because they saw in him an inherent threat to their recognition as leaders before the people.

Hence two classes are enumerated here. One class joyously recognized Jesus, not only for the miracle with Lazarus but for other miracles as well. The other class was plotting his and Lazarus' death.

**John 12:20** And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

**John 12:21** The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and

desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

**John 12:22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.**

These were not Greek *Jews* but *Greeks* who had faith in God and “came up to worship at the feast.” Just as this condition was a proof to Jesus that his “hour is come” (John 12:23), so the *reverse* condition will be proof to us that the feet members are about to be raptured; that is, when *Jews* seek information from the feet members, the time will be significant.

Jesus’ ministry was directed to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” which means his ministry was primarily focused on the Jews in Israel. The Greeks may have been proselytes, but why did they go to Philip the apostle? In John 1:44, as well as in verse 21 here, John states that Philip was from Bethsaida. To state this twice, John would have considered the fact significant. The tetrarch resident in Bethsaida was called the “tetrarch of Galilee,” and Galilee is called “Galilee of the Gentiles” because many Gentiles were in that area, especially the Romans but also the Greeks. And Greek was more the universal language of the day, whereas Latin was used for legal purposes, the courts, etc. Greek architecture, sculptors, mythical gods, etc., were incorporated into the Roman way of life. Thus a lot of foreigners were in Israel up around the Sea of Galilee. Climate-wise, the area was like a health spa; it was 800 feet below sea level with mild weather year-round.

Evidently, Philip was a more cultured apostle, even though he was more simplistic in some ways than the fishermen. Peter, Andrew, and John were ignorant in the sense of being unschooled, but not Philip. Therefore, the Greeks went to Philip, who in turn went to Andrew. The fact that the Greeks called Philip “Sir” showed respect, as well as his approachableness. However, even though he was an apostle, he lacked certain seniority, so he went to Andrew, Peter’s *older* brother, knowing that through Andrew, the Greeks could get the Master’s ear. That deference was becoming, even for an apostle.

These Greeks were more or less like the Roman centurion. Not only were they natives of a foreign land who lived in Israel, but they had faith in God, as evidenced by their actions. The antitype would be Jews with faith living in Christendom who will approach the feet members for information.

Incidentally, there were two Philips: (1) Philip the apostle of Bethsaida (John 1:44; 12:21) and (2) Philip the evangelist (Acts 6:1-6; 8:5,6,26-40). Both were evangelistic.

**John 12:23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.**

“And Jesus answered them [Philip, Andrew, and probably others].” Jesus was especially saying to the *believers* that the petition of the Greeks (verses 20 and 21) signaled a marked change in his ministry; namely, he had discharged his responsibility and accomplished his purpose of coming to the lost sheep of the house of *Israel*. The evidence of the fullness of Jesus’ witness was made manifest by the Greeks now desiring an audience with him.

**John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.**

Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and decays and dies, there will be no grain. By dying, the kernel brings forth a stalk on which are *many* kernels (fruit). Thus the death of one man would bring forth fruit unto *many* in its benefits.

Why did Jesus answer this way? He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, so his

ministry was primarily to the Jews. Now here came the Greeks, and Jesus was saying that his death was necessary before his ministry could be opened up to others. His resurrection was like a sheaf of wheat with kernels (*plural*), as opposed to the *one* kernel put into the ground. Under the Law, the sheaf offering had to precede Pentecost, at which time the Holy Spirit manifested acceptance of the Church, starting with the Jews and progressing to the Gentiles.

**John 12:25** He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

If we subordinate the *present* life to our spiritual desires, we will receive eternal life in the *future*. We must love the natural life less than the spiritual life, the latter being superior. The suggestions of the natural heart and mind are not to be heeded.

Jesus came for the very purpose of giving his life a Ransom for many. The kernel of wheat had to die in order to bring forth fruit. Thus Jesus felt it was a necessity on his part to subordinate his life at his First Advent in order to gain life eternal. He included himself in verse 25 because he was about to die. However, his words indicate that his disciples must also be in this attitude of heart readiness to be faithful unto *death*. The first use of the word “life” in verse 25 is the Greek *psuche*, meaning soul, being.

In addition, a dispensational aspect is suggested. Just as Jesus at the end of the Jewish Age gave his life for the life of the world and for his Church, so at the end of this age, the feet members must also suffer and die. In the near future, there will be a test as to whether we love the natural life to such an extent that we shun or shirk responsibility. “He that loveth his [natural] life shall lose it [the spiritual life]”; that is, he will lose *everything—all life*. To a certain extent, the Great Company will shun responsibility at the end of the age by not entering into the responsibilities of the hour as wholeheartedly as the Little Flock. In the Gideon picture, only 300 participated initially in the routing of the enemy by breaking their pitchers, etc. Later many others joined in the battle, showing that at heart the Great Company class are not cowards, but they must be *forced* to make a decision. The scapegoat was brought by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness to die. The Lord’s goat was a more *willing* sacrifice, but in the *final* analysis, even the Great Company class will make the *right* decision—they are just a little slow to do so. The point is that the decision to lay down life unto *death* must be made in order to get life at all, but the swiftness with which this is done may make a difference as to which class one belongs to. Elijah did the smiting initially; *later* Elisha did a smiting work too. The Lord’s goat died a sacrificial death; *later* the scapegoat died. The suggestion in verse 25 is that those who are cowards when the chips are down could lose everything. In regard to the world too, cowards will not get life; they are described as “the fearful” in Revelation 21:8.

Thus a dispensational aspect is implied. Just as Jesus realized he must die, so at the end of the Gospel Age, there will be a cutting off of the last members of the Church. Moreover, “*two* parts” must be cut off (the Little Flock and the Great Company), and the “*third*” part (Israel) will be left therein (Zech. 13:8). However, the two parts will not be cut off at the same time.

**John 12:26** If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

When Jesus said, “If *any man* serve me,” he was not just speaking of Jews but included Gentiles too. “If any man serve me, let him follow me [unto death].” “Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). “Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach” (Heb. 13:13). *Death* is the portal through which we enter to be with Jesus. This is shown by the second veil, the entrance into the Most Holy.

The *Father* will honor those who faithfully serve Jesus. Again, here, Jesus brought in the *Father*

as superior—and as a *separate* being. We must have this conviction if we are confronted in the future and are not able to enter into the semantics of explanation because of the circumstances then existing. Our confidence should be such that we can **BOLDLY** state our belief in Jesus and the Father as two separate beings, even if we cannot rationalize all the arguments thrust against us. We must oppose the Trinitarian view. If we cannot answer one Scripture but know there are hundreds we have already answered in our heart, that is sufficient. If we cannot meet a particular exigency that arises, so be it—suffer it—but our faith should be *secure* and rock-bottom. To the extent of our ability, we should try to give a reason for the faith that we entertain.

Sometimes the element of fear results in our being a scatterbrain, but if our faith is solid, we do not have to unduly worry about giving an eloquent reply. Of course we like to testify to the best of our ability and pray that by God's grace, these circumstances can be met with full assurance of heart and the joy of doing so properly.

**John 12:27** Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

“Now is my soul troubled.” These words are very comforting, for if Jesus was troubled, then certainly the feet members will have this experience too. And if he overcame, we, too, can overcome *if our faith holds fast*. He will succor us at that time.

The hour of Jesus' death was drawing closer; it was only five days away. Suppose we knew that we would die on Friday and that it would be the climax of our mission. Each day that passed would be like a countdown. We would be very sober-minded.

Jesus' soul was troubled, even though he had come with dedication and determination for the purpose of dying. “How am I straitened until this baptism be accomplished!” he said, yet as the hour approached, moments of trepidation arose (Luke 12:50). Jesus had ups and downs at the end of his ministry, and these were to be expected, especially since he had seen crucifixions. Even if he had not seen them as a man, he would have seen them as a spirit being looking down. He knew what awaited him.

The shock started: “Have I been faithful?” The coming of the Greeks marked the end of his public ministry, so now the manner in which his ministry would be fulfilled became a concern. “Have I rendered perfect obedience?”

How remarkable that we are given insight into Jesus' very thoughts—his *innermost* thoughts—in verses 27 and 28a! Why are we so informed? The reason is that we, too, will have ups and downs, also asking, “Have I been faithful?” Doubts will arise just as they did with John the Baptist. He introduced Jesus, yet asked later, “Are you really the Messiah?” In the near future, tests will make us wonder and doubt too, but remembering this Scripture (and others) will bring reassurance. If he who is *perfect* had this experience, then we, in our *imperfections*, must expect the same. We should not be alarmed but *must hold onto our faith structure!*

“What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour”? No! Jesus was in such close communion with his Father that he was more or less praying here. He was conscious that the Father was *watching* him. Thus prayer life can be other than always kneeling down. Prayers can come suddenly under strange circumstances out in public. “Pray without ceasing” indicates a *continual* attitude.

**John 12:28** Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Jesus continued, “Father, glorify thy name”; that is, “Thy will be done. By my submitting to your will, you will be glorified.”

“Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The people actually *heard* Jehovah’s voice. The Father’s name was previously glorified with the raising of Lazarus (John 11:4,40), and it would be glorified again with the raising of Jesus.

There will be an antitypical dispensational fulfillment. Jesus had wavered a little, then he was stabilized, and now came Jehovah’s voice. The feet members will have mixed experiences and then be strengthened by Scripture.

**John 12:29** The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

The people did not hear the actual words with distinctness. Nevertheless, the “thunder” was a definite response to Jesus’ words “Father, glorify thy name.” The people associated the sound of thunder from heaven as being a response to Jesus’ request.

Verse 29 is a clue as to what the Heavenly Father’s voice sounds like—deep, resonant tones. Zephaniah 3:17 mentions the time when the Father will *sing*. To hear Him sing would *far surpass* the most beautiful earthly voice we could think of.

God’s voice was also heard on the Mount of Transfiguration when He said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5).

**John 12:30** Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

Jesus said the voice came for the people’s sakes.

**John 12:31** Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

The fate of the world hung in the balance of Jesus’ being faithful unto death. Moreover, the very act of manipulating the Crucifixion *sealed Satan’s doom* so that he would be cast out. And Jesus, by being faithful, would have the power to ultimately destroy Satan, sin, and death.

“Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” Jesus made this statement with *confidence*. Just four verses earlier he had said, “Now is my soul troubled,” and he would have this experience several times. Therefore, it is wrong to imply that a faithful Christian has confidence steadily and consistently right up to the end of his course. We should not judge brethren emotionally. Some have a “salesman” personality from birth, and when they become a Christian, they are still confident. Such confidence does not prove one is of the Little Flock.

Consider Jesus’ words: “now *is*” versus “now *shall*.” At this critical juncture in earth’s history, Jesus came to *die* as the *Messiah*. At Jesus’ crucifixion, Satan’s doom was sealed for his *future* destruction. It is one thing to be *in sin*, and it is another thing to go *beyond the point of no return*. Beyond that point, it is *impossible* to repent, no matter how many tears are shed. Satan had manifested a wrong disposition ever since the fall of Adam, but as soon as Jesus was put to death through Satan’s machinations, his doom was sealed beyond the point of retrieval.

**John 12:32** And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

**John 12:33** This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Jesus was referring to the manner of his death—crucifixion—but through this very means, he would be able to offer life to all people in due time. During the Gospel Age, God does the drawing. In the Kingdom Age, Jesus will do the drawing—of “all men.” Verse 32 is a reminder of the serpent on the pole in Moses’ day. To be delivered from the serpents’ bites (sin), the people had to look at the brass serpent on the pole, which Moses had made (Num. 21:7-9).

In verses 31 and 32, Jesus contrasted the fate of Satan (Second Death) with his own fate (Savior). Satan desires to deceive and destroy; Jesus desires to save.

**John 12:34** The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

Verse 34 is the *people’s* response to Jesus’ statement “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

**Q:** What does the term “Son of man” mean, as opposed to “Son of God”?

**A:** The term refers back to Adam: “The Son of [the] man [Adam]”; it has a direct relationship to the fact that Jesus could pay the Ransom price for Adam. The Scriptures say that no clean thing can come out of an unclean thing; that is, man cannot redeem himself (Job 14:4). Verse 34 is presented from the standpoint of the *male*. In generating life, the male must be perfect in order for his offspring to be perfect. In other words, a perfect offspring can come from a perfect man and an imperfect woman, but not from the reverse. However, other Scriptures say that the Redeemer would arise of the human race, of David; that is, irrespective of what seems to be a contradiction, the Messiah would be born of the line of David.

Jesus is the only one of Adam’s offspring who is perfect. This perfection was achieved because *God* is the Father of Jesus. God was the perfect Father, Mary was the imperfect mother, and Jesus, the result, was the perfect offspring. In order for Jesus to be perfect, the male generation as a human being had to come from *outside* the human race, but he still had to be identified with *Adam’s* race, so he was *made flesh*. By being introduced from *outside* the human race, Jesus is “the [promised] Son of man.” The term is a title: “The Son [referring to Jesus] of [the] man [referring to Adam, that is, of Adam’s race].”

Jesus was of Adam’s race through the mother. Thus he is of Adam’s race as a *foster* son, through the Father. Because Jesus had to be directly related through the mother, the mother’s genealogy is actually more important than the Joseph line, although Jesus was of David through both Mary and Joseph. The title, in a nutshell, means that of Adam’s race, a Messiah would be raised up to deliver the human race.

The Jews did not think of a Messiah in terms of a *vicarious* sacrifice—that someone had to *die* for Adam—even though this is taught in the Law. They merely thought of a Redeemer who would deliver through conquest or some other heroic means and thus break the yoke of Roman bondage. Actually, however, the deliverance is *far greater*, for Jesus will break the bondage of *sin and death*.

The people were not accustomed to the title “Son of man” as applying to the Messiah. However, Isaiah 9:6 emphasizes the thought of the Son of man, as opposed to the Son of God: “For unto *us* [mankind] a child is born, unto *us* a son is given.”

Jesus was actually transferred from spiritual to human form—he became a *human* being. John said we can identify the Antichrist by the teaching that Jesus did *not* come in the flesh (1 John 4:3). Roman Catholics say that Jesus was *incarnate* (half God, half man).

By their response (verse 34), the people indicated that they knew Jesus was referring to crucifixion. The Law said Christ would abide forever, but Jesus said the Son of man would be lifted up (crucified). The seeming contradiction was puzzling to the people. The Jews thought Messiah would abide forever, yet Jesus said earlier that the Pharisees were planning to put him to death (John 8:40).

Among others, the following Old Testament Scriptures indicate that Messiah will abide forever: Isaiah 9:6,7; Psalm 45:6,7; 89:4,29; 110:4; Daniel 2:44; 7:13,14; and 2 Samuel 7:12,13. The problem was that the people were applying Second Advent Scriptures to the First Advent. Because they were blinded, they overlooked Scriptures showing that the Redeemer must die. This shows that if one is prejudiced on a subject and will not give due consideration to all the texts on that subject, he can be blinded.

In their puzzlement, the people asked, “Who is this Son of man?” Not only did Jesus use this expression repeatedly in referring to *himself*, but also the people knew that Jesus thought of himself as the Messiah, so they were confused. They thought, “The Law says that Messiah will *live forever*. You call yourself Messiah but say you will be *crucified*. What do you mean by the title ‘Son of man?’”

The people reacted differently, as seen earlier. Some firmly believed Jesus was the Messiah, some thought he was of Beelzebub, and still others were uncertain—but all were Jews, familiar with the Old Testament. And they had difficulty harmonizing some of Jesus’ statements in regard to his being the Messiah. They could not comprehend that Messiah must be lifted up.

Suppose we were a sincere Jew listening to Jesus and hearing him say, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up.” In the type, there was a plague in which the people were bitten by fiery serpents and were dying. As an antidote, the Lord instructed Moses to go through the camp with a brazen serpent on a pole. All who looked upon the serpent lived (Num. 21:4-9). Now Jesus was giving the people information about his crucifixion by saying in effect, “The lifting up of the serpent back there in the wilderness represents that the Messiah must be a curse, and cursed is he who hangeth upon a tree.” In other words, Jesus had to assume the curse on Adam and thus take his place. For example, just as Adam hid naked behind a tree in the Garden of Eden, so Jesus had to hang naked in front of a tree (the Cross). This aspect of Jesus’ being made sin is just as important as the life-rights aspect in which he had to obey the Law perfectly in order to get the reward of the Law: life. The Law promised life to whoever could keep it perfectly.

Thus Jesus was the Redeemer from two standpoints. (1) He was made a curse by taking Adam’s curse upon himself. God “laid [up]on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “With his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). (2) He had *human life rights* to give over to Justice to offset the penalty of death on the human race. *Both* credentials were necessary to substantiate his being the Messiah.

**John 12:35** Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

Jesus is “the light”—plus his *message*. Not only is Jesus the light, but he has information. He is the way, the truth, and the life. What Jesus says, what he *does*, and his *instruction* are all *enlightenment*. He was a light to those who *listened with humility and sincerity*. Those who were prejudiced were turned off; they did not like his criticism.

“Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you” is a principle. In other words, if

one does not react to light, instruction, and information but procrastinates, debates, and delays decision making, he is increasingly less likely to respond. This is not an irrevocable rule, but it is a general rule. The longer one procrastinates on an issue, the more difficult it is to respond. “Walk,” that is, *progress, continue*. Incidentally, back there one had to literally walk around and accompany Jesus in order to hear him. Those who *hungered* after truth were tenacious.

From a dispensational standpoint, Jesus’ words to those at the First Advent alluded to the short time he had yet to live before his crucifixion and death: “darkness.” His public ministry was about to close. When it closed, the darkness, or night, set in.

“He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.” When we have Jesus’ instruction, we can see the path to take. In darkness, without his instruction, we stumble. “If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). Some who once had considerable light have gone into considerable darkness. Some turn against the very things they stood for earlier.

Some of the Jews were on the fence back there, not sure about whether Jesus was the Messiah. But if we are not sure about a matter, we should search more and more to know whether a matter is true or false. It is better to try to resolve a doctrine if possible—and the sooner, the better. If a matter cannot be resolved right away, we should keep it on the shelf and always be desirous of conviction. Unless the issue is special dispensational truth not yet due, such hunger is rewarded sooner or later, generally speaking. “Light [truth] is sown for the righteous” (Psa. 97:11). The Father and Jesus want the “children of light” to be enlightened (John 12:36; 1 Thess. 5:5). It is good to think on these profound principles privately. Even Jesus’ seemingly casual remarks have great depth.

Jesus was also implying that he was like the sunlight. He is the “Sun” as well as the “Son.” The more “Sunlight” that is absorbed, the better it is in the darker periods of life. We should be “phosphorescent,” as it were. After the Sun shines on us, we should phosphoresce all night. When we first come into the truth, the Lord blesses us in opening doors of understanding and knowledge, but the time comes when we have clouds of darkness. While instructional opportunities are available, we should take as much advantage of them as possible to help us through the later period of wind, storms, and chills. The more we grow during the sunlight and the gentle rain, the deeper our roots will go—and, as a result, the better we can survive cold winds and storms. If we do not take advantage of such seasons, our roots will be shallow and spring up. In the Parable of the Sower, some heard the Word of God with gladness, and anon the birds came and plucked the seed away. Some appreciated truth, but because they did not lay hold upon it, the Adversary was right there to distract them and disrupt their life so that they forgot the truth they had heard. The principle of walking or *continuing* in the light becomes very important and essential in connection with our destiny. That principle must be followed.

**John 12:36** While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Jesus hid himself because he had to die on Friday at 3 p.m., and he did not want to precipitate his death sooner. He knew the religious element was plotting to kill him. Of the mixed group listening to him, some of the scribes and Pharisees were always eavesdropping, for they had put out a contract on his life. They would not kill him in the Temple precincts, in the sacred house of God, but if he was too familiar with them and showed them every place he went, then after sunset, they would go and apprehend him. However, Judas knew it was Jesus’ custom to go out to the Mount of Olives at night (“as he was wont”—Luke 22:39). The night that Jesus was betrayed and apprehended, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane according to his custom. Thus Jesus hid himself not through fear but in order to adhere to the time schedule

God had set for him.

This situation with Jesus suggests that at the very end of the age, as events and time progress and draw closer and closer to reality, the feet members will see matters clearer and clearer. They will know what is happening and what is about to happen.

Jesus' actions could seem puzzling. The fact that he hid (John 8:59; 12:36), avoided (John 7:1; 11:54), fled, etc., could be misconstrued. He was absolutely *fearless* in calling the scribes and Pharisees vipers, whited sepulchers, hypocrites, etc., but now that he knew they were trying to apprehend him in a very specific manner, he was wise as a serpent until the due time (Matt. 10:16). Jesus was fearless when he was apprehended. In fact, he said he could call for legions of angels to protect him, but he did not do so, for he *willingly* submitted to his capture.

**John 12:37** But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

**John 12:38** That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

**John 12:39** Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

**John 12:40** He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

**John 12:41** These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

Generally speaking, the nation of Israel believed not, although there were exceptions. For example, "many" chief rulers believed on Jesus but remained silent for fear of the Pharisees (verse 42). However, while "many" believed, the majority of the chief rulers did not. If, for instance, 35 out of 150 believed, the 35 would be a minority. Hence the word "many" did not mean a majority.

Verses 38 and 40 quote from Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:10, respectively. The sixth chapter of Isaiah speaks of the seraphim and the Lord's train filling the Temple. In the vision, the Prophet Isaiah saw the Lord God seated as a great being with seraphim underneath Him. This throne scene in a Temple setting showed the glory of the Lord. The Temple shook from the resonance of God's voice. There is a distinction, however, for Isaiah 6 refers to Jehovah, and in John 12:41, the *principle* is used in regard to Jesus. We are reminded of Jesus' statement "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The message Jesus brought is the *Father's* message. The things Jesus said were not of himself but of the *Father*.

Verse 40 is saying, "Unto them it is not given lest they see." The disciples asked Jesus, "Why don't you speak plainly to the multitudes as you do with us?" Jesus replied, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:11). Those who hunger, thirst, and search are rewarded. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). We are to search for truth "as for hid treasures" (Prov. 2:4). We diligently study with the hope of being rewarded.

**John 12:42** Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

**John 12:43** For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Gamaliel was probably one of the chief rulers who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, as well

as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, plus others we do not know about. The “many” were a minority of the chief rulers who “believed on him.”

A counterpart today for the Pharisees who believed on Jesus but did not confess their belief until later would be those who, *after* truth is seen, decide to stay in Babylon because of the numbers, respect, and influence of the nominal systems. Such individuals love the praise of men more than that of God. And there is another point; namely, the coming out of Babylon is not the final picture but a *degree* of overcoming. The question is, How much *further* progress is made after leaving Babylon? There are three classes: Little Flock, Great Company, and Second Death.

Verse 37 might seem to be saying that none believed on Jesus. This was true in the general, overall sense but not in every individual case, for verse 42 shows that a minority did believe. Of this minority, a *still smaller* minority not only believed but *acted* on their belief. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were two who acted. They *publicly*, at the worst possible psychological moment, espoused the cause of Christ by requesting his body from Pilate and taking it down from the Cross. No matter what their past had been (such as Nicodemus’s fearfulness at night), this act took *tremendous courage* at a time when even the apostles were at a low ebb.

Most of the minority of chief priests believed quietly and/or secretly. When a vote was taken earlier, Joseph of Arimathea would not consent to Jesus’ death; this was the first concrete action recorded in regard to the chief priests (Luke 23:50,51).

Sometimes there is a danger in remaining silent. In a vote pertaining to principle, disagreement should be voiced. The Great Company fear death all their life. However, for them to get life, a point in time must come where the flesh is destroyed so that the spirit may be saved. A *decision* has to be made. The scapegoat *did die*, but it took the Lord’s pressure to bring that about. The scapegoat class will be given over to the Adversary for the destruction of the flesh so that, presumably, they will be saved. “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:25). At the end of the age, some will be very willing sacrifices, while others will *delay* their decision until the decision is forced on them. Making a decision—forced or otherwise—is a prerequisite for getting life. The feet members at the *end of the age* will be put to death by the nominal systems; the Great Company will be put to death by the world (the “wilderness,” hence a radical element—Lev. 16:10,20-22).

Verse 43 shows a *test* in regard to loving the praise of men more than the praise of God. This Scripture is soul-searching. The Bible teaches that we should react a certain way, but for fear of men or fear of the loss of their praise and esteem, do we fail to obey? We are tested similarly. Who are we—man pleasers or God pleasers? In the final analysis, *all* who get life (Little Flock and Great Company) must be *God* pleasers.

Many, on their deathbeds, regret that they have neglected to do many things they should have done. Subconsciously they know they were remiss in many areas, for example, in not fellowshiping regularly. Their reaction shows contrition and decision making—a recognition of having failed. (These comments do not pertain to one who wonders if he made the Little Flock. Rather, the application is to one who *knows* he was negligent.) For such individuals, hard experiences at the end of life make them humble and contrite. This is a *good* sign, for it probably means they will get life. The Great Company have problems that they do not deal with properly during their life.

**John 12:44** Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

**John 12:45** And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

Jesus “cried,” that is, exclaimed *loudly*. Previously, he spoke with force so that all could hear (John 12:35,36), but now he raised his powerful voice to an even higher range.

Notice that one who believes on Jesus believes not on him but on *God*. And one who sees Jesus sees *God*. Jesus was saying that both his message and his acts were exactly what the Father would have done had He been here. “He that believeth on me” and “he that seeth me” emphasize Jesus’ message and deeds, respectively. Jesus reaffirmed what he had been consistently stating—that he was sent of the *Father*.

**John 12:46** I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

**John 12:47** And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

**John 12:48** He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

John frequently used the illustration of light and life in both his Gospel and his epistles. Jesus stressed the concept that he came as a *light* into the world, but *first*, he pointed to the *Father*. What he said and taught were of the *Father* (verses 44 and 45). Always the highest glory went to the *Father*. The *Father* is the *Author* of the gospel; Jesus is the *announcer* of the gospel.

The time was approaching in Jesus’ ministry when he would not teach publicly anymore. From the Memorial on, he spoke to his apostles privately until his arrest and separation from them. Therefore, starting with verse 44, Jesus might have raised his voice because he wanted to finish his public ministry on a positive note. Knowing he would speak publicly no more, he finished on a high level. “This is it! These are my last words to you. I would like you to know that I am the light of the world. However, I did not originate that light. I was sent of the Father. I come in His name and bear His message. If you do not want to abide in darkness but want to follow light, hearken to what I am saying. I am the Messiah!”

“If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not.” What did Jesus *not* say? (1) “If any man hears my words *and* believes, I judge him not.” In other words, some people are really blinded by Satan, and Jesus’ light does not penetrate. In differing *degrees*, the light does penetrate with others. The degree of responsibility is directly proportional to the degree of penetration and understanding. (2) Also, Jesus did not say, “If any man hears my words, and believes not, *God* does not judge him.” Jesus did not tie the *Father’s* hands. What the Father does is the *Father’s* business.

“I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” Isn’t it true that Jesus *does* judge the world? Yes, but in a different context. He will judge and instruct the world in the Kingdom, and some will be remanded to death *during* that time period. In those instances, however, Jesus will have the Father’s consent. Therefore, while Jesus was positive, he was careful not to infringe on the Father’s prerogatives.

Jesus came to save the world by paying the *Ransom* and laying the basis by providing a *sin offering*. His motivation both during the Gospel Age and in the Kingdom Age is to desire *salvation* for as many as possible. Therefore, whether or not one is saved (that is, whether or not one gets life) depends on the individual’s response to the Word of God.

**John 12:49** For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

**John 12:50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.**

Verses 49 and 50 refute the Trinity. In fact, they are a devastating argument against the Trinity, for they clearly show the *Father's* superiority. Credit is given to the *true source*: the Father, who taught Jesus and commanded what he should say. Only by yanking verses *out of context* can Trinitarians say the Gospel of John proves the Trinity. In addition, verses 48-50 show not only the Father's superiority to Jesus but also the superiority of the Word to Jesus.

"I know that his commandment is life everlasting." In other words, *obedience* to God's commandment guarantees everlasting life. Stated another way, God's commandment means everlasting life to those who obey.

"Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." The Triune God is supposed to be a three-headed individual, yet if that were the case, then one head does not know what the other head is talking about. For example, only the *Father* knew the day and the hour; the Son did not: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). If there is a Triune God, one head knows what is happening, and another does not. How absurd! Trinitarians, who have all the weight of scholarship, ask questions like "Do you know Greek and Hebrew?" "Where is your degree?" "By what authority do you speak?" But how nonsensical is their reasoning! We could be very sarcastic. "Do you mean to say that with all your scholarship, you are saying Jesus was God in person down here, yet one part of the Trinity did not know what the other part was teaching or planning?" This type of remark would sting Trinitarians to the quick and make their reasoning look ridiculous. Under the proper circumstance, such words would be "very Christian" to utter. If put on the spot, we should handle the issue this way. We should meet strength *with strength*, not with weakness.

However, when we are in prison and put on trial, we should not speak too strongly, for we will be ready and hoping for our change. Accordingly, Jesus did not defend himself at his trials before Annas, Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate. Rather, he was like a sheep before its shearers at that time (Isa. 53:7). Earlier he spoke a lot, but not in his last moments. When he knew it was time to die, he did not defend himself, which he might well have been able to do to the point of escaping death. Jesus could have made their reasoning look ridiculous.

Hence there is a time to be quiet and submissive and a time when it is mandatory to speak. How do we make such decisions? God grant us the grace to know. We pray that we have a sufficiency of the Holy Spirit and character development to know when to speak. That is something we cannot get from a textbook. We must learn this from the principles in the Bible.

"Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." That was it! From then on, the public heard Jesus no more. As far as the public was concerned, there was a period of silence.

Jesus' attitude was, "To follow the Father's commandment will give life everlasting, so that is what I will do." He used simple logic.

Hebrews 9:28 reads, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Jesus' appearing "the second time without sin unto salvation" refers to the Kingdom work. His motivation will still be to save but not in the humble capacity of being submissive to the insults of fellow men. At that time, he will come with *great authority*, and he will speak in a different tone. This is what he did with his apostles after his resurrection; that is, he spoke with different slants before his crucifixion and afterwards.

**John 13:1** Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

In the type, the lamb was slain on the 14th of Nisan, and the Feast of Passover began on the 15th, that is, at 6 p.m. From the time setting here in verse 1, Jesus' death would occur the next day at 3 p.m.—less than 24 hours away. The Memorial emblems were instituted on the 14th of Nisan, and Jesus' death also occurred on the 14th—because the 14th began at 6 p.m. according to Hebrew reckoning.

Jesus had certain problems on his mind:

1. He knew he would die the next day at 3 p.m. The normal reaction would be to want to withdraw into seclusion and pray about *one's own situation*—to be concerned with *one's own fate*. Jesus knew that his betrayal was imminent and that crucifixion is a dreadful death to face.
2. A betrayer was sitting at the table with him and about to partake of the Passover meal and then the Memorial emblems. Being sensitive, Jesus was concerned about Judas.

In spite of these two problems, Jesus was more concerned about his apostles, whom he loved “unto the end” of his earthly course. He even showed the same love for Judas in this setting (with the sop, for example). Hence this verse is inserted to show the burdens on Jesus' mind.

**John 13:2** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

The *Diaglott* and Revised Standard Version read, “And supper being served.” In the *Berean Manual* is the comment “supper being served, ready for the meal to begin.” The thought is that the lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, etc., had already been served.

Satan had put the thought to betray Jesus into the heart of Judas, but at this point, Judas could still have changed his mind. If the actual betrayal had already taken place, then it would have been a contradiction for Jesus to show love toward Judas in giving him the favored sop to prick his conscience (John 13:26). True, Judas had already made the arrangements, but he had not carried them out yet. Thus there is a difference between a sin and *sinning* a sin. A sin in the mind is one thing, but a sin that results in an act is *sinning* a sin. To not properly understand this distinction with Judas could lead many to draw wrong conclusions. For example, we should not fraternize with, reason with, or show favors to one who is or should be Scripturally disfellowshipped for committing grievous, unrepented-of sins.

**Comment:** A *Reprint* article brings out a thought about the foot washing. None of the others present offered to wash the feet of the group assembled. This was a menial task usually performed by servants. Since Judas already resented the pouring of expensive spikenard on Jesus a little earlier, he probably now looked at Jesus with scorn when the Master stooped to do such a lowly task.

**Reply:** Yes, Judas probably was scornful because he was not in the right heart attitude to start with.

**John 13:3** Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

**John 13:4** He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

The *Diaglott* has, “That he came out from God, and was going to God.”

Jesus knew that the fate of the world was in his hands, for the Father had committed “all things” to him. He felt the responsibility for what he would do from now until the end of his course. Knowing that the Father had confidence in him and that as a reward he would be raised from death and return to the Father, Jesus rose from supper at this point to give the disciples a lesson. How remarkable! In spite of all the things on his mind—the nearness of his execution, the betrayal of Judas, the responsibility resting upon him—Jesus possessed the calmness of mind to realize the importance of instructing his disciples in a certain lesson here because they had failed to wash one another’s feet. Hence Jesus arose from supper to wash the disciples’ feet himself.

The setting seems to suggest that the meal was on the table but that they had not yet started to eat. Psychologically, Jesus waited until the very last moment to wash their feet, whereas, according to custom, the foot washing should have been done earlier, before the supper was served.

Picture the setting. Supper was served. Then the Master, the chief one, stood up, changed his apparel, took a towel, and put it around his waist. The disciples watched in amazement. Throughout his ministry, Jesus did many things under a startling backdrop. For example, consider the circumstances under which he said to his disciples, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41). A “great tempest,” a “great storm of wind,” was raging, and the waves were coming into the boat. Thus it was only natural for the disciples to wake up the Master and say, “Carest thou not that we perish?” Who would not have reacted similarly under those circumstances? But Jesus chose that very moment to make an incisive remark, to give a penetrating lesson.

Here Jesus did the same thing psychologically. As the disciples were ready to partake of the supper, he got up and prepared himself to wash their feet. It took time to get the water and pour some for each disciple. Jesus was behaving like a *servant*. The disciples were in the reclining position that was customary for eating. They did not get up, for they were too amazed. Remember that just a short time previous, James and John had asked to sit on Jesus’ right and left hand. They were desirous of *chief* positions, and now Jesus was serving them in a *menial* task.

**Q:** Was the order of events as follows: supper was served, foot washing occurred, supper was eaten, emblems were instituted? Proof that supper had not yet been eaten is that subsequently Jesus gave Judas the sop (John 13:26).

**A:** Yes, Judas was present for the foot washing and also to partake of the bread and wine emblems, but the foot washing occurred first. It is logical, according to Jewish tradition, that the foot washing precedes the meal. Incidentally, the towel Jesus used was probably long, and it was wrapped around him like a girdle or an apron.

The thought might even have occurred to the apostles that their feet had not been washed, but none of them had the humility to perform the task. It was contrary to tradition for a superior person, especially the chief guest of honor, to stoop to washing feet. The apostles would certainly have been amazed.

The other Gospels omit Jesus’ discourses on the way to Gethsemane, as well as the foot washing earlier. John was very impressed with these events. In fact, the Memorial night had a

deep scarring effect upon John—so much so that he even began to use that type of language in his epistles (“my little children”). And he repeated Jesus’ commandment at the Memorial season to “love one another.”

