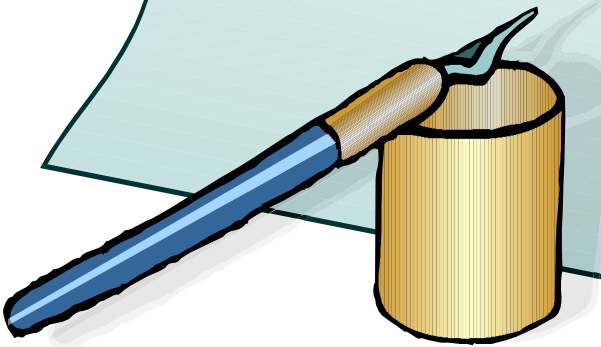


THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



By Brian Terrell Haines

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We know quite a bit about John’s family. James and John were fishermen, with their father Zebedee. Luke tells us that they partnered in fishing with Peter and Andrew. Their mother is identified as one of the most faithful disciples, with names Salome (Mark) and Joanna (Luke). In John’s Gospel, she is identified as being Mary’s (Jesus’ mother) sister. This would make John a first cousin of Jesus Christ. It might also reveal her thinking when she brought James and John before

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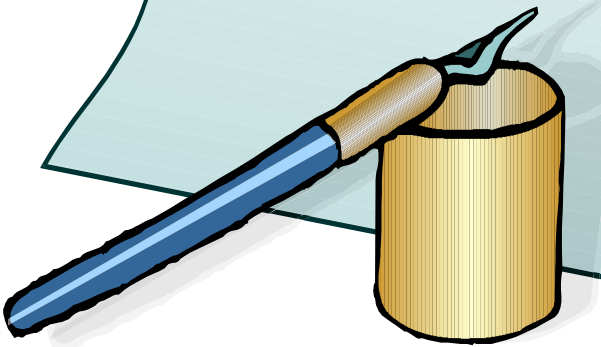
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Gospel of John

Chapter 1

The Word of God

John's Gospel begins with what could be the most profound statement of the New Testament. The Word that became flesh (Jesus) was both with God, and was God, all at once. The declaration translated "word" in John 1:1 in Greek is *logos*. This word has a multiple meaning in Greek; it can mean a word, a ratio, or reason. It was the Jewish philosopher Philo who interpreted it as a spiritual power of order, which he said was the Angel of the Lord of the Old Testament as well as the power of the creation¹. What does John mean with this Logos? Even the Gentiles saw Logos as a divine property. The Greek Stoic philosophers identified Logos with the divine animating principle throughout the Universe.

¹ Copleston, Frederick [A History of Philosophy, Volume 1](#), 2003, pp. 458–462.

If so, the meaning could drive us back to another book that begins with these words:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth

What we are meant to see is that Jesus is more than a man, He is the Manifestation of the Power of God.

No one has seen God

Several times in the Gospel of John the statement is made that no man has ever seen God. We might think to ourselves that it is not accurate, since there are many examples of men “speaking” with God.

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

Genesis 32:30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Exodus 3:6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God

of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God."

Exodus 33:11 So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

Exodus 33:20 But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

In fact, there are repeated statements that God is not visible to be seen even though His divine attributes are visible in nature.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Hebrews 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

It would seem that the idea of seeing God may be about being in proximity to the Power of God. Moses told the people that they had talked to God "face to face" at Mount Sinai, but that conversation was through Moses. So "face to face" does not necessarily communicate what we would think of, but instead as a figure of a direct communication in a form.

Deuteronomy 5:4 "The LORD talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire"

No one has actually seen the face of God, or been in His presence in Heaven. We need to understand that this is likely due to the fact that God cannot tolerate sin in His presence. John is trying to tell us that Jesus was in heaven prior to coming to earth. Unlike every person who has come before Him, Jesus existed since the dawn of time, and even before time began. Isaiah made it clear his vision of God would likely end with his destruction because he was a man of “unclean lips”.²

The Testimony of John

Now we are introduced to John the Baptist. Luke chapter 1 tells us about the miraculous birth of John, and how he was related to Jesus. John’s father was a priest, but John is not. Many see him as a form of a Nazarite (Numbers 6), the “commoner” holy men of the Law of Moses. Jesus tells us in Matthew 11 that John is the most righteous man (born of a woman) that has ever lived. No small statement, when it comes from the mouth of God in the Flesh.

Matthew 11:11 "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

John is told by God to prepare the way for the Messiah. What is remarkable is that John does not know the identity of the Messiah; he tells us this in 1:31. Granted, he was aware of the

² Isaiah 6:5

righteous life of his relative Jesus, as attested by their conversation in the other Gospel records. But being righteous and being the Messiah are not necessarily the same.

Matthew 3:13-15 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

John baptizes because he has been told that this is how God will make known to him the identity of the Messiah. John tells his disciples that he was told of God that he would baptize someone, and then would see the Holy Spirit come down to that One. So when Jesus says that His baptism would fulfill all righteousness, we know that it was necessary so that John could testify that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

The Seven Witness Testimonies

This brings us to the testimonies of the Gospel of John. Jesus, throughout the message, related that there are seven witness testimonies made to His identity as the Christ, the Son of God. We note that the words "testimony" and "witness" are found throughout the entire book, more often than all of the other Gospels combined.

- 1. Testimony of the Apostles** - John 15:27, 21-24
- 2. Testimony of John the Baptist** - John 3:28-32, 5:33
- 3. Testimony of God the Father** - John 5:37, 8:17-18
- 4. Testimony of Jesus** - John 8:14-18
- 5. Testimony of the Scriptures** - John 5:39
- 6. Testimony of Miracles** - John 5:36, 10:25
- 7. Testimony of the Holy Spirit** - John 15:26

John the Baptist is the first witness to testify to the Divine Identity of Jesus. John does not testify to the identity of Jesus as the Christ until after it is confirmed to him by the private prophecy he received from God. This testimony (the events at the baptism of Jesus) is not recorded in John, but John presumes we are familiar with the events of Jesus' baptism from the other Gospel accounts. John's testimony has its own sevenfold purpose:

- 1. Jesus is the Light of the World** - John 1:7-9
- 2. Jesus was before John** - John 1:15
- 3. John was not the Christ** - John 1:9-12
- 4. Jesus is the Lamb of God** - John 1:29
- 5. The Holy Spirit marked Jesus** - John 1:32
- 6. Jesus is from Heaven** - John 3:31-32
- 7. John Testified of Truth** - John 5:32-33

Let us also look carefully and find that there are seven references to water in the Gospel of John, which begin here. John uses water to reflect on a number of points. Consider how the water mentioned in John 3 (baptism) is the same as that mentioned in I John 5:

1 John 5:6 This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

These seven waters have a unique meaning to the event they are located in; sometimes the water is the medium of the miracle, and in other places it is the metaphor for the Holy Spirit. With the reference to baptism, it is the place of salvation.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Water of John's Testimony | - John 1:31 |
| 2. Water of Sin and Righteousness | - John 2:7-8 |
| 3. Water of the New Birth | - John 3:5 |
| 4. Water of Everlasting Life | - John 4:13-14 |
| 5. Water of Healing | - John 5:2-4; 9:7 |
| 6. Water of Divine Authority | - John 6:19-20 |
| 7. Water of Sacrifice | - John 19:34 |

Listing these events in order would state the following truth: Jesus Christ came (water of testimony) for the sins of the world (water of sin and righteousness), and through baptism (the water of new birth) all might have eternal life (water of everlasting life), being healed of sin (water of healing) by God in the flesh (water of divine authority) dying on the cross (water of sacrifice).

The Calling of the Apostles

The other Gospels give us a record of the calling of the apostles, focusing on Simon, Andrew, James and John and their

calling to be fishers of men; of Matthew and his enormous sacrifice to come to Jesus. John does not provide us with a list of Apostles; we are meant to have already understood who these men are through the other Gospel records. John only speaks about four apostles, and how they became convinced Jesus was the Christ.

The first Apostle discussed is Andrew, whom we find is a disciple of John the Baptist, and has followed John's identification of Jesus as the Messiah. Andrew is convicted by the testimony of John the Baptist. He tells his brother Peter, and Peter meets Christ. John places this meeting as the time that Peter is identified as the "*Petros*", the stone.

Jesus then seeks out Philip. After they meet, Philip goes to find Nathanael. Luke groups these two apostles together in Luke 6:14, which might suggest that they are brothers. There is no historical or Scriptural witness to this though. Nathanael (Bartholomew in the other Gospels) makes the point that there is no mention in prophecy of the Messiah being from Nazareth. This will be restated later when the Jews point out that the Prophet was to come from Bethlehem, not Nazareth. John does not bother to explain to us this paradox, assuming we are already familiar with the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus.

It is worth noting that the great confession, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, appears to have been made first by the Apostle Nathanael, not Peter, as many suppose in Matthew 16. This is one of three times this precise confession, critical to the purpose of the book, is made in the Gospel. Peter makes this confession for all of the Apostles in John 6:69 and Mary makes the confession in John 11:27.

Gospel of John

Chapter 2

The First Sign

John tells us in the end of his book that the signs of the book are what convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In chapter two we find the first of these signs: turning water to wine.

The First Miracle

Is this the first miracle Jesus performed, or is it the first miracle that John is enumerating for us? The language John uses when he says “*beginning of signs*” could indicate either. Let us consider though that John states Jesus performed miracles in Jerusalem after this, but before the “second” sign

John 2:23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.

John then calls the sign of the official (in chapter four) the second sign. Therefore, the most likely conclusion is that John's enumeration is not chronological, but for the purpose of the book. Perhaps the significance is meant for us to begin our own count of miracles. Once we do so, we find the following:

- 1. Turning Wine into Water** - John 2:1-11
- 2. Healing of the official's son** - John 4:46-54
- 3. Causing the lame man to walk** - John 5:1-8
- 4. Feeding the 5000** - John 6:5-13
- 5. Walking on Water** - John 6:15-21
- 6. Healing the blind man** - John 9:1-7
- 7. Raising Lazarus from the dead** - John 11
- 8. The Resurrection of Christ** - John 20:1-27

Eight miracles are recorded. Why not the seven we were expecting? Perhaps we ought to consider that the first seven were performed by Jesus Christ (and we already have been told that the signs testify themselves of Christ), but the last one was performed by the Father.

Acts 2:32 "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Acts 3:15 "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

So in fact we have seven miracles performed by Christ, fitting nicely into our pattern. We might wonder why we do not call certain other events in the Gospel “signs”? Some advents (such as Jesus discerning hearts, God speaking from heaven) are not included as “wonders”; John does not call them such. Consider that in 2:11 the Cana miracles is identified as the first, and in 4:54 this is identified as the second; in between these passages Jesus discerns hearts in 2:24 and 4:16-18, but John does not consider them the second and third signs.

Let us return to the water and wine. The stone basins are identified being used for ceremonial washing. Similar stone basins are found in archaeological surveys in the Middle East today. There is no water in them, so we wonder if they have indeed already been used. Such use would likely occur at a wedding, considering the tradition of the rabbis:

Mark 7:2-3 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.

So this action is likely to have occurred at the wedding, a feast which sometimes lasted several days. There is no specific record of whether the water itself became ceremonially “unclean” after being used, but it would seem that at least some stigma might remain with it.

John said that the significance of the miracles was to prove one of two things: Jesus is the Christ (Savior), or Jesus is God. The symbolism here is rather clear; from what was common, came something extraordinary. If the water from those vessels was symbolically unclean itself, the symbolism becomes even more pronounced: from what was unclean came something extraordinary. This miracle is also the second of the seven waters of John. This water is a metaphor for the spiritual transformation that occurs in the life of a believer through Christ.

One last thought: was Jesus authorizing the use of alcohol by this miracle? We ought to consider that the word for wine in Greek (“*oinos*”) refers to a number of beverages, ranging in their alcoholic content. Nothing in the wording tells us if this is alcoholic or not; we are left to the context to discern the beverage’s nature. The context of a wedding feast causes us to ask: if the wedding guests were concerned about being ceremonially clean for the wedding, is it likely they would then defile themselves with strong drink?

The First Passover

The common belief that Jesus died at 33 years old is taken from the account of John, from the three Passover feasts that are recorded therein. This does not mean Jesus was necessarily 33 years

old (Irenaeus dubiously records his age at death as 50¹), but that the youngest he was at death was 33. We are not surprised to find out that there are seven feasts² recorded in John's Gospel:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Passover | - John 2:23 |
| 2. (An unnamed feast) | - John 4:45 |
| 3. (An unnamed feast) | - John 5:1 |
| 4. Passover | - John 6:4 |
| 5. Feast of Tabernacles | - John 7:2 |
| 6. Feast of Dedication | - John 10:22 |
| 7. Passover | - John 11:56 |

At this first Passover, the record is made of Jesus attacking the venders in the Temple court. It parallels what the other Gospel writers record, except that they each place this event at the end of their Gospels, in the final week (Matthew 21:12-14, Mark 11:16-18, Luke 19:45-46). Is this the same event, or did Jesus drive these men out of the Temple two times in His life? It is possible that this is the same occurrence, and that John's Gospel is not recording a separate Passover from the last feast/Passover, but that we are jumping back and forth in chronology. We know John is not meant to be understood in a chronological manner, as Luke asserts his Gospel was meant to be read.

¹ *"The 30 aeons are not typified by the fact that Christ was baptized in his 30th year: He did not suffer in the twelfth month after his baptism, but was more than 50 years old when he died."*— Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 2.22

² The feast in John 4:45 could be the Passover of John 2:23; if so, can we call the wedding a feast, as it is in John 2:8-9?

The simplest answer is usually the correct answer; in this case, the easiest determination is that this happened twice in the life of Christ. So we will proceed under that assumption. This first time we see Jesus full of the righteous zeal of God, driving out those who profited from sacrifice.

Is it the case that it is a sin to make a profit in selling religious items? We note that the Apostle Paul said that those who serve God have a necessity to be compensated for such:

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

We must conclude that the issue here is not the sale of sacrificial products as much as it is the exchange of money that these booths practiced. The Law of Moses stated that usury was wrong³. The reason for the money changers was that the coinage of the realm, that is, Roman or Greek coins, were refused in the Temple by the authorities because of the graven images that they contained⁴. This was ironic, since as we see in Matthew 22:19-20 that these same people had no problem possessing such coinage. Instead, the Temple authorities required either Tyrian or Judean shekels, which were not without graven images, but such images

³ Exodus 22:25

⁴ Sanders, E. P. The Historical Figure of Jesus. Penguin, 1993

were not nearly as pagan. There was no such prohibition given in the Law of Moses to the use of foreign coins.

There is a similar event in the Old Testament, where Nehemiah, in the process of restoring the Temple worship, performed a similar “purging”:

Nehemiah 13:7-8 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

The offense in Nehemiah was that a place had been prepared for an unbeliever in the assembly to profit from the Israelites. Perhaps in John this is also the issue; fundamentally it is that the Temple had been turned into a market, thus changing the purpose of the Temple.

While at the Temple, Jesus makes the proclamation that “this” Temple will be torn down and rebuilt in three days. We realize that this is a reference to His death, which is something that John tells us. What is interesting is that this statement is brought up as the primary accusation against Jesus in the record of Jesus’ trials in the Gospel of Matthew and Mark, but it is not brought up during His trial in John’s account. At the same time, this original statement made by Jesus is not recorded in Matthew, Mark or Luke, but only in John. Once again we are reminded that John’s Gospel necessitates

knowledge of the other Gospels, and vice-versa. The truth of the Gospel is a four part volume.

Gospel of John

Chapter 3

You Must Be Born Again

John three introduces one of several righteous Pharisees in the person Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a member of the Sanhedrin, and in the end of the Gospel account he is one of the men who removed Jesus' body from the cross. It seems that while Jesus is in Jerusalem, Nicodemus will use this opportunity to personally ask Him if He is "The Prophet". When he comes to Jesus, Jesus answers a question that does not seem asked; He tells Nicodemus that in order to "see" the Kingdom of Heaven, one must be born again.

Throughout the Old Testament, prophets spoke about a coming kingdom that would be the eternal one, of which the Messiah would be in control.¹ The use of the word "kingdom" is the

¹ Daniel 2:44, Micah 4:1, Isaiah 2:2

expression for the authority of God² (consider that the Greek word translated kingdom, *basileaus*, means authority) and it is identified with heaven because this is the location of the throne (source of authority) of God. Jesus speaks in John of seeing as being an allegory to understanding, or acceptance³.

Jesus then elaborates to end Nicodemus' confusion. Being born again is a spiritual act, obtained through water and the Spirit. Later, after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, John adds the blood of Christ, not because it was not originally part of the new birth, but because the effect of the new birth could not occur until after the blood:

1 John 5:6-8 This is He who came by water and blood-- Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

What does this mean? The Spirit we presume is the Holy Spirit; Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is manifested in His words later in this Gospel⁴. The Spirit is the mind of God made known, and John will tell us that the Spirit is the Revealer of all things⁵.

² Isaiah 66:1

³ John 9:41

⁴ John 6:63

⁵ John 14:26

Thus, the Spirit needed to be born again is manifested by the knowledge given by God. Peter makes a great point of the place of knowledge in our salvation:

II Peter 1: 2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

The water might be the living water of chapter four, but that really would be a redundant reference, since that water is identified with the Holy Spirit. The likeliest conclusion is that the water is the water of baptism. The Apostle Paul describes a water in which we are “regenerated”, or made again, along with the Holy Spirit:

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the people there that their salvation from sin could only be accomplished through this same water and the Spirit:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We can see a pattern taught by all of the apostles, that to be of God, one must be born again of water and the Spirit. The water is clearly baptism, the immersion of a person into water.

The blood can only refer to the blood of Christ, the purchase price of the human race⁶. John reminds us of this blood when telling of the Roman soldier piercing the side of Christ on the cross, where we see blood and water immediately after Jesus has given up His spirit.

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

There is little debate that the blood is the very grace of God, manifested by His love in sending His son. Blood is the purchase price of our salvation, thus making it “free” for us. The Spirit is the means in which we know this to be true. As all Scripture is Spirit filled⁷, the Spirit is manifested as the Bible now, the message of the Gospel in the time of John (before it was written down). The Water is the action(s) one must take to accept this gift. John is fundamentally clear, that the gift is free and conditional all at once. The blood, the water and the Spirit testify to individual salvation⁸.

Jesus places a great deal of importance on the idea of believing in Him. This must be seen in the context of the purpose of the book, which is to believe He is the Christ, the Son of God. Let us

⁶ Acts 20:28

⁷ II Timothy 3:16-17

⁸ I John 5:8

not interpret these passages exclusively, as some are wont to do; Jesus makes clear that to love Him was equal to keeping the commandments He gave⁹. Later, Paul would make us understand that to believe is necessarily to obey:

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

Jesus is not saying that belief alone is sufficient to save (for as James said, even demons believe in Jesus¹⁰). He is saying that He will provide the necessary proof that people can believe in, and thereby can know the way to eternal life. Faith is the beginning of salvation, not the end.

The Testimony of John

Once again we are brought to John the Baptist. He has not yet been arrested or executed, as we know will happen. Perhaps John himself knows this; we cannot miss the allusion in his words that "He must increase, but I must decrease". With these words we see John as an extraordinary prophet, one who know both when he speaks, and when he is finished. He is telling his disciples (who seem to be quite considerable, as we meet them again in Ephesus several decades later¹¹) that he is not in a competition with Jesus;

⁹ John 14:15

¹⁰ James 2:19

¹¹ Acts 19:3

John's purpose was to be the herald of the Christ, and he has made that proclamation. One testimony only is insufficient; John must now leave the witness stand, so to speak, that other witnesses may come forward.

On another note, the esteem many held John the Baptist in (as has happened with others such as Mary or Peter) would go beyond that which was scripturally intended, and would evolve into a false worship. The *Mandaeans*, a religious group prominent in modern Iraq, regard John as the true Messiah, something John the Baptist himself denied in the first chapter of John¹².

¹² *Mandaeans*, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; Oxford University Press (2005)

Gospel of John

Chapter 4

The Samaritan Woman

The Samaritans were the descendents of the remaining Israelites and the Gentile nations brought in to occupy the country of Israel (the Northern Ten Tribes) by the Assyrian King Sargon II in 721 BC. In II Kings 17 we are told that these Gentiles failed to honor Jehovah, and a plague of lions came upon them. In order to rectify the situation, the Assyrian king sent a Levite priest to teach the Gentiles the ways of Jehovah. The recorder of II Kings notes that these people then created a religion which combined their paganism and the Law of Moses. They took the name of the previous inhabitants of the land, and are known as the Samaritans. They saw themselves as the children of Israel, as seen when in this chapter the woman at the well calls Jacob her father.

The relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews was volatile. When the Jews had first returned from Babylonian captivity, the Samaritans offered to assist in rebuilding the temple, and were refused¹. Again, decades later, Nehemiah's restoration efforts opposed the Samaritans nearly to the point of war². The Samaritans constantly sought to worship in the temple in Jerusalem, but were always refused. Their position is worthy of some pity; having a knowledge of God, they are excluded from worship in the temple. Sometime after this, the Samaritans built a temple for (their) Jehovah on Mount Gerizim³. Even today, Samaritans maintain that this is the true Mount Moriah (as opposed to the identification in II Chronicles 3:1 as it being at the city of Jerusalem), and therefore the true location God desired the Temple. The tension of this temple's existence culminated either under the Greeks (per the Jewish Talmud) or the Hasmoneans (per Josephus), when Jews destroyed this Samaritan temple.

Thus, we can see the animosity of the Jew and the Samaritan in the background as Jesus meets with the Samaritan woman at the well. We can understand why she is astonished that He, a Jew, would even speak with her, a Samaritan. Jesus speaks of the living water that He can provide; this is the third of the seven waters John describes. This is the idea of the life that is in Jesus Christ, a life that Jesus has described already as being born again. How can Jesus prove He is one who can give this? By discerning her spiritual

¹ Ezra 4:1-5

² Nehemiah 4:2

³ Lipschitz, Knoppers, Albertz; Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.; Eisenbrauns, 2007 pg 157

condition. She is morally wrecked; a woman with five husbands, and living in fornication even now with someone else. To her credit, she is not offended by Jesus' critical eye, but astounded that He knows these things. She concludes that He is a prophet.

Now begins an even more wonderful conversation: the worship of God. Here is the contention between the Jew and the Samaritan, one which has produced wars, and left the Samaritans with no place to worship. Jesus pulls no punches, so to speak. He is clear that the Samaritans are not a people of promise, and that their traditions of the place of worship were not of knowledge (fact), but tradition only. What is not of knowledge is not of truth; we need to have that in mind for the next few statements. Then Jesus makes an even a more astonishing statement: soon, the temple in Jerusalem will cease to be the place of worship. If that is not sufficiently shocking, Jesus then suggests that Samaritans will be welcome at the new temple, since God's desire is than anyone who is willing to worship Him in spirit and truth is invited to worship.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

Truth is a prominent point of John's Gospel. He has introduced us to truth in chapter one, telling us that Grace and Truth are through Jesus, that Jesus is the truth, that the Word is the Truth, that there is a Spirit of Truth, that the truth will make you free, and that those who perish do so because they lack the truth. No wonder then when faced with Christ, Pilates asks "what is truth". We know it is much more than a single answer. The Samaritan woman confesses that she believes in the Christ. Jesus tells her: I am He.

Jesus is suggesting that there are two kinds of worship: spiritual worship, and earthly, or physical (sometimes called carnal) worship. We might consider that this is a theme expounded on much by later New Testament writers, that is, the contrast between the physical worship of the Old Covenant, and the Spiritual worship of the New Covenant. We know the Truth is the knowledge of God; now we know the Spirit is the spiritual mind.

The Old Physical Covenant

Hebrews 9:1-8

Physical Temple	I Kings 6:12-14
Physical Priesthood	Exodus 40:15
Physical Sacrifices	Leviticus 1:2
Physical Music	I Chronicles 6:32

The New Spiritual Covenant

Hebrews 9:9-15

Spiritual Temple	Ephesians 2:20-22
Spiritual Priesthood	I Peter 2:5
Spiritual Sacrifices	Romans 12:1
Spiritual Music	Hebrews 13:15-16

The disciples return at the conclusion of this conversation. They are puzzled at the discussion they see with Jesus and the Samaritan woman, but do not ask what is occurring. The woman returns to her village, to testify to her people that she has met one she believes to be the prophet. These people then ask Jesus to stay, and are ultimately convinced that Jesus is the Savior of the World.

When Jesus ascended to heaven in Acts chapter one, He told His apostles that they would spread the Gospel to the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea, then to the Samaritans, then to the rest of the world. The Samaritans represent the transition between the Jew and Gentile. Perhaps we can even see the providence of God, in creating a people that would be a perfect bridge for the Gospel to cross from the Jew first then to the Gentile.

The Official's Son

The second recorded miracle (identified as the second miracle in verse 54) is the healing of a royal official's son. As with many of the people in John's Gospel, no names are given. The son is healed with Jesus not needing to be in the presence of the son. This reminds us of the centurion in Matthew chapter eight, who understood that the authority of Jesus was spiritual, not physical, and that His presence was not necessary for His works.

The man took Jesus at His word, and left to return home. Such is the faith that is expected of all who call upon the Lord, that they take Him at His word. We will note that this is often the case in the healing Jesus performed; that the hearer was expected to act before they received the blessing. The lame man would need the faith to stand before his legs were healed; the blind man would need the faith to wash in the pool before receiving his sight.

Gospel of John

Chapter 5

The Lame Man Walks

When the Messiah was spoken of in the Old Testament, there are certain miracles identified with Him. Specifically, that the lame should walk, the blind should see, and the dead should be raised. Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that these unique works were identifiable with the Messiah

Matthew 11:5 "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Isaiah 35:5-6 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For

waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

The pool of Bethesda was discovered by archeologists in the 19th century¹. When excavated, it was located near the Sheep Gate, with five porticos. The movement of the waters by an angel is unknown to us except by John's account. We are now in the third miracle and the third water as well.

Jesus' question to the man is of significance: "*Do you want to be healed?*" We might consider at first, who does not? But if physical healing is a metaphor for the cleansing of sin, as suggested in places such as Matthew 9:4-6, then the question has more significance. John's Gospel will make it clear that many people, or more accurately most people, do not wish to be healed of that ultimate sickness, sin. Instead, they prefer to be ignorant of their condition.

The command to pick up the mat and walk, in which when the man obeys by faith, he is healed, is viewed as a violation of the Sabbath rules of work by the Jews. It is not the Sabbath itself which is violated, but the traditions defining work on the Sabbath. Jesus does not break the Law of Moses at any time.

The miracle is significant to us as it places Jesus as the promised Savior of the world, and as we will see in a moment, God Himself. Later, when the blind man is healed, like the lame man here he too will have very limited knowledge of Jesus as the Christ. It also demonstrates that while Jesus does the work of healing, it is meaningless unless we meet the condition of obedience set before

¹ Charlesworth, James H., Jesus and Archaeology, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006. pp 560-566

us. If the man had not gotten up and walked, would he still be lame? If the blind man in chapter nine refused to go to the pool to wash, would he still be blind? The gift of God is free and conditional, all at once. Arising to walk, or washing in the pool, are both conditions to the free gift of being healed.

The Identity of Jesus

All of the Gospels make clear that the Jewish leaders are personally offended that Jesus would work miracles on the Sabbath². In other Gospel accounts, Jesus appeals to the simple fact that He, being God, was the Lord of the Sabbath, and that He would not be able to violate the Sabbath *de facto*. Here though, John records the response of the Jews to this to ascertain early on that the Jews understand that Jesus is identifying Himself as God. In John's words, Jesus "*said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God*". We have already understood this, but to remind us, we know that this book is written to know that Jesus is the Son of God; being the "*monogenes*" son of God (translated "*only begotten*" in John 3) is saying that Jesus has the Divine Nature of God. Simply put, Jesus is God.

Now Jesus begins to explain His purpose in coming to earth. He and the Father have the same purpose, that the Love of God should be made manifest to men, and that men might be saved by God. Jesus says that all judgment is His; we know that Jesus will judge the living and the dead when He returns. This is not just

² Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:2, Luke 13:14

about being a judge, but about the authority to be a lawgiver. Only one who has the authority to judge has the authority to make law.

It is confusing to some degree, that Jesus will say that He is both the Judge, and He does not judge. But we need to consider that Jesus is speaking to the two “halves” of the world; the saved and the lost. For the saved, Jesus will not judge them for their deeds; they will pass through this judgment. This is not to say that the saved are not judged at all, as Peter makes it clear:

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

This is the judgment of the righteous. Those in Christ will be judged, but not for the sins they had committed. Instead, the judgment of the house of God is whether they have continued to abide in Christ. Those not in Christ are judged for their sins, and the wage of any sin is death.