Chapters 13-19 of John all pertain to that one 24-hour day of the Memorial. In the other Gospels, the percentage devoted to that day is much, much smaller. John inserted several chapters of Jesus’ instructions to his disciples at that time. With the foot washing, Jesus demonstrated a lesson on their need for humility.

**John 13:5** After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

“He ... began to wash the disciples’ feet.” The *Berean Manual* comments, “The open sandals worn in Biblical times made the washing of the feet after a journey a necessity for personal comfort. The apostles at this time were insufficiently filled with humility, love, and thoughtfulness to volunteer this service for each other or even for the Master, and thus missed a great blessing.”

**John 13:6** Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

**John 13:7** Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

**John 13:8** Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

“Thou shalt never wash my feet.” The *Berean Manual* says, “It is hard for some to realize that the Lord is the teacher and they are merely pupils.”

Jesus said, “If I wash thee not, thou hast *no part* with me.” His words were very startling, incisive, and strong. Peter had just spoken emphatically: “*NEVER* shalt thou wash my feet!” Jesus had to counteract that dogmatic utterance.

**John 13:9** Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Then Peter said, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” In the *Berean Manual* is the Pastor’s comment: “Some are continually trying to be wise, good, and obedient in ways that the Lord has not dictated.” Peter was trying to be “good,” desiring *additional* washing beyond what the Lord required and instructed. Lesson: Sometimes we manufacture good deeds along lines that the Bible does not instruct. We should be the pupil rather than the teacher.

These are hard lessons, but Peter was no doubt voicing what the others felt. Being outspoken just happened to be Peter’s temperament, but no doubt the lesson was helpful to the others too.

**John 13:10** Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

**John 13:11** For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

For “He that is washed,” the *Berean Manual* has the following: “Bathed, as all the disciples had

previously been, in accordance with the Jewish requirements, at the beginning of the Passover season.”

“But not all.” The *Berean Manual* continues: “As it was God’s goodness and mercy that hardened Pharaoh’s heart, so it was the love and humility of Jesus that hardened Judas’s heart.” Jesus’ statement “Ye are clean, but not all” refers to Judas. It is helpful to know Jesus was not taken by surprise. He knew Judas’s heart condition all along and what was occurring.

**Comment:** Jesus said, “He that is [already] washed [that is, justified] needeth not save to wash his feet [to seek forgiveness daily for his daily walk].”

Other Gospels tell that the disciples had been debating who should be greatest in the Kingdom. This thinking had begun in Jericho when John and James asked to sit on Jesus’ right and left hand in the Kingdom. The other apostles were angry at the nerve of the request, and the dispute that ensued continued up to this time. Meanwhile, Jesus had cleansed the Temple, cursed the fig tree, had his head and feet anointed, etc. The contention of desiring to be the greatest stayed with the disciples right up to the Memorial. With the foot washing, Jesus was trying to squelch that attitude.

Jesus poured fresh water to wash the feet of each. Lesson: We get a fresh supply from the Master with each washing, with each application of forgiveness.

**John 13:12** So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

Jesus finished the foot washing, removed the towel, and again took his place at the table to proceed with the supper. He then asked, “Know ye what I have done to you?” The lesson is in verses 13-17. Jesus had earlier said to Peter (verse 7), “You do not know what I am doing, but you shall know.” Now comes part of the explanation.

**John 13:13** Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

Jesus had a stark frankness in his expressions. In other words, “It is proper for you to call me Master and Lord.” He did not have *false* humility. To have assumed a humble posture here would have diminished respect for the message to be given. Occasionally Paul said, “I am an apostle of the Lord. I speak to you thus.” When important instruction was forthcoming, this manner of speaking was proper.

**John 13:14** If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.

**John 13:15** For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

What a wonderful lesson in humility! The “example” Jesus gave was physical and literal, yet his point was not, “Because I have washed your feet literally, therefore you should wash one another’s feet literally.” The point of his demonstration was to bring an *attitude* to the surface. “As I have done to you” is the key thought. It is like his saying, “Forgive one another’s trespasses and sins *in the way that I forgive you.*” Jesus was referring not merely to what he did to the disciples that night but to what he did to them *throughout his whole ministry.* For example, he took them aside and said, “It is given unto *you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11). Consider also how he spoke to his disciples. When necessary, he rebuked them for wrong conduct. Of course, as the Lord, he could do this more officiously than we can. Nevertheless, if we have a “thus saith the LORD” as to what should be done, we can give a stronger rebuke, for we would then not be acting on our own

but would be giving the *Lord's* instruction.

If we are to “love one another, as I [Jesus] have loved you,” we must review and be familiar with his *whole* life and ministry (John 15:12). We should not let someone in our movement get away with a statement such as, “Some in the nominal Church have been studying the Gospels and the Bible for years, and what do they know, for they do not have the *Volumes?*” We cannot study our Lord’s life too much, just as we cannot be too consecrated. Jesus’ love for his disciples was done in accordance with *principles*. It was not just an outpouring of sympathy, for under certain circumstances, sympathy is wrong and can encourage wrongdoing. On the other hand, sympathy can be a wonderful balm poured on a wound when the person is in the right heart attitude to respond favorably to the Lord’s instruction.

**John 13:16** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

“Neither [is] he that is sent greater than he that sent him.” Notice, Jesus *again* brings in the Father. John repeatedly mentions Jesus’ statements about the Father being greater. Either *before* Jesus refers to himself or *after*, he shows that the Father is above all.

**John 13:17** If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

We need more than just head knowledge—we *must speak and act in harmony with that knowledge*.

*After* having made these remarks, Jesus ate the Passover meal. The paragraph symbol (§) before verse 18 indicates the translators felt there was a time interval here where Jesus ate the meal. After eating or toward the end of the meal, he was ready to resume speaking.

**John 13:18** I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

“I speak not of you all [not of all twelve, only of *one*]: I know whom I have chosen.” God chose the members of the family in the *original* drawing, but they were subsequently known as apostles of Jesus Christ because Jesus did have something to do with their selection. “Apostle” means “one sent out.” However, even Jesus himself is called an apostle: “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the *Apostle* and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb. 3:1). From that standpoint, God Himself appointed Jesus. God does the calling of the Church, but Jesus did have some input in regard to selecting the twelve apostles.

When the Twelve were originally called, Judas was not of the betraying disposition, for it would not make sense to accept the consecration of someone who was not sincere at that time. In other words, one can be thoroughly in the right heart condition at the time of consecration and then later deflect. Even Lucifer was perfect in the *beginning* of his ways, that is, when he was created (Ezek. 28:15).

By now, 3 1/2 years had elapsed since Judas’s consecration. In that time, Jesus saw Judas developing unfavorably. Almighty God knew from the beginning that Judas would be the betrayer because His omniscience sees things before they happen. Jesus, on the other hand, did not have the divine nature at his First Advent and hence lacked that capability. What about Jesus’ foreknowledge? His foreknowledge consisted of what he had *already learned*. However, being perfect and being enlightened, Jesus could see the change taking place in Judas, and by this time, he knew Judas would be the betrayer. Therefore, Jesus’ statement “I know whom I have chosen” meant “I am aware of certain things.”

Jesus was referring to Psalm 41:9, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Judas was the “familiar friend.” In other words, Judas was familiar with Jesus, and as an apostle, he accompanied Jesus. “Which did eat of my bread” was prophetically saying that Judas would eat the last meal, the Last Supper, with Jesus. The clause “in whom I trusted” proves that Jesus *fully trusted* Judas initially. Although God foreknew that Judas would deflect, Jesus fully accepted and trusted him. It is interesting that the betrayer is called a “friend” in Psalm 41 and that Jesus used “Friend” as a term of address for Judas at the time of the betrayal kiss. “*Friend, wherefore art thou come?*” (Matt. 26:50).

Some of the Psalms even express in advance Jesus’ words and thoughts on the Cross and his innermost feelings at the very end of his ministry. For example, God predicted Jesus’ thoughts on the Cross in Psalm 22. His ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel occupied his time and attention until the end of his ministry. Then he began to meditate more acutely on the time prophecies and the nearness of his death. Noticing the change in Judas, Jesus realized that apostle would fulfill Psalm 41:9, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” At this last meal, Judas’s lifting up his “heel” against Jesus became even more pertinent. While having previously eaten with Jesus, Judas would now set in motion certain actions resulting in the heel being “lifted up” so that Jesus would die.

Only the Father is omniscient in seeing *all* things in advance, but now that Jesus has the divine nature, he has some capabilities in this direction.

**Q:** Wasn’t it an Arab custom for the breaking of bread, the sharing of a meal, to make a bond between those present?

**A:** Yes. Guests were to be very respectful to the host and vice versa. While at the table together, enemies did not harm one another. Afterwards was another matter.

**John 13:19** Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

Paraphrase: “Now I am telling you in advance so that when it happens, you may believe that I am the Messiah, that I am what I profess to be.” In other words, if Jesus was the Messiah, he certainly should know about his betrayal in advance and who the betrayer was. Had Jesus not known he would die, the apostles and disciples would have been hopelessly discouraged. They would have concluded that he was merely a prophet and that his plans had gone haywire. By hearing about the betrayal in advance, they would later realize it was just part of God’s plan. However, *at the time*, the disciples were surprised about Jesus’ death, even though he had told them in advance a number of times. When he arose from the dead, they then remembered his earlier words—and of course the Holy Spirit assisted their recollection after Pentecost.

Trinitarians say this verse proves Jesus is Jehovah, for Jesus said, “Believe that *I am*.” But he simply meant, “I am what I claim to be.” The words “I am” are not repeated as in Exodus 3:14, “I AM THAT I AM.”

**John 13:20** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

Why did Jesus make this statement? He had said, referring to the apostles, “I know whom I have chosen.” Of those, one would betray him. With this same frame of reference, and going one step further, Jesus was preparing them for his absence. “Whoever receives those whom I send receives me.” Then he reversed the order: “Whoever receives me receives the Father who

sent me.” Of course the last clause implied the seriousness to Judas, for lifting up the heel against Jesus was like a defamation of God Himself.

This Scripture shows the absurdity of the Trinity. If Jesus and God are the same being and yet God can send Jesus, then the apostles and Jesus must be the same being because Jesus can send them. And if *sameness of being* is the thought, then John 17:21 shows that the Father, Jesus, and the 144,000 are *all* the same being. Trinitarians tend to quote only part of a verse, or if they quote a whole verse, it is used out of context. Verses before and after are ignored.

That the Holy Spirit is a third God—coequal and coeternal with the Father and the Son—is an even weaker argument. To give the Holy Spirit a personalized application, Trinitarians are able to use *very few* Scriptures, and these are wrested. Hence they focus more on Father and Son. In regard to the term “Holy Ghost,” the word “Ghost” is from the Elizabethan era, being manufactured at the time of Queen Victoria or earlier.

**John 13:21** When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Jesus “was troubled in spirit.” Several times at the end he tried to prick Judas’s conscience—for example, giving him the sop and the most favored position at the table (to Jesus’ immediate left). Therefore, even though Jesus knew the Scripture had to be fulfilled, it was sad for him to see one who would lose all life because of such a deed. And just as with Jesus, our highest concern should be that, ultimately, as many as possible get life. That is the Father’s plan too. “Choose life that ye may live” is the principle (Deut. 30:19).

Jesus knew that when Judas was first appointed as an apostle, he was a very desirable person. In fact, of all the apostles at that time, Judas was the most talented. He had marvelous potential if he remained obedient and faithful. Therefore, Jesus was greatly disappointed to see Judas’s gradual change into a betrayer who would lose life. Jesus was emotionally involved with Judas and felt very sad to see him make shipwreck of his faith. This feeling was probably a large portion of the reason Jesus felt grieved in spirit.

**John 13:22** Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

The fact the apostles doubted would indicate that Judas’s deflection was not obvious to them. At this end of the age, the situation will be the same with regard to the Judas class.

Stating the matter another way, Judas’s good qualities so overrode the qualities that would cause his rejection that the disciples were unaware of the true situation. When John informs us that Judas was a thief, he is telling of certain unfavorable incidents that were only a fraction of his life. However, John does give us some insight into what the problem was with Judas. Greed and avarice led to his being a thief.

The character of Judas was camouflaged to the disciples right up to the end when he betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The apostles did not have time as a whole to discuss the giving of the sop. In the Garden of Gethsemane, eight of them were left behind, and three went a little farther with Jesus before he separated from them. John would have then told Peter that Judas was the betrayer, but between the giving of the sop and that time, the apostles were listening with such rapt attention to Jesus’ words that they had no time to talk among themselves.

However, the fact that John did know Judas was the betrayer, and could tell Peter later, suggests that in the future, some of the Little Flock will know the identity of the betrayal class ahead of time. *All* will know when the Judas “kiss” takes place and the “bands” apprehend the feet members—just as all eleven apostles knew Judas was the betrayer when these things

occurred to Jesus. The kiss triggered the arrest, and they saw that Judas was part of the kiss.

In regard to the betrayer, the apostles doubted of whom Jesus spoke. It is rather touching when they sorrowfully asked Jesus one by one, “Is it I?” “Is it I?” (Mark 14:19). Judas had already made contractual arrangements, but the others were *unaware*. Thinking the betrayal could be something subtle, the others now asked, “Is it I?”

Jesus did give the apostles information about the betrayer but *not immediately*. Otherwise, they would all have known Judas was the betrayer, and verse 28 proves they did not know.

**John 13:23** Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

**John 13:24** Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

John, to Jesus’ right, “was leaning on Jesus’ bosom”; that is, John had his back to Jesus in the reclining position. Peter, who was next to Judas on Jesus’ left and was therefore facing Jesus, beckoned to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was. Because Peter was not next to Jesus, he could not overhear the answer.

**John 13:25** He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

John asked Jesus, “Lord, who is the betrayer?”

**John 13:26** Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

Jesus answered John, “The betrayer is the one to whom I will give the sop.” We might think that when the sop was given, the rest of the apostles would know Judas was the betrayer. Yes and no. The others still did not comprehend because when Judas left, they thought it was for another purpose (verse 29).

With us too, there are times when we do not absorb what is going on, even though we are trying to pay attention. For example, we may be listening attentively to a talk and the next thing our mind wanders and we miss a point. As fallen beings, we have moments when our concentration does not hold.

Perhaps Jesus did not immediately give the sop. He could have instituted the Memorial emblems in the interim and then subsequently have given the sop. By that time, the apostles would have forgotten Jesus’ statement about the sop and thus would not have understood the significance. Other things were on their minds.

**John 13:27** And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

We do not know how audibly Jesus spoke when he answered John’s question with a comment about the sop. He could have answered privately in a whisper more or less, or in a regular conversational tone that just was not comprehended.

Verse 2 was preparing us, in advance, for the condition of Judas’ heart at the time of the Passover: “The devil ... now put into the heart of Judas ... to betray him.” Already Judas was following the leadings of the Adversary, although he did not seal his fate until the actual betrayal and kiss took place. Up until then, Judas could still have changed his mind. Another reason verse 2 was inserted is to show that despite Jesus’ awareness of the imminent betrayal,

his thoughts were on his disciples, and “he loved them unto the end” (verse 1).

Jesus knew that he had to die and that Judas would betray him, but he could not dwell on these thoughts because he had other things to do. Nevertheless, whenever he did think on them, they went into him deeply. The thoughts did trouble him, but he had to put them aside and get on with the advice for his disciples.

Jesus said, “That thou doest, do quickly.” Notice that Jesus did not say, “Betray me quickly” or “Do not betray me.” The lesson is not to procrastinate but to make a decision and *act*. For instance, if we know something is radically wrong, we should act on it right away. If we parley the matter, we might succumb to it. An example would be for one to stay in the nominal Church even though he sees things are terribly wrong. Remaining there would erode the line between right and wrong. The longer one fraternizes with bad conduct, the harder it is to get extricated.

Jesus had given Judas every opportunity to repent. He had tried to prick Judas’s conscience with kindness and favors, and he had also shown that a betrayal would be against Almighty God. Then he told Judas to act *quickly*. Why? If Judas delayed, he would surely carry out the betrayal because he had already made a contractual arrangement. (In other words, procrastination can be dangerous.) However, if Judas had decided to do the wrong, he might as well get it over with.

**John 13:28** Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

No one knew what Jesus meant by his statement “That thou doest, do quickly.”

**John 13:29** For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

**Q:** Was it surmised that Jesus had told Judas to give something to the poor because that is what Judas ostensibly wanted to do, or was it customary for them as a group to give money to the poor? The question is asked because of Jesus’ statement “Ye have the poor with you always” (Mark 14:7).

**A:** The disciples probably did not give much thought to Judas’s leaving because he left so quickly. However, there might have been occasions when things were given to the needy. Perhaps the apostles had some problems in being separated from their families. The point is that the other apostles gave credit to Judas as having a legitimate reason for leaving.

**Comment:** Perhaps the apostles thought Judas was going to help some who were too poor to properly celebrate the feast.

**John 13:30** He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

Judas did leave quickly but made the wrong decision.

The “sop” was a piece of unleavened pita bread that was used to soak up the succulent lamb juices. The giving of the sop marked the end of the supper.

In Mark 14:20, Jesus gave a clue as to who the betrayer was: “It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.” Hence the betrayer had to be one who was sitting at Jesus’ end of the table.

**Q:** Had the Memorial emblems been instituted? Weren't they served *before* Jesus gave the sop, and then Judas left immediately after the sop?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** In that case, is it possible Jesus answered, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop," and then instituted the Memorial emblems? If so, a time lapse occurred before the sop was given and the apostles would, consequently, not have made the connection that Judas was the betrayer.

**A:** Yes. The other Gospels show that Judas partook of the emblems. Then he left immediately after receiving the sop.

It is interesting that John added the detail "and it was night," which shows the time lapse from the foot washing through the eating of the lamb, etc. Also, being "night" added to the atmosphere, for Judas's betrayal took place under cloak of darkness.

The sop—a material, temporal thing occurring after the Memorial—fits the antitype beautifully. The Judas class, after partaking of spiritual things, will revert to fleshly deeds and betray the feet members. At the time of the betrayal, the Judas class will be sensual.

The Luke account mentions the Memorial and then records the strife among the apostles over who should be greatest (Luke 22:24). The thought is that *previously there had been* this strife among them. To arrange all of the events chronologically in the four Gospels is not a simple matter. The strife had started down in Jericho. The other apostles were mad at James and John for their request to sit on Jesus' left and right hand in the Kingdom, and this spirit of strife carried right into the Memorial supper. Moreover, the strife was aggravated by Peter's not being at the head of the table—instead Judas was. Although Peter was not present when James and John made their request, the Scriptures do not single out Peter, for *all* of the apostles were concerned and strifeful.

**Q:** Do you wish to comment on the fact that the sop had to be given *before* Satan fully entered into Judas? Otherwise, there would have been an impropriety.

**A:** Some sermons teach that when we see others walking in forbidden paths such as adultery, we should give them love, mercy, and consideration. They say we should not excommunicate the offenders or do anything that would show a lack of love on our part. Then they use Judas as an illustration, saying that Jesus knew Judas would betray him, yet he had Judas partake of the Passover and the Memorial, he washed Judas's feet, and he gave him the sop. This reasoning is **WHOLLY WRONG** because the sin was still only in Judas's mind at that time. Judas could have gotten out of the trap if he had so desired. He could have extricated himself before *sinning* the sin. Thus there is a distinction between sin in thought and sin as a deed or action. The action took place later. Jesus would not have shown kindness and favor to Judas if Judas had already committed the betrayal. One who is fraternizing with evil (but not sinning the sin yet) can be forewarned, but when the grievous sin has once been committed, the sin must be dealt with Scripturally.

When Judas left that Upper Room, he got the 30 pieces of silver and a little while later gave the betrayal kiss. The kiss was the actual betrayal—because Judas could have led the soldiers to another place. Earlier, tacks were being put in the coffin, but when Judas kissed Jesus, the coffin was sealed.

**John 13:31** Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

The word “Therefore” (“*Therefore*, when he [Judas] was gone out”) suggests that Jesus wanted to give private counsel to the faithful eleven. Jesus purposely held back until Judas was absent, for psychologically—let alone from the standpoint of principle—one in our midst who is causing a troublesome spirit can adversely affect the whole atmosphere of a meeting. The following, then, is the special counsel of Jesus to the eleven apostles, all of whom were faithful unto death.

Jesus used a rather strange type of expression: “*Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*” These words were spoken *after* Judas departed. Jesus knew the wheels were being set in motion that would result in his crucifixion—dying being the very purpose for which he had come. But what did Jesus mean by the word “glorified”—“*Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him*”? Notice that Jesus once again brought in the Father.

Jesus was taking a *futuristic* outlook. As we study his life from here on, we will see him go *back and forth* in his moods. It is unusual for God to disclose this secret information to us of the intricacies of Jesus’ thinking, of his mood or feelings as they fluctuated. A novelist would concentrate on one theme and lead up to a beautiful climax, but the account here is not that way—it is *choppy*. The conversation goes first in this direction, then in that direction, etc., which is really the way *life* is (not only with Jesus but with some of our experiences too).

**John 13:32** If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

“If” means “since.” “Since God is to be glorified through what Jesus is about to do....” (paraphrase). John sums up, in a pithy statement, the net effect of Jesus’ ministry and of God’s special intent: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). That “giving” was not just Jesus’ being made a human—his being absent from the heavenly courts—but knowing that he would come down here and *die on a Cross*. That is how much God loved the world. He could have just cast the world away, for all are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, but God, in His love and mercy, has made a way of escape for all. That is God being “glorified.” Now that the picture is *finished*—Jesus has died on the Cross and risen from the dead—Christians (and the world in the Kingdom) get an insight into God’s character that they could never have gotten otherwise. Could God’s love be any deeper than giving His only begotten Son to come down here and *die* for sinful man? That is the *epitome* of love.

Thus God is glorified in seeing His Son suffer along this line. We know there is a wonderful purpose in connection with that suffering and death. In the *long term*, it could not be done better, but in the short term, it confounds us that God would do such a thing. Not only is He glorified by manifesting His love in this manner, but Jesus is glorified or honored too by his *subserviency* to the divine will and his willingness to do God’s bidding *unflinchingly*, always having the attitude “*Thy will be done.*” When God honors Jesus in the future and makes him prime minister of the whole universe, *nobody* in the billions of years from now can say that Jesus’ exaltation was favoritism. True, God favored Jesus in calling him, but Jesus *proved* his worthiness by dying on the Cross. “Worthy is the Lamb!” Therefore, from the *finished* standpoint, God is honored in having a Son who died faithfully on the Cross. We can see the *sterling merit* of Christ, and his merit is a reflection on the Father. Both are thereby honored and glorified.

Verse 32 shows that Jesus was very confident in his attitude at this time. He knew the wheels were being set in motion. He knew he would die and he even knew *when*. Therefore, the “if” was not a question mark. Of course the Father’s being glorified was conditional upon Jesus’ faithfulness, but Jesus was not questioning here whether he would be faithful (as he did a little later in the Garden of Gethsemane). Jesus was unburdened because Judas had left, and now he could pour out his heart to the eleven.

“God shall also glorify him in himself”; that is, God would give Jesus the divine nature. “As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). God would share His immortality with Jesus *after* Jesus had finished his sacrifice, *after* he had *proved* his worthiness. What a treasure, what a gift, for God to give Jesus immortality! From the human standpoint, that is the last thing one would do. Human reasoning would say, “The Emperor is taking a chance in giving immortality to another being, for such a being *cannot* be destroyed and is now able to give life to others.” Not merely does a divine being have life *in himself*, but that life can come *out of himself* and be life and refreshment to others through the ability to create life. God must have *complete confidence* in Jesus and in the 144,000 who make the high calling. He must be absolutely sure of those beings to whom He grants immortality, so that *under no circumstance at any time in the illimitable future* would they ever deflect. Hence we can see the necessity for the consecrated Christian to be tested for worthiness.

Jesus was reflecting on what he was going to do and his *reward* for being faithful unto death. Both God and Jesus will be glorified ultimately in the eyes of others as Jesus’ suffering the ignominious death of the Cross is understood. The deeds of Father and Son will attract an appreciation and recognition of their true merit.

“And shall *straightway* glorify him.” “Straightway” means “soon, a very short time.” Let us put ourselves in Jesus’ place. First, he had to die the next day (*our* reckoning—the same day Hebrew reckoning). Then he would be in the tomb for parts of three days. After that would come his resurrection, but not his ascension for another 40 days. In all, in a little more than 40 days, he would be glorified and again be with the Father—a *very short time*.

The Apostle Paul used this same principle when he said, “But this I say, brethren, the time is short,” yet 2,000 years of the Gospel Age lay ahead (1 Cor. 7:29). By measuring the temporal shortness and brevity of life *with eternity*, Paul makes the former seem short and the latter interminably long. However, Jesus’ use of the word “straightway” truly was short; i.e., in just 40-plus days, he would be with the Father.

Verses 31 and 32 contain a tremendous amount of information. Jesus was determined and assured: “I have come to lay down my life, and nothing will deter me from this wonderful privilege. It will honor my Father, and I will be honored too.” We should likewise deem laying down our life to be a wonderful privilege. Nevertheless, we have downs as well as ups in our Christian walk, just as Jesus did.

**John 13:33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.**

How long was the “little while”? It lasted until Jesus’ apprehension in Gethsemane. Hence the fellowship was really just here at the Memorial plus the walk to Gethsemane—a total of only four or five hours. Other than that, he spoke a few words to John from the Cross and gave Peter a look. Of course when he was raised from death, his on-and-off appearances during the 40 days prior to his ascension were also included in the “little while.” And Jesus’ appearances were fairly brief except to the two walking to Emmaus.

“Ye shall seek me.” When? When he died, they certainly felt his absence. However, his death by crucifixion so startled them, *dashing their hopes*, that the apostles were not looking for his resurrection. When Jesus died, their hopes died (1 Pet. 1:3). Not until his resurrection were they rejuvenated. During the 40 days following his resurrection, he appeared to them several times, so it was not during that time period that they sought him. Therefore, the seeking occurred after his ascension. The apostles were waiting for the “soon” establishment of the Kingdom. In other words, Jesus was thinking ahead—he was thinking of the long range—to the *finished*

work and what it will signify to the Church and then to the world in the Kingdom. Incidentally, Jesus was referring to the world when he said, “Yet a little while, and the *world* seeth me no more” (John 14:19). His appearances after his resurrection were to *consecrated disciples* only.

The Father did not grant immortality—that immeasurable gift—when Jesus was first resurrected. He was raised from death “spirit” (a spirit being), and 50 days later the Father personally bestowed upon him the treasure of *His very own nature*. And He seated Jesus on His right hand as a confidant in the highest sense of the word—far higher than a messenger as the Logos. Now Jesus is of the family of God in the highest sense, not as an archangel but as a divine being. Thus in verses 31-33, Jesus was looking *ahead*. Even the angels would then see Jesus’ *worthiness*. They might have thought they could do all that Jesus did in his earthly course—until the Crucifixion and attending events occurred. Had Jesus not endured the agony and shame of the Cross, the angels would (or could) not give him the degree of respect and honor that is now possible. (Neither could we or the world.) The salvation of the human race is predicated upon Jesus’ faithfulness, and we can now see God’s interest in the world and in us as *individuals*. With confidence, therefore, Jesus is looking forward to the honor.

“Little children” is not a term Jesus normally used for his apostles. Apparently, his heart was especially *tender* to them at this time. He realized that very shortly he would not be with them anymore and that they still needed much development and maturity. He was going to give them last-minute instructions and counsel. The endearing use of “*little children*” is peculiar to this season, as he looked back over his 3 1/2-year association with them and was about to leave them.

If John’s Gospel were missing and we had only the first three Gospels, we would have the historical Jesus (what he said and did), but we would be lacking a lot. For example, without John’s Gospel, we would miss chapters of counsel between the Memorial and Jesus’ apprehension. All *four* Gospels are needed.

**John 13:34** A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

**John 13:35** By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

What is *new* about the commandment to “*love one another*”? We should *desire* to lay down our lives for the brethren, as symbolized by the foot washing done a little earlier. Just as the expression “*little children*” is peculiar to this season, so is the “*new commandment*.” Jesus’ previous admonitions were a generalized account of what might be expected. Consider Matthew 24, which outlines the history of the whole Gospel Age and was absolutely essential so that the Church would not be discouraged and the Christian religion die out through longevity of time. On a number of occasions, Jesus told his disciples what not to do and of their need for faith, how to pray, etc.—general advice. For 3 1/2 years, Jesus gave such advice, and now he was saying that to “*love one another*” is an essential ingredient for the Christian. It is a *crowning* phase. We should have a pure and undefiled conscience, etc., plus acquire *love*. Our love for Christ is manifested in our desire to serve the brethren and the truth. That is the only way we can show love for God and Christ because they are not down here.

Notice the clause “*as I have loved you*.” If we look back over the 3 1/2 years of Jesus’ ministry, we see that the bulk of instruction is what Jesus said about the scribes and Pharisees and others. Subtract that out and think what Jesus said to the *brethren*. Sometimes his words were not too complimentary. For example, when the storm was *raging* on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus said, “O ye of little faith. How could you doubt?” The boat was filling up with water and sinking, yet the Master reprimanded them for insufficient faith. His comment laid bare their need for

*development*. Had Jesus soft-pedaled the matter, the lesson would have been lost. The very technique he used could not have been better, even though some might think a softer approach could have been used. It is not pleasant when someone laces into us for a fault we really know we have, but sometimes the experience is *good* for us. Receiving a reprimand can keep us in line and humble.

Jesus was looking out for the *long-term* interests of his disciples, not for short-term fellowship. Their future destiny was his utmost concern, and not the extolling of the individual—telling others how much we like them, etc. That is cheap! There are times when we must lose our fellowship with an individual for a long-term benefit. The “love” we should have is a concern for the *salvation* of others. And we must be careful of our own salvation. We should not wade into a grievous sin.

**Q:** Wouldn't verses 34 and 35 also point forward to Jesus' dying on the Cross and thus to his *literally* laying down his life in harmony with 1 John 3:16, “Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”? (The phrase “of God” was supplied by the translators and should be deleted.)

**A:** Yes, and sometimes that is not easy for us to do. It is pleasant to be always loving and forgiving—to just let everything go. Universal Salvationists are the sweetest people, but they do not have a *principled* love. They believe everybody will be saved, even Satan. In their midst, there are no arguments, no reproofs—how nice!

**Comment:** Previously Jesus said that the greatest commandments in the Law were to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ... soul, ... mind, and ... strength” and to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:30,31). But here Jesus goes one step further in the “neighbor” aspect: “Love your brethren *as I have loved you*.”

**Reply:** Yes, the Christian is to lay down his life for the brethren. That was not a requirement under the Law, yet if one truly loves God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, he will automatically obey this new commandment.

**Comment:** At the end of the age, the feet members will have a counterpart experience. If we love our brethren as Jesus loved us, we will not hesitate to do certain things even in the face of persecution. These verses are a caution to us not to deny or betray because we may all be tested very severely along the line of really loving our brethren.

**Reply:** When Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said, “Do not apprehend my followers. It is me you want. Take me and leave them alone.” His concern was that they should not suffer for what he was doing. He was willing to shoulder his own personal responsibility.

**John 13:36** Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

It would be a *long time* afterwards that Peter would be able to follow Jesus—not just when he finished his earthly course but in 1878, when the sleeping saints were raised.

**John 13:37** Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Here is another case where Peter's heart was right, but he spoke too impulsively. Jesus had to, in a sense, rebuke him (verse 38). With the prediction about Peter's denial recorded in advance, we can better appreciate Jesus' insight into character and also how penetrating the experience

was for Peter when, after the triple denial, Jesus looked directly at him.

This lesson applies to us as well. We should not be too boastful and overly sure of our relationship and loyalty to the Lord under circumstances of extreme duress. However, we should keep in mind that although Peter did vehemently deny the Lord three times, that was not his normal character. His action was not premeditated. He had intended to be loyal.

**John 13:38** Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Mark 14:30 states Jesus' words to Peter a little differently: "Verily I say unto thee, ... before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." The word "twice" is missing in the Sinaitic Manuscript and should be deleted. Also, in Mark 14:68, the clause "and the cock crew" is spurious, as are the words "twice" and "the second time" in Mark 14:72. The Vatican Manuscript contains these words, but they are absent in the Sinaitic, and the Sinaitic is more reliable—although no currently available manuscript is perfect.

Evidently, Jesus *repeated* his prediction that Peter would deny him thrice before the cock crowed. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, the statement was made *after* the apostles had left the Upper Room to go to Gethsemane. But in John's Gospel, the incident occurred *before* they left the room.

Mark 14:31 adds another detail: "But he [Peter] spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. *Likewise also said they all.*" Taking Peter's lead, the other apostles also said they would not deny Jesus.

**John 14:1** Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

This new chapter is still taking place at the scene of the Memorial. The word "also" shows *separateness* of personality between the Father and the Son—*two* personalities. The Revised Standard omits "ye" and puts "hearts" in the plural. The omission gives a slightly different thought. "Let not your hearts be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

Why did Jesus say this about their hearts not being troubled? Already there was confusion, and he knew that doubt and confusion would increase subsequently when he was crucified. Their faith in him as Messiah would be shaken. He also may have been thinking about the betrayal, which was mentioned just a short time before. Judas Iscariot had left, so Jesus was addressing the faithful eleven when he said, "Let not your hearts be troubled."

"Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Why did Jesus add these words? In John 13:36, Jesus said plainly that where he was going, they could not then follow him (in fact, not until 1878). In view of his coming crucifixion, it was important that they believe in him and in the power of resurrection. The confusion at the table stemmed from several things: the betrayal, the coming crucifixion, the question as to who would be greatest in the Kingdom. All sorts of strange thoughts were going around in their minds on this solemn occasion.

The disciples were bewildered at the thought of separation from Jesus. For 3 1/2 years, they had followed him and gone everywhere with him, forsaking homes and families. Now they were puzzled and confused to hear he would leave them. His absence was a troubling thought. Their expectations were being dashed. The multitudes had cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and the establishment of the Kingdom had seemed imminent. Now Jesus was saying everything to the contrary.

He was telling the eleven to cling to their faith, which would be needed in the difficult time

immediately ahead. Their faith would be tried, not only in respect to Jesus but also in respect to God. They had thought God was using Jesus as His mouthpiece, for on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John had heard a voice say, “This is my beloved Son. Hear ye him!” (Matt. 17:5). There they had a contact with God, as it were, and they saw Jesus in resplendent, effulgent glory with his face and garments shining. Jesus’ appearance, coupled with his tumultuous welcome on his Triumphal Entry, had enkindled *great* hope, but now all hope was turning dark. Jesus would be betrayed and crucified, and Peter would deny him three times.

All of these factors led to Jesus’ statement in verse 1 about their hearts and believing in God and him. A very troublesome situation indeed existed among those who were there. Jesus realized the apostles were about to go through deep waters and would need every ounce of faith to carry them through his crucifixion, etc. He was saying in effect, “No matter what happens from here on, keep your trust and confidence in God—and also trust in me.”

**John 14:2** In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Why did Jesus make this statement? For one thing, the dispute had recently occurred regarding who was greatest. Therefore, Jesus was assuring the eleven that he was making preparations and that there would be room for all of them. Also, this statement explains one reason for his long subsequent absence. Rather than being a sign of disinterest in them, his absence indicated his *continued* interest in them to prepare a place for when they would later follow him.

What is the thought of “many mansions”? In the good or favorable sense, there are various planes of existence, or strata of society, in the heavenly realm: angels, principalities, and powers. In fact, there are five planes of spiritual being, and in each plane, the Father has many mansions, houses, and dwelling places. However, at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, a place had not yet been prepared for the Church in glory. Jesus was saying that he would *personally* superintend the preparing of that mansion.

We can actually think of this specially prepared residence as a house—a *spiritual* house. The Scriptures show that after the Kingdom Age, the Church will be in a *place*. During the Kingdom, the Church will be down here in earth’s atmosphere to reign over the earth, but afterwards they will go to their residence. And even during the reign, the Church (and Jesus) will not be fettered here, for they will go to the heavenly throne from time to time as ambassadors and for further instruction. The word “mansion” implies both a *place* of residence and a *condition* of being.

**Comment:** During Jesus’ ministry, the apostles left homes and families. For all practical purposes, they did not know where their next meal would come from or where they would sleep from night to night. The word “mansions” would have aroused their attention because it implied a permanent home.

**Reply:** Yes, and the superiority of the coming residence would make anything down here seem paltry and insignificant. Although conjectural, it seems that an entire universe will be assigned to each member of the Little Flock in the future. Each member will have various spheres of influence. Moreover, the implication is that, for expediency, each one will be assigned a place of residence in the respective universe. The additional abode is comparable to wealthy people now having more than one residence. Therefore, the word “mansions” would include not only a particular place where the Little Flock could meet with Jesus but also a private residence—or possibly even several.

In the absence of Jesus during the 2,000 years, guardian angels and sub-guardian angels have been watching out for the interests of the consecrated. Of course difficult problems are taken to Jesus or even the Heavenly Father. In the meantime, Jesus has been preparing this place along with gardens, brooks, trees, flowers, etc. The spirit realm is even *more real* than what we think is terra firma. Wouldn't the God who created the scent of flowers on earth have a sense of smell? Wouldn't He look on variety in the heavenly realm since He created variety down here? If there are flowers in the physical realm, aren't there flowers in the spiritual realm? It would be very strange indeed if the divine nature were merely a mental state and none of these spiritual counterparts were necessary. Jesus has a nice wedding gift for all who make their calling and election sure.

“If it were not so, I would have told you.” Why did Jesus say this? It takes time to understand John's Gospel. The other three Gospels are historical, whereas John wrote on principles and deeper things. Here Jesus' counsel, given exclusively to his apostles, requires consideration and analysis. Jesus was saying, “I would not have engendered these hopes in you and this love of being so closely associated with me if there were not a genuine reality of being with me in the future.” Earlier Jesus had said the apostles would sit with him on twelve thrones in the Kingdom—and other fragmented comments engendered the hope of being with him. Thus he gave prior promises regarding the faithful, and now he said he would not have engendered the hopes “if it were not so.” In other words, Jesus is thoroughly honest and open in what he says, and whether or not we appreciate his statements, some of them have *great depth* of meaning.

**John 14:3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

This statement clearly tells us not only that Jesus would go away but that he would come back to get the faithful. “I am going away to prepare a place for you. Although there are many mansions in my Father's house, I will create a new mansion for you. And when I come again, that house will be ready.” The preparation of the mansion precedes Jesus' return.

Thus Jesus has a surprise in store for the 144,000. Instead of the usual custom for the woman to have a hope chest, the “man” (our Lord) is preparing one. To a certain extent, we can add to the hope chest by laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt. But Jesus has a wonderful surprise in reservation for the faithful.

Psalm 45:13,14 tells us, “The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.” The Bride is embroidering her garments and getting her bridal trousseau ready. She shall be brought to the King's house in fine raiment of needlework, but her outer garments will then be of fine gold. The needlework represents personal development of character, but on top of this will be clothing of gold (the divine nature).

“I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Jesus probably uttered this statement slowly and with great depth of feeling. It is interesting that only John recorded these words of the Master following the Memorial, and his Gospel was the *last* to be written.

**John 14:4** And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Jesus had told the disciples previously that he must go to the Father (John 7:33), but at this time, his words had not fully sunk in. They knew about a coming Kingdom and that they were to rule (Matt. 19:28), but they did not comprehend the spiritual aspect. By saying, “whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,” Jesus was shocking them into paying more attention to what he was saying. Sometimes a professor who is teaching a subject that is apt to produce drowsiness

in his hearers will make a certain statement to wake them up. Different methods can be used. For example, sometimes a misstatement is intentionally made to arouse alertness. Morally and ethically this technique is not wrong. Of course if the person making the misstatement died the next moment, then what he said would be a lie, but when the technique is used in the sense of *teaching*, it is not a lie. When Jesus said, “The way *ye know*,” they really did not know or understand what he meant. True, they were following him, but they did not know *where* he was going. Jesus uttered these words *to make them respond*—and Thomas did, asking the question that was in all of their minds (verse 5).

In other words, Jesus’ statement was a stimulus, and he often used a variation of this technique. In a parable, for example, Jesus would make a statement to shatter our sense of values. We expect the natural conclusion to be so-and-so, but he said, “No, it is the opposite!” Sometimes he explained why, and other times he did not. One such statement is Mark 10:31, “Many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” This is a different type of thinking.

**John 14:5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?**

Thomas’s question proves the disciples did not understand much about Jesus’ going away. “If we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?” In other words, one must know a destination before starting towards it.

Jesus’ response (verses 6 and 7) was what the disciples had been doing for 3 1/2 years—they *had been following him*. But as to where he was going, that was another matter. His technique of trying to wake them up makes us stop and think of the situation back there.

**John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

**John 14:7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.**

These verses are deep expressions of truth—far deeper than the apostles could understand at that time. While Jesus’ statement “I am the way, the truth, and the life” can be related to the Tabernacle (the gate, the First Veil, and the Second Veil, respectively), the meaning is even deeper.

“I am the way.” In other words, “This is the way. Follow *me*.” Countless others down through history have claimed to be “the way.” Many divergent ways have been presented for finding and attaining life’s objective. Thinking people may say, “I will not be in this life too long. What shall I do to benefit self or fellow man?” They want to be gainfully employed with regard to their ideals, and many attractions exist. Thus Jesus’ words are very significant—that out of the multitude of those who profess similarly, *he alone* is the way.

“I am ... the truth.” When we first accept the truth, it is because *we know* it is true. When we consecrate, *we know* this is the truth. The hymn goes, “I love to tell the story because I know it’s true.” And truth begets *hope*. We do not want to follow a dream or something that just sounds good. Authenticity is the building block of hope and faith.

“I am ... the life.” Barring an abnormality, everyone wants life. The Apostle John appreciated *everlasting* life very much, and several places in his writings he emphasized the *gift* of life even to those who run the race for the high calling but are relegated to the Great Company. Everlasting life, even if not the divine nature, is a *tremendous* hope.

These three ingredients are so essential—to be directed to the right path, or way, and knowing that it is the *truth* and that it leads to *life*. The path to life is a *narrow way*, “and *few* there be that find it” (Matt. 7:14). Once the way is found, it must be *entered*.

Initially we are searching to find God (Acts 17:27). “Who are you, Lord? Where are you?” Our initial thoughts are not on the divine nature—that is a later and a higher hope. It is important to realize at the start that God has called *each one* of us *personally*. It is essential to know in the beginning that *Jesus* is the way, the truth, and the life.

Here again, in verse 7, Jesus ended his statement with something of a shocker: “If ye had known me, ye should have *known my Father* also: and from henceforth ye ... *have seen him*.” In other words, “You have seen God! You have seen the Father!” As intended, Jesus’ words brought a response. Therefore, if we just absorb the truth without questions, without interest and enthusiasm, we are not the class Jesus is really looking for. By putting out a leading statement, he aroused and stimulated those with the right heart condition.

Trinitarians claim that verse 7 proves Jesus and the Father are the same being. How would we refute this? John 1:18 tells us, “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*” And 1 John 4:12 says, “*No man hath seen God at any time.*” Notice that both of these Scriptures were written by the *same* apostle whose Gospel we are studying. The apostles saw and were with Jesus but *did not literally see God*. These verses do not contradict John 14:7, for here Jesus is referring to God’s *character*. We both know and see God through Jesus’ *perfect* character: his words and actions.

Along this same line, two additional Scriptures rebut the Trinity. 1 Timothy 6:16 refers to Jehovah: “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” Again the Apostle John’s words are pertinent: “And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape” (John 5:37).

**John 14:8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.**

Philip was the next apostle to respond. He was puzzled. Earlier Thomas was the spokesman for the group (verse 5). Now Philip expressed what the others were thinking. Verse 8 proves the eleven could not have comprehended the depth of what Jesus was saying until later, that is, not until after they received the Holy Spirit.

Just like the English word “show” (and “see”), the Greek word for “show” can be used either literally or figuratively. Context determines the usage. In 1 Corinthians 12:31, “show” is figurative: “But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet *show* I unto you a more excellent way.” “Show” is also figurative here in John 14:8,9.

Philip certainly did not think Jesus’ remark in verse 7 meant that he and the Father were the same being, that he was the Father. That is why Philip replied, “Show us the Father.” Philip was looking for something more. Nevertheless, Jesus continued in the same vein in verse 9.

**John 14:9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?**

“Have you known me so long, Philip, and yet you ask me this question?” (paraphrase). Philip certainly did not think that in beholding Jesus visually, he was looking at the Father, but he missed the other point; namely, *if God were in the flesh, He would do exactly what Jesus was doing*. He would talk like Jesus, do works like Jesus, and instruct like Jesus. Hence the Son was a

*character likeness* of the Father. To get across the point that the very things he was doing would be what God would do if He appeared in the flesh, Jesus repeated here in verses 7 and 9 what he had said earlier in John 8:19, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:7). Of course, as Emperor of the universe, God could not leave His throne and come down here to satisfy Philip—or anyone else.

**John 14:10** **Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.**

Trinitarians think the Godhead consists of three persons and yet one person. How would we rebut this thinking regarding Jesus’ two statements in verse 10: “I am in the Father, and the Father [is] in me” and “the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works”? We can use verse 20 of this same chapter: “I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” In other words, in whatever sense Jesus is in the Father, he was in the disciples too. The same apostle made both statements. The *same* dwelling of the Father that is in Jesus also takes place in the brotherhood, in the Church. This thought is repeated in John 17:21, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they [those who would become Jesus’ disciples all down the age] also may be one in us.” In fact, John 17:21 is the rebuttal for “I and my Father are one.” In other words, the *same* unity is to be in the Church. Therefore, any who think the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are a mysterious Trinity in one must include the Church in that Trinity too. Jesus prayed that *as* (or *in the same way*) he and the Father were one, his followers would be one with both of them. Jesus desired to please the Father and thus had the *same* purpose, but they were two *separate* beings, just as husband and wife are considered “one” but are *separate* individuals.

The Holy Spirit that enabled Jesus to speak the words the Father gave him also operates in his faithful followers. And in the past, God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets (2 Pet. 1:21). Hence they could speak “thus saith the LORD.” The Father’s instructions, which they voiced, were the indwelling of the Spirit—even if the words were mechanically uttered. God was “in” the messenger who so revealed His thoughts. And it is the same principle here with Jesus. He spoke and did the things *God* wanted.

The latter half of verse 10 (“the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works”) is similar to John 5:19. “Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” By repeating this theme, Jesus was indicating, “Stop and think about what I am saying.” The Apostle John set the tone in John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” In other words, we would not visually or literally see God, but Jesus would “declare” him.

**John 14:11** **Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.**

**John 14:12** **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.**

Jesus was saying that the relationship he and the Heavenly Father had would also be *shared* by those who believe into Christ.

**John 14:13** **And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**

**John 14:14** If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Other Scriptures must be considered in order to clarify and moderate these remarks. A prayer should always have the condition “Thy will be done” even if it is not expressed. And certainly we should not pray for material wealth.

James 4:3 reads, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” Of course we should not utter selfish material prayers. However, a circumstance might arise where we would ask for something material predicated upon “if it be thy will.” We might explain to the Lord in prayer why we are making such a request—that it is not for self-use but for some other purpose. In such a case, the Lord might grant the petition.

On the other hand, God will not refuse us if we ask to develop the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits are what He wants us to request.

1 John 5:14,15 reads, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” Again the Apostle John is speaking. What he recorded Jesus as saying in his Gospel he restated slightly differently in his epistle. The first epistle of John also states the requirement for having prayers answered: “that we keep his commandments” and do the things that are pleasing in God’s sight (1 John 5:3). *Obedience and effort* are required on our part in order to receive. The principle is the same with truth. We are to search for truth as for hid treasure, as for silver and gold.

To ask in a pleading or opportuning sense is pleasing to God. Just as a natural father would give bread to a child who pleaded for it, so the Heavenly Father is pleased to grant proper requests (Matt. 7:9).

**Q:** We pray to God through Jesus, and we usually think of a petition being answered by the Father. How would we harmonize Jesus’ statement here that “If ye shall ask ... in my name, I will do it”?

**A:** Jesus appears to be the prime actor in verses 13 and 14, but the Father actually is. The answers to our prayers come through Jesus, who serves as our *Advocate*, but it is God who answers yes or no. We ask God through Jesus (or in his name). If God gives approval, He nods His head to Jesus. Then Jesus provides the answer. Jesus is more actively associated with the Church because the Father, as Emperor of the universe, has delegated certain prerogatives to the Son. The only reason we can seek the Father’s face is because we follow Jesus. When the high priest tended the candlestick, he was actually a representative of *God*.

Much must be read into the Apostle John’s remarks. The way he thinks and reasons can be more easily understood if his Gospel is considered as a whole and the context is studied. We cannot take isolated statements and build principles. To understand John, we must get the gist of his characteristic speaking manner. (That is true of Jesus too.) The repetition is necessary in order to get John’s point.

What is the distinction between Jesus’ being an Advocate and his being a Mediator? A mediator mediates between two opposing parties who are alienated—in this case, God and the individual. How is Jesus an Advocate? His merit is imputed so that the Christian can have a standing with God. (Incidentally, Evangelical churches pray to Jesus—they do not get the feeling of praying to the Father.) Stated another way, a mediator stands *between*; an advocate stands *beside*. An advocate is like a lawyer. A public advocate assists in getting petitions into the court system; he helps with grievances.

Certain Scriptures speak of Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Hence his role as Mediator relates to the Kingdom. (If Jesus were the Mediator *now*, we would have to be under the New Covenant *now*.) In the Kingdom, the world will deal with Jesus more personally even in their prayer life. It is God's Kingdom, but He turns it over to Christ. Jesus will stand in between mankind and God, but at the end of the thousand years, when the obedient of mankind will have progressed to what Adam was before the Fall, Jesus will step out and turn the Kingdom over to the Father, there being no further need for a Mediator.

**John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

This thought is repeated in 1 John 5:3, the *same apostle's* epistle. The repetition, plus other similarities, shows how poignant the evening's experiences were to John—they scored his memory very deeply. Another example is the repeated phrase “little children.” Much of John's Gospel is devoted to happenings on the night of the Memorial (Chapter 13 into Chapter 18). The other Gospels do not record Jesus' sermonette.

**John 14:16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;**

A comparison of verses 15 and 16 reveals a *general* lesson that has applied down through the Gospel Age, namely, that sincere repentance and an attempt to conform to Jesus' instructions must precede consecration and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The Tabernacle Court shows progression; i.e., prior to consecration, one is *in the way* of justification. When consecration does take place, the evidence that it has occurred is the begetting of the Holy Spirit, which is a bona fide seal that a contract has been made.

By stating that he would give the disciples “another Comforter,” Jesus was implying that he would leave them. Of course he said he would be with his followers all down the age, but they would lose the *personal* contact of speaking directly with him, which the disciples had enjoyed for the 3 1/2 years.

“I will pray the Father.” When did Jesus “pray the Father”? He did this in the Garden of Gethsemane. After he talked with the apostles, he had a long prayer with the Father concerning their welfare, and here he is saying that his intention was to pray for them—to pray that the Father would give them the Comforter. Certainly the glorified risen Christ, who is in heaven with the Father, no longer has to pray to Him in this sense. No, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. The beseeching took place down here. He was telling his followers that he would ask the Father to send them a Comforter. If properly obedient unto death and raised to be with the Heavenly Father, Jesus would see to it that, in his stead, the Holy Spirit of truth would guide the Church. “Comforter” is the Greek *parakletos*, meaning “helper, sustainer, assistance, encouragement, strengthening.”

**John 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.**

Changing the pronouns “he” and “him” to “it” is more accurate. Although the Greek language has a neuter gender, it uses male and female for a lot of things that we apply a neuter to in English. For example: “The sun [he] is warm.” “The moon [she] is bright.”

The Holy Spirit is not a personality any more than the spirit of fear, the spirit of envy, etc. *Volume 5* compares the numerous references of a *holy* Spirit versus an *unholy* or *evil* spirit. The comparison broadens our thinking to realize that the Holy Spirit is not a personality.

Those who believe the Holy Spirit is a personality do not talk too much about the subject because there is a scarcity of information in the Scriptures. For the most part, it is hard to read into texts on the Holy Spirit that it is a personality. John 14:17 is an exception.

**John 14:18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.**

**John 14:19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.**

Jesus said the world would not see him but his disciples would. What is the thought? The *general* lesson is that only those who receive a *spiritual* resurrection will see Jesus, and they will see him *as he is* (1 John 3:2). But what was the thought back there at the time Jesus uttered the statement?

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more.” It is true that from the time Jesus was crucified and buried, the world saw him no more. However, there is a *dispensational* aspect. When Jesus was raised a spirit being, he appeared (that is, materialized) on and off for 40 days. The disciples did see him, but he did not appear as they had known him previously. Thus Jesus was saying in verse 19, “I must absent myself for a little while, but I will be back. Before I truly leave you and the Holy Spirit comes, you will see me for a brief interlude.” When Jesus appeared in different forms during the 40 days, the disciples recognized him by the characteristic mannerisms and/or words he used. For that *brief* period of time, they heard his voice and could even touch him—something his followers have not been able to do down through the age.

God permitted Jesus to materialize during the 40 days, but these materializations were an exception to the rule. If we consider all the times Jesus appeared to the disciples during the 40 days, and if we could calculate the hours exactly, the total would probably be *less than a third or a fourth of one day* because he disappeared for *long periods of time* after only brief appearances. He appeared just often enough and long enough to convince the disciples of his resurrection. The longest conversation was on the way to Emmaus.

To a large extent, our faith in Jesus is based upon the testimony of the apostles. They saw and talked with him both before and after his resurrection. John says, “*We know this one came from God. We saw him. We touched him. We conversed with him*” (1 John 1:1). The Holy Spirit helps us *to know* that the things recorded about Jesus are true. Through the apostles’ eyes, we see Jesus.

**John 14:20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.**

“At that day [that is, at Pentecost and progressively until the spirit birth takes place] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” If we consider this verse from the standpoint of Jesus talking to his apostles, they were overjoyed when they became *convinced* of his resurrection and realized that he had indeed risen from the dead. From that day forward, for the rest of their lives, they met all kinds of persecution, famine, homelessness, etc., in the security of that knowledge.

**John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.**

Certain words should be emphasized: “He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that *loveth* me.”

**John 14:22** Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

Notice that when the apostles Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot) questioned Jesus in verses 5, 8, and 22, they preceded the question with “Lord.” That humility, that recognition, that decorum, characterized them and it was proper. We should have the same attitude of not being too familiar with either God or Jesus. Nevertheless, we have the full freedom of going to the throne of grace in joy, in sorrow, and in pain. Sometimes the disciples used “Master” instead of “Lord.” Even the world used some decorum in addressing Jesus as “Rabbi.”

Judas was referring to Jesus’ comment in verse 21: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them ... loveth me: ... he ... shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and ... manifest myself to him.” Judas misunderstood and was thinking of a *visible* manifestation.

**John 14:23** Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

The peace of God dwelling in our hearts is evidence that the Father and the Son are abiding with us. In other words, having the peace of God is the practical effect of our dwelling in union with Jesus. It is through the Holy Spirit that God and Jesus abide with the Christian. We must read and meditate on—and thus understand—Jesus’ words in order to obey them. Then the words become more life-giving because they are indwelling in us through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus was tying in his thoughts in verse 16 about the Holy Spirit abiding in the Christian. He was saying that the Father would send the Holy Spirit (the “Comforter”) to abide in those who keep his words. Here in verse 23, Jesus repeated that thought, and verse 26 again mentions the Comforter to be sent by the Father. Because the words were not penetrating the minds of the apostles at that time (they had not yet been begotten by the Holy Spirit), Jesus repeated them with slightly different phraseology. Following Pentecost the disciples understood Jesus’ words.

**John 14:24** He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

This verse refutes the Trinity. Jesus was sent of or from God, and hence *cannot be God*.

**John 14:25** These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

**John 14:26** But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Spirit would truly be a Comforter, for Jesus’ words were not penetrating at this point. And of course the Holy Spirit has been a Comforter to all Christians down through the age.

In the early Church, the Lord’s words were more real than they are today. Not only during Jesus’ ministry of 3 1/2 years but afterwards when the apostles went out evangelizing, his presence was especially manifested to them. The power of the Holy Spirit was very marked. For one thing, no stenographer was recording Jesus’ words. Therefore, the spirit of remembrance of Jesus’ actual words and deeds throughout his ministry was necessary. The Holy Spirit operated *mightily* on Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (Mark and Luke were the amanuenses of Peter and Paul, respectively). To remember what Jesus said and did for 3 1/2 years means there must have actually been a *sensation* of remembrance.

Paraphrase of Jesus' words: "I am present with you now and talking to you, but when I leave, the Father will send another Comforter to teach you and enable you to remember all that I have said." The coming of the Holy Spirit would mean the opening of their minds—a wonderful experience!—and they would realize it. The apostles' experience would be somewhat like Jesus' own experience when he was immersed in Jordan. The Holy Spirit came on him without measure, flooding his mind with the remembrance of his previous existence.

**John 14:27** Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

How does the world "give peace"? (Jesus was saying, "My peace is different from the world's peace.") Worldly peace is transitory. The world translates peace as success in business, acclamation, honor of men, wealth, protection from certain harmful things, etc. But Jesus' peace is *peace of the heart and mind*—an *inward* peace. His peace penetrates the soul. In Matthew 10:34, he said that he came not to bring peace but a sword. Thus exterior-wise, the Christian may have many discomfiting experiences. This was especially true after Jesus departed and the apostles tried to witness to their fellow Israelites. They met a lot of opposition. Their initial experience with Jesus made them very bold and strong because while other Jewish Christians were being scattered, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem much longer (although not until the Dispersion in AD 70). With Peter, James, and others moving down from Galilee, there was a nucleus in Jerusalem.

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." What was the initial trouble and fear? The apostles were troubled by Jesus' imminent absence and separation from them. He was preparing them for events that were coming. Seeing him crucified and then actually leaving, being transported up into heaven, would all happen in about 50 days. Just a short time before, crowds had followed Jesus, and he was acclaimed when he entered the city, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Then would come the exact opposite experience. The humiliation of the Cross would stigmatize his teachings and cause them to become like a stench in the nostrils of the nation. Jesus would be leaving at the time the apostles would feel they needed him most. Knowing what would happen, Jesus said unto them, "Do not let these things frighten you. If you really understood matters in their proper light, you would realize it is in your best interest that I go away, because something else will happen for your good." One thing was their discipline (persecution), as hard as that was to accept. But the long-range outcome of their faithfulness would work out better for them than if Jesus remained in their presence and coddled them.

This same principle of not fearing has applied throughout the Gospel Age, and it will apply right to the end of the age. However, the heel members will have mixed experiences—just as Jesus needed diverse experiences at the end of his earthly ministry.

"Let not your heart be troubled." Jesus used the same words to introduce the chapter. He was saying to have confidence in him. His leaving was for their good, and something would replace his absence, namely, the Holy Spirit. The apostles did not understand Jesus' words at the time, but the spirit of remembrance helped them subsequently. When Jesus departed, no literal man abode with the apostles. True, Jesus had been *literally* present, but no man took his place. However, the Comforter was *literally* present as the *Holy Spirit*, not as a person they could talk to. The Holy Spirit was the miraculous power of calling things to remembrance and giving them the ability to understand and interpret. It will "teach you all things ... [as well as call] all things to your remembrance" (verse 26).

**John 14:28** Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

This concept was hard for the disciples to grasp. They were naturally *sorry* to hear that Jesus was going away, and then he said, “*If ye loved me, ye would rejoice.*” The rejoicing was predicated on *faith*. We should take time to consider the clause: “*If ye loved me.*” To have the love of Christ meant to have complete confidence and faith in Jesus’ leadership—even though he was absent. He had schooled the disciples for his absence. First, he was in the boat with them during a storm, then he was on a mountain but came to them in another storm, and finally he went away to a higher “mountain,” that is, to heaven. All of this teaching was to help the disciples put their hands into the hand of God and trust in God and in Jesus.

Verse 1 says, “Ye believe in God,” but it should read, “*Believe ye in God; believe also in me [because I go to the Father].*” We must have confidence in the Heavenly Father, who is *greater* than Jesus, and then have confidence in Jesus. If so, then Jesus says, “I will not forget you. The Father will send you the Holy Spirit in my name.” In other words, we must *pray* for the Holy Spirit. We must pray to the Father in Jesus’ name and *hunger* for the truth in order to be the recipient of a larger indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The source of the Holy Spirit (the oil) is God. We receive the Holy Spirit through Jesus, our High Priest. He supplies the oil as *God’s* minister.

Notice how Jesus *magnifies* the Father. Instead of supporting the Trinity, John’s Gospel does the opposite. For Jesus to go to One who is *greater than he*, and for *both* to come and make their abode with the disciples, would be an additional comfort. Acceptance of this reasoning would come with maturity of development.

**John 14:29** And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Even in Old Testament times, God used this principle. Noah was warned 120 years in advance of the coming Flood. Abraham was apprised of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah before it occurred. Israel was warned of coming trouble regarding both 606 BC and AD 69-70. And so, now, the feet members are given much information about the end of the age. It is up to us to use the information, to put on the armor. The slogan “Prophecy cannot be understood until it is fulfilled” is not true. We know in advance about the Kingdom, the resurrection of the dead, etc. The secret of the Lord is revealed to His disciples in whatever age (Deut. 29:29; Psa. 25:14; Amos 3:7).

Seeing Jesus’ crucifixion and the events leading to it was the lowest ebb of the disciples’ lives, but later, when the Holy Spirit helped them to remember that he had prophesied his death and many of his experiences, they were convinced that Jesus truly was the Messiah. Instead of having a weak faith and wondering whether he was the Messiah, they **KNEW** he was. Their faith had been strengthened. The purpose of telling in advance what will happen is to establish *faith* so that when the event does occur, one’s consecration will not be shipwrecked.

Real faith is not credulity but is based on the Word of God, and it requires a measure of understanding. One may have to go forward not knowing, but up to that point, the individual has an accumulation of experiences to draw on. Stated another way, one may have to take a step into the unknown, but it is strengthening to have been led up to that point.

**John 14:30** Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

Jesus gave the reason he would not henceforth talk much with the apostles; namely, he would be interrupted by the “prince of this world.” The eleven had just had a blessed hour or two of complete quiet with Jesus after Judas, the betrayer, left. Jesus talked heart to heart with them. However, from the time of his apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane until his death, he

talked *very little* with them. He looked at Peter and committed his mother into John's care. Even after his resurrection, Jesus did not talk much with them compared to previously.

The "prince of this world" came when Judas initiated the betrayal with a kiss. In the tumult and confusion that ensued, the disciples fled. John and Peter followed at a distance, after which Peter denied Jesus three times.

Satan "hath nothing in me." Once the betrayal took place, Satan was incorrigible and without any hope of retrieval. Satan had nothing in common with Jesus. Jesus had complete love and obedience for the Father. His speaking the words the Father gave him was absolutely contrary to what Satan did. Therefore, if in the future at the end of the age, there is a false manifestation of the coming of Jesus, it will be short-lived because the Adversary has no love for him. Satan could not masquerade in that posture for any length of time. It would simply be as an opening wedge to lead into other error or deception. Such deception is reflected in the Roman Catholic religion, which is the religion of Satan, as it were. The emphasis is on the pope, Mary, and the saints, not on Jesus. Personal salvation seems to be completely absent. The false doctrines are characteristic of the one behind the false system.

**John 14:31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.**

Jesus was concluding his remarks at the Memorial table. Now he and the apostles would start for the Garden of Gethsemane. His subsequent experiences—his submission to them—would be recognized as a proof that he loved the Father. Jesus professed to be the Messiah, the sent One of God, yet he walked willingly to his death. Even the world admires Jesus' fidelity to his views, the consistency of his behavior and doctrine. He was no coward.

Always in the back of Jesus' mind, while he was talking to the eleven for an hour or two, the clock was ticking. He knew he had to get to Gethsemane in time for the betrayal, so he must end the lesson. The crucifixion process had to begin with the sentence exactly at 9 a.m. Thus Jesus was bringing the session to a close, although he still talked as he walked to Gethsemane. (The distance between the Upper Room and Gethsemane was about one-half mile, so the walk would take a little while, especially because of the hilly terrain.)

**John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.**

Indirectly, this verse is a great proof against the Trinity, for how could the vine be equal to the One who is *in charge* of the vine? Moreover, if Jesus is the "*true vine*," this would suggest that there are other or *false vines*, which are not of the Father's planting.

**John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.**

God takes away every branch in Jesus that does not bear fruit. On the other hand, God prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it may bring forth even more fruit.

When a person consecrates, he is in the vine. Every individual who is called and accepts Jesus on the proper grounds is in the vine. Based on many other Scriptures, we know that most will not make the high calling. Of those who do not, two possible destinies remain: the secondary Great Company class or Second Death.

In this parable, what about the branch that is taken away—the branch that bears *no fruit*? Do overcomers (as opposed to *more-than-overcomers*) remain in the vine, or are they separated? Only the Little Flock remain in the vine. Those who are taken out of the vine will either end up

in Second Death or have their flesh consumed by the Adversary to become part of the Great Company. In other words, although the Great Company do bear fruit, their fruit is not enough to remain in the vine in the sense of the parable.

As to whether the parable is emphasizing a Second Death or a Great Company destiny for those who are removed from the vine, even Pastor Russell wavered back and forth in his interpretation. In his early writings, he felt that the ones who are taken away do not necessarily go into Second Death. They simply fail to attain the Little Flock. He probably based his reasoning on 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, where the Apostle Paul says that every man's work will be made manifest. The fire of that day will try the work, and the wood, hay, and stubble will all perish, yet the individuals themselves will be saved "so as by fire." In other words, in this illustration, a class can be totally burned (have their flesh destroyed) and yet get life.

Thus two types of interpretation can be pursued for this parable. The fact that the cut-off branch "withers" creates a problem (verse 6). One explanation is that Jesus is considering only the Little Flock here and is ignoring the Great Company. The lesson would be that for one to stay in the vine in a particular arrangement with the Lord as his Church, he must bear fruit. That seems to be the better interpretation. However, the parable is difficult to interpret with definiteness. If a person is cut off from the vine, separated from fellowship with Christ, is there hope for him? On the one hand, the destruction would seem to be severe, but on the other hand, those who do bring forth fruit—even if not much—are pruned to bring forth more fruit. This parable has several dilemmas, but it is particularly concentrating on what Jesus is looking for, i.e., the true Church.

The Pastor referred to those who are cut off as "suckers on the vine." Suckers are cut off so that more fruitage can be brought to the vine. Thus the branches that bear fruit must be pruned a certain way so that they will bring forth even more fruit.

**Comment:** The thought of "suckers" is interesting. Suckers are useless growths that sap the energy of the vine but do not produce fruit. They are meant to be severed from the vine. This principle would apply to the Lord's people. One who does not add to the body, does not serve and encourage the brethren, etc., but just takes and takes from others would be a "sucker." It is like the concept of lukewarmness, which pulls down the others rather than building them up. That is why those who are lukewarm will be spewed out of the Lord's mouth. Not only do they not contribute, but they take away from the others.

**Reply:** However, this parable does not say that the Great Company remain on the vine. Notice how the parable ends. It does not say that the cut-off branches are destroyed—they are just burned. The point is that a class are separated from the vine and burned, but since they are not destroyed, the emphasis of the illustration is on the *fruitage*, not on the other particulars. Otherwise, the Great Company would have to remain on the vine. Those who do not produce fruitage are severed. Those who do produce fruit are pruned to produce more fruit. This parable seems to emphasize only the true Church. Even the destruction is not emphasized—just the true Church and their *fruitage*.

**John 15:3** Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

**John 15:4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

**John 15:5** I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Notice the term "*much fruit*" is used here. Only the true Church can be said to bring forth much

fruit, not the Great Company. Jesus said, “If you abide in me, you *will bring forth* much fruit,” not “maybe you will.” The parable is referring to a closer relationship to the Lord than merely being faithful in the sense of not disowning him. The class who bear much fruit are very knowledgeable as to what the Lord’s will is. The emphasis is on the fruit, not the destiny. Only the Little Flock truly abide in the Lord, and the Lord truly abides in them.

**Comment:** The Little Flock are constantly on the alert to get rid of the defilement of the flesh, and to be as obedient as possible to the Father’s will.

**John 15:6** If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

**John 15:7** If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Surely verse 7 would not apply to the Great Company class. Only the Little Flock can pray and ask what they will and it shall be done accordingly, for they would not ask amiss. They would not pray selfishly and can be trusted because Jesus’ words abide in them. The Little Flock ask in harmony with God’s will. The “abiding” here is a *close* relationship, one the Great Company does not have.

**Comment:** Progression and growth of fruitage are shown. Verse 2 says that the ones who bear some fruit are pruned to bring forth *more* fruit. If they continue to abide, they will bring forth *much* fruit (verse 5).

This is a difficult parable, and it should not be blended with other pictures, which is easy to do. The ones who are rejected do not seem to go into Second Death.

**Q:** It is hard to see that the taking away of the non-fruit-bearing branch does not picture Second Death. Verse 4 says that the branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine. This thought seems to correspond to the withering idea. The end of verse 5 says, “Without me [severed from me—King James margin] ye can do *nothing*.” It would seem that once the branch is cut off, not only is there no more growth but there is a deterioration as well. If so, how could the parable apply to the Great Company, who are at least overcomers?

**A:** However, other pictures show that a burning is not necessarily a complete destruction. The Apostle Paul speaks of some who build with wood, hay, and stubble, which are not “fruit.” Gold, silver, and precious stones are the “fruit” in the mineral kingdom. The ores are separated from the ground and purified, usually through a process of refinement. With the wood, hay, and stubble, the destruction is also a process, but the individual is saved.