There is too the discussion of the raising of the dead. Jesus speaks that some will hear and believe in Him, and will pass from death to life. Then Jesus says that one day the dead in the graves will hear His voice and be raised, to life and death. There are two resurrections in the text here, which might be a bit confusing. It might help to consider what John says in Revelation pertaining to the first and second deaths, and first and second resurrections:

Revelation 20:6,13-14 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ,

and shall reign with Him a thousand years..... The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Let us simply say: the first death is physical death, and the second is eternal damnation. The first resurrection is in baptism³, the second is the physical raising of the dead. The first resurrection is spiritual, and the second is physical. No man can avoid the first death or the second resurrection. It is the choice of all men as to whether we are part of the first resurrection, or the second death. As John plainly said in Revelation 20:6, those who choose to partake of the first resurrection (baptism, or all obedience in general) avoid the second death (eternal damnation).

Jesus now returns to the idea of testimony. He makes the case that it is not merely Jesus who speaks of Himself, but He is testified to by the law (and by extension Moses) and by the Father. Jesus makes it clear that because they refuse to believe what is written in the Scriptures, they are not going to be saved.

³ Romans 6:3

Gospel of John

Chapter 6

Feeding of the 5,000

This is the only miracle that is common to all of the Gospel accounts. With only five loaves of bread and two fish, 5,000 (men, not counting women and children) are fed. In a culture where the next meal is not always predictable, such an event would no doubt have made a considerable impression on those who received the benefit thereof. Consider the moment when the sixth person reached into the basket; having seen the five loaves placed inside, and the five previous persons removed them, what incentive is there to reach inside? Hunger drives people in strong ways. Jesus will use this miracle to teach those who so hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Isaiah 55:1-2 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

The miracle results in the people proclaiming that Jesus is “the” Prophet. This idea of being “the” Prophet is the foretelling by Moses pertaining to the Christ. This statement is fundamentally the same as the one made by Philip in chapter one, the Samaritans in chapter four, and by Mary later. As we have seen before, there are three roles that the Christ would fulfill: Prophet, High Priest, and King. We know that “Christ” means anointed one, and these three offices were all given by anointing. Each of these roles was prophesied in Scripture, and with each of them there is a “foreshadow” person who are prophesied to “return”. It would take a unique person to satisfy the qualification of all three:

David the King		
Prophetic Return	Anointing	Christ Fulfils
<i>Ezekiel 34:24 "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them;</i>	<i>1 Kings 19:16a Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.</i>	<i>Luke 1:32b "...the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.</i>

Moses the Prophet

Prophetic Coming	Anointing	Christ Fulfils
Deuteronomy 18:15 <i>"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear"</i>	1 Kings 19:16b <i>"And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place</i>	John 7:40 <i>Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet."</i>

Melchizedek the High Priest

Prophetic Return	Anointing	Christ Fulfils
Psalms 110:4 <i>The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."</i>	Exodus 28:41b <i>You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.</i>	Hebrews 6:20b <i>even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.</i>

As the people realize the identity of Jesus, John says that their desire is to make Jesus King by force. Jesus has spoken previously about the desire of some to "force" the Kingdom¹. Jesus

¹ Matthew 11:12

will have no part of this, for as He has said previously, “my time has not yet come”.

Walking on the Water

That evening Jesus’ Apostles cross the Sea of Galilee by ship. The events that transpire are recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. A storm arises, and the Apostles see Jesus walking to them on the water. We know additionally from Matthew’s account that Peter attempted to walk to Jesus unsuccessfully. Mark’s account tells us that the amazement of the Apostles was because they failed to grasp the meaning of the miracle of the feeding of 5,000².

John’s use of miracles, as we have already considered, is very limited. Why this? The miracles cause us to believe that Jesus is Savior and God. This miracle leads us to the latter, that Jesus is able to manipulate the materials of nature in a manner that only the one who created them could.

The Bread of Life

The next day, Jesus is found again by the people on the far side of Galilee. Jesus makes it clear that He understands their motivation for seeking Him; not for truth, but to be fed. While Jesus is one quick to show mercy and compassion on the poor, He is also one who points out the carnal nature of the same. His desire has been for men to seek the spiritual things over physical ones, as He

² Mark 6:52

told the woman at the well. So now Jesus begins to speak about greater, spiritual bread, the Bread of Life.

In the Old Testament, *Manna* was the bread that “came from heaven” to sustain the Israelites. We recall that it ended the moment that they crossed into the Promised Land³. *Manna* meant “What is it?” Jesus now says that He is the answer to that mystery. “I am the Bread of Life”.

This is not a reference to communion, as is sometimes supposed. Jesus describes this sustenance in the same way He described the living water of John 4; that it will provide an eternal end of hunger or thirst. Obviously, the Lord’s Supper is, as a memorial, limited in application to being a spiritual means of discernment, and there is no description of a physical benefit to the recipient in the Bible. It is done as a matter of worship to God. The Bread of Life is life to the hearer; whoever “eats” of the Bread of Life lives forever.

Jesus goes on to say that He, being the bread of life, is the sustenance of men. Again, we must perceive this to be spiritual, not physical. Jesus promised that many who followed him would physically be put to death for doing so. As *manna* kept the Israelites while they wandered in the wilderness, so Jesus will sustain the believer who wanders in the wilderness that is this world, this life. We do not miss that the allegory follows to conclude that the Promised Land is in fact heaven⁴. How often we sing songs that point to Caanan’s Land as our heavenly hope; here we see the fitting of *manna* into that allegory.

³ Joshua 5:12

⁴ Hebrews 4:1-11

What specifically is the Bread of Life? Jesus uses the analogy of His flesh and blood as sustenance, something that the Jews hearing this found repugnant. But how else could He explain we would be saved by the stripes of His flesh⁵, and the purchase of His blood⁶? His physical life was absolutely necessary to solve the problems of the sins of the world.

After the lesson is over, many depart from Jesus. Such it is when we meet obstacles, we depart too. In the Parable of the Seeds⁷ Jesus taught that of those who turned to Him, who let the seed enter their hearts⁸ and give them life, two thirds would fall away. This is not meant to be an exact numerical prediction, but a prediction that most who follow Jesus fall away; they will fall either because they have no root, or because the cares of the world choke them out. We might say that many fall in this place in John because they were not prepared to receive the spiritual meaning of what Jesus would say.

Jesus does explain the metaphorical meaning of the Bread; His words are the Bread. Later, we will be told that the Holy Spirit would come to the Apostles, to cause them to remember these words⁹, and then to speak these words to others¹⁰. But too many were unwilling to take the time to think through the difficult sayings of the Son of God.

⁵ 1 Peter 2:24

⁶ Acts 20:28

⁷ Mark 4:3-21

⁸ James 1:21

⁹ John 14:26

¹⁰ Matthew 28:20

The chapter concludes with Jesus looking at His Apostles and asking if they desired to depart. Peter responds for them:

John 6:68-69 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This is Peter's confession of faith, much like that which he made in Matthew 16:16. But the value of this passage is more than the substance of Peter's confession. When in the spiritual walk of faith a believer is confronted with that which is not easily understood, it is easy to become discouraged or disheartened. Peter's words are a powerful tool to remember; where else do we turn? There is no other salvation offered, no other place to turn to for hope. Even when it is difficult to understand or serve the Lord, it is always better than any and all alternatives. Too, Peter points to what they do understand: Jesus is the Savior. Perhaps the "Bread of Life" teaching was too difficult for the moment, but the plain truth of the identity of Jesus was far too important to be discouraged by lesser matters which are not yet fathomed. Let us endeavor to have the same mind.

Gospel of John

Chapter 7

Jesus at the Feast

The chapter begins with an unusual interaction between Jesus and His brothers of the flesh. We know that Jesus was the oldest of multiple brothers and sisters; we often do not consider the familial issues that may have arisen because He was the Messiah. His brothers desire Him to go to the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, and to make Himself known. John clarifies that they did not believe that He was the Christ at that time, which causes us to wonder what their motivation in this is. Once more Jesus announces that His time has not yet come; since the first verse tells us that they are now seeking to kill Him, it seems likely that these refer to the eventually death on the cross. Jesus tells them He will not go with them yet, but then goes in secret, alone and later.

John/Jesus mentions the “time” or “hour” of his departure seven times; four times in telling us that His time had not yet come, and three times telling us that His time had come.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. “My hour has not yet come” | - John 2:4 |
| 2. “My time has not yet come” | - John 7:6 |
| 3. His hour had not yet come | - John 7:30 |
| 4. His hour had not yet come | - John 8:20 |
| 5. “The hour has come” | - John 12:23 |
| 6. His hour had come | - John 13:1 |
| 7. “Father, the hour has come.” | - John 17:1 |

We need to understand that such language tells us that Jesus will not die until He arrives at the time He has determined it to occur. Jesus tells Pilate that it is the authority He has permitted him to have that allows Him to be put to death¹

John 10:17-18 “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

We can see that Jesus has made such a powerful presence in His teaching that the danger now is that He will be seized and made King by force, or seized and put to death. From here on many of the actions Jesus does are secretive, or not publically announced, until

¹ John 19:11

the last week in Jerusalem. Chapter eight reflects a great deal of the impact of Jesus among the people of His time.

Jesus begins teaching at the Temple, and the people are amazed at His understanding. It reminds us of the events at the Temple when He was just 12 years old². Jesus confronts them about their intentions: they seek Him dead. Perhaps they themselves have not realized yet it is their desire, as they seem to in chapter 11:49-55. Jesus commands that they, and we, need to make a righteous judgment about Him. Either acknowledge Him as Christ, and all that means, or reject Him.

Here marks a change in the minds of many. Some are beginning to esteem Him as the Christ, something that the Apostles have done for some time. They make an excellent analysis: what more could the Christ do that Jesus has not done, to prove He is the Christ? Others point to what they perceive as faults in Jesus that prevent Him from being the Christ; they know where Jesus is from (Nazareth), and that Messiah would be an unknown figure. Conversely, others reject Him because they see Messiah as only coming from Bethlehem³, and are unaware of the circumstances of Jesus' birth that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke relate to us.

Jesus finishes the feast with another reference to the living water, which we are clearly told here is the Holy Spirit, received when we believe (and obey⁴). With these words, many proclaim He is the Prophet or the Christ, perhaps not realizing that both are the

² Luke 2:47

³ Micah 5:2

⁴ Acts 2:38

same. There is an attempt to seize Jesus which fails, because the guards are astonished as to the teaching of Christ. There will be other failed attempts to force Jesus, either to become Messiah, or to be stopped.

Perhaps we are seeing the division of those who believe, and those who do not. John is clear that those who demand answers for the Christ with the right heart, will receive them. Nicodemus in chapter three and Thomas after the resurrection reflect the “noble minded” attitude that does not accept on face value, but seeks proof of belief. The others, who reject Christ, seek proof that cannot be established, thus rejecting the Christ before He is revealed.

Gospel of John

Chapter 8

A Woman Caught In Adultery

Some Bible translations may contain a note here that this text does not appear in all early Bible manuscripts. There are some 5,300 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament¹, and so it is not surprising that there are some with passages removed or redacted. Nothing in the passage contradicts the message of Christ, or causes us to consider it false, so there is no real reason to debate its validity or testimony at this time.

It is notable that the woman taken in adultery was taken “in the act”; the question is of course, where is the man that was also caught? This tells us that the issue here is not the justice of the Law

¹ Lightfoot, Neil How We Got the Bible, (1963) pp34

of Moses, but a test of Jesus. There is no question here as to her guilt, or the appropriate penalty. The Law is clear:

Leviticus 20:10 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

How can it be fair that they have chosen to punish only one of the parties involved? Obviously it is not, and we are left to wonder why they have only chosen to punish one of the parties. Is he a friend, or is it that these men are hesitant to punish the man for the crime?

Perhaps what is most important is not our supposition, but that this is a trap. It is possible that putting her to death at Jesus' order might well create a reason for the Roman's to arrest Him; this seems unlikely, since the Romans are not very concerned about the Jews enforcing matters of their own law². Perhaps it is more the case that this will put a wedge between the people and Jesus. Jesus has been a teacher of mercy and grace, and has promoted the heart of the law. John's very Gospel is established to show how grace came through Jesus.

"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." We cannot miss the absolute brilliance of this answer to the issue. It does not suggest at all that the Law of Moses should be invalidated; it is in fact an encouragement to follow through. However, it puts to the enforcer of the law an obvious qualification:

² John 19:6-7; Acts 7:58; Acts 18:15

only one who is sin free has the authority to carry through with the punishment. This brings to mind something that Jesus' half-brother would tell us later:

James 4:11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

Jesus would qualify this a bit further, to tell us that we have an authority to make judgments, but only if we ourselves have been attentive to be attentive, or have corrected ourselves. In the last chapter we were commanded not to judge by appearance, but with righteous judgment. We consider this in perspective with another commandment to judge:

Matthew 7:2-5 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

The men depart; the older first, perhaps seeing the point in their experiences before the younger men. In the end, it is Jesus and the woman. The last statement Jesus makes is that she is to “leave your life of sin”.

The Testimony of Jesus

The subject moves back to the testimony of the identity of Jesus. In the course of this chapter, the conversation becomes heated, with the Jews who are against Christ accusing Jesus of being illegitimate, and ultimately attempting to kill Him. Jesus will make one of the most personal testimonies of His identity as being God.

Jesus now testifies that He is the light of the world. The Pharisees make the point that a single witness is insufficient; Jesus responds to say that the Father testifies with Him. He may have pointed to this conversation in chapter five, that John the Baptist testified of Him, and the Scriptures testified of Him. For our sake we are adding the Father’s testimony now.

Jesus says that His witness testimony is based on the place He has come from: heaven. Since the Throne of God is in Heaven, this testimony is one of absolute authority. “Where is your father” is the question; all of the Gospel accounts are mute about the presence of Joseph after Jesus begins to preach, leaving us to conclude that he is deceased. This is the father they are thinking of, one they seem to know about³.

³ John 6:42

In verse 31 Jesus begins speaking to some of the Jews who believed Him. We need to note that John does not generalize or stereotype anybody in his Gospel; there are faithful, believing Jews, and there are unfaithful, disbelieving Jews. Even of the Pharisees, John tells us of some who believe, and some who do not. However, in this point of the passage, even the Jews who believe in Him will become hostile. Perhaps we are subtly being told that “believing” in Jesus does not make one a disciple of Jesus⁴.