In the parable, the arrangement is *two ways*: (1) if Jesus’ followers abide in him, and (2) if he abides in them. The Great Company abide in Christ, but he does not abide in them. Why not? Because they are not dedicated enough to know—and to want to know *fully*—God’s or Christ’s will concerning them. The emphasis seems to be on the fruit.

**Comment:** Dispensationally speaking, the Great Company will go into the “fire” at the end of the age, for they enter the great Time of Trouble as “tribulation saints” to wash their robes white. In another picture, the scapegoat will be taken into the wilderness condition to die.

After instructing his disciples for 3 1/2 years, Jesus told them, “If you *continue* to abide in me as you endeavored to do during my ministry, you will produce much fruit. As you are pruned and disciplined, you will develop more and more fruit.” After the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the fruitage would be produced. During the 3 1/2 years they were soaking in, like sponges,

what Jesus was telling them. Instead of being exercised, they were being tutored. But after Pentecost they would have to go out and be Jesus' representatives in a fuller sense.

Some seemingly simple subjects are more difficult to “mathematically” ascertain than other subjects that are a definite yes or no.

**Q:** Since some parables exclude the Great Company class, could that be the case here? Then this parable would show just the Church and the Second Death class.

**A:** When various *Reprint* articles on this parable are compared, certain problems surface. Notice, the “he” of verse 2 (the husbandman, i.e., *God*) takes away the branch that does not bear much fruit. In trying to harmonize the parable, the Pastor said that those who take *themselves* away go into Second Death, as well as the ones the *Lord* takes away. Thus the Pastor did bring in a Second Death application for those who separate themselves from the love of God. But he also felt that those who are taken away do not necessarily go into Second Death.

**Q:** Would verse 11 be helpful here? “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be *full*.” John also uses the thought of “full joy” in John 16:24; 17:13 and in 1 John 1:4. The Great Company has joy, but would we say their joy is “full”? Since full joy is the goal here, wouldn't the parable be slanted to the Little Flock?

**A:** The emphasis is on the *special* relationship of Jesus with the true Church class (the Little Flock). All others of the consecrated are separated regardless of ultimate destiny. Both the Second Death class and the Great Company will be burned in certain pictures.

One constructive lesson here is that of *fruit bearing*. The Father desires that *much* fruit be brought forth. Of course the pruning indicates discipline. In regard to pruning, the Pastor said that we might have certain cherished ambitions for a talent or talents in connection with what we would like to dedicate to the Lord, or for something else, but He might just lop them off. Instead of feeling frustration, we must resign ourselves to the Lord's will. We must accept that such was not the Lord's intention for us. The very thing we may want to do for the Lord may not materialize.

“If we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us,” “If we obey his commandments,” and “If his words abide in us”—these thoughts show the importance of *instruction*, of not merely *wanting* to do his will but of *actually doing* his will. What is “his will”? Jesus' will was exemplified in his life and in his teachings. Thus this parable shows the importance of *instruction*, *pruning*, and *developing fruit*—all constructive aspects. It is just the other area (being severed from the vine) that causes some difficulty. Perhaps we have been trying to bring in a class that is not meant to be dwelt upon; the Great Company are just passed over. There are alternate interpretations, and let us leave the parable there.

One other point, however. The Great Company class are separated from the Lord, but there are different kinds of separation. Examples of *temporary* separation are as follows: (1) On the Cross Jesus said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). That was a *momentary* feeling of separation from God because Jesus was a sin offering and had to be a curse. Separation was part of his development. (2) Another type of cutting off is like the scapegoat class in the wilderness. They will get a feeling of alienation and yet not be completely severed.

When we read the parable here in John 15, we are not sure what type of separation is indicated: permanent or temporary. Is it that God will have *nothing* more to do with the individual—is it that the individual has *no more life*? Both the Great Company and the Second Death class will be burned, but to *two* different destinations.

All who make a full, unreserved consecration go into the vine originally. To be part of the vine is a great privilege. In the years after consecration, self-examination is important. We can ask various questions: Do I love the Lord? If I could retrace or relive my life, would I again consecrate? Affirmative answers are very encouraging. To be several years in the truth is encouraging—showing that we still love the truth. These assurances will keep us from getting discouraged. Do I want God’s will to be my will? Am I trying to please the Lord? Do I want to make my calling and election sure? These are helpful questions for judging ourselves. If we see some wavering on these simple questions, we know we need strength, personal prayer, fasting, prayers of others, etc. It is good to question our motives.

**John 15:8** Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

**John 15:9** As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

**John 15:10** If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

Verse 9 is *very tender*: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” In the present life, we cannot fully appreciate the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the love the Father has for the Son, yet Jesus said that *as the Father loves him, so he loves us*. Therefore, Jesus tells us to “*continue*” in his love. *By faith* we are to grasp that Jesus has a *personal interest* in each one of us as an individual.

**Q:** Verse 3 seems to have a bearing on what classes are being discussed in the parable about the true vine, the branches, and the husbandman: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” Earlier this same night (of the Memorial and betrayal), Jesus had said (John 13:10), “Ye are clean, but not all,” referring to Judas when he was still present with them. In Chapter 15, Judas had left and Jesus was talking to the eleven. Jesus had hope—and actually knew—that the eleven would be faithful and bear much fruit. Would not the thought of the branch that did not bear fruit being taken away, withering, and being cast by men into the fire to be burned (John 15:2,6) refer to Judas specifically back there, indicating a contrast between the Little Flock and the Second Death class? We are not really considering the Great Company either in the much fruit bearing or in the destiny.

**A:** Yes, the bearing of *much* fruit was the focus of concentration, but we cannot be dogmatic in regard to the destiny of those who bear *no* fruit in the parable.

**John 15:11** These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

What is the “joy” of Jesus that he wishes will remain in his disciples and that he wants to *enhance*? Jesus talked about joy in at least three other places. (1) “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). (2) “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they [the eleven apostles] might have my joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13). (3) “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:4). All three of these Scriptures give the “joy” an application in the *present* life. Just before his execution, Jesus was speaking of having this joy *himself* (“that my joy might remain in you”—the joy that he *then* had). Jesus wanted his disciples to have more fullness of joy in the *present* life. (Of course, an even greater joy awaits those who are faithful when they go beyond the veil.)

Jesus wanted his joy to *remain* in the disciples. Therefore, in verse 10, he said, “If you *keep* my commandments, if you *abide* in this relationship of joy in committing your life to me and sitting

at my feet to learn of me, you will have joy.” That is one aspect. “If you *retain* this relationship to the end of your earthly life, you will have the expectation of the reward I receive from the Father.”

In spite of the sorrows Jesus experienced at the Memorial table, he spoke of joy. His real joy was in knowing the Father and doing His will. That kind of joy and relationship are what Jesus was referring to here in verse 11.

In John 17, Jesus spoke about joy, even though his agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane took place only moments later. And at the Memorial, he said he was “exceeding sorrowful” (Matt. 26:38), yet he also spoke of joy. Thus the “joy” here is not the joy usually thought of. Joy is the opposite of sorrow, but there are different kinds of sorrow. For example, if we knew we were not doing God’s will, our sorrow would be worse than the kind of sorrow we would experience if we lost something, such as someone’s companionship. Sorrow from a serious transgression is much worse. Normally we think of things along human lines—joy is fun, having a nice social time (such as a birthday), etc.—but another kind of joy has nothing to do with the weather or external circumstances. It is the joy of communion with God. Under that situation, we could be anguishing and praying but be thankful that we have access to the throne of grace. Jesus was referring to that type of joy.

**Comment:** The husbandman (the Father) purges those who bear fruit so that they will bear more fruit. The purging and chastening experience may be hard, but when we realize it is proof that the Father loves us, there is joy. If that relationship is maintained, we remain a branch on the vine.

**Reply:** While Jesus was giving his disciples information about how the husbandman prunes the vine, he himself was about to be pruned on the Cross. Although he was talking to his disciples, the principles and lessons apply to us too—usually. The secondary application can be very important.

The “joy” is like the joy David had: “I delight to do thy will, O my God” (Psa. 40:8). “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). Whether pleasurable or not, we should want to do the Father’s will. “Send sorrow, send pain. Sweet will be their messengers, sweet their refrain.” These words of a hymn express the sentiment of one who is thoroughly consecrated. When shocking providences occur, we must be in a very consecrated attitude to accept them properly and say, “Sweet is their message, sweet is their refrain.”

Paul said that “no temptation for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous”; however, *afterward* it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Heb. 12:11). Experiences of sorrow and pain are better for us to have as long as we are rightly exercised and properly receive them. In other words, the *trial* of our faith is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tried by fire (1 Pet. 1:7). The fire or purging experience is extremely valuable even though it is not pleasant to go through. Hence we are to “think it not strange concerning the *fiery* trial which ... [trieth us], as though some strange thing happened” (1 Pet. 4:12). The tutoring and discipline of evil (unpleasant happenings) are more precious than gold.

**John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.**

The loving of one another is qualified: “*as I have loved you.*” We look to Jesus to see *how* he loved his disciples. For one thing, he criticized them. The Gospels do not emphasize politeness in the sense of Jesus’ being very careful in everything he said lest he offend. Words, thoughts, and messages were what he presented. We learn from these as well as from what he did NOT do with regard to his disciples. For example, consider how much time he spent in fellowship with them. He had many capabilities and could have gone off and done many other things, but

he devoted *much* time to them. They were always tagging along with him. He fellowshipped with them continuously, trying to make them understand what God's will was. This verse suggests we should be familiar with *Jesus*—with his parables, teachings, acts, etc. Sadly, many Christians give little thought to Jesus' life and ministry, but they spend a great deal of time on other subjects.

We should *not* love according to our feelings and emotions. Very often we interpret love by what we think love is, but we can gain certain insights into the subject by studying *Jesus* and the *apostles*. We should meditate on these things. The Bible is the *foundation* of our faith. Special messengers can help us, of course, but they are not the same as the Word itself. Teachers should merely point us back to the Word. To love as Jesus commands requires an *understanding* of the Scriptures.

**John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**

Although it is certainly commendable for someone to impulsively risk his own life to save another (such as plunging into ice-cold water to rescue a drowning man), that is not the love referred to here. That is a love but not *this* love. Here Jesus is referring to a sacrificial *daily* dying or laying down of life, which is *agape* love.

When Jesus died at Calvary, he died for the world, which included *enemies* who had persecuted him in ignorance. Yet here Jesus said the greatest love was to lay down life for friends. What is the explanation? For 3 1/2 years, Jesus laid down his life for his friends. His love was not just the act at Calvary but a *continual* laying down of life and sacrifice. Paul said, "I die *daily*" (1 Cor. 15:31). Calvary was the culmination of a *period* of time.

The act of dying can be instantaneous and quick. It may be given without even weighing the thought, for some people instinctively do certain things. But when our life is *programmed* to *every day* do things in harmony with God's will, that is what Jesus is referring to here. Such love requires continuous concentration and doing.

**Q:** Specifically, how did Jesus lay down his life for his *disciples* for 3 1/2 years?

**A:** Miracles for the people did not occur every day for that period of time. Sometimes Jesus was in desert conditions while traveling from place to place. The majority of his days were spent with his disciples. They were with him *every day*, whereas *occasionally* others crossed his path. The principle is, "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the *household of faith*" (Gal. 6:10). Jesus concentrated on teaching his disciples. He expended special effort to find some of the apostles (Matthew and Philip, for example). Also, he had a *master plan* of helping them, of *progressively* teaching them and helping them grow in faith and knowledge. That planning and helping was his *love* for them—his interest in and concern for their development. He used great wisdom in taking or teaching them step by step. This thinking—in spite of his own discomfort from performing miracles, receiving criticism, etc.—*cost* him something and showed his *love* for them. Jesus truly was a master teacher. He concentrated on his *disciples*, not on the world, which was secondary. While Jesus died for the world, there was a *primacy* with regard to his disciples. One lesson for us is that even with relatives (mother, father, sister, etc.), our main interest should be for *God's people*.

1 John 3:16 carries out this thought: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Romans 16:3,4 also picks up this idea: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."

**John 15:14** Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Notice, “Ye are my friends, *if* ye do whatsoever I command you.” Those who *do God’s will* are Jesus’ friends, mother, father, brother, etc. The closeness of the relationship all hinges on obedience to the Father’s will.

**Comment:** It is interesting that Jesus used the word “friends” here, yet a little later he called Judas “friend” (although a different Greek word). What irony! The one who was *supposed* to be his “friend” and close companion turned against him.

**Reply:** Paul did this too, where he seemed to make contradictory statements. Verse 15 says the disciples were not servants but friends, and other Scriptures called them sons. The word “friends” implies a more *personalized* affection and love than a servant. A servant might be respected and be dutiful and good, but a friend would be closer. The Bible often likens the Christian to a servant, but to be a friend is a closer term of endearment. *Phileo* (brotherly) love is a very high form of love. True *agape* (disinterested) love is the highest form, but even that requires a definition.

Others are our friends *if* we see in them a desire and effort to do God’s will. The more we see this, the closer the relationship—even closer than our natural family. If we see someone trying to do God’s will, our esteem for him is raised to a higher level. Verse 14 includes as “friends” all true Christians down through the age. During the 3 1/2 years of Jesus’ earthly ministry, he left an example and instruction for all of his footstep followers.

Jesus accepted those the Father drew—not from a personal standpoint but because the Father did the drawing. Hence Jesus can overlook certain idiosyncrasies, race, color, background, manners, etc. The key point is the desire to do the Father’s will. Such are drawn to Jesus (and vice versa) proportionately.

**John 15:15** Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

A servant or slave is just told to do certain things. He may be informed on some matters but on relatively little, for he is just a servant.

**Q:** In John 16:12, Jesus said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye *cannot* bear them now.” But here in verse 15, Jesus is saying, “*All* things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” How can these statements be harmonized? Is the tense correct in the King James for verse 15? Is it “*have made known*” or “*will make known*”?

**A:** The tense is correct.

**Q:** Could verse 15 be qualified in the sense that Jesus made known to the apostles all things needful for them to know at that time, prior to his crucifixion? Obviously, the Holy Spirit would reveal more things later.

**A:** Yes. Also (and mainly), before Jesus came down here, the Father gave him instructions of what he was to do and say. Therefore, what he disclosed to his disciples were all those things that the *Father* had wished them to know *prior* to Pentecost. In other words, Jesus was *required* to reveal certain things to them. Here is another example that many times in Scripture, the word “all” needs to be modified. Frequently, it does not literally mean “all.”

Jesus had already given his apostles his great prophecy of Matthew 24, which embraced the

entire age. Hence he did tell them *many* things they did not understand at that time—not until Pentecost. From this standpoint, Jesus had disclosed all that he was supposed to tell, all the necessary things, all that the Father had told him to reveal, even if they did not understand. For example, even with all the repetition about his need to die and return to the Father, it was not until well into the sixteenth chapter that they began to realize he would die and leave them. They knew but they did not know, etc., etc. Finally, the thought began to sink in.

The Bible pictures the Christian as a servant or slave, as a friend, as a son, and as a brother of Jesus, and each description is in its own place or setting. During Jesus' ministry, the Christian was not called a brother or a son. Those terms were not used until Pentecost, for not until the disciples were begotten of the Holy Spirit were they considered family members. At that time, they became sons of the Father and brethren of Jesus.

**John 15:16** *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

Jesus was not speaking here of all Christians but about the apostles, whom he had selected and appointed. He knew them before they knew him. The word "apostle" means "one sent forth." Jesus appointed the apostles, gave them names on the mount, and later instructed them what to do. There were only twelve (Rev. 21:14). The instruction "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," etc., applied only to them (Matt. 18:18). Other Christians do not have such authorization in the Word. For example, Paul gave two different kinds of advice regarding old widows and young ones. This advice becomes binding in the sense that it is important and it is the thinking of an apostle.

Jesus chose the apostles that they should "bring forth fruit" and that the "fruit should remain." Of course the fruit bearing discussed in this chapter applies especially to the apostles. However, it is proper for *us* to draw lessons about *our* bringing forth fruit as well. Consider Jesus' words "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." To a certain extent, we apply these words to ourselves but add "according to *thy* will." There is no harm in asking if we add the qualifying clause. On the other hand, the apostles, who were charged with a very important work, made requests with an extremely high prerogative. No doubt they all prayed earnestly about their ministries because they had additional responsibility.

**John 15:17** *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

Why mention this again? For 3 1/2 years, the apostles had been getting instructions from Jesus on what and what not to do. Now that he was about to depart, one of the immediate dangers was jealousy or a feeling that one apostle was more important than the others. Hence the apostles were always to keep in mind that they were all equally apostles. They were to minimize what might *appear* to be contradictions. The earlier feelings of "Which one is the greatest?" and "Which ones can sit on Jesus' right and left hand in the Kingdom?" must not be allowed to surface and continue.

In regard to Christians in other circles, we should give the benefit of the doubt to them if they claim consecration, if they profess to have made a commitment to the Lord. We should recognize them as brethren *as long* as their lives and conduct comport with that profession. But we are to note *false* brethren—wolves, tares (imitation Christians), etc.

However, the apostles were apostles, and the eleven plus Paul are to be specially regarded. Some who entered the early Church claimed (falsely) to be apostles because they had seen and known Jesus during his earthly ministry. The apostles Paul and John spoke of them and had to put some in their place (2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2). The *false* apostles had a high opinion of

themselves and were presumptuous.

Here Jesus' telling the eleven to love one another indicates they had a lot to go through, even though they would make their calling and election sure. They would experience much tribulation before they finished their course.

Jesus' counsel in these last hours was primarily directed to the apostles. They had the greater need because they were the chosen leaders in his absence. When others came along and tried to take over their office, it was the duty of the true apostles to expose such presumptuousness.

Some feel that love precedes all other qualities—that no matter what an individual does, we should love him. They reason that since we all have failings, we should be ready to forgive almost anything. Others are highly incensed at what is taking place. The commandment to “love one another” *does not mean* we should wink the eye at gross sin. It is true that we should give the benefit of the doubt where one's life is not at variance with the profession. However, if one's life and behavior contradict the profession, we should take note of the matter and not love him according to the instruction in verse 17. Deeds are important and we are to judge conduct. We should be careful not to wish “God speed” to any who are living a hypocritical life. Verse 17 must not be given an abnormal application as a commandment to love no matter what happens. It is true that love covers a multitude of sins—but a *certain type* of sins, not cardinal sins.

**John 15:18** If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

The world hates the Christian in different levels or degrees. Some may say nothing, but they shun our companionship. Either they think we are too fanatical, or they do not want to hear our disapproval of what they are doing. That is a lower level of hatred by the world. At any rate, *all* who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in some manner (2 Tim. 3:12). The apostles certainly incurred the world's hatred.

Today we live in a peculiar time. During the Dark Ages, communication between true Christians was much less frequent because of distance and poor travel conditions. In the past, real hatred was directed toward those identified with a certain belief (for example, Wycliffites, Luther's followers, and Waldensians). Today we have many more opportunities for fellowship and communication. And those brethren who work have much more contact with the world than those who, say, work at the Dawn full-time. The latter have relatively little contact with the world and a lot of contact with each other. Hence their trials would have to come largely from the brethren. Trials are absolutely necessary for development and for making our calling and election sure—just as iron has to be put into the furnace to become hardened as steel. We are to endure hardness as good soldiers.

Back there just to be identified as a Christian was a problem. For instance, a Christian in Israel in the early Church encountered reproach, hatred, and stigma. At the present time, we experience little of such persecution. Not until 300 years later, when Emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity as the official religion of the empire, did it become fashionable to be a Christian. But more than a thousand years later, during its period of power, the Roman Catholic Church persecuted and put Protestants to death; that is, those who were *ostensibly* “brethren” did the persecuting. Today we are not receiving open persecution, although events in the near future will rekindle such activity. Currently many of our problems and our schooling and development take place right in the Bible Student movement. But in time the nominal Church—both Protestant and Catholic—will enter our lives in a very dramatic way.

**John 15:19** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

“I have chosen you out of the world.” The Church is called the *ecclesia* of God, the “called-out ones.”

**John 15:20** Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Here the word “kept” means “watched” or “observed.” “If they [the world] have kept [watched or observed] my saying, they will keep [watch or observe] yours also.” When Jesus preached the gospel, he had a lot of critics and opposition. In addition, he actually healed people—something we cannot do. Therefore, it stands to reason that if we are loyal to the truth, we will meet opposition. There is a saying: “The truth hurts.” The truth sometimes hurts us in the sense that we smart when we see our shortcomings. That is good, for it shows we have a conscience.

**John 15:21** But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.

“For *my* [Jesus’] name’s sake” is the key phrase, for we could be persecuted for the wrong reason(s). Jesus received persecution because of faithfulness to his *Father* and in teaching his *Father’s* Word. Hence the persecutors did not know God.

Because of the certain persecution when Jesus was planning to go to Jerusalem, Peter said, “Be it far from thee, Lord” (Matt. 16:22,23). But Jesus rebuked Peter and said that the advice came from the Adversary, that Satan had used the *old man* of Peter, that Peter savored not the things of God but the things of the world. Satan has fallen and depraved tastes, but *anyone* who falls would have similar shortcomings even if Satan did not exist. Sin came on the human race because *Adam* sinned. *Adam’s* sin caused the penalty, not Satan’s sin. It is true that Satan sinned—he told a lie—but it was by “one man’s” (*Adam’s*) sin that condemnation came on the human family (Rom. 5:17-19).

In regard to the spirit that motivates the world, Jesus said on one occasion, “Ye are of your father the devil because you do his works” (John 8:44 paraphrase). The influence of Satan is reflected in the human race, but mankind would have done those things even without his influence because they are fallen. Sometimes the tendency is to blame everything on Satan, but such is not always the case, for many people, because they are fallen and weak, accept sin for the benefits of sin.

**Comment:** That is good reasoning because it shows why, even when Satan is bound in the Kingdom, the human race will have to *struggle* against their fallen propensities. It will not be easy just because the Adversary is restrained.

**Reply:** And any who then die will die for their own sin if they do not desert former habits.

**Comment:** The thought of suffering for Jesus is expressed in 1 Peter 4:14,16. “If ye be reproached for the name of *Christ*, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.... Yet if any man suffer as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

**Reply:** Peter was more or less quoting the principle Jesus mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount. On that occasion, Jesus spoke of suffering for righteousness’ sake and for his name’s sake—two different types of suffering.

Let us digress for a moment. The fighting in Ireland today is more political than religious. Earlier it was religious. Southern Catholic Ireland, which is three quarters of the country, wants the northern part to be incorporated in a parliament of *all* Ireland. But if that happens, the parliament will immediately be Catholic because they so outnumber the Protestants in the north. Some of the northern Protestants are quite enlightened (like Reverend Paisley). They know the history of Ireland and about the bitter religious persecution in the past. We in the United States, a country of many religious faiths, tend to ask, “Why can’t they get along together?” But history shows that the Catholics intended to exterminate the Protestants. Centuries ago England sent General Cromwell to Ireland. Against great odds, he had an outstanding victory and wiped out Catholic Ireland. The Irish Catholics have never forgotten that. England has subsequently sheltered and protected the Protestant colony to the north, knowing that if their army were withdrawn, the Protestants there would be annihilated. Thus England has tried to protect northern Ireland from being massacred and made an arrangement to send troops if needed. The point is that because history is not known today, the people are generally sympathetic to the IRA, who want a united, whole Ireland. They do not realize what would result if Ireland were unified. We are very generous in solving *other people’s* problems.

**John 15:22** If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

For the most part, “they” would be the scribes and the Pharisees. However, the pronoun would also include those of the nation of Israel who personally saw Jesus’ miracles and heard his words and yet persecuted him. Thus there is a form of retribution—and different degrees of guilt. Those in the Galilee region incurred more responsibility because many of Jesus’ miracles were done there. He said, “It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee [Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee]” (Matt. 11:24).

The scribes and Pharisees who paid hush money to the guards who watched Jesus’ tomb are in far greater danger than those who merely criticized him during his ministry, for the former went against direct firsthand evidence. The guards were set by Pilate’s permission, but those comprising the guard were appointed by the Pharisees. The very fact the guard returned to the Pharisees to tell what they had seen proves whom they were influenced by and whom they were sympathetic to. Others, who based their judgment on hearsay, were less guilty than the Pharisees who acted contrary to firsthand evidence.

**John 15:23** He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

**John 15:24** If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

Many witnessed Jesus’ miracles, which included raising from death at least three individuals.

**John 15:25** But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

The Jewish nation rejected Jesus because they were influenced by their mentors. The very ones who hailed him “Hosanna!” took up the cry of their religious leaders to “Crucify him!” The latter was not a cold statement but an *emotional chant*—with *fervor!* When the people saw Jesus entering Jerusalem, he was their promised Messiah. He had been healing, raising the dead, and speaking as no other human spoke. But when he was crucified—when they saw him on the Cross—they thought he was cursed of God. Now they were just as emotional as before but in an *opposite* direction. They were emotionally directed by the religious leaders.

Much of what we do today is predicated upon what others say about somebody else. We

should try to search out serious matters before we make decisions and not rely on hearsay evidence. We should get the facts.

**Comment:** A marginal reference for “They hated me without a cause” is Psalm 35:19. That Psalm expresses a sentiment of asking God to avenge injustice. These are the prophetic thoughts of Jesus and the Little Flock.

**Reply:** Yes, and Psalm 139:22 says, “I hate them with *perfect hatred*.” What is a “perfect hatred”? Many people do not know how to judge. The chances in the Kingdom will be rather minimal for the radical conscience-hardened “graffiti” element because they have established a character of waste, destruction, and violence. No mere slap of the wrist will suffice. They will have to earn their way to life by retracting the things they have done to injure their fellow man. Individuals, no doubt, will truly reform, but as a whole, many will prove incorrigible. Those who wallow in sin and harden themselves are undermining their own characters. When the Psalm is read from this standpoint, a class is being addressed, and the wish is that they go into Second Death. Individuals are another matter, but our wish should be that society will be cleansed of the incorrigible as a whole.

**John 15:26** But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

**John 15:27** And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

“From the beginning” would be from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when the apostles began to walk with him. That seems to be a prerequisite for those who are apostles. Except for Paul, who had visions of the glorified Jesus, they all had to know Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. Paul’s amanuensis, Luke, completely informed him of Jesus’ past life, ministry, and sayings.

The clause “he shall testify of me” will be treated subsequently in a lesson about the Holy Spirit. This difficult subject can be treated better when we have the information that is presented in the sixteenth chapter of John. The way the subject is stated seems to have been providentially overruled because it will be a test. The wording is not as clear as it might be. The pronoun “he” is not in the Greek. Instead “that” (the Greek word *ekeinos*) is used: “that shall testify of me.” The word “that” is *impersonal*; it is not neuter, feminine, or masculine in gender. This complicated subject will be treated later.

**John 16:1** These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

In what sense did Jesus mean “that ye should not be offended”? Jesus told the disciples “these things” so that they would not be *stumbled* when persecutions arose and also when he was crucified. The *Diaglott* uses the word “ensnared.” This “stumbling” would be in a *very serious* sense.

**John 16:2** They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

Why is this comment of our Lord helpful? It puts us on guard to be as generous as possible regarding the motive of those who persecute us. They might be acting out of conscientious conviction, or they might have an ulterior motive. We are not to be concerned which it is. We should just try to be faithful under the circumstances. Prior to his conversion, the Apostle Paul was an example of one who persecuted Christians while thinking “he doeth God service.”

When a person of the world opposes us because of our devotion to God and to conscience, that is one thing. But when one who is ostensibly in the religious world opposes us, when one who claims to love God does the persecuting—one from the nominal Church—that is another matter. In the latter case, that would be persecution from the “synagogue.” In other words, here Jesus is referring to a *religious* persecution in contradistinction to persecution from the world. From this standpoint, it would appear to be *God’s* organization that ostracizes and persecutes us. If we are not stable in our convictions and beliefs, we might feel that those from the nominal Church are right and we are wrong. Our consciences might be so jumbled and scrambled that we would forsake the narrow way, fearing we have committed the sin unto death. Incidentally, some translations say, “Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God a *religious* service.”

The Revised Standard and the *Diaglott* use “hour” instead of “time”; that is, “the hour cometh.” Although this verse has applied all down the age, it seems a little more poignant to us to think of the “hour” as the coming hour of power during which we will be put out of the “synagogues.” The Holy Inquisition was a dreadful period of persecution in the past.

In regard to what is yet future, this verse ties in with Revelation 13:17, which describes the condition when none may buy or sell save he that has the mark or the name of the beast or the number of his name. Since we are not part of the denominational Babylonish systems, we will be prevented from speaking. Revelation 13:17 is a prophetic text that takes the principle of verse 2. At that time, it will be made mandatory for every man in the religious world to receive the mark of the beast or his image.

At least at present, one application of being put “out of the synagogues” is being denied an opportunity to teach, for example, among the Bible Students. This more subtle type of persecution occurs because one’s *influence* is killed.

**John 16:3** And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

This verse can be applied in various ways. *To what extent* does one not know the Father or Jesus? There are various gradations of intimate acquaintance with God and Jesus. This verse would apply more to the nominal system, for the Bible says that at the end of the age, “a thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand” (Psa. 91:7). However, this comment of Jesus was comforting and enlightening to Christians right after his death, resurrection, and ascension, and then a little later when fellow Jews, particularly the scribes and Pharisees and false teachers who arose within the Church, brought persecution on the disciples. Verse 2 suggests the primary persecution would occur in the “synagogues” by professing Christians.

**John 16:4** But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

Take the first part: “But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.” These words were very comforting to the disciples then, and also all down the age, for when persecuting experiences do come, it is brought to remembrance that they were predicted beforehand as a test of faithfulness, and not as a punishment. Jesus is telling *beforehand* what will be *his* experience, as well as what will be *their* (and *our*) experience. This verse proves that he could see in advance, that he had *foreknowledge*.

Now the second part of verse 4: “And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.” Jesus knew his death had to occur at a specific time. For 3 1/2 years,

he did not have to *dwell* on the theme of his death (he did make *some* statements, but his death was not a theme earlier). Now the subject of his death was more pertinent. Also, for the 3 1/2 years, he knew his apostles would be specially protected—their persecution would not occur until after his death. So now was the time for Jesus to tell them much.

The *dispensational* aspect of truth can be seen here. As events drew near to fulfillment, necessary knowledge was revealed proportionate to the need of the circumstance and hour. Earlier it was not needful for Jesus to discuss his death as a theme, but now it was.

This principle has applied *throughout* the age. Information has been supplied as needed, namely, meat in due season. It is *incorrect* to say that prophecy is not understood until it is fulfilled. Of course hindsight is clearer than foresight, but we should not use such a slogan. We should not say, “When it is time, we will know. The information will automatically be given.” We are enlightened *in advance* according to *our hunger and desire* and the light due at that time (just *how far* in advance depends on the situation). Otherwise, what is prophecy for? The Book of Revelation was given by God to help His servants to know things *before* they come to pass. The book was given as enlightenment *progressively*—to be understood and appreciated as needed throughout the age.

**John 16:5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?**

Thomas did ask earlier, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” (John 14:5 paraphrase). Thus the question had been raised in a certain way previously. Why, then, does Jesus ask this question here? The disciples did not ask at this point because of their sorrow and fear of the unknown. However, if they had been begotten of the Holy Spirit, they would have asked. The apostles, like us, were not perfect—and particularly at this juncture.

The next verse proves sorrow was the overriding reason for their not asking Jesus where he was going. Their sorrow also explains why they were so sleepy in the Garden of Gethsemane. When we get very depressing news, it can exhaust us. And mental exhaustion can affect us physically. Some who are very depressed just want to shut out the depression by going to sleep. They hope to wake up refreshed.

**John 16:6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.**

The disciples had hopes that Jesus would shortly establish his Kingdom, and now he kept emphasizing his departure. Sadness filled their hearts. In his great prophecy of Matthew 24, he had warned of a time interval, but they could not comprehend his words at that time.

**John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.**

The “Comforter,” or Helper (Greek *parakletos*), is the Holy Spirit. Why was it expedient for Jesus to go away in order that the Comforter might come? It was like his saying, “It is absolutely *necessary* that I go away. Otherwise, the Comforter will not come.” Why? Jesus had nurtured wonderful hopes in the disciples, but they could not be adopted as sons of God or even be eligible for the high calling unless he did go away. The technical recognition of them as sons of God—the spirit of adoption, of sonship—could not take place until the sacrifice of Christ had been completed and accepted.

Verses 7-15 seem to suggest that the Comforter is a personality, an individual. How would we refute this thought? How would we counteract the thought that the Comforter is one of the

persons of the Triune Deity?

1. The Holy Spirit is shown to be subordinate to the Father and to Jesus. The Comforter does “not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak” (John 16:13). Earlier Jesus said he did not speak of himself but spoke and taught as the Father directed. Here the Holy Spirit is said to receive from Jesus (who receives from the Father) and then to transmit to the followers of Christ. The Father is higher than Jesus and the Comforter, yet the doctrine of the Trinity says that the three in the Triune Godhead are coequal and coeternal or everlastingly coexistent. Those who originated the thought of coequality really put their foot in their mouth, but the Trinity is in the creeds so frequently that it cannot be retracted. Other doctrines have been retracted because they were forgotten, but not this one.

The pope has called this year (1987) the “Marian year.” Interestingly, some Catholics have been turned off because they say, “Where is Jesus?” At least in some cases, a part of the Protestant message with regard to the need to accept Jesus as Savior has filtered through to Catholic thinking. To dedicate a special year to Mary offends the sense of *thinking* Catholics.

2. Suppose we lived back there and Jesus promised to send the Comforter. Then he died, arose, and was with the disciples on and off for 40 days. Next, he ascended up to heaven, having said he would send the Comforter. The disciples waited for that Comforter, but there is *no historical evidence* that any such *being* dealt with them. The Holy Spirit is always referred to in vague terms—no personage appeared to them. The apostles saw and talked with Jesus, who was supposedly a part of this coequal Triune God, but where was the “Holy Ghost”? There is no historical record of such a being—the Holy Spirit is always put in other terms: the spirit of truth, the spirit of love, etc., did such and such. Thus, from a *practical* standpoint, we see nothing that would represent a being.

**John 16:8** And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

**John 16:9** Of sin, because they believe not on me;

**John 16:10** Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

**John 16:11** Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

**John 16:12** I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

**John 16:13** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

**John 16:14** He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

**John 16:15** All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

The use of the pronouns in these verses needs to be discussed. With regard to French and other languages (but not the Greek, which does have a neuter gender and uses it in an unusual way), nouns are considered either masculine or feminine, even when referring to inanimate objects. (The moon *she* is full; the sun *he* is hot.) An attempt is made to determine if there is a generative influence (like a father generating a son) or a nurturing or subordinate influence. The Greek is similarly influenced to a certain extent, although it does have a neuter gender. In the Greek, the use of “he” and “him” can be correct, and in many cases where the Greek lacks a pronoun, the

English translation inserts one—correctly or incorrectly.

Here in John 16, the Greek does have the masculine pronoun *auton*, but there is a way to countermand it. If we get into the semantics of the Greek with a theologian, we should remember that dictionaries and concordances (Young's, Strong's, etc.) are very disinclined to give the gender of the Holy Spirit, yet for other words or entries, the gender is listed: masculine, feminine, or neuter. With the dictionaries omitting this designation for the Holy Spirit, it cannot be pointed out subsequently that the authors were wrong in calling the term masculine. Furthermore, the authors cannot be accused of premeditation.