Jesus tells them that they are slaves, slaves to sin. The response of these Jews is their statement that as descendants of Abraham, they are no one’s slave. However, considering the history of the last 600 years, this is rather problematic statement. Their people have been captives some time, with Assyria, Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, and now the Romans. They are not “free” even in a worldly sense. However, Jesus does not speak to this type of freedom, but to the freedom that truth brings from sin.

If the idea of slavery was not offensive, the next comparison must be; Jesus tells them that Satan is their father. This is a true insult, one Jesus would reserve for the Pharisees and Lawyers elsewhere who make men slaves of sin⁵. They identify their father first as Abraham, then as God Himself. Yet Jesus continues to berate them, to tell them that they desire to commit murder. Again, they do not seem to believe the accusation themselves, as it seems in chapter seven.

The insults continue. Jesus is called a Samaritan, and then He is identified as one who has a demon. Jesus never stoops to

⁴ James 2:19

⁵ Matthew 23:15

slander, simply telling them that so long as they oppose Him, they oppose God Himself, and therefore, are serving the purpose of Satan. Perhaps the most offensive slander is the one hinted at in verse 41; that Jesus is a son of fornication. As we know, they are aware of the background of Jesus Christ, of His father Joseph and mother Mary. Perhaps they know this too, having sent out men to investigate him as these did John in chapter one, or will do to the blind man in chapter nine. Jesus was born to a woman who was only engaged to be married when she conceived; in the eyes of all men (even a righteous man), who would believe what Mary or Joseph said about the visitations of an angel? It may be that the very character of His mother is being slandered; who among us would not rise to this bait? If it is in fact what is being hinted at, the fact that Jesus does not lose His self-control is marvelous.

Jesus closes His sermon with the promise that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. The Jews see this as an insult to their esteemed father Abraham, one who is known as a friend of God⁶. If Abraham died, how can Jesus offer the opportunity for eternal life? Jesus tells them that Abraham looked for His coming, saw it, and rejoiced in it. The Jews mock Him, seeing what they perceive as a simple impossibility. Then Jesus makes the most dramatic statement of the book: *"Before Abraham was, I AM."*

How did Abraham see the day of Christ? For one thing, Jesus makes it clear that Abraham is not dead, to the extent that He lives yet now.

⁶ II Chronicles 20:7

Matthew 22:32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Abraham either saw the day of Christ by faith, or in the sense that he yet lived in God, he saw it come about. Luke's account of the story of Lazarus and the rich man suggest that Abraham had some awareness of the events in the world⁷

When God met Moses at the burning bush, He revealed that most special name that would be the covenant name for generations: *YHWH/Yahweh*, or as it is translated into English, Jehovah. We know that this is a rendering of the expression "I Am That I Am", or more specifically, "I AM". Jesus is using this unique name of God, not in the third person, but first; He was clearly saying He was God.

It was not missed by the opponents of Jesus. They pick up stones to kill Him, but He slips away. As we know, it is not yet His time, and therefore they have no power to put Him to death.

⁷ Luke 16:29

Gospel of John

Chapter 9

What the Blind Man Saw

This is a chapter unique in the Gospels, in that it is primarily from the view of the unnamed man who is healed by Jesus. The event begins with the disciples coming to a blind man, and asking Jesus “who sinned” that the man should be born blind. The idea that sickness was only the result of sin was popular throughout the Old Testament (as we see with Job’s friend accusing Job of sin based on his suffering), and into this passage now.

The idea that sin is punished in this life is not an accurate representation of scripture. Though many have attempted to identify all suffering with sin, it simply does not work with a Scriptural context. The penalty of sin is the death of the soul¹. While

¹ Romans 6:23

there are consequences to sin, those consequences cannot be perceived as the wage or punishment of sin. The wages of sin are imputed ONLY to the person guilty of sin; God makes it clear in Ezekiel that to believe otherwise was an offense to His divine justice:

Ezekiel 18:2-4 "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die."

The inheritance of the wages of sin is a false doctrine, although one which is commonly believed, as propagated by Augustine of Hippo, and later by John Calvin. While nothing is said in Scripture of an inheritance of the wages of sin, there are many examples of the inheritance of the consequences of sin. The consequences of sin are various, and affect many people, and may not affect the sinner at all. The consequences of sin are not divine justice, but something that allows us to see in the world around us that sin is harmful.

God told Adam that the day he ate of the tree of knowledge, he would die². As God does not lie, we know that the day Adam ate, he died. However, since he did not die in the flesh, we can

² Genesis 2:17

conclude this was a reference to the death of his soul before God³. Subsequently, God removed Adam from the Garden to prevent his physical life from immortality⁴. Over 900 years later Adam died in the flesh; this death was passed on to his descendants, and it affected the whole of creation in a consequential manner⁵.

The Blind Man

After Jesus places mud in the eyes of the blind man, the events follow the blind man rather than Jesus. We need to remember several important points from here on: first, the man does not know the identity of the one who healed him, apart from the name Jesus; second, Jesus did not tell the blind man to confess him before others. What the man does know is that he was told to wash, he did, and now he can see.

The miracle occurred on a Sabbath, as did the other miracle of healing in chapter five. Thus, the Pharisees want to interrogate the man healed. His testimony is simple, and does not change. However, we see the blind man begin to make some necessary inferences from what he does know.

There is a division among the Pharisees as to what is occurring. This division has been around for years now, as it was mentioned by Nicodemus in chapter three. To those who believe, it is clear that a sinner could not work such signs. To those who

³ James 5:12; Matthew 10:28

⁴ Genesis 3:22-23

⁵ Romans 8:20

disbelieve, the Sabbath issue is the evidence of Jesus' evil intentions. There is also the question of the miracle itself; it is not believed by the Pharisees; perhaps it is because, as we shall see in a moment, this is an absolute proof of Messiah. His parents are called in to testify to this, but to nothing else; they fear the threat of being cast out of the synagogue for calling Jesus the Christ.

Finally, the blind man is interrogated a third time. He has already concluded in verse 17 the obvious: whoever this Jesus is, He is a prophet. When the Pharisees confront the blind man about his conclusions, and say that they do not know where Jesus is coming from, the blind man seems unable to hold back his astonishment. It is simple: a blind man cannot be healed without the power of God; therefore, this Jesus is the Christ. Since God does not hear sinners⁶, Jesus cannot be the sinner they suppose.

The blind man gives us an important fact that tells us that Jesus is no mere prophet, but He is The Prophet, The Christ. Even the blind man recognizes that it is remarkable that he is the only one who seems to realize: no one in recorded history has ever been blind and then had their sight restored. Lepers have been healed in times past by prophets⁷; the dead have been raised⁸; people have been miraculously fed⁹. But no one has ever had their sight restored. Yet the Scriptures were clear that the Messiah would do just this:

⁶ Isaiah 59:2

⁷ II Kings 5:14

⁸ I Kings 17:22

⁹ I Kings 17:16

Isaiah 29:18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isaiah 42:7 To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Isaiah 42:18 Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see.

We might be tempted to think that with an absolute proof looking them in the eye, the matter would be resolved. The result is not the acceptance of clear logic, of scriptural soundness. Instead, it is the pronouncement of inherited sin, and the total rejection of clear testimony. The man who could see is cast out.

There are not many people in Scripture who were sought out by Christ. When Jesus hears of the man's ejection, He seeks him out. Jesus asks him if he believes in the Christ; the man tells Jesus that He need but identify the Christ, and the man would believe. When Jesus identifies Himself, the man worships Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

In a finally note to this conversation, Jesus applies the metaphor of blindness and sight to the recognition of sin. Those who know that they are sinful can be healed. But those who refuse

to “see” cannot be healed, and their sin remains. It reminds us of the allegory of Jesus as a physician:

Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

The Pharisees seem to understand his point, and ask Him if they are blind then. Jesus replies in the affirmative. They are blind to their own sins; as such, they cannot be healed by Christ, and will ultimately die in their sin¹⁰. The prophet Isaiah saw the rejection of Christ by many of the Jews, and described it in just this language:

Isaiah 6:9-10 And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.”

Jesus had not asked the blind man to stand up for Him among men (as He does ask us). Yet the blind man did so, simply because it was right. One of the most remarkable events in the Bible, and we never know the man’s name.

¹⁰ John 8:24.

Gospel of John

Chapter 10

Jesus the Good Shepherd

Following Jesus' conversation on blindness, He begins a sermon on His identity as the Shepherd of God. Jesus will identify Himself with two characters here: He is the Good Shepherd, and He is the Door of the sheep. We already saw the statement by Jesus that before Abraham was, "I AM". Now that powerful name expounded on into seven "I AM" statements by Jesus in the Gospel of John:

- 1. I AM the Bread of Life** - John 6:35
- 2. I AM the Light of the World** - John 8:12
- 3. I AM the Door** - John 10:7
- 4. I AM the Good Shepherd.** - John 10:11
- 5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life** - John 11:25
- 6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life** - John 14:6
- 7. I AM the Vine** - John 15:1

Jesus is the Door

Jesus begins the sermon discussing how those who follow Him are comparable to sheep. Many shepherds will tell you that sheep are fairly intelligent when it comes to identification of the master; they are able to recognize the voice of the one who leads them. Jesus desires that believers be followers; that those who seek Him trust Him to lead them to “good pasture”.

Jesus is the Door, or the Sheep’s Gate, to the good pasture. He is the means through which believers pass on to other things. The Apostle Paul speaks of how it is that the believer passes through Christ in order to have access to God. Jesus Himself tells us later that access to the Father is only through Him.

Ephesians 2:18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus the Shepherd

In the Old Testament, the prophet Zechariah was told by God to act out the work of bad shepherding.

Zechariah 11:15-17 And the LORD said to me, “Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal

those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded."

Jesus wants the followers to understand: no one has ever cared for them as He does. In this way, Jesus is the ultimate Shepherd. He is willing to die for His charges. The word shepherd later finds place in the New Testament church as a synonym for the Elder/Bishop/Overseer's work¹, where it is sometimes translated "Pastor"². Particularly, Peter uses this image and term to compel fellow Elders to look to the example of Christ as Shepherd:

1 Peter 5:1-4 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

¹ Acts 20:28

² Ephesians 4:11

He ends this sermon again discussing the laying down of His life for the sheep. Those who hear are again divided, some claiming he is demon-possessed, others pointing to the miracle of the healing of the blind as evidence of His identity.

Confrontation at Chanukah

If the preceding events happened while Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, we have now moved from late September to December, to what is the only reference in Scripture to the Feast of Dedication, or in Hebrew, Chanukah. The Feast of Dedication came about during the Maccabean revolt, when the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanies IV desecrated the temple with the sacrifice of pigs. When the revolt ended, the priests rededicated the Temple, and by tradition, an eight day “feast of lights” was held³. This occurred around 166 BC.

While in Jerusalem Jesus is confronted by the Jews, and they want Him to directly tell them whether He is the Christ. He replies that He has already “told” them by the signs He has performed; they are the works of the Messiah. Those who truly look for the Messiah have “heard” Him, as sheep who hear the Shepherd. They are going to have eternal life, which cannot be taken away from them. We need to understand that Jesus is not saying that eternal life cannot be lost, but that it cannot be taken away; men can choose to abandon eternal life, as some have done in this very Gospel.

³ Josephus, Jewish Wars, i 34

This answer is very much like the one Jesus gave to John the Baptist's disciples in Matthew 11. In that passage, the same question is asked, and in effect, the same answer is given. It is not that Jesus is hesitant to proclaim He is Messiah, but that the things He has done speak stronger than words. If men would not "hear" what He has done, they will not listen to what He says.

Matthew 11:2-5 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Jesus says that He and the Father are One. This statement of a shared identity of God is blasphemy in their eyes; they understand perfectly that this is one more time Jesus is saying He is God. This is the third time in the Gospel of John Jesus claims to be God, and is nearly murdered for this:

John 5:18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 8:58-59 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went

out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Jesus then confuses them by asking a difficult question: why does Scripture say that men are gods?

Psalm 82:6 I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High.

It is an interesting passage; some translations try to make it more palpable by translating the word as “angels”, but the Hebrew word is *Elohim*, the name for God in plurality. John told us in chapter one that everyone who believes in Christ has the right to become Children of God⁴; so it is no wonder that we are also told that through Christ we become partakers of the Divine Nature.

2 Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

With this, Jesus departs from Jerusalem, escaping yet one more failed attempt to put him to death. Jesus will only permit them their murder when the time is right.

⁴ John 1:12

Gospel of John

Chapter 11

The Death and Life of Lazarus

The question is often asked: why does God permit evil things to happen to good people? The book of Job is devoted to examining this difficult question, and we know from that book sometimes the answer is that we cannot fathom the reason why bad things happen. Can we agree that “a very bad thing” occurs to some very good people in this portion of the Gospel? If we consider it from the view of the spectators, it seems unreasonable that Jesus would allow it to happen. Yet He did, because there was a greater purpose in letting it occur.

Lazarus is identified only in the Gospel of John. He is the brother of Mary and Martha, who are identified in Luke’s account as followers of Christ. John tells us what we need to know about these women: they are loved by Jesus. But when He hears Lazarus

is sick, He does not go, although he makes plans to enter Judea (this may follow in chapter 12). Jesus' statement about the death of Lazarus tells us that He knew Lazarus would die. He then says He is glad He was not there, so that He could make them believe what is perhaps the most important virtue of Christ: He is life.

The words of Martha are haunting: *"if you had been here, my brother would not have died"*. Perhaps not an accusation, but more of a regret; Martha knows Jesus had the power to stop this; she and her sister had asked Him to come to aid their brother. Yet we and the Apostles know He did not. Jesus then tells her that her brother will live. The reason is that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

We are not surprised that Jesus makes seven life statements in the Gospel of John:

- 1. Everlasting life to those who believe - John 3:15**
- 2. Everlasting life form the Living Water - John 4:14**
- 3. Everlasting life to those who believed, - John 5:21**
- 4. Everlasting life from the Bread of Life - John 6:58**
- 5. Everlasting life by keeping His word - John 8:51**
- 6. Abundant life by Jesus' coming - John 10:10**
- 7. Life after death for those who believe - John 11:25**

This last one seems to be the most powerful: Jesus is life itself, the very promise of eternal life. He embodies life, and His presence here and now will manifest this truth. With His statement to Martha, Martha makes the confession: You are the Christ, the Son of God. There are seven such confessions in this Gospel; we will look at them in chapter 20.

Mary comes next, also saying what Martha had: that if Jesus had been there, this would not have happened. The text then says that Jesus “*groaned in the spirit and was troubled*”. Let us understand here that the meaning of this is not sympathetic sorrow. The word for “groaned” means a noise of anger (the same word used to describe the Apostles reaction to Mary pouring oil on Jesus in Mark 14:5); the “troubled” means angry or upset. His emotion is not in sympathetic sorrow, but in frustration that even now, He is not believed. He is even blamed, perhaps subtly by Mary and Martha, and openly in verse 37 by some of the mourners.

How is it different today, when we suffer? Are we not quick to blame God, even when we should understand it is the consequences of our own actions that we suffer for? Consider the emotional state of our Lord here, when His followers are blaming Him for something He has (at best) permitted in order for greater works; perhaps it is the same when we are the ones to be angry with God for His will.

Angry again, Jesus tells the mourners to move the stone. Should we ask questions why the Resurrection and the Life wishes to move the stone? The disciples do. Jesus tells them that they will see the glory of God. Jesus then prays to the Father (so that they know who raises men from the dead), and then calls Lazarus to come out. And Lazarus came forth from the grave.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

This is an extraordinary event. We are told in chapter 12 that those who are seeing Lazarus are deciding that Jesus is the Christ¹.

¹ John 12:11

The chief priests and the Pharisees call a meeting of the Sanhedrin. There is no debate among them that Jesus is performing miracles; they do not once accuse Him of being a false teacher or prophet. Instead, their concern is that Jesus *may actually be* the Messiah; if so, their belief of the Messiah is that He will restore the Kingdom of Israel with military might. If people believe in Him, the Romans will act.

The Priests owe some great measure of their authority to the Romans. It was the Pharisees who first pleaded with the Roman General Pompey to oppose the Jewish Hasmonean kings, and give them a place in controlling the priesthood². This warfare between the sects would again emerge during the Jewish War in 67 AD. Their place in society was in no small part given to them by the Romans. Jesus of Nazareth could possibly end their place, and even their country.

Caiaphas the High Priest now speaks to the council. Joseph Ben Caiaphas was appointed to the rotating role of High Priest by the prefect prior to Pilate in 18AD. He was married to the daughter of the previous (and sometimes current) High Priest Annas Ben Seth³. It seems that the role of High Priest was rotated by the Romans between their appointee and the Jewish choice of High Priest. The historicity of Caiaphas was solidified even further when in 1990, the ossuary of Caiaphas was unearthed in the modern country of Israel.

Caiaphas says what many have been plotting in their hearts and even half-heartedly attempting for some time: Jesus of

² Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews xiv. 3, § 2

³ Metzger & Coogan Oxford Companion to the Bible, 1993. p 97

Nazareth must die. To provide a noble reason, it is for the preservation of the people. John tells us that this was a prophetic utterance that Caiaphas was unaware he was making.

The other Gospel accounts tell us that the plot intended for Jesus to die after the Passover, for a fear of the people rising to His support if it happened while a number of people were there. However, Jesus is predicting that He will die at the Passover, contrary to their plans. His desire is that many people witness this event.

Matthew 26:1-5 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

We know that it is Jesus who is correct. Why then do they do exactly what Jesus said they would, contrary to their own plans? John's Gospel does not go into this, but presumes we know that Jesus fulfills the last week by confronting the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians so forcefully that they are left without any words to speak. These confrontations are covered in length in the other Gospel accounts.

Matthew 22:46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Ultimately, it seems that the real motivator for moving the murder of Jesus of Nazareth to the Passover was the opportunity presented by Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. While not recorded in John, we know from the other accounts that Judas went to the Jews and traded Jesus for the “princely sum” of 30 pieces of silver. Everyone supposes (correctly) that Jesus will come for the feast, and that this would be the time to capture Him.

Gospel of John

Chapter 12

In Bethany

The other Gospel accounts identify the house that Jesus is in as belonging to Simon the Leper. Jesus is gathered here with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. As it is identified as being six days before the Passover, this may be Saturday night. The text says that Mary used an amount (about ½ liter) of pure nard (the other accounts tell us it was so precious as to be contained in an alabaster container) and poured it on Jesus' feet. The other Gospels also tell us it was poured on His head too.

Even more remarkable is that Mary then used her hair to wash His feet. Such an act of humility could only have been done by someone who had much to be grateful for; we are aware of her brother's presence in the house at that moment. Those of us who have lost loved ones know what it would have meant if they were

then returned to us. Thinking of this in those terms, this act of supplication becomes much more credible.

John makes a point to specify Judas Iscariot's wicked intent, when Judas makes the point that this could have been used to aid the poor instead of poured on Jesus' feet. The other accounts tell us that the other Apostles agreed with Judas. To be fair, this was an unusual action; such vials were purchased to wait for the funeral of the buyer, not to be used as a common foot wash. Today we invest a great deal of money into funerary items such as caskets; what if, having purchased a casket in advance, it was then used to make a bonfire?

Ultimately, the importance of this event is that Jesus makes the point that this is not an act done carelessly; He is about to die, and this is the preparation for this event. Does Mary truly know that it is about to occur? The text does not say, but she very well should have, as should all of the Apostles; Jesus has been telling them He will die in Jerusalem for some time¹, and has begun telling them it would be the Passover². We need to understand that Jesus has known this fate all along, and it has been at His control all along.

Entering Jerusalem

Immediately prior to the passages telling us of Jesus entry into Jerusalem, we are told that the people are becoming moved to acknowledge Jesus because of the resurrection of Lazarus, so much

¹ Matthew 16:21

² Matthew 26:2

so that the chief priests seek to kill Lazarus too. The other Gospel accounts do not tell us why the people gather on a Sunday morning to praise the Messiah as He enters, and it might have left us to wonder why Jesus received such a “triumphal” entry; it is John’s Gospel that puts this into context, that the people have heard of this man who raised another man of some notable identity.

As Jesus rides in, we are reminded by John that this was spoken of by Zechariah the prophet:

Zechariah 9:9-10 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'

His mount is not the mighty battle horse that ascribed to Him in Revelation 6:2; instead, this is a lowly animal, two of them to be precise. The prophecy goes on to say He will bring peace to the nations, from the river to the end of the earth. Consider the etymology of “Jerusalem”; *Yarah* means “to flow” (like a river), and *Shaloam* is “peace”. Thus, Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, enters the city of Peace, to die for the sins of the world.

The Gospel accounts describe with different details the same thing: those opposed to Jesus are offended by this event. Luke tells us that they want Jesus to command them to cease calling Him the King; Matthew tells us the entire city was asking to His identity.

Josephus records that as many as a two million people came for the Passover³; many believe this was an overestimate, and it really would be a little less than half this amount⁴. Regardless, this is an extraordinary number of people to be put into a tumult over the coming of one man.

In Jerusalem

Several Grecian Jews come to Philip (his name suggests he too was a Grecian Jew) and ask to see Jesus. Jesus response is to tell His disciples that shortly He must die; there is no longer time for such things. Recall that throughout the book Jesus has told us He must work while there is light; that His time had not yet come. Now the light is fading, and there is no more time. His time has come.

Jesus calls on the Father to glorify Him. This glorification is a reference to the sacrifice, and the accomplishment it will achieve. There is a voice from heaven that proclaims *“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again”*

There are three times in the New Testament that the Father spoke from Heaven (excepting the symbolic Revelation). Each of those times it is suggested or stated that the voice was manifested not for Jesus, but for the audience. When Jesus was baptized, we are told that the Father manifested Himself invisibly by His voice, and the Holy Spirit manifested Himself similar to a dove. John’s Gospel

³ Josephus, Jewish War, 6.9.3 422-427

⁴ Sanders, EP; Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE - 66 CE (p. 126).

has revealed that this occurred so that John the Baptist would know the identity of the Messiah when he baptized Him⁵.

Matthew 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The second time is at the transfiguration of Christ, when He meets with Elijah and Moses, and discusses His coming death in Jerusalem.

Luke 9:34-35 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

Now the Father states that He will glorify the name of Jesus. What is in a name? Even today, we use the word "name" as a synonym for authority (such as "stop in the name of the law"). We are told this is true of the name of Jesus:

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

The Father is speaking to the authority that He will give to the name of Jesus, and He calls this passing of authority

⁵ John 1:32-33

“glorification”. The authority given to Jesus had already begun to manifest itself in the works or testimonies given to Him. Consider the testimony of His miracles; these came by the will of God, and are called a manifestation of glory:

John 2:11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

John 11:4 When Jesus heard that, He said, "(Lazarus') sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

John would have us understand how important it is that it was necessary for Jesus to die to receive authority. Jesus tells us in John 17:

John 17:1-2 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him"

When Jesus arises from the grave, we are told that He has been glorified

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Jesus continues in the text to make it clear that He must soon die. The people perceive this as a contradiction, since they are aware that Scripture reveals that Messiah would be forever.

*Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over
His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment
and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal
of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

This is not merely an issue of ignorance; very educated men struggled to reconcile the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53 with the victorious Messiah of Isaiah nine. We see this dilemma with the Ethiopian Eunuch:

*Acts 8:30-32 So Philip ran to (the Ethiopian Eunuch), and
heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you
understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How
can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to
come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture
which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the
slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He
opened not His mouth.*

It is only we, who have been blessed to live in the last days⁶, that understand the fullness of Messiah, and how He fulfills both of these prophecies at once.

⁶ Hebrews 1:1-2

Jesus points to that this is the moment when the “ruler of this world” will be cast out. Satan is identified as the Ruler of the World:

2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

The power that Satan holds is death. This power is because of sin. Therefore, all who sin are under this power. Jesus will die to overcome this power, thus “binding the strong man” and defeating His power over all who would believe in Him.

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

1 Corinthians 15:56a The sting of death is sin

Revelation 20:1-2 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Jesus' Last Speech

The second part of chapter 12 finishes the preaching of Jesus. The events from chapter 13 on are on the night of His betrayal leading to His death and resurrection. John points to the prophetic message from Isaiah six we have looked at before which tells us of the refusal of many to hear or see the Christ. The point is to understand that Jesus has performed enough signs, and there have been enough testimonies of His identity, that now anyone who is undecided of His identity is ignorant by a choice to ignore or hide from the truth that is plainly in front of them. Even to this day, those who refuse to hear or believe have sufficient evidence to do so, but have made a choice in their hearts to be blind and deaf to the truth.

Jesus finishes His ministry to all men by telling them that those who will believe on Him will have life, but those who do not are judged by their own words in the last day. Let us not be confused by what Jesus says; He clearly tells us that He has the authority of judgment⁷. At the same time, Jesus tells us that those in

⁷ John 5:22, 9:39

Him have no judgment⁸. We conclude that Jesus is offering to those who believe (and obey⁹) Him the chance to avoid the judgment of God for sin, and instead be judged by Christ for righteousness.

⁸ John 5:24

⁹ John 14:21

Gospel of John

Chapter 13

The Last Supper Discourse

Chapter thirteen begins the second part of the Gospel of John. The events from chapter 13 through chapter 19 are all within the space of hours. The next four chapters are the teachings Jesus gave to the Apostles after the Lord's Supper. The other Gospel writers can only afford to dedicate a few paragraphs here, but John makes this the main event in his Gospel.

The Passover

There is no reason stated why John does not describe the Lord's Supper. We know that John himself has told us that for the sake of space most of the events in the life of Jesus are not found within his book. Recall our understanding too that John's Gospel requires us to have already read the other Gospels. His Gospel is

not so much to provide us with the primer of Christian life, but to give us the necessary events in the life of Christ to believe He is God, Savior of the World.

Was the Passover celebrated on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday? There is a bit of confusion on the date of celebration, as some hold it to be held on Wednesday due to the “three days and three nights” Jesus said He would be in the grave¹. Traditionally we hold the date to be Thursday night, as we are told that Jesus hung on the cross the day prior to the Sabbath². Some hold it to be Friday night this occurred, as this was the night the Passover was observed in the Old Law³. At this moment we will proceed on the presumption it is on Thursday night; later in the book we will examine this in depth.

Passover was a family meal. The head of the household was obligated to speak to the family as to the importance of the day⁴. This makes it a bit more unusual that Jesus requested all of the Apostles share the Passover with Him, seemingly without their families present⁵. As Jesus tells them in the other Gospel accounts, He had desired to observe this with them for some time.

The Passover traditions were complex even in the time of Christ. While not mentioned in the Law of Moses, there were a number of ceremonies included in the Passover by Christ, such as

¹ Matthew 12:40

² Mark 15:42

³ Leviticus 23:5

⁴ Exodus 12:26-27

⁵ Mark 14:17

the four cups⁶ or the *Hallel* song⁷. The traditional Passover contained perhaps two times when there was a ceremonial washing of the hands. We know that it was the tradition of the Jews to do this to prevent defiling themselves.

John makes it clear that it is in the midst of the serving of the Passover that Jesus disrobed and began to wash the feet of the Apostles. It is a shocking action, and when Jesus reaches Peter, Peter refuses to allow Him to do so. We might understand Peter's appalled response if we were to consider attending a religious service and the spokesman of the service takes off his shirt, and begins washing our feet.

Jesus tells Peter that if he does not permit it, he has no part of Him. Peter's response is that if such washing is necessary, then perhaps all of him should be washed. But Jesus tells Peter it is this one part that needs to be cleaned. It reminds us that our duty to Christ is not to offer more than He has asked, or less, but to do that which He has commanded.

Why did Jesus do this? The chapter tells us that it was to teach the Apostles that they were to be servants to others from this time on. Jesus is telling them that their apprenticeship has come to an end; He will tell them He is leaving, and they cannot (immediately) follow. He tells them that He will send another to teach them. They need to know that it is now time for them to rise to the esteem that Jesus held them in when He selected them.

⁶ Luke 22:17-20

⁷ Mark 14:26

The Betrayers

Jesus then makes the statement that He knows one of the 12 will betray Him. All of the Gospels record the confusion that this statement makes. Each of the Apostles seem to be asking Him if He is referring to them personally; here in John's account Peter asks John (John identifies the disciple whom Jesus loved as Himself in John 21:24) to ask Jesus who is the betrayer. Jesus says it is the one with whom He shares the sop. Whether He did so immediately or later is unclear, but Mark makes clear that Judas knew he had been identified. All of the accounts tell us that no one understood that Jesus had identified Judas as His betrayer. Judas leaves, and then Jesus begins His last teaching to His disciples.