In the Greek, the Holy Spirit is neuter. To prove this, the article that introduces it is *to* (pronounced "tow"). *To* is singular (*the* Holy Spirit), and there is no case where *to* can be masculine or feminine—it is *always* neuter. The word *pneuma* (translated "breath") ends with an "a." Other words that are feminine or masculine can also end with an "a," but not *to*—it is *always* neuter. Although some neuter words do end in "a," the article itself is the best proof, for theologians might give us words to show that an "a" can end masculine, feminine, or neuter words. However, the article *cannot be changed*.

In the Greek, when a noun refers to a *person*, there are no exceptions for the pronoun or the article. If the person is masculine, so are the pronouns and the article, and if the person is feminine, so are the pronouns and the article. But if the thing referred to is *neuter*, the pronouns and the article can be masculine, feminine, or neuter. And that is the point with the term "the Holy Spirit," which is *not another person*. The Father is a being, and so is the Son, but not the Holy Spirit.

The words "him" and "he" actually appear in the manuscript, but that does not prove the Holy Spirit is a person for the following reason. If the thought is *God's Holy Spirit*, then the masculine would be correct because God is considered masculine, which has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit's being a person. The masculine shows up *if* the context is related to the *Father*.

**Q:** When a word is neuter, can the article be masculine, feminine, or neuter?

**A:** Yes, so how do we decide which gender to use? By the *context*. And when it comes to context, an argument will ensue. Others will state, "That is what *you* say, but *we* say such and such." Thus the issue is left up in the air. However, Trinitarians cannot get around *to* ("tow") with "the Holy Spirit." And in many cases where Trinitarians try to emphasize the pronoun, it is *not even in the Greek*, and another word is used—an adverb. That adverb is used frequently, but it is given a personal pronoun translation that is not in the Greek at all.

In the near future, the true Church will be tested in regard to the Trinity. We are living in an age where knowledge is held up as a god or goddess. Therefore, when the test comes, we cannot argue theologically on the Greek but must do as Jesus did when the scribes and Pharisees tried to trip him up. He took the initiative and changed the question. For example, "You asked me a question. Before I answer, let me first ask you a question." Jesus responded on *his own terms*. Therefore, when we are confronted on the Trinity, we should not go back to the Old Testament where the word "Jehovah" is used or the New Testament where *Adonai* is used. Instead, we should use *ordinary* reasoning such as "How can Jesus be God if...?" The public would appreciate this kind of reasoning more than if we get inveigled into a discussion of Greek and Hebrew. For example, "How can Jesus be God if he said, 'My Father is greater than I'?"

It is like the word "godliness" in 2 Peter 1:6,7, which means "piety." "And ... to patience [add] *godliness*; And to *godliness* [add] brotherly kindness." The word "God" is not in the Greek in these verses. In certain cases, "godliness" could be "God-likeness," but Godlikeness would be

at the very *top* of a listing of qualities for the Christian to attain. One cannot go higher than Godlikeness—that is the epitome. Unfortunately, that is the word used in the King James to translate the Greek in Peter’s second epistle for the sixth quality, and then two more qualities are listed subsequently. The Greek has the thought of *reverence and piety* toward God.

Thus the Trinity is a subject that cannot be debated in a scholarly way with theologians. However, theologians are nervous if the usage of the neuter singular article with “Holy Spirit” is brought in, for they know it is not referring to a being. There are the *Holy Spirit* and the *unholy spirit*. Bringing in the unholy spirit (the spirit of fear, etc.) shows the foolishness of claiming a personality for the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, we should not get inveigled into a grammar discussion because theologians can steer it to their advantage. The public would think, “The theologians have gotten the degrees, so who are you to question?” We would then have to admit we lack that type of training. They could fire questions as on the witness stand—making us answer just “yes” or “no” with no explanation. We must be BOLD when the time comes, and we must prepare *years in advance* (not the night before) with “How come this?” and “How come that?”

How does the Holy Spirit “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”?

**Comment:** The Pastor wrote that the consecrated of the Gospel Age are an example as they let their lights shine in the present life, but wouldn’t this be only a *partial* fulfillment because many of the world have no contact with the truly consecrated? And even if there is contact, the consecrated are imperfect in the flesh. Therefore, wouldn’t the main fulfillment of this verse be in the Kingdom when the Holy Spirit is poured on all flesh, that is, when it is poured out in a different way?

**Reply:** We should keep in mind that these verses are talking about the Holy Spirit reproving the *world*. In other words, the context limits the interpretation. Has the *world* been *convinced yet* of the error of their way? No. There are occasions where, on a certain issue, people might see that they are wrong, and perhaps a member of the true Church was instrumental in pointing out the wrong, but this would be an isolated circumstance. Generally speaking, the world is *not convinced* or convicted in the present life. If they were, they would respond like the Jews at Pentecost, who asked, “What shall we do?” and then consecrated. The next logical step after an individual realizes he is a sinner and in need of help is to repent and then consecrate.

Actually, from another perspective, verse 8 is a little of both applications: the present life and the Kingdom. Down through the Gospel Age, the Church has been witnessing, and as they witness, different ones of the world have had contact with the truth. In the Kingdom, when mankind review their life and look back at their past actions and statements, they will be convinced *then* that they were in error and that the true Church was in the right. They will also then appreciate why God honored those who were in the right by giving them a spiritual resurrection. In the *future*, the world will be convinced by the Holy Spirit but pertaining to their deeds in the *present* life as they look back. The enlightenment of the future will help the world to see. Then they will glorify God in heaven.

Verse 11 mentions Satan as the “prince of this world.” Because Satan is invisible, many do not presently believe he exists. But in the Kingdom, all will know that he has been judged and that his fate is sealed. The tense in the *Diaglott* supports a future fulfillment: The world will know that “the prince of this world *has been judged*” (a *past* action). The world will *look back* upon that judgment.

The world’s awareness of sin, righteousness, and judgment is future, but it will be predicated upon the past because they will be given a review—not only of their personal lives but also of the history of the world as a whole. They will then understand the reason for God’s *righteous*

indignation. Because evidences have been given of the existence of an intelligent Creator, because all have received some enlightenment (through nature, for example), God is justified in His actions. The world is *willingly* blind and ignorant.

The thought in verse 13 is as follows: The Holy Spirit “will guide you into all truth [as it is due].”

Verse 14: “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” The pronoun “he,” referring to the Holy Spirit, should be “it.” The implication of this verse is that after Pentecost the Holy Spirit, acting as a spirit of *remembrance*, would enlighten the disciples in regard to Jesus’ previous words (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit helps us to recall certain things. Jesus had said that the disciples could not understand the things he was telling them, but that later, at Pentecost and afterwards, the Holy Spirit would call to remembrance the things necessary to be understood—the words spoken during Jesus’ earthly ministry.

“For he [it] shall receive of mine” signifies “For it [the Holy Spirit] shall manifest my words unto you so that you might have the same disposition and desire to please the Heavenly Father that I have.” Jesus was God’s *beloved* Son because he did the things that pleased the Father.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). We must be familiar with Jesus’ teachings and *understand* them (through the Holy Spirit) in order to have the mind of Christ. We get the teachings from God’s Word. (The power of God’s Word to sanctify us is brought out in the next chapter.) “And shall show it unto you.” The word “it” refers not only to Jesus’ words but also to the *lessons* he was trying to convey so that the disciples would be like him.

Trinitarians may make statements of three personalities, but they do not press the Holy Ghost aspect because there are problems. For instance, many texts on the Holy Spirit have nothing to do with personality. Moreover, there is an unholy spirit, and we do not think of the unholy spirit as a personality. The Holy Spirit pertains to character of *thought* and disposition. It is the disposition of God. “Ghost” is an Elizabethan term.

**John 16:16** A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

“A little while, and ye shall *not see me*” refers to Jesus’ crucifixion, when he was removed from their presence. “Again, a little while, and ye *shall see me*” refers to his resurrection, when the disciples saw him on and off for 40 days. Jesus was saying, “While I must leave you now, do not worry. I will be back again after my resurrection.” And even after his resurrection, he had to caution, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” (John 20:17). (Incidentally, “Because I go to the Father” is spurious in the Vatican Manuscript.)

**John 16:17** Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

**John 16:18** They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

Even though Jesus had told the disciples that he would be crucified, they were puzzled. And even though they were puzzled, notice that they did not voice their questions to Jesus. (Remember, he was addressing the eleven on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane.)

**John 16:19** Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

This verse tells us, in effect, that Jesus could read their thoughts. Now he would furnish a little more information.

**John 16:20** Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

Jesus was explaining his remarks of verse 16 but not in terms explicit enough for the disciples to know exactly what he meant. He told them they would have sorrow, grief, and anguish when he was absent from them. And that is what did happen. The disciples' hopes were dashed when he was crucified. Later, when assured of Jesus' resurrection, Peter said, "We were begotten again unto a lively [living] hope" (1 Pet. 1:3). Earlier the disciples said, "We trusted he was the Messiah, but now we are not sure" (Luke 24:21). When the risen but disguised Jesus joined the two on the way to Emmaus, he inquired why they were so sad. They replied, "Haven't you heard? Are you a stranger in these parts? Don't you know about Jesus of Nazareth?" (Luke 24:13-19). At least two million Jews were in Jerusalem at the Passover, and they could see the Crucifixion from the Temple. Hence the two could not understand Jesus' inquiry, but he was goading them. The disciples said, "We trusted that he would deliver Israel, but he was a prophet." They had to admit he was a prophet, but his ignominious death ("Cursed is he who hangs on a tree") crushed their hopes of his Messiahship (Gal. 3:13). They were very discouraged. (Note: The Scriptures quoted in this paragraph are paraphrased.)

"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Jesus told the disciples not only that they would sorrow but that when he was resurrected, they would be *joyous*. In fact, when they were assured of his resurrection, they were almost like lunatics with joy. They wanted to witness to everyone, "Jesus is alive!" But, first, they needed more information from him.

**John 16:21** A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

Jesus likened their coming sorrow to a woman in travail, which is a tender illustration—something probably all of them had witnessed. If we put ourselves in the disciples' place, we can understand their emotions. For 3 1/2 years, they heard Jesus speak as no other man spoke, and they witnessed his miracles. Next, they saw him on Calvary's hill, naked, on a cross, exposed to the whole nation. Wouldn't we have been confused too?

During his ministry, Jesus did not explain the necessity, the reason, for his death—that he must die in order to redeem. Jesus had many things to tell his disciples but could not reveal at that time because they did not have the Holy Spirit yet. Only *afterwards* did he explain and on the occasion when he joined the two on the way to Emmaus. Still later, the Apostle Paul explained the rationale; namely, when Adam sinned, another perfect man had to die in his stead in order to redeem the human race.

**John 16:22** And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples' joy was so great that no man could take it from them. They were willing to die for their faith.

The Jewish world back there rejoiced when Jesus was crucified. Similarly, during the period of the Holy(?) Inquisition, the populace rejoiced.

**John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.**

This verse shows there was a larger fulfillment than just what immediately happened after his resurrection. The fulfillment continues to the present day.

Verse 23 must be *qualified*. If we ask according to the *Father's will*, our prayer will be answered, but not if we ask amiss. Spiritual requests will be answered if we obey and progress in what we learn. Also, we must ask *in faith*—faith based on God's Word. The Father "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). We should ask ourselves, "Do I *diligently* seek the Father?" We must examine ourselves continually if we want the crown. We must *run* as if there is only *one* winner.

**John 16:24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.**

If we ask for *spiritual things*—and depending on the intensity of that desire—our joy will be full in the *present life*. "Joy" means *spiritual joy*, for "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). A fiery trial may be grievous, but if we are patient and persevering, looking to the Lord, we will see a lesson in the experience. *Sometimes* a stumble can be a stepping-stone.

Incidentally, we pray in *Jesus' name* to the Father. In praying to the Father, we recognize His supremacy, but we must pray in *Jesus' name*, that is, in *his righteousness*.

**John 16:25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.**

Ever since Pentecost, Jesus has not spoken to Christians in proverbs and parables. While he used many parables during his earthly ministry, he has subsequently provided information through the New Testament to those who ask. That is how he speaks "plainly." We can read the parables, but we can also get the explanation.

**John 16:26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:**

**John 16:27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.**

**John 16:28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.**

What a comforting thought for all Christians! We can ask in *Jesus' name* and actually pray to the *Father*, and why? Because "the *Father himself* loveth you"! And the Father loves us because we love Jesus. No man comes to Jesus unless the Father draws him. The high calling is of God, but it is in Christ in the sense that we are drawn *through* Jesus but *by* the Father. The Father chooses the Bride for the Bridegroom.

"The *Father himself* loveth you." The disciples knew that Jesus loved them—they were with him for 3 1/2 years, and during that time, he gave many demonstrations of his love. Now he was

saying, “The *Father* loves you too, because you love me.” They were two different personalities: the Father was in heaven, and Jesus was down here. In John 17:11,21,22, Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one with him as he and the Father were one. All of the Church are to be at one with God—with the same love, joys, sentiments, and appreciation of the principles of right and wrong. In other words, we want the mind of God and the mind of Christ.

The Father loves us because we love Jesus and because we believe Jesus came forth from Him. It is almost mathematical, very precise: “I came from the Father into the world; I leave the world to go to the Father.” “I came from Him, and I am returning to Him.” God sent His Son here on a mission to redeem man.

**John 16:29** His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

This comment is based on verses 25-28. To us verse 28 seems so simple (Jesus came into the world, and he left the world), but the disciples still could not fully grasp the situation at this time.

**John 16:30** Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Other versions give the thought that “Before we ask a question, you seem to be able to read our minds; this capability convinces us you are who you say you are [that is, the Messiah]” (RSV, Jerusalem Bible, Living Bible). In other words, the capability of audibly producing the question in advance showed Jesus knew what the disciples were thinking. What brought their conviction was that Jesus needed no man to ask him a question—he already knew.

**John 16:31** Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

Jesus’ question is interesting. The disciples had just said, “We believe.” Then Jesus replied, “Do you *really* believe?” In John 14:1, Jesus said, “Believe in God, believe also in me.” He had been preparing them, yet the belief did not sink in deep enough for the subsequent experience. The Holy Spirit would bring these things to remembrance later.

**John 16:32** Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

Compare this verse with the end of verse 30: “By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” Verse 32 reminds us of Peter’s boast: “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). In spite of his words, Peter later denied Jesus. Here in verses 31 and 32, Jesus was saying, “That is what you say now. Even at this very moment, things are being triggered where you will be tested on that point, and you will fail momentarily.” “You will be scattered; every man will go his *own* way” is the thought.

**John 16:33** These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

What did Jesus mean when he said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”? In what sense could the disciples be of good cheer because Jesus overcame the world? Because he overcame the world, he could succor the apostles (and us) in trials and give the proper counsel and advice. Jesus’ own experience in tribulation, including being put to death, qualifies him to help us as a sympathetic high priest.

In the Greek, the word “tribulation” means “pressure.” Thus Jesus was contrasting peace and pressure. Some translators use “threshing” in the sense of harvesting grain. Threshing separates the food content (wheat germ) from the kernel, or even the wheat from the stalk.

**John 17:1** These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

This prayer of John 17 occurred outside the Garden of Gethsemane, en route, before Jesus crossed the brook Cedron (John 18:1). The eleven disciples were with him and heard him. Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven as he prayed (as he did when Lazarus was raised).

Notice Jesus’ humility. He wanted to be glorified only so he could, in turn, glorify the *Father*. He recognized the supremacy of His Father in all matters.

But in what way would Jesus glorify God by being glorified himself? The redemption work and God’s plan could be carried out. During his earthly ministry, Jesus glorified the Father, giving credit to Him, always teaching His doctrine, etc., but now, if raised from death and given the great capability of the new nature, he would be able to continue to glorify the Father but on a higher and grander scale.

**John 17:2** As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

In this context, Jesus’ “power over all flesh” will occur in the *future*, when he reigns as King of earth and exercises his power. However, the words Jesus uttered after his resurrection, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth,” applied then and had a *different* meaning (Matt. 28:18). He meant that *at that time*, all power had been *secured*, not exercised. Jesus has the potential; he has proven faithful. Therefore, all of the promises are his, but he cannot exercise the power until the Church is complete and the Father says, “All right, *now* you can do it.” Jesus waits until then.

The Bible was written not just for us but for ages and ages into the future—hence the seemingly incongruous tenses. It will be a textbook for other planets and generations. All will know that Jesus came to *earth*, to *this* planet. He died on Calvary here *on earth*. Therefore, even the simplest statements are fraught with meaning. The lessons can be deeper than we realize.

The first part of verse 2 mentions “all flesh”; the second part mentions the disciples. The *Father* gave Jesus the disciples, and Jesus trained and taught them—the eleven at that time. But all of the Church are called of God and come to Him through Jesus. Thus Jesus again used past tense (“thou *hast* given”) for something mainly futuristic from the time of utterance.

The phrase “eternal life” is characteristic of John’s Gospel and his epistles. This expression means *everlasting life*, which is a boon, let alone immortality. It would embrace immortality (the Little Flock) but includes also the Great Company.

**John 17:3** And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

The Living Bible is good: “This is the way to have eternal life—by knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth!” In other words, our initial conversion is not sufficient to get eternal life. We must spend however long we have here in the flesh getting to *know* God and Jesus, which means knowing God’s Word and obeying. We must learn as much about their characters as we can. Emphasis: We must know *God* (and Jesus Christ, whom *God* sent).

Even if we lived *forever*, we still would *not fully know* God; that is, it would take an *eternity* to know God because He is so great. There are so many facets of His love, power, wisdom, and justice that just as an eternity never ends, so God's attributes can never be fully plumbed. God's qualities, depth of character, etc., will always be on the increase. (Certain translations stress this thought.) Some of Jesus' simplest statements are the hardest to fathom. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

**John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.**

Notice the tense. Jesus had finished his public ministry of educating his apostles and others. Following this prayer, he would not be talking much with them. (And even after his resurrection, he spoke only with his disciples.) Yet his greatest work lay ahead: suffering the death on the Cross. Therefore, verse 4 is both "yes" and "no" depending on the perspective.

This verse reveals something about Jesus' character; namely, he intended to *fulfill* the work given to him, for he had *to die* in order to glorify God. He would have alternating experiences of deep sorrow followed by firm determination, but his *will* was crystallized like iron. In other words, even though one's character is crystallized, it does not mean his emotions are frozen. Jesus knew what lay ahead, and he was determined to see it through. Hence when he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth," he was thinking not only of his completed earthly ministry but of the upcoming crucifixion where he would be a public spectacle. He spoke of his crucifixion as past tense, but it was future.

**John 17:5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.**

Jesus was asking to be restored to the glory he had as the Logos—not for anything additional. His great humility here is interesting despite his talents and capability. With us, just to see the Father and have life will be a blessing. True, we must run the race to win it; we must run as if we had to beat out all other contenders. Such motivation, concentration, and effort are needed in order to attain the prize of the high calling. Nevertheless, to get life even as Great Company will be a great joy and blessing.

"With thine own self" means "in thine own *presence*." Jesus wanted to be with the Father as formerly. He longed just to be in the Father's presence—to hear His voice and to see Him. (See the RSV, New English Bible, and Phillips Modern English.)

**John 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.**

Jesus was *audibly* praying and *all the time* looking heavenward. The eleven were listening. He was thinking not only of the disciples present but of those who would become his down through the age. This would have been a mentally exhausting prayer.

Verse 6 is touching, for it shows that *Almighty God* opened our eyes of understanding to see Jesus as the Savior. Here Jesus is speaking especially of the apostles, but other Scriptures show that all of the Church are called of God. Up to this point, the eleven had "kept" God's Word—and they would till death, we find out later. These eleven, plus Paul, are the twelve foundations of the Temple.

One can be of a tender age and make a sincere consecration. However, parents should not

push or pressure their children into consecration. The motive can be *pride*—wanting children to be “in the truth.” The old heart can be deceitfully wicked and deceptive. Such pressure is scary and sad. We can reason with our children regarding consecration and hope they will dedicate their lives, but we should not pressure them. The Lord “loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Hence consecration should be a *natural* outpouring.

**John 17:7** Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

“All things whatsoever *thou* hast given me are of *thee*.” Jesus always gave credit to God.

**John 17:8** For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

John 16:30 records the apostles’ affirmation of this belief that Jesus came out from the Father. “Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” In the next verse, Jesus replied, “Do ye now believe?” In other words, “Do you *really* believe in me?” Jesus uttered these words for future reference. He was aware of the depth of despondency that would come over them because even if they did not deny him like Peter, they would forsake him. And their forsaking would hit them hard. Jesus’ question shows that he was aware of the forsaking in advance and that it was just about to occur. His words in John 17:6, “They have *kept* thy word,” were intended to be a comfort, or solace, to the apostles lest they become so despondent they would think they had committed the sin unto Second Death. Some forsake the Lord because of a wave of depression that comes over their soul. They cannot see that they can be forgiven. Thus it is important to note that care and concern are in the Word.

**John 17:9** I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

Jesus’ prayer continues. He was still en route to Gethsemane. Notice that he made a clear-cut distinction between the consecrated and the unconsecrated. Jesus prayed for his disciples, for those the *Father* had given him. The expression “*Thou* hast given me” is used repeatedly in Chapter 17, and it shows the *Father’s* superiority. “*Thou* hast sent me,” another expression used frequently in John 17, also shows the superiority of the Father. Thus John 17 is excellent for refuting the Trinity. In his prayer to the Father for the disciples, Jesus showed that the union is not triune but 144,000 + 2 (the Father, the Son, and the Little Flock are “one”).

**John 17:10** And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

As the consecrated manifest faithfulness to Jesus in the present life, he is “glorified” in them. This verse applied primarily to the disciples, the apostles, but secondarily to the whole Church. “Glorified” means “honored.” The Church in the present life honors Jesus as Jesus has honored the Father.

**John 17:11** And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Jesus knew he was about to leave the world, so he spoke of the future as the present. Some misunderstand John, especially in his epistles, where he used tense (past versus present versus future and vice versa) as Jesus did.

“Holy Father, keep ... those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are.*” This is a

powerful Scripture—it is good proof against the Trinity and one of the best Scriptures to show that the Church would have the *same type of union* that the Father and the Son have. The Church are one with God and Jesus in the same sense that they are one with each other.

In regard to the designation “Holy Father,” it is bad enough that the pope is considered Christ’s vicegerent on earth, but when he assumes a title due the *Father*, it is blasphemy of the most repulsive kind. The pope, *a human being*, usurps this prerogative of *God Almighty Himself*.

Again, God’s superiority is shown. Jesus was *asking* (not ordering), praying to the *Father*. It was up to the *Father*. Moreover, the apostles were comforted to audibly hear Jesus utter this prayer, petitioning the Father on their behalf.

**John 17:12** While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

The “son of perdition” was Judas, and the term implies a Second Death destiny. This verse indicates that Jesus knew about the heart condition of Judas even prior to the actual betrayal. It also shows Jesus’ intimate acquaintance with the Father and the Father’s plan. He knew that eleven apostles would make their calling and election sure and that one would fail utterly.

Verse 12 is proof that Judas went into Second Death, for “perdition” signifies complete destruction or extinction, from which there is no return. The beast that goes into the “lake of fire,” which is called Second Death, is also spoken of as going into perdition (Rev. 19:20; 20:14; 17:11).

It is helpful to consider other Scriptures that indicate Second Death. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the man of sin is called the “son of perdition.” Hence both Judas, an individual, and Papacy, a system, go into utter extinction. Psalm 41:7-9, speaking of Judas, says that “he shall rise up no more”; i.e., his fate is utter extinction (Second Death). And Matthew 26:24 reads, “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.” If Judas had not been born, he would not be rendered infamous throughout eternity for having betrayed Jesus. All other beings, when created in the future on other planets, will read the story of Jesus here on earth and know that Judas was the traitor. Therefore, it would have been better for *Judas* if he had not been born and another had done the betraying.

**John 17:13** And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Jesus had checkered emotions at the end of his life. During the Memorial Supper, he said his soul was exceedingly sorrowful almost unto death. Now he was speaking of his joy, for as soon as the wave of depression was lifted, he came back to his normal feelings. Yet later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prostrated himself and prayed that, if possible, the cup would be withdrawn from him. Many Christians try to say that joy should be *ever present*, but that is *wrong!* Jesus and the Apostle Paul both had mixed experiences. Paul said, “Now no chastening [tribulation] for the present [while going through it] seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb. 12:11). However, if we are rightly and patiently exercised, it does work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Some writers say Paul contracted a sickness in his travels that had recurrences. Physical ill health does affect us. When sick, we are not the same as when we are healthy. If one part of our body hurts, the whole body hurts. Even the brain is affected.

2 Corinthians 1:8,9 proves that Paul had “down” experiences: “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.” Paul and Jesus both despaired of life at times.

We are not to be stoics—impervious to pain, etc., through mental conditioning. What we should do is fix our determination so that NOTHING will deter us from our goal. But we cannot go through life without some emotion.

**John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**

Interesting! During his 3 1/2-year ministry, the apostles were “hated” too, as well as Jesus, probably by some friends and neighbors along the way who thought they were fanatics to leave their professions and families. Jesus appreciated the apostles’ suffering up to that time in espousing him and his cause. When the Twelve were sent out, and the 70 later, they no doubt suffered.

**John 17:15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.**

This verse is a reminder of part of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus prayed that God would keep his followers “from the Evil One [Satan]” (see *Diaglott*). Verse 15 is also proof that the Christian should not isolate himself from the world—he should just keep himself unspotted by it.

**John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**

In spite of the imperfections of the eleven apostles, Jesus could appreciate their loyalty.

**John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**

Sanctification is *progressive* and ongoing throughout our consecrated life. If we are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, it means a *continual* imbibing until the end of our course. The initial *act* is called consecration (although consecration can also mean a process). The *process* is usually called sanctification, which is the transforming power and the keeping of that consecration alive.

Notice, “through *thy* [God’s, not Jesus’] truth.” Again a verse in this chapter is a proof against the Trinity, for it shows the Father’s superiority.

“Thy truth” would be *all* of God’s truths: character lessons, principles, chronology, doctrines, etc. This term is broader than just a creedal thought. The humblest child who hungers and thirsts for truth and righteousness will be filled.

In our consecrated walk, we do make discriminations between teachers and fellowship. A teacher should *at least* be a little above the average—and certainly on the subject that is being studied. However, even in fellowship, we should try to get information wherever we can.

If the leadership and instruction are not sufficient in our local ecclesia and we pray earnestly about the matter, God will provide. If we *hunger and thirst* to be fed, spiritual food will be supplied. Jesus said, “I will be with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20 paraphrase). One problem could be, Do we have the courage to leave our present class where we are not being fed? We should make a break and go where there is more spiritual food. We

are not to be bound by family or the fear that we will hurt feelings. It is the same principle as coming out of nominal Christendom. We should want to grow in grace and knowledge.

“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). There comes a point at the end of the age when the salt is leaving. Therefore, the general counsel will not always be the best counsel. As the Little Flock in the flesh gets less and less, the judgment of the majority is less sound. Many heads are not necessarily better than one head.

**John 17:18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.**

Neither Jesus nor the Christian is *forced* to go into the world. A proposition was presented, and Jesus and the apostles *voluntarily* went into the world—so should we.

Again the *Father's* superiority is shown in that *He* sent Jesus. Similarly, Jesus sends us and he is our superior. Order of authority: (1) the Father, (2) Jesus, and (3) disciples.

The invitation was given to Jesus by the Father. However, once the invitation was accepted, it became a command. First Jesus, of his own free will, gave his heart to the Lord God. *Then* he was commanded. The same is true with us. We are instructed to sit down and count the cost *before* we consecrate, but once we take the step of consecration, certain things become mandatory. Although there are degrees of importance, some things are absolutely required. For instance, now the Abrahamic Covenant is *unconditional*, but *originally* it was *conditional*. God told Abraham that *if* he left the country he was living in and went to a country God would show him, he would be blessed. Once Abraham obeyed, then the covenant, which previously had conditions, became *unconditional*. Once Abraham fulfilled his part of the agreement, God was required to give him what was promised. After consecration come “commands,” as shown in Acts 10:42, “And he *commanded* us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.”

**John 17:19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.**

In what way did Jesus sanctify himself for the Church? Jesus not only separated himself so that he could bless the world of mankind in due time, but he was willing to *share* this honor with others who would consecrate and be faithful unto death during the Gospel Age.

To “sanctify” means to set apart. We must be set apart from sin, let alone other things. Jesus did not have this problem with sin because he already was perfect. Therefore, his sanctification was of another nature. Jesus was so committed to the Father’s plan that there was no jealousy in regard to his followers sharing his honor. However, since we have the problem of imperfect flesh, our sanctification, or separation from sin, is a progressive, slower process, whereas Jesus, being perfect, was already sanctified.

**John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;**

“Neither pray I for these alone [the eleven apostles primarily and other believers at *that* time secondarily], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” This verse broadens the picture and gives us hope that we are included in these promises. “Their word” would be the apostles’ word, that is, the Gospels plus the epistles—the New Testament.

**John 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.**

The first part of this verse is very important for refuting the Trinity—it *shatters* the arguments of the Trinitarians. The 144,000 will *all* be “one” with God and Jesus. It is a oneness of purpose, intention, mind, spirit, and disposition.

Notice the last part of the verse: “that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” Suppose there had been no zealous apostles or believers back there. How much would we know about Christ? The apostles and disciples were so moved that they wrote the Gospels and epistles. As a result, not just their contemporaries but future generations, after their demise, would know the truth. Just as Jesus prayed for those who would believe in future days through the teachings of the apostles, so the apostles had the same motivation. They were concerned that a record be left to inform future generations. It was important that knowledge of Jesus’ ministry be perpetuated so that the world might believe that God had sent him. If that word had not gone out, who would know about Jesus’ life and ministry?

**John 17:22** And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

This “oneness” refers to both the present and the future life. However, in regard to the subject of “glory,” Jesus spoke of the *future* as present. We receive the “earnest” now, and the reality comes later when, if faithful, we will be born to the spirit nature (2 Cor. 1:22). This principle is shown in the Apostle John’s words in 1 John 2:13, “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” In what sense did the “young men,” who had not known Jesus in the beginning of his ministry, “overcome the wicked one”? These young men were not necessarily faithful unto death, so what did John mean? They had been faithful in respect to a *particular trial* by siding with the Apostle John. We should always keep this principle in mind with John, for he is the most misunderstood apostle in his writings. Thus here in verse 22, where John recorded Jesus’ words in regard to “the glory,” he was speaking in an *anticipatory* sense of a class who would respond faithfully but who had not yet finished their course. Beyond the veil, in the fullest sense, the “oneness” is in *nature*—the divine nature.

What “glory” did God give Jesus? The HOPE of glory. But Jesus was so determined to be faithful that he laid hold of something *future* as if it were *past*. Jesus had not yet secured that glory. Later he had a low point and wondered if he had been faithful. But neither Jesus nor the Christian can be judged by a low point—it may not be characteristic of normal behavior.

**John 17:23** I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

How do we know God loved Jesus? A voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). The Father answered Jesus’ prayers for healing and raising the dead. Also, Jesus himself was raised from the dead. And how do we know God loved the apostles? Historically, we can look back and see that, except for Judas, they made their calling and election sure.

**John 17:24** Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

“Before the foundation of the world” means “before the ordering of earth’s surface.”

**John 17:25** O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

**John 17:26** And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

This is Jesus' last statement to the disciples before his crucifixion. He had faithfully declared his Father's name and would yet do it through being faithful in the Crucifixion.

The seventeenth chapter of John uses two wonderful titles for God: "Holy Father" (verse 11) and "righteous Father" (verse 25). This is a very good chapter to keep in mind for the future in regard to refuting the Trinity, as well as for pointing out that the pope usurped God's title, let alone Jesus'. Based on this chapter, even the humblest saint can speak confidently on the relationship of the Father and the Son. We should concentrate on the simple statements and avoid semantics, for there are many Greek scholars. The unity is between Father, Son, and the Church.

The sum and substance of Jesus' ministry was to honor his *Father*. What he spoke and did were with the authority, power, knowledge, and instruction of the Father. Christendom has not known the Father. The emphasis is on Jesus, and then the matter is beclouded with the Trinity.

**John 18:1** When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

This verse is proof that the preceding prayer and discourse of Chapters 15-17 were uttered by Jesus *before* he entered the Garden of Gethsemane.

**John 18:2** And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

As a general rule, when Jesus went to Jerusalem for feast days, he slept in the Garden of Gethsemane. He also went there in the evenings of the last week of his ministry. "And he came out, and went, *as he was wont*, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him" (Luke 22:39). "And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives" (Luke 21:37).

**John 18:3** Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

A "band" was a fairly large number—more than 15 or 20. Included was a special group of soldiery that was attached to the Temple but was allotted to the Jews by the Roman ruler as permitted. In other words, those who came to apprehend Jesus were Jews, even the soldiery (John 18:12). The band, sent at the instigation of the chief priests and Pharisees, came with lanterns, torches, and weapons (swords and staves). Although a mixed group, the band consisted of a nucleus of officers assigned to police duty. Some were part of the household of Caiaphas; among these was Malchus, the high priest's servant (John 18:10).

Previously during his ministry, Jesus had evaded the Pharisees. This time, with *light* at night, *weapons*, and *numbers*, the band took no chances of his escaping.

**John 18:4** Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

Jesus knew in advance that his time for capture had come.

**John 18:5** They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

**John 18:6** As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to

the ground.

When Jesus said, "I am he," the account does not say his apprehenders "fell backward." They first went backward and *then* fell. His words were like a repelling force. This dramatic scene showed that Jesus had the power to resist arrest but did not utilize that power.

By identifying himself, Jesus was protecting his followers from molestation through mistaken identity. He said, "I am he" twice (verses 5 and 8), the first time strongly with a repelling effect. The second time, which was after his apprehenders had regained their composure, he probably used a little different tone of voice, reminding them of what he had said.

**John 18:7** Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

**John 18:8** Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

The band's mission was to apprehend Jesus, and Jesus purposely shielded his disciples. His prayer in Chapter 17 was that he would lose none (except Judas) because they had a ministry to perform. It was noble of Jesus to protect his disciples.

**John 18:9** That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

**John 18:10** Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Peter probably intended to decapitate Malchus, but the sword was divinely guided to cut off only the ear. Perhaps the servant's name was given because he became a disciple later.

**John 18:11** Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

The sword was providentially taken to the Garden of Gethsemane by the disciples to afford Jesus the opportunity of forbidding them to fight on his behalf. This incident also showed that Jesus' servants were willing to fight for him. In other words, not only did Jesus have magnetic or charismatic powers to repel the band, but his disciples could have been allowed to resist his apprehension. To state the matter another way, he *submitted* willingly.

In addition, Matthew 26:53 records that Jesus could have prayed for twelve legions of angels to rescue him. Thus there were three means of defense: (1) the Father's angels, (2) the disciples fighting for Jesus, and (3) Jesus' personal power.