Jesus then speaks to His imminent departure. He says that He will teach them now a new commandment, to love one another. Of course, this is not new in the sense that Jesus has spoken of love quite often in the past, such as loving enemies, loving neighbors, etc. But this time, He qualifies it to say that they must love as He loves, and within the next few hours that love will be manifested. Peter asks where He is going, and Jesus tells Him He will not follow. Peter refuses to believe this, and Jesus points to the fact that before dawn Peter will have betrayed Him three times.

Peter has in the past refused to accept the death of the Messiah. We recall in Matthew 16, almost immediately after Peter identifies Jesus as Messiah, that Jesus states He must die in Jerusalem.

Matthew 16:22-56 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this

shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

We note that there have been times when Peter simply spoke because he did not know what else to do⁸. It is easy to judge Peter as for his rash statements from our view of the kingdom, but his statements really reflect a fairly reasonable attitude. Jesus was telling them that He would shortly die, and not merely die, but by the method of execution reserved only for the worst of criminals. A death on the cross seemed, even in the last hours here, to be simply impossible.

⁸ Mark 9:6

Gospel of John

Chapter 14

The Master Must Soon Depart

The next three chapters are the teachings of Jesus to the Apostles. Some of these things are meant for the Apostles only, and some are meant for all believers. We can see this in chapter 17, when Jesus prays both for His Apostles and then for all believers.

Jesus: The True and Living Way

Jesus again tells the disciples that He is leaving for the Father's abode. Thomas asks how they will be able to follow, and Jesus replies that He Himself is the way to get to the father, He is the truth of the Father, and that He is the life of the Father.

This statement is one of several that Jesus makes that we might call absolute statements. Such a statement leaves no room for question or doubt: a person can only get to God in Heaven if they

are in Jesus Christ. The Apostles would later teach this by saying that there is no other name given in which someone can be saved¹. The question is asked many times about the noble infidel, the good atheist, etc. The answer here is the answer to all: no salvation apart from Jesus Christ.

Philip now asks about the Father. Recall in chapter one we were told that the Father cannot be seen by men, but is seen through Jesus Christ. This is the Jesus' response to Philip. If one has seen (or more accurately, understood) Jesus Christ, they know the Father.

Finally, Jesus lets the Apostles know that from here (actually, from His ascension) on, they have a special ability to ask of Him and He will pass it to the Father. Jesus will say this again in 16:26; to ask anything in His name (authority) and it is presented to the Father. We often consider this passing when praying, and sometimes conclude our prayer with the expression "In Jesus' Name". Do we fully understand the meaning here? It is not merely a "stamp" necessary on prayers, as though it is postage. This is the means of mediation. Merely saying "in Jesus name" is insufficient cause to be heard; we must be speaking to God in Jesus' authority. We must be in Christ, for that mediation to work.

What is a mediator? We are told that Jesus is a mediator between God and man². In order for someone to mediate, they must be approachable to both parties. For example, Moses mediated between Israel and Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites. He could approach Pharaoh as an equal, as he too was a child of Pharaoh, an Egyptian. His name was even Egyptian (if it was

¹ Acts 4:12

² | Timothy 5:12

Ramses II of Thutmose II, both even shared their names with Moses). Too, he was also an Israelite, with an Israelite name. He could engage both parties as an equal.

What Jesus offers is mediation between God and Man. He is unique in all of history in that only He could approach both parties as an equal. This perhaps is why we must believe in both a human nature of Christ, and a divine nature of Christ; otherwise, He could not mediate between God and man.

Philippians 2:6-7 (Jesus Christ) being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

John 5:18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

Hebrews 2:14a, 17 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, (Jesus Christ) Himself likewise shared in the same Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

The mediation of Christ is when we dwell in Him, or as John elsewhere says, abide in the doctrine of Christ³. It makes sense then

³ || John 9

why God “cannot here sinners”⁴; if Christ is the mediator of that ability, and a sinner is by definition one who is not in Christ, then Christ does not mediate for all men. Hence the judgment John has repeatedly spoken of falls upon the one outside of Christ. Jesus Christ is the only way to have access to the Father.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

In the course of speaking Jesus will make multiple promises of sending someone once He has departed. The One is identified as the Holy Spirit, the third person of God. Jesus calls Him the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is clear to identify the Holy Spirit as a Person rather than a power; in the next three chapters we find one of the more powerful testimonies as to the identity of the Holy Spirit.

The promise of the Holy Spirit has multiple qualifications. First, He cannot come until Jesus has departed the earth. Second, He will not be received by the world. Finally, He will be received only by the Apostles. The reception occurs in limited release in John 20:22, but the true baptism that was promised was received on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. This baptism was not for all believers, but limited to the Apostles only. This can be seen both in the context of the promises here in John, as well as the means the Holy Spirit was manifested in Acts.

*Acts 2:3-4 Then there appeared to them divided tongues,
as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all*

⁴ John 9:31

filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 10:46-47 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

That the Holy Spirit will submit to Jesus does not mean He is less than God; Jesus states in 16:15 that this is the same as His submission to the Father. The Holy Spirit's purpose will be to bring to the minds of the Apostles what Jesus has taught them; the great commission given in Matthew 28 was to teach the world what Jesus had taught the Apostles. As the Apostles manifested the Holy Spirit, they inscribed the teachings of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Thus, their reception of the Holy Spirit, and His work of teaching us all things pertaining to Christ, is accomplished even now by the medium of the Bible, the Inspired Word of Truth. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is today manifested to us in the Bible.

2 Peter 1:20-21 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who

have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

The promise of the Holy Spirit finishes in chapter 16, when Jesus tells the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would reveal everything to them. This leaves no room to believe that other men would need to come after the Apostles, since the work of the Spirit in them was to reveal everything, so that the world would stand either convicted or saved. It then becomes clear what is meant when the inspired writers, towards the end of the Apostle's time on earth, spoke in terms of a Gospel finished and fully delivered to men.

2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Gospel of John

Chapter 15

I am the Vine

Jesus uses a vine as an analogy of His person. He is linked to each believer, and the analogy follows that if we are severed from Him, we die. Verse five makes it clear this is not speaking about churches, as many denominations have said to justify divisions in ideology. This also sets up an expectation: the branches must bear fruit or perish.

There are expectations of Christians. Jesus will make clear that He expects obedience to His commandments. He is saying here that He expects our faith to yield fruit. Anyone who would say that once we are in Christ we cannot be lost is not grasping the clear message here: for failing to bear fruit, Jesus will remove you from His grace.

What is the fruit of which Jesus speaks? The Apostle Paul wrote about the spiritual fruits of faithfulness, and the Apostle Peter spoke of Christian growth; both were really speaking to the expectation of spiritual maturity if we abide in Christ

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

2 Peter 1:5-8 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Commandment of Love

We are drawn again to the Commandment of Love. To the senses of the unspiritual, love may not seem like a difficult commandment. However, to the spiritually minded, love is the ultimate and sometimes most difficult commandment. Love is not the beginning of spiritual maturity, it is the end. Peter's path to spiritual maturity above culminates with love; one must learn other things in order to reach the Christian *agapeo* love. In Christianity, love is not an emotion, but action.

Love can be defined in this single word: sacrifice. Here Jesus states to His disciples that there is no greater love than to lay down our life for another. Elsewhere, Jesus tells His disciples to love their neighbor as themselves¹, and even to love our enemy². Jesus calls His followers to the simple yet profoundly unnatural, nearly impossible task of loving others as He has loved us.

Romans 5:7-8 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Perhaps it is with this imagery of loving enemies that Jesus goes on to explain that as His disciples, the world is going to hate the believer. This is strong language that we must believe as a straightforward truth: the world hates the believer. We might be tempted to say this is a generalization, or exaggeration, but we need to understand that John records the use of the “world” with two ideas: the “world” that is all men, such as found in John 3:16, or the “world” that is all things unspiritual. This is found in John’s definition in another book:

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the

¹ Mark 12:31

² Matthew 5:44

Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

That which is of the unspiritual “world”, or those people who are given over to that world, will hate spiritual things. Not the mental or emotional determination to despise, but will stand opposed in every way naturally, perhaps unwittingly. Later the Apostle Paul would tell Timothy:

II Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Upon a believer there is a great persecution in being opposed by men; in being in the smallest of minorities, in taking positions on subjects that are immensely unpopular. Jesus is clear: the believer will be hated because of their love for Christ. If we consider this in depth, we can perceive how Jesus knew He would die, even if it were not a matter of fore-knowledge. Because He would live His life as the very identity of spiritual righteousness, the world would necessarily hate Him to His death.

Gospel of John

Chapter 16

The Apostle's Directives Concluded

Jesus continues to expound on the things He has previously told us. We know that we will be persecuted as Christians; Jesus points out that those doing so may think that they are in the moral right. We cannot help but to think of the Apostle Paul, who persecuted the way to death¹ believing it was the will of God.

Jesus also returns to the Holy Spirit's work with the Apostles. He makes it clear that the Holy Spirit will be the force that awakens the world to the mind of God; men will stand either convicted or justified because of the Holy Spirit's work in them. He also makes it clear that the Holy Spirit will not be giving them a new doctrine, but the one that Jesus has been teaching them. Even

¹ Acts 22:4

the things that the Holy Spirit says that Jesus did not, the Holy Spirit is saying for Jesus.

Grief into Joy

As we see and can understand, the Apostles are becoming more and more alarmed by the tone and content of this lesson. Jesus is leaving them, and they will not be allowed to follow. Jesus has sent them away before, but they were always reunited. If Jesus is the Messiah, His great work, in their mind, of restoring the kingdom of Israel has yet to be done. Imagine, as a comparison, that we have a man who promises to build a great business in our town. We invest much money and time with him. One night he tells us he is soon leaving, and will not be back. To the Apostles credit, they do not consider that Jesus has defrauded them, but are simply confused.

Jesus compares this to the pains of birth. We all can understand the great pain of giving birth, but then the great joy of having a child. So it will be for the disciples. John may well be using this imagery again in Revelation 12:2, as he describes the birth of the church.

Jesus tells them it is simple: He would soon be gone, and they would mourn Him. Worse, the world, that which hates the believer, will rejoice. But then there will come again joy, and it will remain forever. Jesus is of course speaking of His death the next day. He tells them again that the greatest joy will be because they have received the ability to call on God in His name. Perhaps we might consider what it would be like for Jesus to ask something of His Father. Would the Father say no? They are one, so they could

not. Now Jesus says that if a believer asks, it is as though Jesus asks, if it is in His name. This makes us think that then anything we ask must be granted; this is true, but we must see that Jesus too would never ask anything that was not the Father's will. So too is it with a believer.

This is the end conversation with the Apostles. It seems from what Jesus said that there is more He either personally desired to say, or needed to say, that would have to be communicated by the Holy Spirit. However, the time has now arrived. Jesus will pray in the next chapter, and then depart for the Garden of Gethsemane, where He will be arrested.

Gospel of John

Chapter 17

The Prayer of Jesus of Nazareth

A very complicated event throughout all of the Gospels is the record of Jesus in prayer. It is complicated considering that Jesus repeatedly identifies Himself as God. Many who deny the deity of Jesus Christ point to these prayers as proof of His separate nature. There is no question that these events do demonstrate a separation between the Father and Son; however, the problem that such face in their ideology are the many times where Jesus makes clear that He is the Father, and the Father is in Him.

The Gospel of John does not spend the time revealing the prayers of Christ as the other Gospels do. Chapter 17 is the only example; it is not likely that this is the same prayer that was offered in the Garden of Gethsemane, as John does not have Jesus leaving for the Mount of Olives until after this prayer in chapter 18.

Jesus, the Son of God, spent a considerable amount of time in prayer. Sometimes, this was done with no one around¹. Other times, it was done with Apostles or even children present. Jesus did not pray merely to be observed by us, but because He needed prayer to strengthen Himself. He prayed alone all night before He appointed the 12 Apostles²; He was praying when He was transfigured³.

Jesus Prays for Himself

We know from the other Gospel accounts that when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane that He prayed for Himself:

Mark 14:35-36 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

While Jesus often spoke of the desire to be glorified, He also spoke of the desire not to experience what would be suffered. Perhaps we see in this the pains of childbirth; the desire of the mother to end her pregnancy and be blessed with a child, contrasted with the desire not to go through the birthing process.

¹ Matthew 14:23

² Luke 6:12

³ Luke 9:29

In chapter 17 Jesus' prayer points to the purpose of His coming. When He is glorified, He will have authority over all people. In the Old Testament, the prophets foretold many times that Messiah's authority would not be limited to Israel alone, but would cover the world;

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Many have misunderstood these statements, seeing the kingdom as a literal kingdom (Jesus well explain to Pilate the error of that idea). As His kingdom is spiritual, the dominion is spiritual as well. Jesus will remove the Old Law which divided men (by legally creating the Jew and Gentile), so that in the eyes of God, no nation is favored above another. All men will be under one Law, the Royal Law, the Law of Liberty, the Law of Christ.

Ephesians 2:14-15 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

James 2:12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Jesus Prays for the Apostles

As mentioned before, the prayer separates the work of the Apostles from all believers. As the Holy Spirit was promised uniquely to the Apostles, so they are remembered uniquely by Christ. Jesus says that they belonged to the Father before they were His; we see this in the fact that these were Godly men prior to their calling. They were disciples of John the Baptist, or men who had reputations as “true Israelites”⁴

Ultimately, these men are ready to be the foundations of the church Jesus would build by being the Lamb of God. They believe Jesus is the Christ, He is the Son of God. They are not worldly; that is, they are not carnally minded, but spiritual seekers. Jesus says that He does not wish for them to be removed from the world; many have seen the admonitions of Scripture as a command to withdraw ourselves into communes, monasteries, or other such closed societies. Yet we know that we cannot be a city on a hill, a light that shines among men to glorify the Father if we do that. Jesus does not desire His believers to be removed from the world, for we are the very light that is Christ to the world now.

Jesus asks the Father to sanctify them by the Word of Truth. The word “sanctify” means to make holy; we are often reluctant to identify men as holy, yet here Jesus says that the impact of the Word of God is that it can make men holy.

⁴ John 1:47

Jesus Prays for All Believers

In the third part of His prayer, Jesus prays for the unity of all believers. The means to achieve unity is a matter of dispute today; some believe that unity is achieved by compromising ideas or doctrines, or coming together with the lowest common denominator. This is not at all the unity spoken of by Jesus or the Apostles. Instead, Jesus expresses the desire that believers be one with God in Christ as Jesus was one with the Father. This unity is expressed throughout this Gospel as being achieved by the submission of Jesus to the Father, and the obedience of Jesus. Therefore, the only unity that believers can have is because of our submission and obedience to Jesus Christ. This is called “*fellowship*”

In the New Testament, it is the Apostle John who provides the simplest but most concrete definition of the word fellowship. In I John 1, he describes the condition of believers who “*walk in the light*” as Jesus did as being in the condition of fellowship. Fellowship is not a work or a task, it is not something we can offer or revoke. Fellowship is a condition. It could be translated as “brotherhood”, the condition of being a brother.

1 John 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Jesus concludes the prayer with the expression of the desire for the love of God to be given to men. This love was shown by God in the gift of His Son. It is returned to God in the obedience to the commandments He has given us.

1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

It is personally overwhelming to think that as Jesus was looking to the death on the cross, just hours away then, He took the time to pray for me.

Gospel of John

Chapter 18

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

What is the “Gospel”? Throughout the New Testament the word, which means “good news”, is used to portray the message of hope in Jesus Christ. But it is the Apostle Paul who gives us a very specific definition in I Corinthians 15:

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

Chapter 18 begins the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is this record that makes the book of John one of the four Gospels, or accounts, of the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God.

Arrest of Jesus of Nazareth

It is in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus is arrested by soldiers of the High Priest. When Jesus sees them, He asks whom they are seeking. When they reply Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus answers "I am". The additional word "he" is not in the text, but only "I am". It is the same words used by Jesus to proclaim His Divine Identity in John 8:58. Thus, when these words are said, the men there fall to the ground, certainly unwillingly, perhaps at the very power of the Name of God.

Jesus tells the guards again His identity, and that the others (the Apostles) should be released. It seems that the disciples have been somewhat prepared for a physical conflict; Luke tells us that they had earlier that night armed themselves with two swords¹. When the guards arrive, Peter attacks, striking a servant named Malchus. This is a critical point, perhaps one that the Apostles have been waiting for; when the battle to establish the Messiah begins. And yet, precisely the opposite happens. Jesus orders them to cease their fighting; He tells them that if it was meant for strength of arms to overcome the world, He would call forth legions of angels.

¹ Luke 22:38

Instead, He heals the injured servant², and meekly submits to the arrest by the Temple Guards.

Since the Apostles were prepared to fight, and even raised their weapons to strike, we cannot say that they were fearful of the armed force before them. All of the Gospel accounts agree that it was after Jesus surrendered Himself to the guards that they all fled. Perhaps we can see their dismay; they have been with this Rabbi for years, preparing for great things with Him, and He simply surrenders to the enemy without a fight. He even insists that His own do not fight, and even aids the enemy.

Matthew 26:56 But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Peter's Betrayal

Peter and John follow Jesus in secret, and are able ultimately to gain access to the home of Annas. Interspersed in the trial record is the account of Peter's denial of Christ. All of the Gospel accounts record this, as well as the abandonment of Jesus by all of the Apostles. Peter's betrayal is the most ironic, as John and the other Gospel writers tell us that Peter made it a clear point that he would never fail. It is John's Gospel that contains what seems to be an epilogue to this event in chapter 21. Peter's refusal to acknowledge Christ is a testament to our pride going before our fall. We are

² Luke 22:51

reminded repeatedly that when we believe we cannot fail, we are quite likely to do just that.

Trials of Jesus of Nazareth

When we examine the proceedings of the events in the time between His arrest and His death, we find the most remarkable miscarriage of justice in history. As the events in all of the accounts play out, here is the series of events:

1. Jesus is taken to Annas for trial
2. Jesus is taken to Caiaphas for trial
3. Jesus is taken to Pilate for trial
4. Jesus is taken to Herod for trial
5. Jesus is taken back to Pilate for trial

What is remarkable is that much of the shuffling of the multiple trials is caused by the absence of guilt. Five times Jesus is proclaimed innocent by the Roman judges. No one is able to truly find guilt, but needing to do so, they each pass Jesus along to another. Jesus was abused at each of these trials. And yet, without a word, the Son of God bore all of these things, as it was foretold.

Isaiah 53:7-8 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For

He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

The Jewish Trials

The illegality of the Jewish trial of Jesus is blatant. The Law of Moses forbade false witnesses in the Ten Commandments³, and it also dictated that there must be two or more witnesses to verify the truth⁴. Yet Jesus is arrested, and according to the other Gospel account, witnesses had to be found and ultimately fabricated after His arrest. The Law required that the witnesses themselves be the first to strike the accused when guilt was established⁵, and that the manner of death be stoning⁶. Finally, it was a sin to permit a mob to act in a trial⁷, and yet the Jewish leaders incited the crowds to accomplish just that⁸.

It is also remarkable to note the illegality of the Jewish portions of the trial by their own standards. While there is no precise codification in the first century of Jewish trials, we presume that the *Mishnah Sanhedrin* was the legal structure in effect. The Mishnah was the compiled traditions and practices of the Rabbis

³ Exodus 20:7

⁴ Deuteronomy 17:6

⁵ Deuteronomy 17:7

⁶ Deuteronomy 17:5

⁷ Exodus 23:2

⁸ Matthew 27:20

from before the time of Christ until after the temple was destroyed. It was written down sometime after the rebellions of 132AD in fear that it would be forgotten if it remained oral. These are the “traditions of the elders” that are so often referenced in the New Testament⁹. For absence of a better source, we will presume that these are the rules that the Sanhedrin applied for trial; these are the rules of court that they themselves created, and they themselves broke here.

First, the Sanhedrin tradition was for all capital offense trials to occur in daylight¹⁰. Yet here Jesus is arrested and tried by the leaders in darkness. We cannot miss that Jesus, who has been speaking much about the works of darkness, and His work while there is light, would then make this arrest in darkness a metaphor for their greater evil.

Luke 22:53 But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Second, the Sanhedrin tradition was that a trial of a false prophet could only occur with the presence of the full council, called the Greater Sanhedrin¹¹. It is apparent that since the entirety of the Sanhedrin would prosecute Jesus, but we know that the Sanhedrin was in fact split as to the identity of Jesus, that likely this was not a Greater Sanhedrin but a council called the Lesser Sanhedrin.

⁹ Mark 7:3

¹⁰ Mishna, Sanhedrin 4.1

¹¹ Mishna, Sanhedrin 1.5

Third, the reaching of a verdict was never to occur at the same time in a capital matter, but it was required that a day space between them. Therefore, it was not legal to adjudicate capital offenses before a feast or a Sabbath¹².

Fourth, the acceptance of the testimony of the witnesses was not according to procedure. Again, the Mishna speaks to witness verification: *“Witnesses were examined by seven queries: In what Sabbatic period? In what year? In what month? On what day of the month? On what day? At what hour? and, Where?”*¹³ The false witnesses in this trial were arranged, and had no verification of their accuracy.

Finally, when a death sentence was reached, there was only a few authorized methods of execution: stoning, decapitation, or being burned¹⁴.

The Gospel accounts together tell us that there was some difficulty in making accusations against Jesus. Jesus Himself repeatedly asked the judges to solicit their witnesses from among those who heard Him teach. How frustrating would it be if it were us falsely accused, and nearly anyone could testify on our behalf of what we really said, but the judges refuse to permit any other witnesses beyond their own.

Jesus is moved from the residence of Annas to the residence of Annas’ son-in-law Caiaphas. It is here that Jesus ceases to speak or answer the charges; truly, what would be the point? Ultimately,

¹² Mishna, Sanhedrin 4.1

¹³ Mishna, Sanhedrin 5.1

¹⁴ Mishna, Sanhedrin 6.1

two false witnesses are found, willing to perjure themselves. They manipulate what John told us Jesus had said:

Jesus Said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."¹⁵ The False Witnesses said: "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

Even this, to a court which was predisposed to guilt and execution, struggles to make a conviction on this charge. However, the High Priest puts Jesus under oath, based on a rule found in the Old Testament. Under the oath, Jesus confirms what they want Him to say: He is the Son of God.

Leviticus 5:1 'If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter -if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.

Matthew 26:62-64 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

¹⁵ John 2:19

Thus, with this last confession, the need for witnesses in the mind of the judges is no longer necessary. They pronounce guilt on Jesus.

Why is it that the High Priests and Sanhedrin do not carry out the execution of Jesus by stoning themselves? There are a number of possible answers from Scripture; for one, the High Priests feared the people¹⁶, and executing Jesus by stoning would certainly bring reproach on them for their actions. They needed someone to carry this out whose love or hate was irrelevant; someone with both the power to end life, and the power to resist any anger that might arise from this. Even more likely is that this is a reflection of their hate for Jesus. Stoning would be a quick execution, while the Roman methods could be much crueler. This possibility becomes even more likely when we consider that the Romans had many means of execution available to them, but that it is the Jews who demand it be crucifixion.

We know that both John the Baptist¹⁷ and the Apostle James¹⁸ were beheaded by the Romans; crucifixion is described by the Romans as the ultimate penalty for only the most extreme crimes. The Romans saw crucifixion as “*the extreme punishment*”¹⁹, at the top of the list of execution methods available for use. Applying it to someone whose “crime” was purely religious, with no Roman law broken, would be most unlikely. However, the Jewish leaders

¹⁶ Luke 22:11, Mark 11:18

¹⁷ Matthew 14:10

¹⁸ Acts 12:2 (put to death by the sword)

¹⁹ Cicero, Against Verres, 2.5.168

will manipulate the circumstances to the point that the Roman Governor, Pilate, will seem to have no choice.

The Roman Trials

The lengthy process of putting Jesus through trial by the Romans is not fully covered in any single Gospel. To be clear, there is no disagreement among them as to the events, but there is such much to record, that all of the Gospel writers focus on the point, not the events themselves. The point is that Jesus was unjustly accused, unjustly convicted, and unjustly executed by a series of circumstances that a few men manipulated.

John does not include the intermission of Pilate's trial with Herod's interrogation. It is Luke who covers that event, and the fundamental importance is that it demonstrates that neither of the rulers of the Romans knew what to do with Jesus, or how to handle the situation. That Jesus spoke not at all to Herod (whom He had earlier called a "fox"²⁰) may suggest that Herod had neither part nor authority in this matter; Jesus will tell Pilate that he has the



²⁰ Luke 13:32

authority in this God gave him.

At dawn, Jesus is brought to the governor, Pontius Pilate. In 1961, a stone was found in Caesarea that mentioned Pilate as Prefect of Judea.²¹

Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor (called both the Prefect and Procurator) of Judea from 26AD to 37AD. There are several references to Pilate outside of the Bible. Josephus tells us that when he arrived in Jerusalem, he nearly instigated a revolt by permitting the Roman Soldiers to bring their standards into the city, which on top bore eagles, an emblem of the Roman god Mars²². The Jewish Scholar Philo, a contemporary of Josephus, records a similar offense by Pilate with golden shields covered with graven images²³. Josephus also records that Pilate massacred a group of Jews who protested when he used funds from the temple to build an aqueduct²⁴. While these historians are sometimes questionable in their historicity, it is Jesus who points to Pilate's cruel ruling style in Luke's Gospel:

Luke 13:1-3 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such

²¹ Photograph by Marion Doss, 2007 – Flickr; with permission

²² Josephus, Jewish War 2.9.2-4

²³ Philo, On The Embassy of Gaius Book XXXVIII 299-305

²⁴ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18.3.2

things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Jesus may well be describing the event Josephus suggested. Regardless, we now see that Pilate is a cruel tyrant, who is concerned with his authority above his fairness.

According to Josephus, Pilate was dismissed from his position by the Roman Governor Vitellius in 36AD after an assault on some Samaritans attempting to worship on Mount Gerizim. What is interesting to note is that Vitellius also removed Caiaphas from the High Priest office at the same time²⁵. Perhaps what this suggests is that Caiaphas and Pilate worked together on issues, and it might suggest why Caiaphas was confident to bring Jesus before Pilate.

We presume that John's account of these events encompasses both times Jesus appeared before Pilate. Pilate was residing in Herod's Palace, which may have sat roughly on the location of Solomon's Palace, overlooking the Temple. Pilate's request is to know the charges against Jesus, to which the Jews present give the non-answer that Jesus would not be there if He were not a criminal. It becomes clear that there is no crime that Jesus has committed that Pilate (or Herod) had any jurisdiction over. As a later Achaian Proconsul would do²⁶, Pilate dismisses them to handle the punishment on their own. However, the Jews refuse, stating that they have no legal right to execute Jesus, which is what their law demands. Again, we are struck by the falsity of this statement. They

²⁵ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18.4.2

²⁶ Acts 18:14

have already attempted to put Jesus to death several times²⁷. They had no problem putting Stephen to death five years from this point. Ultimately, Pilate even gives them permission to crucify Jesus themselves. However, this is not what they desire; they want the Romans to be the ones that actually execute Jesus. There is some debate that the Jews here are referring to the absence of a “King of the Jews”, as Herod had identified himself, or later Herod Agrippa would be called, in which case there was some approval needed to act out the penalty. But with Pilate authorizing them to continue, and their refusal, it is clear that the legal concern is not valid; they desire Jesus to be murdered by the Romans for political ones.

Pilate and Jesus then begin a dialogue, one of the most remarkable in the entire Gospel. Pilate the Tyrant and the Man accused of being the King of the Jews begin to discuss the authority of kings, and the meaning of Truth. This title, “King of the Jews” was a specific title that, as mentioned before, had once belonged to Herod the Great. In Herod’s case, it had been bestowed on him by the Roman Senate in 37BC²⁸. We can see why Herod was so concerned in Matthew’s Gospel when a group of Chaldean emissaries arrive to honor the one born “King of the Jews”. Jesus would be born to this title, and after birth His life was in jeopardy because of this title, and ultimately would die for the crime of holding this title.

Pilate is perplexed that the Jews do not wish to elevate this Man as “King of the Jews”, but wish to execute Him. Jesus had a genealogical right to identify Himself as heir to the throne of

²⁷ John 8:39, John 10:31

²⁸ Josephus, Jewish War, 1.14.4

David²⁹, but instead makes clear that His Kingdom was not one in competition with Rome, but instead was a spiritual authority.