Jesus referred to the prayer he had uttered previously there in the Garden regarding the cup the Father had given him to drink (Matt. 26:39-44). He was showing his resignation, for he had prayed that, if possible, the cup would be taken from him.

**John 18:12** Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

Jesus was led away *bound*, probably with his hands behind his back.

**John 18:13** And led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

Both Annas and Caiaphas were high priests at the same time (Luke 3:2). Jesus was led to Annas first to show deference, for Annas was the older of the two. High priests served for life, and for centuries there was a second high priest, an alternate, in case one was indisposed.

**John 18:14** Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

John 11:47-50 shows that the chief priests and the Pharisees had consulted together earlier in regard to Jesus. Psalm 2:2 tells us, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed.” In other words, the leadership (both religious and civil) took counsel together; that is, Caiaphas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod.

“Caiaphas ... gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.” The Holy Spirit moved Caiaphas to prophetically make the statement about Jesus’ dying for the people. Saul was similarly moved, and so were Balaam and Balaam’s ass (Num. 24:15-24; 1 Sam. 10:1,6,9-13). Thus the Holy Spirit can overrule to cause a statement to come forth, *even though the speakers are evil.*

Caiaphas might have been moved to make the statement from the standpoint that if Jesus became too popular as a king, the Romans would clamp down on the Jews with far greater severity. Rather than have the nation suffer, Caiaphas felt it was expedient for Jesus to die. This statement was recorded for history—far into the future. The sentiment will be, “Yes, it was expedient that Jesus die lest the whole race of Adam perish.” Sometimes profound wisdom comes out of the mouth of babes.

**Comment:** The Sanhedrin envied Jesus and feared he would take away their prerogatives of leadership, so they went along with the suggestion of Caiaphas.

**John 18:15** And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

“Another disciple” was John. Should some try to say “another disciple” was not John because he referred to himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved,” we can cite John 20:2, which uses both expressions: “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.”

In what way was he “known unto the high priest”? There was a family relationship, probably through marriage. A daughter of Zebedee might have married a kin of the high priest. Anyway, John was allowed right into the palace, and it is important to realize that both John and Peter followed Jesus when the other apostles fled. Their action was noble. The “palace,” the personal home of Caiaphas, was near the Temple but southwest of it. The houses of Annas and Caiaphas were very close to each other, just across a courtyard.

John Mark is probably the one who lost his robe (Mark 14:51,52). Not an apostle, he was like Peter’s right-hand man for a number of years. At the close of Peter’s ministry, John Mark went over to Paul. He had been with Paul earlier but was barred for desertion. Later he was reinstated, but in the meantime, he united with Peter. Thus the Gospel of Mark is sometimes called the Gospel of Peter. Mark merely wrote what Peter dictated.

**John 18:16** But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

There is a little pathos in regard to Peter’s standing “at the door without” while John went into the palace. By John’s speaking to “her that kept the door,” the girl might have suspected Peter was a disciple, but she obeyed John and let Peter in.

**John 18:17** Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

“Art not thou *also* one of this man's disciples?” indicates that John, as well as Peter, was known as being one of Jesus' disciples. However, because Jesus was the focus of attention and the chief priests were so happy he was in their custody, they ignored John. This verse is Peter's first denial.

**John 18:18** And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

Jesus was crucified the beginning of April, a time of year when Jerusalem was quite cold—although milder than our area. When the apostles slept in the Garden of Gethsemane, they could have had a fire and bundled themselves up to withstand the coolness of the night.

Notice the setting: servants and officers were standing right there. Their presence made Peter's test more difficult when he denied Jesus a second time (verse 25). At this point, Peter must have been something like a zombie, for he had already denied Christ once. Lesson: Peter's experience is recorded to warn us lest we do likewise when we have a similar experience at the end of the age.

**John 18:19** The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

The questioning was hypocritical, for the high priest knew perfectly well what Jesus had taught. He (and the others) had probably all heard Jesus' teachings with their own ears, and they also had spies listening.

In their asking Jesus to tell “of his doctrine,” it would be like asking us to explain in short order what our beliefs are. Under such conditions of brevity, Jesus would be more apt, they thought, to state something they could use as grounds against him. Hence the motivation for asking Jesus was *hypocritical* and faultfinding. They wanted him to incriminate himself; then they would not need other witnesses. Someday in the future, we may be similarly confronted.

**John 18:20** Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

**John 18:21** Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

Despite the question about the disciples (verse 19), the high priest was particularly centering his attention on *Jesus*, whom he and the others were trying to implicate. Jesus' reply (verses 20 and 21) seems to suggest that the high priest viewed him something like the nominal systems view us. Those in the Truth movement are cast as being associated with a cult, a rather *secret* cult. The nominal systems say, “This group has strange views. They do not vote, go to war, etc.” The implication is that we are a nefarious group. The same applied to Jesus. The high priest was suggesting that the sentiments he harbored were of a revolutionary nature—that his disciples could potentially be soldiers for his mysterious Kingdom. The insinuation was that Jesus was hiding something, but he replied in effect, “I have nothing to hide. What I have taught has been taught openly. Everyone should know my views. There are no secret doctrines.”

**John 18:22** And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

Jesus' answer (verses 20 and 21) was taken as an offense by the high priest. No matter how delicate the reply, it would have been resented by the high priest. Hence one of the officers struck Jesus.

Jesus did not want to expound about what he believed, who his disciples were, or what his doctrine was. One reason may have been that he did not want to delay matters too long, for he had to die at a particular hour and there remained certain experiences to go through.

**John 18:23** Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

Jesus gave a clever reply. By asking a question and turning the tables around, he put his opposers on the defensive. He often used this technique. Earlier he had said, "If one smites you on the cheek, turn the other cheek also" (Matt. 5:39).

Evidently, Jesus wanted the chief priests to present a legal charge for arresting him and holding a trial. His replies forced the high priest to get witnesses. In other words, Jesus wanted the chief priests to bring forth a charge that would be more recognizable by Pilate, for Jesus, knowing the Scriptures in regard to the necessity of death by crucifixion, wanted to die by Pilate's hand. By making them think along these channels, Jesus knew they would be better prepared to give a charge when they subsequently went to Pilate. As they saw that their answers did not work, they brought up a charge that would: treason. They later hypocritically said, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

Thus Jesus was forcing the chief priests to develop a charge that would be irrevocable, for he knew this was his time to die. He did not want to either slow down or speed up matters because 3 p.m. was to be the hour of his death. The trials had to be finished by early in the morning so that he could be brought to Pilate in time and the charges made. He had to die the next day from the Gentile standpoint, the same day from the Jewish standpoint.

Jesus' reply in verse 23 was in harmony with the Scripture about his being brought to the slaughter as a lamb. He was meek, especially in the trial with Pilate; he witnessed a good confession and would not defend himself *publicly*. (*Privately*, however, he said to Pilate, "You speak the truth. My kingdom is not of this world.")

Notice that although Jesus did not defend himself here, he did try to have the accusation clarified. We should do the same if our circumstances are similar. We can simply ask, "What is the charge?" One purpose in asking for the clarification was for the benefit of the hearers, who could then see the trumped-up nature of the charge. For example, Nicodemus might well have been in the room. Thus Jesus did speak, but he did not try to defend himself. He just wanted the charge clarified.

**John 18:24** Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

Caiaphas was considered the determining factor, for it was he who gave the advice, "It is expedient that one man die lest a nation perish" (John 11:50 paraphrase).

**John 18:25** And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

**John 18:26** One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

**John 18:27** Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Jesus had predicted that Peter would deny him thrice before “the cock crew.” Although “cock crow” was the term for a watch in the night, there may have been a simulated sound as well. It would be like the town crier or Muslims in their minarets crying the hour.

Tradition says that after repenting, Peter woke up every morning at that hour and thanked God for repentance. Anyway, Peter’s denials were certainly scarred in his mind. His repentance benefited not only him but all other Christians. As a result of his repentance and growth, his epistles became more meaningful.

Probably Peter did not remember Jesus’ prediction until the Lord looked at him. That look must have penetrated his very soul, for in that look, there would have been love and compassion as well as sternness. In addition, Jesus’ face would have been bruised at that time. He could have walked on by without looking at Peter, but despite the pressures, he took time out to show concern for Peter—and for his mother too.

**John 18:28** Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

The “hall of judgment,” which was off the Via Dolorosa, was part of Pilate’s house, or residence. It was outside on the lower level. In some pictures, Pilate is seen leaning out over a balustrade to say, “I find no fault in this man” and “Behold the man.” That probably was the case, but the charges were brought down below by the Jews. Pilate sat on both levels depending on what he was doing. On the lower level, he listened to the charges. On the upper level, he pronounced judgment.

“It was early”—shortly after 6 a.m. Jesus was led from Caiaphas to the Hall of Judgment at an early hour. The Jews did not go into the Hall of Judgment, but they had to communicate with Pilate. It was an open area, but they did not step down into the hall proper lest they get polluted for the Passover.

This is the fourth Passover in the Gospel of John. Only John’s Gospel enumerates the four Passovers, thus proving Jesus’ ministry was 3 1/2 years long. The reckoning is as follows:

6 months from October to Passover No. 1	=	1/2 year
12 months until Passover No. 2	=	1 year
12 months until Passover No. 3	=	1 year
12 months until Passover No. 4	=	<u>1 year</u>
Total		3 1/2 years

**John 18:29** Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

**John 18:30** They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

**John 18:31** Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

Right away Pilate wanted to brush this matter off, for he realized the Jews did not have a real charge. To say Jesus was a malefactor but not specify the charge was not convincing to Pilate. The Jews had expected Pilate to take their word for Jesus’ “wrongdoing.”

After the Passover feast, the Jews could have put Jesus to death themselves—that is when they

stoned Stephen—but they did not want to wait a week lest the matter cool off. Therefore, they said to Pilate, “It is not lawful [according to Roman law] for us to put any man to death.”

The priesthood wanted to have clean hands in regard to Jesus’ death because he was popular. At this Passover season, the multitudes had just cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Hence the priesthood had to tread softly. As for the culpability of the priesthood, the false witnesses were brought up before the *religious* authorities, not the civil authorities. Two false witnesses were procured to get a *religious* consensus. (Under the Jewish law, two witnesses were needed to condemn a man to death.) Once the religious consensus was obtained, the matter was taken to Pilate, and another strategy was pursued to persuade the reluctant civil authorities. John 11:48 is a proof of Jesus’ popularity and the fact that it was gaining momentum. “If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”

Caiaphas pictures the pope as spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church. However, the corresponding antitypical statement about it being expedient for “one man” (the feet members) to die may not be said to the public at large but may be spoken among the religious leaders. This possibility is shown in the agreement between Salome and Herodias to get John the Baptist’s head.

**John 18:32** That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

That death was crucifixion, as mentioned in John 12:32,33, etc. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”

When Pilate saw that he could not dismiss the matter so readily, he called Jesus in for questioning. But the delay was just putting the noose around Jesus’ neck, for the Jews would devise other ways of incriminating him.

**John 18:33** Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Pilate called Jesus into the Judgment Hall. This audience between Jesus and Pilate was relatively private. Pilate would have been aware that Jesus was being called the Messiah and a King, for it was his responsibility to know what was going on. As custodian of the Roman Empire, he had to have eyes and ears throughout the realm. He knew Jesus was talking about a coming Kingdom and being the Messiah (or King/Emperor as the Romans would view the matter).

**John 18:34** Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Jesus asked Pilate why he had put forth the question “Art thou the King of the Jews?” In other words, Jesus was saying, “Did others prompt you to ask this question, or are you asking yourself?” Notice Pilate’s answer in the next verse.

**John 18:35** Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

Pilate had to get information in order to keep a record to show his superiors in case something happened. He saw that the chief priests meant business. He wanted to shirk his responsibility and not get entangled, but that was not possible. Hence, like a judge, he needed more information. If he were questioned later and said, “I do not know,” the emperor would not have been pleased.

Jesus did not answer the original question (verse 33), but countered with a question (verse 34). When Pilate responded (verse 35), Jesus gave another answer (verse 36) and eventually answered the original question (verse 37). The point is that Jesus answered later and *on his own terms*.

Verses 33 and 34: One reason Jesus questioned Pilate was to test his sincerity. The question “Art thou the King of the Jews?” could have been asked from one of two motivations: (1) Pilate wanted *personal* information. (2) Pilate wanted information for record-keeping purposes—for the *report* he would have to make to Caesar. The motivation was the latter. Pilate’s tenure in office depended on how well he discharged his responsibilities, so he needed information. In making his report, he had to be aware of any threat to Rome.

Of course Jesus knew what was in Pilate’s heart, but there was a beneficial effect in asking; namely, the questioning focused attention on the real issue. For example, if one is insincere and that fact is brought to his attention, a purpose has been served. However, Pilate did have a sense of righteousness and justice in that he did not want to put Jesus to death. He could see through the envy of the chief priests, and that the charges against Jesus were trumped up, not worthy of death. But Pilate was not personally interested in Jesus’ teaching. He was trying to find out if Jesus did, in fact, *consider* himself to be the King of the Jews. He did not want to know *if* Jesus was King but if Jesus *thought* he was King. Pilate could also have had in mind, as Jesus seems to be saying, “If it is true that you *purport* to be the King of the Jews, and if your followers believe you are the King of the Jews, that might constitute a threat to Rome.” Jesus’ reply in verse 36 allayed any such suspicions.

**John 18:36** Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

In other words, “I have men who would be very willing to give their lives unto death, but my Kingdom is not of this age, so you do not have to worry along this line. My followers would defend me if I gave the word.”

“Now is my kingdom not from hence.” This statement puzzled Pilate. “You are King of the Jews, but your Kingdom *is not of this age?*” The words were very confusing to Pilate—and to most Jews too.

**John 18:37** Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

“Art thou a king then?” It was hard for Pilate to rationalize this. “You are a King, but your Kingdom is future?” Jesus admitted, “What you say is true. I am a King. I was born for this reason, and I testify unto it.” Pilate’s next response is interesting.

**John 18:38** Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Pilate was not very religiously inclined even to the Roman gods. He was not interested in philosophy and felt truth could not be proved one way or the other. His question “What is truth?” really signified, “End of matter.” The conversation was cut off at that point.

Pilate had no philosophical views. Evidently, some previous experiences had soured him toward religion. “What is truth?” has been a quest all down through history. Many have

become discouraged in their quest for truth. Furthermore, “What is truth?” signifies that truth is relative to the believer. There were different viewpoints, but Pilate would do what he felt was right and just. And he turned around and said to the Jews, “I find in him no fault at all.” His concept of truth was to make righteous judgments. Beyond that—that is, in regard to philosophical judgments—he was not concerned.

It is interesting that Pilate did not feel Jesus’ remarks constituted a threat. He could see that Jesus’ doctrine was philosophical, not insurrectionist. Probably, too, he was impressed by Jesus. Moreover, Pilate would have heard of Jesus’ teaching: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). Thus Pilate perceived that Jesus’ Kingdom was more theoretical and not a practical threat to the Roman Empire. Also, Pilate could see that envy was a motive of the chief priests in wanting Jesus’ death.

**Q:** How would John, who was not present, have received this account of Jesus’ exchange with Pilate?

**A:** After having a premonition or dream, Pilate’s wife warned, “Have ... nothing to do with that just man” (Matt. 27:19). She subsequently, in later years, may have confided in others. Since there were believers in Herod’s and Caesar’s households, there probably also were believers in Pilate’s household who could have reported the conversation to John—perhaps a maid or even Cornelius the centurion.

**John 18:39** But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

**John 18:40** Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate tried to provide a way out. Since it was customary to release a prisoner at the time of Passover, he suggested that Jesus should be the one released. This way out would have allowed the chief priests to save face, and Pilate would have deemed justice done. But the chief priests wanted Barabbas released, and they moved the people accordingly (Mark 15:11).

Pilate’s *reluctance* to put Jesus to death is reminiscent of Herod with John the Baptist and of Darius with Daniel concerning the lions’ den. Herod did not expect John the Baptist’s head to be requested when Salome was offered a reward for dancing. Pilate did not expect Barabbas to be released when he mentioned the custom. Of course there will be some exceptions at the end of the age, but generally speaking, the civil authorities will be reluctant to prosecute the feet members. The fact that Pilate did try to dispense justice is shown by his publicly washing his hands (Matt. 27:24).

“It was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth [*third*—according to the Sinaitic MS] hour: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!” (John 19:14). The “third hour” was 9 a.m. Hebrew time (all four Gospels use Jewish time). Thus Jesus was intentionally taken to Pilate early in the morning, before the public was aware and would interfere. As the Passover Lamb, Jesus was slain between the two evenings. The seven-day feast followed the “day of preparation” (the feast began at 6 p.m.). The slaying of the lamb preceded the feast. Therefore, Jesus had to be removed from the Cross and put in the tomb before 6 p.m.

In addition to John’s calling Barabbas a “robber,” Luke 23:19 refers to him as a murderer and a seditionist: “Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.”

**John 19:1** Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

Being reluctant to crucify Jesus, Pilate thought the scourging might satisfy the bloodthirsty cravings and he would be able to release Jesus. In other words, the scourging was a ploy, or stratagem, on Pilate's part to pacify the multitude.

The Prophet Isaiah (50:6) wrote prophetically of Jesus, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Although Pilate tried to avert the Crucifixion by means of the scourging, he *unknowingly* was fulfilling prophecy.

**John 19:2** And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

Notice how Jesus was decorated. A circular crown of thorns, woven in and out, was pressed down hard onto his head, and a purple robe was put on him. Matthew 27:28 describes the robe as scarlet. Probably the robe was both scarlet and purple, being lined with scarlet. Both colors could then be seen because of the cape-like nature of the robe.

The robe may have belonged to the centurion at the Cross. He was melted down by a process—a process of conviction. But earlier, at this time, the soldiers could have borrowed his cape.

All of these details were necessary in order for Jesus to fully pay the penalty for Adam. The crown of thorns was an offset for the curse put on Adam that he would have to till the ground by the sweat of his brow and that thorns and thistles would spring forth. Also, Jesus had to die as a King because Adam was a king. In other words, Jesus did not just have to die as a perfect man for Adam, but other correspondencies had to occur. Adam was king over the animals as well as king over his own family and the potential future human race to come from his loins. With thorns being part of the curse, Jesus had to experience them also. The point is that in order to be the *corresponding* price, Jesus had to *feel* the curse as well as die as a perfect man.

**John 19:3** And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Notice, it was the soldiery who put the crown of thorns on Jesus' head and a purple robe on him and mockingly hailed him as "King of the Jews." This suggests that soldiers were present as bodyguards for Pilate when he had the private audience with Jesus (John 18:33-37). Pilate had asked Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" And Jesus had replied, "Yes." Thus the soldiers would have heard the exchange between Pilate and Jesus.

The mockery and ill treatment of Jesus show how cruel and hardened these soldiers were—and accustomed to doing such butchery as crucifixion and scourging. Their callousness was manifested even more later, at the Cross. They were sadistic.

**John 19:4** Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Three times in John's Gospel, Pilate said publicly in regard to Jesus, "I find *no fault* in him" (John 18:38; 19:4,6). The repetition is impressive. And it is true, as the hymn goes: "Spotless Lamb of God was he." Pilate's words point out that the charges were false.

The mood that prevailed had a bearing on Jesus' experiences and intensified his suffering and shame. Although the soldiers alone did the scourging, the multitude could have cheered as they witnessed it. The mood was like a football stadium, a bullfight, etc., where the sadistic nature of the crowd comes out. The people liked brutality and blood. Hence a mob spirit

prevailed in regard to Jesus. No doubt Satan provided ideas for the occasion, such as the crown of thorns and the robe. Nevertheless, the soldiers were hardened to comply. The scourging usually involved 40 lashes save one. On the end of each strip of leather was a piece of metal, so that when the victim was hit, the flesh was ripped off his back as the leather strips were pulled back. “With [or by] his stripes we are healed” becomes very significant (Isa. 53:5). Jesus bore MUCH humiliation and shame with great patience so that Adam’s sin could be forgiven (and thus ours and the world’s). Technically, Jesus died for Adam, but in the process, he was even helping those who had scourged him and the mob that had shouted, “Crucify him!”—for all will have the *opportunity* for life.

We see the temptation Jesus faced. He knew he possessed powers when he was taunted, “If you are really the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40 paraphrase). He patiently endured and went through the rigors of the Cross and death. In Matthew 26:53, he said, “Know ye not that I could call twelve legions of angels if I so desired?” (paraphrase). Over and over again we see that Jesus did not just die—it is the *manner* in which he died that is so significant.

**John 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!**

**John 19:6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.**

The chief priests and officers had a blind spot. No matter what Pilate said, they would not be dissuaded. The same was true of the Holy(?) Inquisition. Many thought they were doing God a favor by persecuting so-called “heretics.” Hence they were completely hardened to the cries and moans of the afflicted. *Reprint* No. 2312 entitled “Jesus Before Pilate—‘Consider Him’” contains an interesting statement: “The hatred inspired by religious fanaticism is the deepest, wickedest, and most conscienceless of all.”

There were different groups of soldiers. One group, plus a motley crew of others, apprehended Jesus in Gethsemane. A different group of soldiers, Pilate’s own cohorts and bodyguards, scourged Jesus. Thus the priests had a contingent of soldiers to keep order during their services, and Pilate had his own soldiers. We know that the officers who later watched the sealed tomb pertained to the priests because when the resurrection occurred, the soldiers reported to the priests, and the priests, in turn, paid hush money to the soldiers.

“Behold the man!” (“*Ecce homo*”) included Jesus’ countenance, bearing, stature, composure, and dignity—in spite of all the humiliation. The way Jesus patiently accepted the situation impressed Pilate, and Pilate was a hardened individual. But there are people who, even though hardened, want *justice*. Roman governors, such as Pilate, had to be very careful lest they lose their office overnight at the order of the emperor or someone higher up than they.

Pilate no doubt sensed that Jesus was *innocent*. If he consented too quickly to Jesus’ death, there might be repercussions. But he finally agreed when Caesar was mentioned. The chief priests said in effect, “We want your approval to have him crucified. If you refuse, you know what Caesar will do” (John 19:12).

Pilate’s words “Behold the man!” showed the excellency of Jesus’ dignity as a *perfect man*. This is a good example for us to remember when we are on trial at the end of the age. We are to keep our dignity, even when *suffering* for the *Lord’s* cause. Pilate discerned the perfection of Jesus’ being. Although Jesus’ countenance was 90 percent of the situation (see Strong’s), everything about him contributed. (The word “countenance” can be used in either a large sense or a

restricted sense.)

Pilate got his retribution in the present life. After the Crucifixion, he was removed from office very quickly and had a sad ending. Thus in the next age, he will be dealt with a little easier. There were *degrees* of responsibility among those who contributed to Jesus' death.

Pilate could see earlier, from his private audience with Jesus, that the latter posed no threat. Jesus had said in effect, "You do not have to worry about me. My Kingdom is not of this world, or else my servants would fight" (John 18:36 paraphrase). He had a different calling for some time in the *future*—and a very indefinite time from Pilate's perspective.

Both Pilate and Herod represent civil authorities, who will be pawns in the hands of the religious leaders at the end of the present age. Caiaphas and Herodias, picturing Papacy, were the respective connivers. Those in the Papacy will want the feet members put to death but will not want to do the dirty work themselves. The civil authorities will be reluctant to act but will have their hands forced.

Pilate was not concerned with *religion*, but he considered the subject of sedition against the government more inflammatory. The same will be true in the future. Civil authorities will be concerned over the feet members' influence on the downfall of governments.

**John 19:7** The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

Notice, Jesus "made himself the *Son* of God," not God or even God the Son. This verse is helpful in refuting the Trinity.

**John 19:8** When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

Pilate's being "more afraid" shows he already was afraid previously. Following a dream, his wife had warned, "Have nothing to do with that *just* man" (Matt. 27:19). This statement, plus looking at Jesus, made Pilate nervous—there were forces at play here. He could see that he was being railroaded by the chief priests and officers. Now, hearing the claim that Jesus was the *Son* of God, he was the more afraid.

Following the charge of the "Jews" that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God, Pilate may have foreseen what the next step would be (verse 12). "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend, for whosoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar" (paraphrase). Also, "son of God" was one of *Caesar's* titles. (Starting with Julius Caesar, this title was ascribed to the Roman emperor.) Pilate realized he would be pressured on this point. Although he still wanted an out for Jesus, he was frightened and suspicious of what would happen.

**John 19:9** And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Notice Pilate's strategy, for he deliberately took this moment to have Jesus come privately to him again. In other words, when the situation got delicate, he tried to distract attention or break the continuity of thought of the others by an intermission. He still did not want to crucify Jesus.

But notice what Jesus did next: he *refused* to answer. He did not want to defend himself to the point of being released, for he had come to *die*. Only after the second question did he answer. In other words, there are times to speak and times to be silent. It is hard to know when to do which.

Pilate knew the reports that Jesus was from Nazareth—he would have known Jesus’ background. But upon hearing the claim that Jesus was the Son of God, he asked, “Whence art thou?” Pilate half expected to hear that Jesus’ origin was another planet! In other words, he suspected Jesus was not really from Nazareth. However, Jesus did not answer because he did not want to be released. Because of their offices, Herod and Pilate both knew about Jesus’ doings and whereabouts—and the possibility that there *might* be some truth to his claim (even though Pilate had asked earlier, “What is truth?”).

**John 19:10** Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

**John 19:11** Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Jesus knew what was in Pilate’s mind. Therefore, not only did he correct Pilate’s statement about power, but because of Pilate’s fear, he made a statement about guilt and responsibility. He was saying, “Those who delivered me to you will be worse off.” Jesus’ response went to the core of Pilate’s being and made him tremble even more.

Another point. Jesus’ statement proves there are different degrees of responsibility. He did *not* say that Pilate had *no* sin but that the chief priests and officers had the *greater* sin. Whenever Jesus spoke—even if caught suddenly and off guard—he answered precisely and so true. His words were *astonishing*, for he was *always* prepared. He always had the appropriate reply (or nonreply).

**Q:** How do we harmonize John 18:31 where the Jews said, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,” with John 19:7 where they said, “We have a law, and by our law he ought to die”?

**A:** Their excuse was not that they could not put him to death, for they subsequently stoned Stephen, but that it was the Feast of Passover and they wanted to be ceremoniously clean. They did not even want to enter the Judgment Hall but stood in the open plaza. In other words, they conveniently used the Law to suit their own purposes.

At Passover *many* Jews were gathered in Jerusalem. The chief priests were nervous about all the people and hence did not want to be apparent as the murderers of Jesus, yet they were afraid to wait lest his popularity swell even more and their positions be in jeopardy. He had already chased the money changers out of the Temple, and they feared what else he might do. Hence they felt they could not wait any longer. And their trials (Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin) were held at night while the people were asleep so that Jesus could be brought to Pilate around 7 a.m. the next morning. At that early hour, they practically got Pilate out of bed, and they demanded an audience, shouting into the recesses of his residence.

Angels have knowledge far superior to men, one reason being that they have lived so much longer. But even without the divine nature, as a *perfect human being*, Jesus was *far* superior even to the angels. Consider the parables. When Jesus was questioned on a matter, he often replied with a parable—a *deep* parable *packed* with wisdom. His wisdom far outshone Paul’s logic. Paul is usually given the credit based on the fact that Jesus was somewhat limited because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, but the seemingly simple parables contained *very deep spiritual* lessons and, at the same time, satisfied the need to answer natural-minded men back there. Jesus did say there was much he wanted to tell but couldn’t. Nevertheless, he gave forth great wisdom with far-reaching spiritual applications. And consider that he uttered the parables on the spur of the moment—not after an hour’s private planning!

Nicodemus could not understand spiritual things when he went to Jesus by night, but Jesus used a helpful technique. He told Nicodemus something that stayed with him: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14). Then, later, when Nicodemus saw Jesus on the Cross, his body naked and all deformed, twisted like a serpent, he got the point. Jesus had predicted that crucifixion would be his fate—that he would be lifted up and draw all men to him. Now *Nicodemus* was drawn! He had been thinking of Jesus: “I know you are a wonderful Master with a lot of knowledge, but what is the Kingdom you talk about?” Nicodemus was borderline until he saw Jesus on the Cross and remembered the earlier statement. Jesus knew how to reach men’s hearts, so that if they were of the right caliber, they would respond. The original going of Nicodemus to Jesus was like being led of the Father to him. Even though it was at night, Nicodemus took the initiative, and he was rewarded for that step.

**John 19:12** And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

Pilate sought to release Jesus after the latter said there could be no power over him if it were not according to the Father’s will. Since Pilate was accustomed to having the power of life and death over his subjects, Jesus’ words must have made quite an impression.

Earlier the chief priests called Jesus a blasphemer. Now they changed the charge to treason. They cleverly turned the situation to their own advantage, knowing they had Pilate by the throat.

**John 19:13** When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

Pilate came down from an upper court to the Judgment Seat below. The seat itself was elevated. Now came the time for a decision. The chief priests anticipated that Pilate would concur, for he was frightened by their mention of Caesar. The implication was, “If you do not put Jesus to death, we are going to press charges to Caesar.” Hence Pilate was forced to make a judgment.

It is interesting that John used the Hebrew word for Pavement, *Gabbatha*, and the Hebrew word for Calvary, *Golgotha*.

**John 19:14** And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

**John 19:15** But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

It was a thorn in Pilate’s flesh to bring up Caesar again. How hypocritical! The chief priests despised the Roman government, wanted their freedom, and were looking for Messiah. What irony!

John’s observation of *repetition* is interesting. This is the third time Pilate, a *heathen*, called Jesus “King” (John 18:39; 19:14,15). John also observed the *repeated* efforts of Pilate to either shift responsibility back to the Jews or suggest a way out of putting Jesus to death (John 18:31,39; 19:1,4-6,12,14,15). The repetition points out the degree of responsibility and guilt that fell on the Jews, that is, on the Jewish *religious leaders*. John is also showing the *tenacity* of the Jews in pressing the charges. Every time Pilate brought up a point, he showed his desire to drop the

charges. The account reveals the bloodthirstiness of the scribes and Pharisees to have Jesus put to death. For this reason, the Jews hate the Gospel of John; they consider John to be anti-Semitic.

Although John did not narrate all of Jesus' trials, he listed many of them: Annas, Caiaphas, Hall of Judgment (John 18:28), Hall of Judgment for private questioning by Pilate (John 18:33), Judgment Hall (John 19:9), and Judgment Seat (Pavement or Gabbatha) (John 19:13).

In regard to the reference to Caesar by the chief priests, they should not have entered into government matters, for there was separation of Church and State under the Jewish arrangement. They were wrong to try to trick Jesus earlier by showing him a coin and asking about paying taxes. Their attitude was, "Why, if he were a loyal Jew, he should abhor paying tribute money to Rome!"

According to the Sinaitic manuscript, the time was the *third* hour (not the sixth hour) Jewish reckoning, or 9 a.m., when this last interchange with Pilate took place, after which Jesus was led away to be crucified. Incidentally, the scourging was rhythmically done. The 39 stripes could have been administered in just 1 1/2 minutes. Hence the chief priests were very successful in getting the matter over with before the populace realized what was happening.

**John 19:16** Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

**John 19:17** And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

The fact that John pointed out Hebrew words (19:13,17) proves his Gospel was written in Greek (not Aramaic). Jesus spoke in Aramaic for the most part, although he did speak Greek and Hebrew at times. The Gospels were all written in Greek. When Jesus performed one of his miracles, he said in Hebrew, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be [thou] opened" (Mark 7:34). No doubt the events have been photographically recorded. When they are viewed in the Kingdom, these key words will be repeated in the original Hebrew. Incidentally, when there is one language on earth, all will know the language spoken in Israel. In Jesus' day, the Jews were forced to know two languages: Hebrew plus Greek for commerce and business. They had to know a smattering of Latin too because the Roman Empire occupied the land and all decrees and public legal pronouncements were in Latin. The same could be true in the earlier phases of the Kingdom, even though one universal language will be gradually implemented. Hence the original Hebrew words will be meaningful.

**Q:** Before the Church is complete, will we see a remnant of Jews become spiritual in the sense of running the race for the Little Flock?

**A:** I am not inclined to think so, but it can be. However, some will be interested in truth from a natural and practical standpoint.

When the priests said, "We have no king but Caesar," they must have spoken very threateningly because right after that statement, Pilate sent Jesus away to be crucified. The centurions, as Pilate's representatives, would have escorted Jesus to keep back the crowds. "Unto them" (verse 16) means "unto their wishes." Pilate gave Jesus over according to the desires of the chief priests, but Pilate had his own soldiers do the work.

The place of crucifixion looks like a skull. The hill has pocket cavities that resemble eyes and a promontory that projects out. Called Gordon's Calvary, the hill is north of the Damascus Gate, a short distance away.

Originally, the skull was concealed underground. Then about 200 BC, the hill was dug out to make Jerusalem harder to capture. In the process, the skull was exposed. No doubt Satan, who would like to bury all evidence, was behind the thought to fill that land in again subsequent to the Crucifixion. This happened in AD 135 when Hadrian made a ramp to capture the city. Then in 1874, the skull was again excavated. (Note: The Vespasian-Titus siege of Jerusalem was earlier, in AD 69. The last two fortresses fell in AD 73, one of which was Masada.)

As for the skull formation, it was fitting that Jesus paid the Ransom price for dead humanity on the very spot that resembled what he would redeem, figuratively speaking. Gordon described the topography as being the skull of a person lying on his back. The chest would be the Temple Mount proper. The neck was the gully that during the Hasmonean rulership era in Israel was dug out to make it more difficult for an army to conquer Jerusalem. (The wall, plus the gully, made Jerusalem harder to conquer.)

Originally, Skull Hill was part of Mount Moriah, the mount where Abraham offered up Isaac. The mount was like a loaf of bread before it was gouged out and the skull exposed. Just as Jesus bore his cross, so Isaac, picturing Jesus, bore the wood for the sacrifice. Both were willing sacrifices. In addition, Arabic tradition states that Mount Moriah is where Adam died—specifically at Golgotha. How appropriate that both the first Adam and the second Adam died on Mount Moriah or Golgotha!

**Comment:** God's *foreknowledge* is shown by His preparing earth's surface—i.e., Golgotha, Skull Hill—*long before* Adam was created. God foreknew that Adam would sin, that he would die above the skull buried in Mount Moriah, that the skull would be unearthed, and that Jesus would die as Adam's Ransom price in the *very same place* with the skull exposed.

**John 19:18** Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Jesus was crucified between two thieves, as prophesied. “He made his grave with the *wicked*, and with the rich in his death; ... he was numbered with the *transgressors*” (Isa. 53:9,12). In the Kingdom, the Jews will be ashamed that with *so many* Old Testament prophecies predicting details about Messiah, they failed to recognize him.

**Q:** If it is true that five were on the hill, would two have been crucified earlier (that is, the day before) and thus already be there? Then two others were crucified at the same time as Jesus.

**A:** Piecing together certain Scriptures, the Companion Bible puts forth the theory that more than two others were there with Jesus on Calvary Hill. Two individuals definitely accompanied Jesus to Calvary and were crucified at the same time. These two would have been aligned with Jesus in front; others were in back, having been *previously* crucified.

**John 19:19** And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

**John 19:20** This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

The writing on the Cross would have been fairly large. Some artists show it in script form. And—how interesting! The chief priests worked secretly at night to set the machinery in motion for Jesus' death, and now the *truth* was stated in three languages so that *all* could read. It was like an open rebuke. Moreover, this was Pilate's way of getting back at Jesus' accusers. The chief priests resented the sign and wanted the writing reworded, but Pilate refused, saying,

“What I have written I have written” (verse 22). In the antitype, when the feet members are put to death, the event will be *known universally*.

The place of the Crucifixion “was *nigh* to the city,” not *in* the city. Hence verse 20 is a proof that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is not the site of the Crucifixion, for it is *inside* the city walls—despite the fact that some have drawn the old wall with a peculiar indentation so as to put the Church of the Holy Sepulchre outside the wall. Moshe Dayan and others bent the facts lest they offend the Catholic view. In 1922 the wall of the Damascus Gate was found. To hold to the erroneous view, they said that wall did not exist in Jesus’ day. But subsequently another wall was found *underneath*, and that wall did exist in Jesus’ day. Jesus came out the original (lower) Damascus Gate when he was crucified.

**John 19:21** Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

**John 19:22** Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Pilate was saying, “You *forced* me to crucify Jesus, and now you will have to face the matter squarely.” How *dramatic* this scene will be when viewed in the future! With the Crucifixion being one of the turning points of earth’s history, the title on the Cross will be very meaningful for the world to see as the Ransom is dramatically testified to them in due time (1 Tim. 2:5,6).

**John 19:23** Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

Altogether, there were five parts. Four parts pertained to articles of clothing, one part for each soldier. Hence we know there were four soldiers, for each soldier got one garment. The fifth part, the coat “without seam,” was more valuable and prized. Since it would not have made sense to cut the coat into four pieces and give each soldier a fragment, they cast lots for it (verse 24). The words “and also his coat” are apparently spurious.

Why were four soldiers on the scene? When the Crucifixion took place, one soldier held down Jesus’ hand, another put the spike through the hand, a third soldier held the other hand, and a fourth put the second spike through Jesus’ other hand. His feet were probably nailed last.

**Q:** Was a coat without seams unusual?

**A:** Yes. Josephus states that the high priest wore a garment without seams, so such a garment was unusual. It would be interesting to know who made the coat and under what circumstances.

Bro. Russell and other writers suggest that the coat represents the covering of the Church. When we consecrate and become members of Jesus’ body, the thought is not that the Ransom is parceled out to us. Instead, we come *under the Ransom*. In other words, the Ransom is not a piecemeal thing. This concept fits in with the garment being of one piece and without seam—it covers the *whole*.

As an *outer* garment, the coat covered the four other garments that were distributed. The four garments represent four classes of humanity (like the four rivers of Eden). All four classes are covered; all four are of Adam’s race. Stated another way, the one Ransom is for all humanity, of which four classes are called. (Of course the consecrated of the Gospel Age have the Ransom on the basis of a mortgage or a loan.) The four classes are the Little Flock, the Great Company, the Ancient Worthies, and the world of mankind.

With condemned prisoners who were crucified, it was a practice for soldiers to parcel out the garments among themselves. In other words, the garments became the property of those immediately involved with the execution. Hence verse 23 states that when the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they parted his garments. After doing the dirty work—nailing the prisoner to the cross, lifting the cross up into position, and putting the cross in the hole in the ground—they disposed of the prisoner's goods. This is sordid. Hardness is suggested.

**Q:** After Jesus was scourged, were these clothes put back on him? If so, they would have been bloody, yet the soldiers wanted them.

**A:** Yes. In ancient times, clothing was considered valuable. And no doubt the women made sure that the Master's clothing was kept clean and in excellent shape. We are used to washing our hands each time they are a little soiled, but such was not the case in olden times. With water not being readily available in many places, it did not mean much that garments were soiled and wrinkled. Moreover, Jesus was probably unusually meticulous as far as possible and convenient under those circumstances. Therefore, from a material standpoint, his garments were valuable despite the blood stains, perspiration, dirt, etc., for they could be washed.

**John 19:24** They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

The disposition of Jesus' garments was prophesied long in advance in Psalm 22:18.

**John 19:25** Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

The fact that three Marys were on the scene at the time of the Crucifixion is unusual. Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all four Gospels, whereas the others are mentioned sometimes and sometimes not. Mary Magdalene was present at the Cross, when Jesus' body was laid in the Garden Tomb, when the women came to anoint his body after the sabbath, etc. Her name is the most constant one.

The Greek is unclear whether "his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas" is one person or two. The family relationships are an involved study. It is possible for two Marys to be in the same family.

The name Mary, which is Miriam in the Hebrew, had a great appeal for Hebrew women because traditionally it was felt that the mother of the Messiah would be called Miriam. Hence Mary (or Miriam) was a very common name at the time of the First Advent. Many were afraid that not having that name would jeopardize their chances for being the mother of the Messiah. There are five Marys in the New Testament.

**John 19:26** When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

**John 19:27** Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

John was at the Cross with the women. Notice that in verse 26, he described himself as "the disciple standing by, whom he [Jesus] loved." Jesus committed his mother to the custodianship of John (only John's Gospel shows this, among other details). The women and John went closer to the Cross than any of the others. A beautiful painting shows them kneeling and looking up

at Jesus. The artist painted the picture as if he were behind the Cross and looking towards it. Thus the perspective of the person viewing the painting is that he is Jesus and looking down at the suppliants.

When Jesus was apprehended earlier, John and Peter followed him, and John got Peter into the palace of Caiaphas. Only John's Gospel tells of this incident. John's multiple additional details enrich the Gospels, for he provides insights that the other Gospels lack.

"Woman, behold thy son!" Jesus' manner of address to Mary safeguards us against Mariolatry. It shows a certain *reserve*, and the reserve is proper because Jesus is Lord and Master. By calling Mary the "mother of God," Catholics give her inordinate reverence and respect. Jesus alone is the Mediator—Mary is NOT the Mediatrix. Catholics wrongly pray to Mary, thinking that as a woman, she is more pliable and compassionate. They expect her to put in a good word for them to either God or Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity confuses the picture even more.

Then Jesus told John, "Behold thy mother!" And from that *very hour*, John took Mary into his home. Jesus was making provision for his own—making sure Mary would be cared for in the best way. In spite of his suffering and his preoccupation with his own trials from the night before and on through the Crucifixion, when he saw Mary, he thought of *her* welfare.

Why did Jesus give Mary to John—especially when two of his stepbrothers were apostles? Jesus recognized certain qualities in John that led him to make an important decision concerning the welfare of his mother, and that decision was above the natural family relationship. The arrangement would profit Mary spiritually and affectionately, as well as provide stability in temporal matters. Moreover, John would be comforted in having charge of Mary while he felt the loss of Jesus so keenly. John would feel that what he did for Mary he was doing for Jesus.

Jesus made only a brief statement to John and Mary in their grief—and yet they understood the meaning of the words "Behold thy son!" and "Behold thy mother!" Certain factors suggest that Mary was more compatible with John than with her own sons. When we are consecrated, we look at our natural families in a different light. Despite her great age, tradition says that Mary went to Asia Minor. John's type of ministry was better suited to taking care of Mary, and generally speaking, the circumstances of his life were more stable. For the most part, we have to rely on tradition to know the whereabouts of some of the other apostles later on—what nations they went to, how they died, etc. Among the nations Peter traveled to were Babylon, Iran, and Iraq. He was the chief spokesman until Paul appeared on the scene. Moreover, Peter was of a different disposition than John, although both were fiery. John's emotionalism was of a different type.

**John 19:28** After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

Psalm 69:21 is the Old Testament prophecy Jesus referred to: "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Jesus knew this Scripture still needed fulfillment, so he said, "I thirst." Had he not thus spoken, he might not have been given the vinegar. *Extreme* thirst is a problem with crucifixion.

**John 19:29** Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

A hyssop reed or branch was needed to reach Jesus' mouth, for he was probably 2 1/2 to 3 feet off the ground with his mouth about 9 feet up.

Vinegar was another form of cruelty, for it does not assuage thirst. In fact, it exacerbated Jesus' symptoms. Offering the vinegar shows the sordid, sadistic nature of the soldiers—and others of humanity. An element of society gets a thrill from hurting people or their property. Psalm 69 gives Jesus' thinking. Although he died for the world of mankind, the incorrigible will not be saved; they will not get life. That element must be weeded out of earth—weeded out of the Church, the Great Company, and the world. Thank God, the permission of evil is not forever! In time there will be a *cleansed* universe. Psalm 69:28 expresses those sentiments: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous"; in other words, "Let the incorrigible go into Second Death."

**Q:** On many other occasions, a prophecy about Jesus was fulfilled inadvertently by a certain event or incident happening. We know that Scriptures were brought to Jesus' mind in Gethsemane and on the Cross to strengthen him. Is that the basis for assuming he was aware of the prophecy of Psalm 69:21? Then, knowing that it needed to be fulfilled, he intentionally said, "I thirst."

**A:** Yes. Jesus' "checklist" showed that all Scriptures had been fulfilled regarding what others would do to him except this one. The vinegar *intensified* his thirst, yet he uttered these words and accepted the vinegar uncomplainingly just to fulfill prophecy.

**Q:** What is the significance of the hyssop?

**A:** Hyssop, a purgative, represents cleansing and discipline. At the time of the first Passover, a sprig or branch of hyssop was dipped in the blood so that the blood could be *splashed* on the doorposts of the houses. The splashing of the blood suggests punishment, hardship, and severity.

**John 19:30** When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

A person being crucified would normally have his head bowed all along from the pain, agony, and weariness, but Jesus held his head erect. He saw what was happening (for example, he saw his mother). Even though he was on the Cross, he held up his head like a king. Despite all the agony, he tried to keep his composure, but he had no control over his body. Referring on the Cross to his naked and twisted body, Jesus said, "I am a worm." (These words were prophetically recorded in Psalm 22:6.) Jesus could not do anything about the pitiful state of his body, but what he could do, he did. He maintained his composure, even under *excruciating* pain.

This nineteenth chapter of John suggests that Jesus *felt the burden of sin* that is on the human race. People who are *thoroughly innocent* of a crime, but sensitive by nature, may *feel guilty* if they are suspected of that crime and there is substantial evidence. Jesus had this experience. Isaiah 53:5 reads, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." There is a lot of meaning behind the thought that Jesus bore our sins—not only pain and humility but the weight of sin itself. Jesus felt the guilt just as Adam did. Adam hid *behind a tree*; Jesus was nailed *in front of a tree*. Adam had a feeling of guilt when he heard the Logos walking in the midst of the Garden of Eden, calling "Adam! Adam!" The sensation of guilt was part of the Ransom. Using a scale to illustrate the corresponding price may show *justice*, but it is too cold to portray the *depth* of Jesus' sufferings in taking Adam's place. The crown of *thorns* around Jesus' brow corresponds to the curse in Genesis 3:18 about the *thorns* and thistles. Adam was a *king*, and the charge of "*King*" was nailed to the Cross. There are many other correspondencies as well. The point is that the guilt aspect was significant—Jesus really **FELT** the guilt.

Psalm 69:8 is a prophecy that some of Jesus' stepbrothers would reject him until later, until after his resurrection. "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children." Seeing Jesus cursed and put to death by the nation, they rejected him as Messiah, but when they subsequently got *proof* of his resurrection, they did believe.

Jesus' very terse statement "It is finished" was his last. We would be missing a lot if Jesus had not concluded with these words about his finishing the Ransom sacrifice. In a *loud* voice, he cried out with a note of *triumph* (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37). As he pronounced the words in this moment of excitement, his heart ruptured.

Jesus had checkered experiences of depression and exhilaration. Hence we should not expect a Christian to always be calm and gentle, for we, too, have mixed experiences.

**John 19:31** The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

"It was the preparation" for the Passover, the preparation day being the 14th of Nisan. The next day, the 15th, began the seven-day Feast of Passover. In both type and antitype, the slaying of the lamb took place on the 14th. The lamb was slain "between the two evenings," that is, at the midpoint of 3 p.m., which was between 12 noon and 6 p.m. Jewish time (Num. 9:3 King James margin). In other words, 3 p.m. was three hours before sundown, and sundown marked the beginning of the next day, the 15th. The lamb was slain, flayed, and prepared for roasting on the day of preparation.

"That sabbath day was an high day." The regular sabbath day is a Saturday, which begins the day before (Friday) at 6 p.m. and ends Saturday at 6 p.m. In other words, Jesus died *before the sabbath*, before the "high day" began. He died three hours before Saturday—on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m., April 3, AD 33.

In regard to the Passover Feast, both the first and the seventh days are "high days." For the year that Jesus died, the first day of the Passover Feast happened to occur on a *regular* sabbath day. However, *all* high days in the Jewish festivals are sabbaths, and they can occur on any day of the week, including Saturday, the regular sabbath. The year of Jesus' death, the "high day" festival sabbath fell on a regular sabbath. Fifty-two regular sabbaths occur in a calendar year but only three or so high sabbaths.

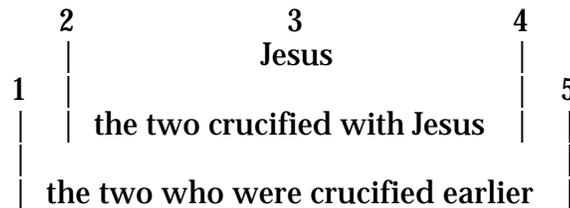
The Jews did not want Jesus' body to remain on the Cross, for that would defile their sabbath. It was 3 p.m. and they wanted his body removed before they observed the Passover, the Feast of Passover, on Saturday. In other words, the Jews' Feast of Passover, in which they ate the lamb at the time Jesus died, was a Saturday, a sabbath.

When the Jews have their Passover, they do not reckon the 14th. Instead they start with the 15th day of Nisan. However, as Christians, we attach far more importance to the 14th, the day of preparation, the day *before* the feast.

It is erroneous to say that Jesus was in the tomb for three *full* days and that, therefore, he died on Wednesday. John 19:31 is proof that he died on *Friday*, for he died on the "day of preparation," on the *day before* the (Saturday) sabbath—three hours before. In other words, Jesus ate the Passover on the 14th of Nisan and also died on the 14th. He ate after 6 p.m., *after the 14th of Nisan had begun*, and he died the next day, which was still the *same day*, the 14th, according to Jewish reckoning. In order to fulfill the type, he had to die on the 14th.

**John 19:32** Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

Two had *already* been crucified and were on the hill of Calvary at the time Jesus brought his cross, and two *more* were crucified with him at the same time. Thus *five* were there, with Jesus in the middle. The soldiers went down the row, as it were, and broke the legs of the first individual—one of the two who were already there. Then they broke the legs of the person who was next to Jesus, that individual being one of the ones crucified with him. Next they came to Jesus, who was put in the center, or middle, to specifically point him out.



By analyzing the Gospels, we know that four others were with Jesus on Calvary, for their conversations reveal this fact. First of all, two others were crucified with him at the *same time* (John 19:18; Matt. 27:38; Luke 23:32,33). Now notice the conversations of the individuals who were crucified on Calvary. Matthew 27:44 says that the two “thieves” who were crucified with him “cast the same [mockery] in his teeth.” But Luke 23:39-43 provides other information. “One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him.” (The account does not say that the malefactors were crucified at the *same time*.) “But the *other* [malefactor] answering rebuked him [the first malefactor], saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Then he asked to be remembered when Jesus came into his Kingdom: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Jesus responded that he would. Thus the Scriptures prove that *four* were with Jesus, for three of them cursed Jesus and/or had nothing complimentary to say. Only one individual supported him. With different Greek words describing the two pairs, the suggestion is that their crucifixions were done on a different basis. Incidentally, people who are crucified can be on a cross for days before they die.

The legs of two of the others were broken before the soldiers arrived at Jesus in the center. A note in the Companion Bible says there are places in history, such as in a small French village, where five crosses are shown with Jesus in the center. The fact that the five crosses are *old* suggests a factual basis.

What did the breaking of the legs accomplish? How did it cause the death of those who were crucified? Shock killed them immediately. And if, because of the way they were hanging, they had to lift their legs to breathe, then broken legs would interfere with breathing.

**John 19:33** But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

This verse shows that the soldiers climbed the hill and started at one end, breaking the legs of the first and then of the next one, who was more immediate to Jesus. Then “they came to Jesus” in the center, but he was already dead. From there the soldiers went on to the third individual and then the fourth.

**John 19:34** But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

The blood and water show that Jesus died of a broken heart. His heart actually ruptured, and

the pericardium sac outside the heart became filled with blood and water. When the spear punctured that sac, blood and water came out. The thought of a broken heart is bolstered by Jesus' words "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Jesus was so weak from the emotional trauma that even though he cried out victoriously and loudly, "It is finished," the energy expended to make that pronouncement was more than his heart could take and it burst. The soldiers came along a little later, and one pierced his side.

Let us consider the blood and the water from another standpoint. "Water" is a symbol of truth, the truth that comes through Jesus. It is a miracle to understand the measure of truth that we have because Satan has blinded the minds of men lest they believe (2 Cor. 4:4). The truth is from Jesus, from his side. Of course "blood" refers to his death. BOTH truth and Jesus' death are needed by the Christian.

**John 19:35** And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

The pronouns "he" (used three times) and "his" refer to John. Instead of his saying "I" and "my," the use of third-person pronouns indicates humility and modesty. In his second and third epistles, John called himself "the elder." In Revelation 1:2, he used the same words "bare record."

**John 19:36** For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

Jesus was already dead when the soldiers got to him (verse 33). Thus they did not have to break his legs, and the Scripture was fulfilled that not a bone of him would be broken. Having no broken bones enabled him to be an antitype of the Passover lamb. Also, the nails were driven through the wrists and ankles so that no bones would be broken. (Since the Greek language has no words for wrists and ankles, the words for "hands" and "feet" included these parts of the body.)

**John 19:37** And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

An additional reason why one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side was to fulfill Zechariah 12:10. Of course there will be a further fulfillment of that Scripture in the future, but the nation of Israel had to see him pierced at that time too (Rev. 1:7).

**John 19:38** And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

**John 19:39** And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

It is interesting that John *tarried* at the Cross to see these things happen, for when the soldiers came, it was after 3 p.m., the time Jesus died. Between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate beseeching Jesus' body. Joseph returned with Nicodemus and removed the body from the Cross. Thus John remained for some time *after* Jesus' death. And now we can see why John felt it essential to write about Nicodemus in his Gospel (the other Gospels mention Joseph but not Nicodemus). Only John recorded the conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus. Here is another example showing that *all four Gospels* are needed for a rounded-out picture.

"*Being* a disciple of Jesus," Joseph of Arimathea besought Pilate for the body. In other words, Joseph was fully convinced of Jesus' Messiahship *before* he went to Pilate, but he had not

disclosed his conviction previously. Now that Jesus was dead, Joseph was strengthened in character to beseech Pilate for the body, even though doing so would make him a public spectacle—and Nicodemus too. Initially Joseph and Nicodemus, who went to Jesus secretly by night, were fearful. Both were probably on the Sanhedrin, and both were men of means. Joseph provided the tomb, and Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes that weighed 100 pounds. The mixture would have been very expensive because the myrrh came from Arabia. The number “100” pictures perfection.

Joseph was “an honourable counsellor” (Mark 15:43); “a good man, and a just [man]” (Luke 23:50); and “a rich man” (Matt. 27:57). Although he was present at Jesus’ trial, he did not consent to the evil deeds and counsel. In other words, he voiced his opposition to the majority thinking. And he “waited for the kingdom of God” (Luke 23:51).

While Jesus was alive, Joseph and Nicodemus were fearful. Therefore, it would seem logical that after his death, they would be even more fearful to identify themselves with him. But at this very point in time, they manifested supernatural character in taking his body. Moreover, removing the body from the Cross would have been a gory ordeal. A *Reprint* article states that it was a sacrifice on the part of Joseph and Nicodemus to even touch the dead body, for this act made them unclean for Passover, one of the highest feasts of the year.

**John 19:40** Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

The *Diaglott* has “linen cloths.” The customary burial manner was to use several cloths ultimately sewn together into one long, narrow winding bandage to wrap the body—and then the head was wrapped *separately* with a “napkin” (John 11:44; 20:7). The cloths were very long, relatively narrow strips. When one cloth was used up, another was started, etc. This method of wrapping made the subsequent extraction of Jesus’ body even more miraculous; that is, it was miraculous that all the separate pieces of cloth held their position, not being unwrapped.

How appropriate that white linen was used, picturing righteousness! Although the custom was to wrap with separate cloths, it was not customary to use white linen, for the latter was expensive. Joseph of Arimathea supplied the white “fine” linen (Mark 15:46).

Because the custom was to wrap the legs separately, Lazarus could walk when Jesus “cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). Lazarus climbed the winding staircase up out of the tomb.

Evidently, Joseph was a believer, but out of fear for his position, he did not declare his belief openly—not until Jesus’ death. Then he showed great bravery in going to Pilate and begging the body. In that sense, he did even more than Nicodemus.

Isaiah 53:9 reads in part, “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.” The Hebrew word translated “grave” is not necessarily the tomb itself but a condition. Jesus fulfilled this Scripture by dying on the Cross between the thieves and then being laid to rest in a rich man’s tomb.

**John 19:41** Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

The Crucifixion and the sepulcher were in close proximity. The Garden Tomb beautifully fits this description. In this tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, places had already been prepared for two adult-length bodies and then a small one at the top, or head. The fact that one of the places had been enlarged shows God’s foreknowledge that Jesus would be crucified nearby; that Joseph, a

man of good heart condition, would obtain the property and build a tomb there; that the tomb would not be used prior to Jesus' death; etc. And God made sure that the tomb would be carved out of rock with only *one* entrance which could be sealed by a stone. "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed" (Matt. 27:59,60).

It is interesting that both Jesus' birth and his burial occurred in a carved-out rock. He was born in a *cave stable* (illustrated by the Grotto in the Pyramid) and laid to rest in a *hewn-out rock* tomb (illustrated by the Coffin in the Pyramid). Moreover, he is called the Rock.

**John 19:42** There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

Jesus' body was not put in a tomb bed but was laid in the antechamber, which originally had a shelf protruding from the wall. The large number of visitors since 1874 has worn the shelf down.

**John 20:1** The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

The "first day of the week" would be Sunday. Mary (and other women) came *before sunrise*. Probably they were up all night grieving and then came as soon as possible after the sabbath and yet toward morning when it was starting to get light.

**John 20:2** Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Mary *ran!* Peter and John were probably together at this time. Since it was John who earlier let Peter into the place of trial, John evidently had more access to living quarters in Jerusalem. And after Pentecost, Peter and John were the ones who spoke and preached. They were close from this time on, that is, from their experiences at the trial.

**John 20:3** Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

**John 20:4** So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

John outran Peter because he was younger. However, his tender conscience kept him from rushing into the sepulcher. Out of propriety and deference to Peter, John waited, for he realized Peter was at a higher level than himself. Even though Jesus had repeatedly taken Peter, James, and John aside during his ministry, John no doubt noticed the special deference given to Peter as a natural leader. Although both apostles preached on the Day of Pentecost, Peter did most of the talking.

**John 20:5** And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

Outrunning Peter and arriving at the tomb first, John looked in and saw the linen cloths lying there. Perhaps this initial view was not as clear as when he subsequently entered. He may have even thought at first that the body was still there because of how the cloths lay.

**John 20:6** Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth

**the linen clothes lie,**

When Peter arrived, he did not stop—he *rushed right in!*—just as he had impulsively jumped out of the boat on another occasion.

**John 20:7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.**

**John 20:8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.**

John followed Peter into the tomb. Both saw the linen cloths, but only John got the point—it dawned on him what had happened. Perhaps Peter was too overcome with anxiety to reason on the way the linen grave cloths and the separate napkin were still *intact but empty*. Peter may have been in a trauma, and being older, he was probably tired from running as well. These factors would have affected his power of observation and reason.

The form of the linen wrappings was intact but hollow inside. The wrappings had been like a cocoon around the torso, legs, and arms. They still retained their shape, but John could see that the body was missing. In other words, the body had been miraculously and instantly dissolved into gases and extracted, leaving cocoon-like wrappings in their original position.

When people are in an emotional trauma, they cannot observe certain things. For example, it is impossible to reason with an intoxicated person with any degree of complexity, but that is true with other emotions as well—for instance, anger. The senses become dull. Excessive sorrow also numbs the senses and can keep one from observing what would normally be seen. When Stephen died, his countenance glowed, but those who stoned him would not have noticed. Being “blind” with hatred, they could not see Stephen’s face shining like an angel.

**John 20:9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.**

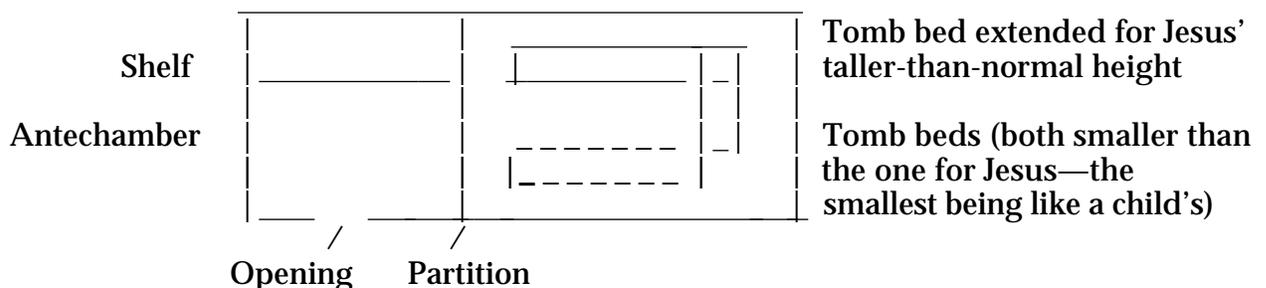
Notice how this verse is worded: Peter and John did not know “the *Scripture*” that Jesus would rise from the dead. Yes, Jesus had told them he must die, but they did not know the Scripture. If they had, it would have helped them to believe.

**John 20:10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.**

“Their own home” would be where they were residing in Jerusalem. John and Peter may have gone back to the same house, however.

**John 20:11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,**

Rough Schematic of Garden Tomb



John had stooped down and looked into the sepulcher earlier when he outran Peter to the tomb (verse 5). Now Mary did likewise while she was weeping. Incidentally, the original opening to the Garden Tomb was smaller and near the bottom.

Jesus' body never got into the tomb bed but was left on the shelf in the antechamber. The women intended to prepare the body further after the sabbath and then have it placed in the tomb bed. Visitors to the Garden Tomb see two small windows through which the sun shines onto Jesus' (intended) tomb bed. These windows were carved out following Jesus' resurrection.

When Peter and John entered the tomb that Sunday morning, they saw the empty linen grave cloths lying there (verses 6 and 7). The head napkin was "by itself" (that is, separate), so it was obvious the body was gone. The grave cloths were folded together, not in the sense of being unwrapped and folded but in the sense of being collapsed.

The cloths were like wide tape strips. When one cloth ended, the next one was started, overlapping a little. The arms, torso, and legs were wrapped individually, not mummy style.

**John 20:12** And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

The sequence of events was as follows:

1. Mary went to the sepulcher. Seeing the stone rolled away, she ran to get Peter and John (verses 1 and 2).
2. Peter and John ran to the tomb. John got there first and waited for Peter. Peter arrived and rushed in; John followed. They saw the linen cloths and the head napkin lying there empty. John believed (verses 3-8).
3. Mary returned to the tomb (behind Peter and John). She lingered when they left and was weeping. When she looked into the tomb, she saw two angels *but not the linen grave cloths* (verses 11 and 12).

Why is there no mention of the linen cloths in verse 12? Because they, too, were *dissolved into gases* and thus had disappeared lest man make a relic out of them. Stated another way, their miraculous removal prevented a subsequent worshipping of the grave cloths.

The two angels were sitting, one at the place where Jesus' head had been and the other where his feet had been. There was a small slab or ridge to sit on at the ends of the tomb bed proper. (Normally a marble slab was placed over the tomb. Held up by ridges, the marble slab covered the body.) But the antechamber also had shelves, and it was on these shelves that the angels were sitting.

**John 20:13** And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

Mary Magdalene was distraught. When she saw the two angels in white, did she recognize them as angels? No. Luke 24:4 calls them "men." Only afterwards, in retrospect, did she realize they were angels. If one is emotionally disturbed with tremendous grief, anger, happiness—any emotion in the extreme—his senses are benumbed, and that is what happened to Mary. She was *consumed* with grief and the thought "Where is my Master?" Hence she was oblivious to the details a more rational person would observe. "Where is my Lord?" was the focus of her concentration.

**John 20:14** And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

What is unusual? Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, a *woman*. This priority was appropriate because a woman represents the Church. Also, because Mary Magdalene's grief was *so intense*, she deserved the honor of seeing the risen Jesus first. Notice that he was standing behind her. She turned *partially* and saw but did not recognize him.

**John 20:15** Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Notice the pronouns: "Sir, if *thou* have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and *I* will take him away." Mary *herself* would take the corpse. This shows *how deeply* she loved Jesus. Formerly, she had seven spirits in her. When she came to Jesus and was forgiven, her life changed *radically*. The principle is that he who is forgiven much loveth much (Luke 7:47). (This forgiveness pertains to *before* consecration.)

At the end of Jesus' life, Mary Magdalene was mentioned frequently and in every instance where women (plural) were named. She was mentioned more than Mary, the mother of Jesus; more than Mary and Martha; more than Joanna; etc. This shows the *tremendous affection* she had for Jesus.

**John 20:16** Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

When Jesus (the gardener) addressed her in the familiar, recognizable tone "Mary" (*just one word*), she instantly knew him and *immediately turned around completely*. Jesus was risen! In a nanosecond (*one billionth* of a second), she remembered his words about rising again and recognized him!

"Rabboni" means "my Master," "my Teacher." When Jesus said "Mary" in the familiar way, she responded in her customary way.

**John 20:17** Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

"Touch me not" signifies "*embrace me not*." Jesus must have said this very *quickly*, for as Mary turned, she would have wanted to *fling* herself at his feet. "I am not yet ascended" means "I will ascend, but first, I will *remain here for a little while yet*."

Jesus was clearly implying that the disciples' dealings with the *raised* Lord were to be different than when he was in the flesh. Their deportment should be different. There was a marked change, and he wanted to impress that fact on them. Although he *appeared* as flesh, he was really *spirit*—that is what they had to grasp. Jesus was now a *spirit being* who used flesh or an accommodated body to prove he was risen.

"Go to my brethren." What is unusual about this instruction? The term "my brethren"—here Jesus used this expression for the first time. Formerly he had called them servants, friends, etc., but not brethren. The *resurrected* Lord addressed Mary in this fashion. (Although Hebrews 2:11 says of Jesus, "He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*," these words were written much later by the Apostle Paul.) Being called Jesus' "brethren" right after his resurrection was encouraging to the disciples. While he now had a reserve as the risen Lord—Mary could not

embrace him—yet the tone of his voice in saying “Mary” was very affectionate and penetrating, and he used the familial term “brethren.”

What a *blessing* for Mary to be given something to do by and for the Master! She had come to the tomb wanting to prepare his body, and now he asked her to take a message to the others.

“I ascend unto *my Father*, and your Father; and to *my God*, and your God.” John’s Gospel repeatedly shows Jesus’ acknowledgment of the *superiority* of the Father. His words are *strong* proof against the Trinity. Jesus had to go to *his Father* and *his God*—that is, to the One who was *his superior*.

What is unusual about Jesus is that while he was emotional, tender, compassionate, and considerate, he retained his bearings. He knew just *what* to say and *how* to say it. In the first part of the verse, he used the words “*my Father*.” Then he repeated the words but added others: “*my Father, and your Father; ... my God, and your God*.” Jesus brought in his relationship to the disciples, his “brethren,” but that could not change his affection for the Father. The Father was, is, and always will be first. Nevertheless, the relationship that exists between Jesus and the Father also exists between Jesus and the Church. Chapter 17 of John’s Gospel emphasizes this oneness.

**John 20:18** Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

No doubt the disciples thought she was so distraught that she had *hallucinated*. Yes, John had seen and believed, but his conviction did not persuade the others.

**John 20:19** Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

“The *same day*,” “the first day of the week,” was Sunday—the day Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. However, other events happened between his first appearance to her and what is described in verse 19 (for example, his appearance to the two on the way to Emmaus). The same day, Sunday, was the resurrection day.

The disciples were assembled behind shut and bolted (locked) doors because they feared the Jews. The disciples’ fear was a proof that they did not really believe Mary’s report of Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus had appeared to the other women too, saying, “All hail,” etc., but that report also was not believed (Matt. 28:5-10).

The fact that Jesus appeared suddenly in their midst, through bolted doors, proved he was no longer a human being. Physical walls do not encumber a spirit being at all, for their molecules can be adjusted to go through the porosity of walls. They can also adjust their size, even being reduced to just a pinpoint. As an illustration, a *legion* of demons was in the man—showing they can compact themselves (Mark 5:8,9). That which is ethereal and spiritual is *more real* than the physical. A *invisible* God made the *visible* earth.

“Peace be unto you.” Jesus tried to calm them and play down the emotion. He wanted to show them he was not a ghost or apparition. He purposely appeared in diverse forms after his resurrection in order to appeal to their natural minds in a calm, serene circumstance. That way the disciples got the feeling that he was actually raised. If he had appeared only in dramatic ways, they might have had second thoughts later on.

**John 20:20** And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were

**the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.**

When the disciples first saw him, they thought, “It looks like Jesus.” He was probably wearing a white robe. All they saw initially was his face—they did not notice his hands. Then he said, “Look at my hands,” and he drew aside the robe to show his wounded side. This further impressed upon the disciples that he was the *same* Jesus but *not a human being* because he came through a locked door. He was the same and yet not the same. Because Pentecost had not yet come and they could not discern spiritual things, he was trying to appeal to their natural minds.

**John 20:21** Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

As the Father sent Jesus at the First Advent—from Jordan to Calvary in particular—to get disciples, preach the Kingdom, etc., so Jesus now sends us on a mission to preach to others. And there was a more *immediate* sense too. As the Father sent Jesus to the disciples at that moment to convince them of his resurrection, so Jesus would send the disciples to convince others. The Father sent Jesus for 3 1/2 years, and Jesus likewise sends us for our lifetime—until death. This thought can be extended to the whole Church.

**John 20:22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

Jesus “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” He did this in pantomime form to impress upon the disciples that the power was not from themselves but was an external power coming from the Father and through him. Of course the disciples did not actually receive the Holy Spirit until later, when they were gathered in this room on the Day of Pentecost. Then the Holy Spirit came down to them in a visible form as tongues of flame that sat on each of their heads, and they were given miraculous ability, such as understanding languages they did not know. By doing this now in pantomime form, Jesus was telling them what would occur as a result of his resurrection and *through him*. He is our Advocate. Only through Jesus do we have this relationship. The Holy Spirit is *from God* and *through Jesus*, the Head.

**John 20:23** Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Jesus continued to speak, but his words in this verse apply only to the *apostles*. The point is that we *cannot* teach love, mercy, forgiveness, etc., except by spiritual guidelines, and these spiritual guidelines come through the writings of the *apostles*. While Jesus talked on these subjects, he did not talk at length except in parable form. But the apostles, especially Paul, laid down *many* guidelines to fit various circumstances. We are told when not to fellowship, on what grounds, what the degrees of fellowship are depending upon the nature of the sin, and so forth.

However, we can say to one who has not consecrated, one whom we are trying to interest in the truth, “No matter what your past sins, you will be forgiven if you openly confess both the sins and your need for Jesus’ redeeming grace. If you comply with those terms, you will be freely forgiven.” But even in this case, we can utter these words only because the Holy Scriptures tell us so, especially the apostles.

**Caution:** Do not be free with forgiveness that is not Scriptural. It is easy (but wrong) to be free with other people’s money, goods, and feelings. We can be very magnanimous, but we are amiss if we do not obey Scripture. Papacy erroneously uses verse 23 as a basis for obtaining forgiveness. The system instructs, “Go to the priest and confess your sins. He will then tell you how many Hail Marys to say and/or how many candles to burn.”

In regard to the trespass offering, Pastor Russell said, “For every wrong, restitution must be made with interest and accompanied by repentance and asking forgiveness from the Lord.” If we speak according to Scripture, we can speak authoritatively.

“Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained [not forgiven].” Peter used this power with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10).

When the 70 were sent out earlier, Jesus gave them the Holy Spirit with regard to physical healings, not with regard to the forgiveness of sin (Luke 10:1-16). That event, too, was prior to Pentecost. What is the difference? It is one thing to be *begotten* by the Holy Spirit and another thing to be *mechanically moved* by the Holy Spirit as the 70 were.

**John 20:24** But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

**John 20:25** The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

This experience is the basis for the term “doubting Thomas.” Jesus had previously appeared in the midst of the ten apostles (minus Thomas) through a locked door (verses 19-23). Thomas did not simply say that he had to see Jesus *as he had appeared to the ten*, but that he wanted to see *and touch* the wounds. In other words, in order to be convinced, he wanted *more than an identical experience*.

Thomas’s statement “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” is missing in some of the ancient manuscripts, but we can accept it because of what is stated subsequently in verse 27, where Jesus voiced Thomas’s attitude, thoughts, and words. Obviously, Jesus would not have enjoined Thomas to reach forth his finger and hand to touch the nail-print wound and side, respectively, if Thomas had not doubted.

Thomas wanted more effectual evidence—and so do some Christians. This attitude is not to their discredit in some respects. It is just a slower process to fully confirm and assure them of certain things in Scripture. Such Christians have a harder time accepting particular statements in Scripture just as they are written.

“Didymus” may refer to a town called Didymus, although the town could have been named for him at a later date. “Didymus” means “twin.” We do not know who the other “twin” was. He was not an apostle, but perhaps he was a disciple.

**John 20:26** And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

This appearance to the eleven (including Thomas) was on a Sunday eight days later. In other words, the phrase “after eight days” refers to the following *Sunday*, a *week* later. The expression “eight days,” like “three days,” is a Hebraism that can throw us off, for they were not full days. (Jesus was in the tomb for just *parts* of three days.) The intervening week would have seemed interminable to the apostles. Jesus’ appearances on *Sundays* were one reason why the early Church decided to break bread on Sunday. Another reason is that Jesus was resurrected on a Sunday. Thus the early Church—that is, during the first three centuries—put a greater emphasis on Sunday as they separated from the Jewish influence of the sabbath.

Jesus appeared to two on the way to Emmaus. The two returned to Jerusalem speedily to report the appearance only to learn that he had also appeared to the ten in the interim, on the same day.

**Q:** Jesus said three times “Peace be unto you” (verses 19, 21, and 26). Does this repeated statement relate to his title “Prince of Peace”?

**A:** Since this statement was made *after* his resurrection, it would seem to be related to the title.

**John 20:27** Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

**John 20:28** And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Thomas would not have thought the ten, Mary Magdalene, and others were lying about the earlier appearance of Jesus, for it was too serious a subject (verses 19-23). He knew they had seen something but thought that it was a deception, that someone was assuming Jesus’ posture. Hence he wanted more evidence.

Thomas never did thrust his hand into Jesus’ side—just seeing Jesus with the wounds was enough. In fact, one reason Thomas did not have to thrust his hand into Jesus’ side in order to believe is the miraculous nature of Jesus’ *sudden* appearance through *locked* doors. In this and the earlier instance, Jesus said, “Peace be unto you,” because such a sudden appearance would tend to frighten the apostles and cause them to think they had seen an apparition. Moreover, Jesus’ manner of address showed Thomas he knew what the apostle had previously said about seeing him, that is, when Jesus *was not visibly present* with them. Jesus’ words impressed Thomas and helped to convince him.

Thomas’s exultation “My Lord and my God” is recorded by John in the *same* chapter where Jesus said earlier (verse 17), “I ascend unto my Father ... and to my God.” Trinitarians use verse 28 to *prove* the Trinity, but the same chapter *refutes* it. In the context here, John shows a *chain of command*. Just as Thomas has a “God” or superior in Jesus, so Jesus has a “God” or superior in the Father. A similar principle was used by David when he wrote, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa. 110:1).

Moreover, the fact Thomas made the statement does not prove that Jesus is God, for Thomas had not yet been begotten by the Holy Spirit—Pentecost was future to this event. Thomas uttered the statement on an *emotional* basis when Jesus made his *surprise* appearance. Prior to Spirit begetting, the apostles made some incorrect statements; for example, Peter denied Jesus three times, and surely Peter’s statements were not true. Thus a statement uttered before Pentecost is not to be considered true just because it came from an apostle, for the apostles made several unbecoming or unfavorable statements before they were Spirit-begotten.

According to Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the word “God” in verse 28 (Greek *theos*) means “a god, object of worship.” This same Greek word is used in 2 Corinthians 4:4 to refer to Satan: “In whom the *god of this world* hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” And *theos* is used in Philippians 3:19, “Whose end is destruction, *whose God is their belly*, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

Knowing the capability of spirit beings to materialize, we might find Jesus’ resurrection hard to accept, but the *number* and the *variety* of appearances, plus the techniques used and his conversations, give us the assurance. We need these multiple references. The tenor, thinking, and method of appearance are characteristic of Jesus. Also, an unholy angel would not be

happy to appear as Jesus or to be with him. Earlier two unclean spirits said to Jesus, “Art thou come hither to torment [judge] us before the time?” (Matt. 8:29). And James said, “The devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). Hence the attitude of the fallen angels proves Jesus’ appearances were not deceptions. Fallen angels are called “familiar spirits” because they impersonate the dead. To avoid being deceived in the future, we need to be armed by the Holy Scriptures and dispensational truth (such as the *Second Volume* chapter “The Manner of Our Lord’s Return and Appearing”).

**John 20:29** Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

This statement was a rebuke to Thomas. John gave *balanced* clues to Thomas’s character, for he also recorded Thomas’s favorable, positive statement, “Let us also go [to Jerusalem], that we may die with him [Jesus]” (John 11:16).

After this incident, a stigma may have attached to Thomas in some respects. Those who want to find fault with Thomas use this incident, but it is not a fair assessment of his character. He is an *apostle*, and at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit sat on him, showing he had divine approval.

John treated certain personalities more closely than the other Gospel writers. An example is Mary Magdalene, for we get a deeper insight into her at the Cross and the tomb. John also gave us an insight into Nicodemus both earlier and at Jesus’ death, the latter showing the courage aspect of his character. John felt that certain things should be brought out, and he wanted to set the record straight. We learn about the woman of Samaria at the well from John’s Gospel. He zeroed in on particular personalities and omitted perhaps three quarters of the events recorded in the other Gospels, including the Memorial emblems. Instead John dwelled on discussions; he recorded Jesus’ discussions with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, and the disciples the night of the Memorial en route to Gethsemane. John’s different temperament beautifully complements the testimony of the preceding three apostles. Thus *all four Gospels* are needed. In reality, “*the gospel*” is the four Gospels.

“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” The “blessed” ones are those in the days following Jesus’ resurrection, as well as those down through the Gospel Age and during the Harvest period.

Luke 24:39 emphasizes the fact that Jesus appeared in flesh and *bone*, not flesh and *blood*. “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not *flesh and bones*, as ye see me have.” With the human nature, the life is in the blood rather than in the outer covering. Hence spirit beings appear with the same skeletal framework and with flesh but not with blood (Lev. 17:11,14).

**Q:** Wouldn’t the angels who materialized at the time of the Flood and had offspring through human females have had bodily fluids and blood?

**A:** Yes, they could simulate blood, etc., as well as flesh and bone, but they should not have done so. The sperm that create life are of the blood.

The genetic aspect is very technical. It is the same with the soul. In previous studies, we have shown that the body and the breath are really but the *vehicle* in which the soul resides. We can understand this today through the illustration of a tape recorder, plus there are Scriptures to indicate the distinction. And certain Scriptures give us clues about the blood. Blood *outside* the body is a symbol of death. Blood *inside* the body is a symbol of life.

The unholy angels *left their first estate*, so more was involved than just their coming down—

they established a residence. But perhaps the information in Jude 6 that they “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” also indicates the thought of their procreation of children and intermingling with the human family.

**Q:** Would the implication be that when the holy angels materialized on various errands or even when Jesus materialized after his resurrection, not having divine nature yet, they were to just *simulate* human nature? Part of the sin committed by the disobedient angels prior to the Flood was that they not only materialized as human beings but took on the *entire* aspect of that nature.

**A:** Yes.

**Comment:** When angels materialized, they were never to have blood, and that was part of the sin committed by those who left their first estate. To have just flesh and bones was the *normal* way to materialize in *any* age.

**Reply:** Yes. Originally the angels appeared without the blood and simply simulated human beings. Then, considering the fallen angels had children, we see that in leaving their first estate, they simulated human *blood*, which was strictly forbidden. Perhaps that sin was even the kernel of the matter in leaving their first estate and living down here.

**Q:** Didn't a newspaper article report that in the Midwest, cattle were found missing some of their organs and blood?

**A:** Yes, the blood had been drained. These mutilations were never explained. The cattle were dropped from high altitude down into the mud. Many things are going on that we are not fully cognizant of. The study of genetics being pursued by scientists today is, unbeknownst to them, following the lines of the Adversary. Dedicated and noble-minded scientists do not consciously worship or cooperate with Satan, but he is interested in science. In the pre-Flood days, Satan tried to produce a new human race that would not die. Earth was his domain, and he saw that the human race of Adam was dying. He reasoned that if an angel, who never dies (as far as he knew, for none had yet died), had offspring through a human female, the progeny would not die. Although Satan may have been right in his reasoning, that method was stopped by the Flood and the incarceration of the fallen angels themselves.

Here, now, was another way of creating life apart from Adam. Very remarkable things are being discovered today about the genes, but behind this quest is the desire to make man like a god, able to manipulate his own destiny. Satan is very interested in genetic engineering. Perhaps the blood was taken from the cattle by the fallen angels to pursue studies—by spirit scientists, as it were, who are intensely interested in this subject. Satan is still trying to circumvent a dying race.

**Comment:** Adam (on behalf of the human race) was given a simple test of obedience: Do not eat of the grove of life, the forbidden fruit. The angels were given a simple test of obedience: Do not simulate blood/body fluids in materializing. In *both* cases, Satan thought God was *depriving* the beings of something.

**John 20:30** And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

**John 20:31** But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Some have suggested that these verses finish John's Gospel from one standpoint and that the

next chapter is an addendum by the apostle, written postscript. This premise seems reasonable. An authenticity in the next chapter also stamps it as being truthful and of John. Authors, ancient and modern, sometimes furnish an addendum. For instance, a person may give a comprehensive sermon or treatise and then find he has omitted a thought that needs to be included in order to straighten out a misconception surfacing afterwards; he then attaches an addendum.

Chapter 21, which was written after the Apostle Paul's death, helps us to understand certain things that Paul said. John lived to be a centenarian, whereas Paul died before AD 70. The entire Gospel of John was written after AD 70.

John 21:25 is missing in the Sinaitic Manuscript. Is it spurious? "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." John 20:30,31 is a similar thought, but verse 25 is such an exaggeration that it smacks of being spurious—like the end of Mark.

The Sinaitic and Vatican manuscripts are the most helpful in trying to see what the original Bible actually said. Although neither manuscript is infallible, both are vastly superior to other manuscripts, which are riddled with interpolations. The other manuscripts are perhaps 90 percent correct versus the Vatican and Sinaitic being 98 percent correct. Constantine had the Sinaitic Codex compiled from another manuscript. In the copying process, a *few* errors crept in, but that older manuscript has been lost.

As the last of the four Gospel writers, John was very different from the other three. He was very choosy in what he wrote, omitting much material because it had already been covered.

**John 21:1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself.**

After his resurrection, Jesus had previously shown himself to the apostles on two occasions, one where Thomas was absent and one where he was present, suddenly appearing in their midst through a locked door (John 20:19-29).

**John 21:2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.**

On this occasion, at least seven were gathered, of whom at least five were apostles: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael (Bartholomew), and James and John Zebedee. John probably specifically mentioned Thomas, Peter, and Nathanael *by name* because elsewhere in his Gospel, he wrote about discussions and incidents with them. John told about Nathanael on multiple occasions, and Thomas too. He also recorded the interview with Nicodemus and then what Nicodemus did at the Cross. And details about Mary Magdalene were given. Thus John *followed through* on the personalities and characters of various individuals.

**John 21:3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.**

Two weeks, and possibly three, had passed since Jesus' last appearance. The length of time was one reason Peter suggested returning to their former business pursuit. Although Jesus appeared on and off during the 40 days, many of the appearances occurred on the *first* day. After the eighth day, there was a gap of time, during which the apostles left Jerusalem and went up to Galilee, called the "sea of Tiberias" in verse 1.

We get a clue about Peter's personality here. As a man of *action*, he was prone to be impatient and not sit around. This trait is a good one if properly channeled; it is the opposite of being slothful. Moreover, this trait showed that Peter was a leader—a highly respected leader. Hence the others joined him in the suggestion to go fishing.

No time was wasted. Peter was quick and impulsive. He got into the ship *immediately*, and the others followed. The “ship” was large enough to easily hold seven or more fishermen.

They fished *all night* and caught *nothing*. This was a psychological downer, for the Sea of Galilee was teeming with fish in those days and it was unusual not to catch any.

They caught nothing on their own, but when Jesus told them to cast the net on the *right* side of the ship, they caught MUCH (verse 6). This is a lesson about God's providence. When the disciples caught nothing, some may have been a little conscience-stricken. They might have associated the lack of fish with Jesus' instruction to go to Galilee where he would appear to them. Instead of being in an attitude to receive him, they were out fishing. The incident would seem to represent a lack of faith, but actually, that is not the case.

**John 21:4** But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

**John 21:5** Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

**John 21:6** And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Jesus' posture—he “stood on the shore”—must have been very striking for John to mention it. The disciples were in the boat, going to shore, when they noticed Jesus. They were 200 cubits (300 feet or 100 yards, a little less than the length of a football field) from shore (verse 8). Jesus would have had a very powerful voice to talk to them from that distance.

Picture the scene. The apostles had fished all night and caught nothing. Now it was morning, and they were weaving their way back. Then they observed an individual standing on the shore, and he called to them, “Children, have ye any meat?” Next Jesus told them to cast their net on the right side of the ship and they would catch fish, “right” being the *favorable* side. Jesus was teaching the disciples that they had to do things in *his* way. In addition, a general lesson would be for Christians to expend their energy in the most profitable direction in harmony with the Bible.

When the apostles tried to pull the net out of the water, there was a great deal of resistance, for the net was *FULL* of fish—153 fish, we are told later.

**Q:** When Jesus called to the disciples, “*Children*, have ye any meat?” was that a common form of address back there?

**A:** For one to use that manner of address, he would have to be a *superior*. We know from details recorded and from John's use of the expressions “children” and “little children” that he was extremely observant of Jesus' last days and his resurrection (John 13:33; 1 John 2:1,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). Of course we know too that John was older when he used these terms.

The apostles and disciples were strong characters and yet childlike in some respects. Their humility and naiveness show forth. For example, Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see the Lord because he was short. If we had fished all night and caught nothing and then someone told us

to cast the net on the right side of the boat, it would take humility to obey. As already mentioned, for the apostles to notice Jesus at a distance of 300 feet, his appearance must have been unusual and impressive. They were not told the one on the shore was Jesus, but they knew his identity once they started to pull in the net. And John announced, "It is the Lord!" (verse 7). Jesus would have had an authoritative posture or appearance.

**John 21:7** Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

**John 21:8** And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

**John 21:9** As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

**John 21:10** Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

When the great numbers of fish were caught, John said, "It is the Lord." John recognized Jesus based on what the Master had done very early in his ministry (Luke 5:4-11).

Once again we get insight into Peter's character and striking personality. He was "naked" (the account does not say how naked), for he did not want to be encumbered by clothing. He was ready for work and activity.

Verses 3 and 8 contrast a "ship" with a "little ship." The apostles had two boats, a larger one from which they fished, and a smaller one to haul the net.

Even prior to John's announcing, "It is the Lord," it is possible the apostles were getting a little nervous. When they fished all night and caught nothing, their consciences may have bothered them. Things were strange. And then they saw the stranger on the shore. If they did not recognize Jesus right away, at least they were getting very close, and of course John was sharp in his observations. Later, at and after Pentecost, Peter and John were companions in declaring the gospel message. The two apostles were regarded by the others as the leading lights, but John never mentioned his own name directly. After all, John was a "son of thunder," so we know he was a strong personality (Mark 3:17). That strength was channeled into courage for the truth and for expounding it.

When the disciples got to shore, they observed a fire already burning, with coals glowing, and then fish and bread. This tells us that Jesus produced the food miraculously (for he had *not been fishing*), similar to the feeding of the 5,000 with fish and bread earlier. Jesus did not need the apostles. And that is a good lesson for us to remember too; namely, the Lord does not need us, but we need him. Hence we should not regard ourselves or our ministry higher than we should.

The bread and fish were already prepared for the disciples by the Lord, yet he said, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Why did Jesus do this? The entire incident is a spiritual lesson to show that the Lord can perform his work—whatever is necessary—*without* the apostles and us. While he impresses upon us our own *lack of importance*, yet he *will accept* our services. He shows us our proper place but, nevertheless, invites us. He will accept of our fish and bread—he condescends to accept the sacrifices of his people. And even though the disciples caught fish, they did so *only after he instructed them what to do*.

**John 21:11** Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred

and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

**John 21:12** Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

**John 21:13** Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

**John 21:14** This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

When Jesus told them to “bring of the fish,” Simon Peter was again the *first*. He was impulsive and also strong *physically*, as shown by his drawing the “net to land full of great fishes.” The account does not say that Jesus ate of the apostles’ fish, but he wanted them to realize the importance of their work and thus asked for some of their fish.

It is miraculous that the net did not break. In the earlier incident of Luke 5:1-11, the net did break. Only John wrote of this later incident. The things he observed are very significant.

What does the catch of 153 “great fishes” represent? To count out the fish was unusual, and the *exact number* is given, not an approximate one. Since we are living in between two ages, certain things may be happening of which we are unaware, for example, possibly a preparatory harvest with Israel.

**Comment:** The fact the fish are called “great” seems to imply that they represent part of the Little Flock. Perhaps 153 of the feet members will come out of Babylon at the very end of the age, as opposed to those who have had dispensational truth right along.

**Reply:** That suggestion cannot be denied, for 153 is a strange number.

When the net broke in the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, the disciples were untaught, immature, and inexperienced in the work *he* had in mind for them. That was the beginning of their call, and they were babes at that time. But now, after 3 1/2 years of instruction, they were much further advanced in understanding about Jesus, even without the Holy Spirit, for they had lived and talked with him during that time. Thus Jesus had accomplished in them what he wanted to. His prayer in John 17:12 contained the words “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” The eleven he did not lose were instructed, and they were now ready to proceed into the ministry once they got the Holy Spirit. (Of course Jesus still had to deal with Peter, as will be seen in the next few verses.)

When Jesus said, “Come and dine,” the apostles obeyed. All of them knew Jesus was the “stranger,” but no one wanted to say anything. That is human nature, and their reaction gives a stamp of authenticity to the narrative.

“This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples”; that is, it was the third time he showed himself to a group of apostles, as opposed to Mary, the women, the two going to Emmaus, Peter alone, etc. Incidentally, it was characteristic of John to *count* days, incidents, number of Passovers, and so forth. He observed things and kept them in remembrance like a library. This talent is what urged him to write a Gospel.

The number 153 is very important. If we add 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5, etc., up to 17, the total is 153. Also, 153 is a multiple of 17 (17 x 9 = 153). Moreover, the multiple of 17 is in the Great Pyramid but in a modified sense. Hence 153 is a mystical number. These “great fishes” may be true ones, that is, individuals, or souls, that are drawn in and make the Little Flock. The fish were all larger than normal. Usually there is a mixture and a variety of fish in the net, so this uniform

catch was unusual. Each of the 153 was *large*. This incident contrasts with the Parable of the Dragnet, for that net contained good and bad fish and required sorting (Matt. 13:47,48). Here *all* of the fish were salvable, for whatever purpose.

**John 21:15** So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” According to a *Reprint* article, the word “these” could refer to either the other apostles or the fishing business. Probably the reference was to the other apostles. However, the Pastor gives the other view, the thought about the fishing business, for which there is merit. For one thing, Peter is the one who said, “I go a fishing,” and the others followed. They followed his leadership because they respected him. But it is more likely that the word “these” refers to the apostles. Peter had said, “If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise” (Mark 14:31), yet the denial occurred three times. Peter also said, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). Because of these boastful statements, Peter was singled out in regard to his love for Jesus versus his love for the apostles. Peter responded, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

This was the first of *three* times that Peter was asked to reaffirm his love, based on his previous *three* denials of Jesus. All three times Jesus addressed Peter as “Simon, son of Jonas.” Some have felt this address was a form of coolness, but other Scriptures seem to indicate that that was not the case. For example, earlier, during his ministry, when Jesus asked, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter responded quickly with “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona [*son of Jonas*]: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:15-17). Hence the use of that phrase here in John 21:15-17 is not a sign of coolness but a sign of directness. Jesus singled out Peter and addressed *him*.

**Q:** Why did Jesus use *agape* love (“Lovest thou me more than these?”) and Peter respond with *phileo* love (“Thou knowest that I love thee”)?

**A:** Bible Students have been taught from the platform that *agape* love is a higher form than *phileo* love. That is a correct view under certain circumstances. *Agape* love is a detached love predicated on principle. But with those who are already in the family—those who are consecrated—there is a tender, *more affectionate* type of love, *phileo* love, as well as a principled *agape* love. Thus there are times when *phileo* love is a better expression than *agape* love. God and Jesus exercise *agape* love to the world. They are so principled that they will give the world a chance, even though mankind has not listened to them in this age. The very fact God has the mercy to resuscitate the human race and give them an opportunity for life is *agape* love, a higher form of principled love. But Christians, who have come into the family, are loved *even more*. The *context* must be considered.

Hence Peter was saying, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I *dearly* love thee.” Yet there are other *phileo* love texts where the insertion of “dearly” would not fit either the mood or the context. Peter was reaffirming his love: “Yes, I love you. I *affectionately* love you.” Peter’s response was more intense, for Jesus had merely asked, “Do you love me?” using the thought of plain love.

Jesus then told Peter, “Feed my lambs.” What does this instruction suggest? Upon denying Jesus, Peter lost his discipleship, so now Jesus was beginning to *reinstate* him as an apostle, starting with “Feed my baby Christians.” Peter knew he had denied the Lord. When Jesus was resurrected, it was only natural that Peter would question where he now stood with him. Before, Peter had boasted he would never forsake Jesus—the old Peter was prone to be a little

boastful. After his resurrection, Jesus reaffirmed his interest in Peter both in a private appearance and with these remarks about “feeding.” Jesus was reinstating Peter as an apostle to be used in a teaching capacity, but with a little reserve at first—hence the words “Feed my lambs.” It would be like saying to one who was previously an elder, “You can now teach Sunday school.”

Verse 15, then, was a *limited* reinstatement—*after* Peter said, “I dearly love thee.” Jesus was now free to give Peter a limited acknowledgment and reinstatement. Just as with Peter, the Lord sometimes helps us with our lack of understanding of a particular principle. By initiating a situation, God can extract certain statements from us. The Lord wanted to reinstate Peter, but it had to be predicated upon *repentance*. The leader Peter had denied the Lord three times, and now, as a form of repentance, it was necessary for him to be humiliated three times in front of the other apostles.

Of course Jesus knew Peter loved him, for Peter was the first to jump into the water when the Lord was recognized on the shore. Nevertheless, the confession had to be made publicly and audibly because the denials had been so given. And Jesus knew Peter (and John) had run to the tomb. In other words, Peter’s confession was a necessary form of *decorum* in view of what had previously happened. Peter’s weeping *bitterly* was not enough—public retraction and reaffirmation were essential.

A principle is involved here. *Private* sin can be *privately* confessed to the Lord because it has not harmed others. But to the extent that sin reaches out and touches others, it incurs correspondingly more responsibility.

**John 21:16** He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

At this point, Peter probably did not realize what was happening, namely, that Jesus would ask him three times as an offset to the three denials. Jesus used the same question, form, and words. And Peter gave the same response. Jesus again used *agape* and Peter *phileo*. The only difference was Jesus’ “feeding” instruction, which this time was, “Feed my sheep.” With the word “sheep,” Jesus went up another rung of *reinstatement* for Peter. He now gave Peter a little larger custodianship. “Shepherd my sheep” is the thought. This is the second of a cumulative, progressive reinstatement. Instead of little lambs, now the older, more mature sheep were to be fed. “Shepherding” and what it involves will be considered when the third response is discussed.

Jesus’ emphasis the second time could have been on *himself*: “Lovest thou *me*?” This would tie in with his caution to the Church of Ephesus about leaving their “first [*personal*] love” for him (Rev. 2:4). The phrase “more than these” was omitted the second time, suggesting Jesus’ emphasis was now on Peter’s love for *him*. This emphasis was a little more embarrassing and humiliating to Peter. Like a surgeon, Jesus was probing *deeper*. Each subsequent question, although essentially a repeat, went deeper.

When Jesus asked Peter, “Do you [*agape*] love me?” Peter purposely replied with *phileo* love because he felt that *phileo* love was more intense. The point is that depending on context, either *agape* or *phileo* love can be superior. Here *phileo* love is higher.

Jesus so (*agape*) loved the world that he gave his life on their behalf. To have concern for *others* besides yourself is a *better* quality of love, but where the *consecrated* “family” is concerned, *phileo* love is more important, for it is a *personal* love, not a cold, detached love. Jesus did not personally love each individual in the world. No, those in the world are astray—they do not know Jesus and do not want to. The *personal* love Jesus has for a Christian is far superior to his

love for the world. Hence Peter felt he was reaffirming his love in a more *intense* way with *phileo*. *Agape* love is the *usual* word for love. *Phileo* contains the thought of brotherly or sisterly love.

Jesus did not just *carte blanche* forgive Peter. His words and method were carefully thought out. The caution to us is that we should not be more loving than the Father or Jesus. If someone does a real injury to another, the injured party should not just brush off the matter, thinking he is being so magnanimous.

**John 21:17** He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Even though the questioning was a form of rebuke to Peter, it was also an encouragement, for it reinstated him as an apostle—and in front of the other apostles.

Here, the third time, Jesus used *phileo* love. He took Peter's remarks—Peter's own words—to phrase the question "Do you *affectionately* love me?" Jesus now pressed the matter deeper and made it a little more searching. "Do you *really affectionately* love me as you stated?" At this point, Peter would realize the question was being asked *three* times because he had denied Jesus *three* times. Peter was *grieved* to be asked the third time, and this time in his reply, he added, "Thou knowest *all* things." Peter knew Jesus could search his heart.

Many mistakenly think that even if the sin was grievous, the grander love is to forgive as soon as one says, "I am sorry." Should Jesus have forgiven Peter because he knew Peter wept, ran to the tomb, and jumped out of the boat? No! The three denials had to be *publicly* countermanded. However, Jesus did this in a gentle manner, for each time he asked if Peter loved him, Jesus gave added assurance in regard to feeding or shepherding lambs or sheep.

*Compare:* Verse 15: "Feed my lambs."  
 Verse 16: "Shepherd my sheep."  
 Verse 17: "Feed my sheep."

In verse 17, the thought of "feed" is more important than "shepherd," and the instruction about sheep transcends that of lambs. In other words, the advice in these instructions is cumulative. To "shepherd" means to give counsel as a leader in the sense of technical advice. Elders may have a lot of common sense along *practical* lines but not be deep thinkers along spiritual lines. In other words, some today who guide and influence Christians—and not just in the Truth movement—may not be the deepest, spiritually speaking, yet they have needed capabilities (for example, evangelizing or how to get things done). Giving advice and providing leadership ("shepherding" the sheep) are one thing, but in addition, Peter was to "*feed*" *advanced* Christians.

This last instruction reinstated Peter in the minds of the other apostles, and until Paul came on the scene, they looked to Peter as a leader in more advanced thinking. When Paul began to teach, Peter humbly acknowledged Paul's superiority. In fact, Peter's humility was outstanding. Roman Catholics have used Peter's commission to feed lambs and sheep to support his being the first pope. However, they ignore Paul's reprimand to Peter and Peter's acknowledgment of Paul's superiority.

**John 21:18** Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

**John 21:19** This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Verse 18, as proved by verse 19, indicated Peter would die by crucifixion. Tradition says he asked to be crucified upside down when the time came.

The entire incident showed Peter that he needed to be more humble because he was accustomed to being impetuous and impulsive, doing what *he* wanted in a macho way. Jesus was giving Peter a reflective view of his own nature as it *had been*, but *now* Peter realized he must be *on his guard* and do things *Jesus' way*. Jesus' words "Follow me" suggest, "Peter, now you have to control yourself."

Regardless of the reasons Peter denied Jesus earlier, the fact that he would be *crucified* would be a form of retribution, and it would remind Peter of both Jesus' experience and his own failure. But Jesus' words here were also an encouragement to Peter in that they indicated he *would be faithful*. Jesus' words were like a little chiding. He was saying, "In the past, you did things in your *own way*, but in the future, you must watch that tendency and hearken unto *me*. You will be faithful, but you will meet with a fate of crucifixion." When that time came, Peter would be encouraged by remembering Jesus' words. He would also remember his three denials and his progressive reinstatement—the whole incident.

In 2 Peter 1:14, Peter referred back to John 21:18,19. "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, *even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me*." Peter was probably crucified shortly before Paul's death—maybe a year earlier.

**John 21:20** Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

**John 21:21** Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Peter turned around and saw John. Then he asked Jesus what John's fate would be.

This observation by John about Peter's "turning about" is helpful. A very focused conversation had just taken place between Jesus and Peter, culminating with the Master's prediction that Peter's life would end with crucifixion. Now Peter saw John and changed the subject to John's fate. Peter wondered, "Would John meet with the same fate? Would John be crucified?" Peter was interested to know John's fate.

After Jesus' resurrection, Peter and John were paired for quite a while, so it was natural for Peter to be concerned about his "partner." There was a growing affinity between these two. At the Memorial supper, Peter had asked John to inquire who would betray Jesus. As time went on, Peter became more attached to John than to Andrew, his brother. Hence Peter was more concerned about John's fate than about the fate of the other nine apostles.

Notice how in verse 20, John used almost an entire verse to avoid giving his name. The term "the disciple whom Jesus loved," which John used several places, is here definitely pinned down as referring to John by the added description about the Memorial supper.

**John 21:22** Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

This was a prophetic statement that the John *class* would tarry until the Lord's Second Presence. Then when John *personally* tarried, he became a good picture that the John class are the feet (or latter) members of the body of Christ.

The following is a paraphrase of Jesus' reply: "If it is my purpose or my Father's purpose that John should tarry, it really is no concern [or no business] of yours. Follow thou *me*." Jesus' reply is a lesson for all of us to be careful that we are following *the Lord*. Regardless of any dealings, trials, etc., that *others* have, we are to follow the Lord through our *own* experiences and not to compare our trials to the trials of others. "Follow the *Lord's* instruction" is the rule. Thus Jesus inculcated a principle and also manifested a little reserve—just as he did with his statement "Touch me not" when Mary Magdalene wanted to embrace him (John 20:17).

It seems reasonable to assume Jesus knew that John would have the privilege of recording the Book of Revelation and that through that book and by the Holy Spirit, the John class would be carried down to the end of the age.

**John 21:23** Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

From the natural standpoint, John did tarry, for he outlived the other apostles by a considerable length of time. In fact, John did not even write his Gospel until a fairly late date. However, once his Gospel was written and other brethren became aware of this private conversation of Peter, John, and Jesus and then observed that John was living into his nineties, they began to think maybe he would live until Jesus' return. Thus John had to squelch the false rumor circulating that he would live on into Jesus' return, that Jesus would return in his lifetime.

In his epistles to the Thessalonians, Paul had to combat the erroneous thought that the resurrection was past and that the invisible Second Presence had already occurred. Of course the Thessalonians understood that the Second Presence would be *invisible*. Otherwise, Paul would have used the argument "You do not see him, so of course he is not here." Instead he had to use the argument about the man of sin, etc.

When Paul wrote his first epistle to the Thessalonians, they thought he was hinting that Jesus had returned. He later said (paraphrased), "By word of doctrine from my mouth or by my pen, do not get the thought that I meant in my first letter Jesus is here. No, he cannot come until, first, there is a falling away and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:1-3). Some erroneously thought Jesus had already come. The Greek word used does not mean "nigh" in the sense that the Second Advent was near, but it means that Jesus was *present*, that he was actually *here*.

The Matthew account about sleeping saints arising in the earthquake at the time of Jesus' crucifixion is true (Matt. 27:51-53). Some falsely concluded that the resuscitation of the sleeping saints was an evidence the resurrection was past. And the apostles thought Jesus would restore the Kingdom after his resurrection. The theme of the Second Advent was so exciting that many overread certain statements. In their zeal, they misread providences.

**John 21:24** This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

**John 21:25** And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

These two verses were appended to the Gospel of John in some of the ancient manuscripts. It is possible that verse 24 is authentic, but internal evidence proves that verse 25 was an

interpolation and is thus spurious. One internal evidence is the change of pronoun from “we” in verse 24 to “I” in verse 25. The word “I” does not harmonize with John’s characteristic manner of always referring to himself indirectly.

John’s Gospel was finished while he was yet alive, but in the transcription of the original document and its incorporation with the other books of the New Testament, this exaggeration was added. Some try to justify verse 25 by saying it was Hebrew hyperbole (see the *Diaglott* footnote). Although the Scriptures do contain such hyperboles—for example, “The cities are great and walled up to heaven” (Deut. 1:28) and “There we saw the giants, ... and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers” (Num. 13:33)—the pronoun “I” proves the verse is not authentic. The *Berean Manual* says that verse 25 is not in the Sinaitic manuscript. Certainly John did not write it.