Pilate tries repeatedly to release Jesus. We are told that he perceives that the issue here is not legal, but was envy³⁰. Too, we might wish to understand that the penalty of crucifixion was one not to be engaged in lightly; Roman rulers had been removed (and one even crucified himself³¹) for invoking the extreme penalty without merit. Finally, let us not miss that some of this is consideration that Pilate may be believing that Jesus is something more than a mere man, as evidenced by his fear in John 19:8, or the message he received from his wife in Matthew 27:19. Likely, all of the above were on his mind, and we see Pilate attempting with several different ploys to release Jesus and still appease the Jews. Let us consider them as follows:

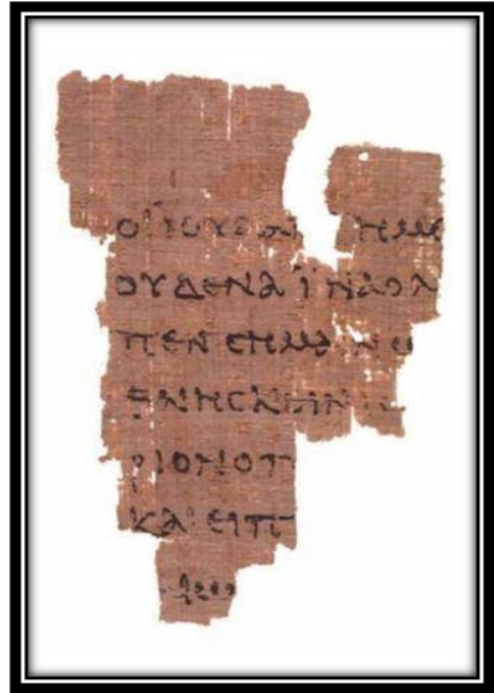
1. He sends Jesus to Herod for trial (Luke 23:6)
2. He demands the Jews try Jesus by their own laws
3. He offers to release Jesus according to custom
4. He makes the counter-offer to release Barabbas instead
5. He abuses Jesus as “King of the Jews”, and tells them
Jesus is only a man
6. He orders the Jews to crucify Jesus
7. He made other unrecorded attempts to release Jesus (John 19:12)

²⁹ Matthew 1:1

³⁰ Mark 15:10

³¹ Cicero, Against Verres 2.5.165

“What is truth” is Pilate’s reply to his interrogation of Jesus. Of course, we know that in some ways John is the Gospel of Truth, as it is discussed more often in this Gospel than the others combined, or anywhere in the entirety of the Bible. Jesus Himself is Truth, and Pilate is looking into Truth and being humiliated. Some have suggested that Pilate



walks out before Jesus could answer, because perhaps he could not bear the answer. On a historical note, the oldest fragment from the New Testament, dating to the first century AD, is the fragment of this passage³².

Now we are introduced to the criminal Barabbas. Barabbas has the distinction of being mentioned in all of the Gospel accounts. Why is he of such importance? Let us consider that first, he demonstrates the level of animosity against Christ. What seems to occur is that Pilate offers to release Jesus, which is rejected. He then names a “notorious” criminal named Barabbas; if we put all four

³² Photo courtesy of John Rylands University Library

Gospel accounts together, we find that Barabbas is a thief, a murderer and an insurrectionist. He is the very face of the type of criminal that no one would desire to be released. In a sense, Pilate has offered a choice that is really not a choice; free the man who has only offended your sense of religious piety, or free the dangerous criminal. No one in their right mind would choose the later, the “Charles Manson” of their community. And yet, to what must have been Pilate’s shock, they choose Barabbas.

Perhaps there is a spiritual allegory in Barabbas too that should not be missed; that this man was condemned (presumably to die, possibly even with the other two criminals that morning), but was released, and someone else died in his place.

1 Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

Ultimately, we see that even in his name there is a message to us. “Bar” is the Aramaic word for “Son”; “Abba” is the Aramaic for “Father”. Those who have been freed by the sacrifice of Christ are known too by the name “Bar-Abba”

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

All of the things that have worked in place here to bring Jesus to trial, and to ultimately have Him executed, could be summed up in the unique Proverb of the seven things God hates:

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

Perhaps long ago the prophets looked into the very heart of the murderers of the Son of God, and therein found the darkest potential of the human race.

Gospel of John

Chapter 19

The Roman Trial Concludes

The chapter breaks in the middle of the trial with Pilate. This scene begins with Pilate making a mockery out of Jesus' identity as King of the Jews. This derision is seen in physical abuse, a robe of purple, and a crown of thorns. When Pilate then brings out Jesus, he points to Him (whom he has found not fault) and proclaims "here is the man". Pilate likely seeks to satisfy the growing crowd's blood-lust by humiliating Jesus in manner that makes Jesus seem ridiculous; perhaps Pilate thinks that by mocking Jesus as a king, and telling everyone He is clearly only a man, they will themselves be satisfied and Jesus is no longer a threat. However, now the entire crowd, as worked by the Jewish Elders, will accept only one outcome: crucifixion.

Here too we see Pilate give the authority to the Jews to crucify Christ. It was not unheard of for Jews to crucify others; one record suggests a number of Pharisees were crucified by the ruling Sadducees and Hellenistic Jews during the Hasmonean period¹. This offer is rejected by the Jews, who claim Jesus must die for the crime of being the Son of God.

This statement frightens Pilate, who has lost control of this situation. He returns and asks Jesus where He is from. Jesus is finished speaking with Pilate, as recorded in the other Gospels. Pilate pleads with Jesus to respond, attempting to gain control over Jesus by asserting his authority of life and death in this matter. Jesus tells Pilate a most frightening truth: the authority over life and death was given to him by the Father. This terrifying revelation is followed with a statement of guilt: these who turned Him over to Pilate were guilty of the greater sin. This is not an absolution of Pilate, who stands guilty of many things.

When Pilate presents himself again, the Jews make the most dramatic argument in their case: if Pilate supports Jesus, he necessarily opposes Caesar. Pilate, despite the reputation of viciousness, is subjugated by his fear. He comes to the seat of judgment (it is here that Matthew records Pilate receiving word from his wife to avoid dealing with “that just Man”²). The exact location of “Gabbatha” is unknown, but we presume it was the location that official edicts of judgment were given, perhaps similar in nature to the judgment seat of Acts 18:12. With one last attempt

¹ Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 13.14.2

² Matthew 27:19

to identify Jesus as someone they should revere, Pilate is placed in the predicament of being the less loyal of Romans to these Jews. They shout that they have no king but Caesar; a remarkable act of blasphemy³. Pilate now turns Jesus over to his own soldiers to be taken for crucifixion.

It is remarkable to think that it has only been about six hours since this all began. In that time: Jesus is passed between three courts; Jesus is pronounced innocent five times; Jesus is beaten/scourged at least four times; Jesus is verbally abused at least three times. Once again, the miscarriage of justice is outrageous.

One final act of defiance on the part of Pilate is to signify the crime for which Jesus would die. This posting was called the *Titulus*; we presume that on either side of Jesus the *tituli* would read "thievery". The cross on which Jesus would be hung bore the crime in three languages (Latin, Greek and Hebrew), so that no one would mis-understand, regardless of their nationality. The Jews are offended, as this is an official recognition of Jesus' authority, and seek to have it changed. Pilate, in contrast with the rest of his decisions, stands firm.

Let us understand that it is not one party, the Jews or the Romans, that John places guilt on; it is both. The death of Jesus was begun in envy, and ended with cowardice.

The Crucifixion

Jesus is taken to the execution place, which John tells us is called the Skull, or Golgotha. None of the passages indicate that it

³ | Samuel 8:7

was a hill, as commonly called. It must have been outside of Jerusalem proper, in a place where the pilgrims would pass by going into Jerusalem.

Here we must note that the record of events from all four Gospels is tremendous; it is often suggested that there is a fault in this, but we can see that if this is the most important event in history (as a Christian believes it to be), then the events recorded were too numerous to be contained in one chronicle. In addition to what is recorded in John, the other accounts tell us that there was an earthquake, that Saints arose from their tombs and later appeared in the city, that the Temple veil was split from top to bottom, that Simon of Cyrene carried the cross at least some of the way, that the two thieves at first mocked Jesus, but then one of them made the great confession, and that darkness was on all of the land from noon until three.

John is careful to tell us this is the Day of Preparation, and that it is the sixth hour. There is some confusion as to the ceremonies going on in Jerusalem at this time. Some of this is because both the Gospel writers and even contemporary writers merged the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover, calling them both Passover at times. Because of the number of people coming to Jerusalem for Passover and the Passover week/Feast of Unleavened Bread, a tradition may have arisen from events in the time of Hezekiah⁴. In that time, the priests are recorded to have begun butchering the sheep for the Passover.

⁴ II Chronicles 29-30

2 Chronicles 30:17 For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD.

In the time of Christ, the priests were still butchering the lambs. During the reign of Nero, the Roman Governor Gallus ordered a census of Jerusalem by counting the sheep slaughtered in the Passover; the Priests came up with the number 256,500⁵. This may have been alleviated by the likelihood that Judeans and Galileans (both Jews) observed the Passover on different days. According to the Mishnah, the Galileans counted the day before the Passover as the preparation, while the Judeans counted the day of the Passover as a day of preparation⁶. Thus, Jesus and other Galileans may have been celebrating on Thursday night what the Judeans were celebrating Friday night.

There is another record which bears some consideration. The Jewish theologian Philo, writing a few years after Jesus' death, made the statement that the slaughter of the lambs began at noon⁷. As Jesus, the Lamb of God is hung on the cross to die, the slaughter of the Passover lambs may have begun in the Temple.

John also mentions the fulfillment of the prophetic words of David when the soldiers began dividing up Jesus possessions. They

⁵ Josephus, Jewish Wars, 6.9.3

⁶ Mishnah, Passover, 4.5

⁷ Philo, DeSeptenario 18

tore apart His outer garment, and then cast lots for the inner garment.

We are told in John that Jesus' mother Mary is present, as is her sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas/Alpheaus, and Mary Magdalene. The other Gospels identify the un-named sister as Joanna/Salome, the mother of James and John. This is our introduction assertion that John was in fact a cousin to Jesus.

The Words From the Cross

Putting the four Gospel's together, we are given these seven expressions as being those Jesus made from the cross. The first is unique to Matthew and Mark; the second, third and fourth are from Luke, and the final three come from John.

- 1. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**
- 2. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."**
- 3. "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."**
- 4. "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."**
- 5. "Woman, behold your son!"**
- 6. "I thirst"**
- 7. "It is finished"**

Each expression is a rich revelation of prophecy, of love and compassion, and of hope. John's record is of three things Jesus said. The first was to John and Mary; Jesus turns over the care of Mary to John, His cousin. It is an unusual act, as we know Jesus had brothers

too. But perhaps it is because only John is there, and the others have not come, that Jesus passes care to John. Jesus statement of thirst is prophetic.

The last expression in John (which may not be the last expression on the cross) is of particular importance: “It is finished”, or *tetelestai* in Greek. This word is found in association with accounting ledgers or tax documents⁸; it could be rendered by our more common expression “Paid in Full”.

Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount of not removing the Law of Moses, but fulfilling it⁹. Thus, on the cross, as He died, He fulfilled the Law of Moses by being the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God.

Death and Burial

We note too that the last of the seven waters in John is revealed, when the soldier pierced the side of Jesus, and both water and blood left. This was done at the request of the Jews, who did not desire for dead bodies to be left hanging through the Passover week. John was himself a witness to this, as he solemnly testifies. John has been pointing us to the identity of Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God; once more, we see that with Jesus suffering incredible abuse and no bones begin broken, He fits this pattern.

When it is confirmed Jesus is dead, two Pharisee members of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, request Pilate’s permission to bury the body. After verifying that Jesus was

⁸ Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, (1997) pp 768

⁹ Matthew 5:17

dead, Pilate consents. Nicodemus purchases a significant amount of burial material, and they take Jesus' body to a new tomb. It is interesting that none of the Gospel accounts make a direct reference to the prophecy of Isaiah, although there is no doubt that they have all made a point to tell us it is a new tomb with this prophecy in mind.

Isaiah 53:9 And they made His grave with the wicked-But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

In the Grave

It is worth a moment to consider a couple of events recorded in this time in the other Gospels. First, there is the issue of the time in the grave. There is some debate as to the date of Jesus crucifixion; that is, was it on a Thursday or a Friday? It is not necessarily a relevant issue, as the significance is always placed on the day He arose. Jesus did state that it would be "three days and three nights"¹⁰, but we know that from other references to this, that it was not necessarily an exact 72 hours¹¹. Therefore, we have presumed it was a Friday on which Jesus died, but a Thursday would not present any more difficulty.

We also know from the other accounts that it was not only the women who watched where Jesus was laid, but the enemies of the cross too. On the following day they appeared before Pilate, and

¹⁰ Matthew 12:40, John 2:19

¹¹ Esther 4:16-5:1

requested that he place a guard to avoid the robbery of the body by the disciples, who might seek to steal the body and then claim Jesus arose.

What irony that this occurred; the only men who are concerned about the promise of a resurrection on the third are the men who killed Jesus, and the disciples seem to be the most surprised (and disbelieving) when Jesus does what He promised.

*When all the days are over,
And added good and bad,
This will be the best and worst
That we have ever had.*

Author Unknown

Gospel of John

Chapter 20

The Resurrection

All of the Gospels make it clear that the Resurrection of Christ occurred on the first day of the week, as we call Sunday. We note that later, when the Saints would soon after gather in the church of Christ, that they would on that same day of the week partake of the memorial called the Lord's Supper¹.

When we put together the Gospel accounts, we are overwhelmed with the number of angels present; which perhaps should not surprise, since the Gospel was something that angels desired to look into². There was an angel who moved the stone (and

¹ Acts 20:7

²² I Peter 1:12

incapacitated the guards) (Matthew); perhaps that same angel is the one sitting on the stone and telling the women to look inside (Matthew). Upon entering the tomb they see another angel inside (Mark). Two angels then appear to the women and ask them why they seek the living with the dead (Mark), possibly the same two Mary sees in the tomb (John).

The first human witnesses to the fulfillment of the Gospel are the women who were the most devoted followers of Christ. These were the ones who stood and watched as He died; they are the ones who are blessed to be the first witnesses of His glorification.

John only discusses the experience of Mary Magdalene coming to the grave. We know that others were with her, and John's account does not necessitate Mary was alone. There may be reasons John only mentions this Mary; the other women were older, and at the time of John's Gospel may have not have been alive to provide the testimony John was so intent on providing.

In some ways the confusion of the morning is revealed with a side by side comparison of all of the accounts. The women return to the Apostles, perhaps not all at the same time or the same place (it is sensible to see that the Eleven would not all be in one location). Their stories seem confused; some tell the Apostles that Jesus' body has been stolen; others repeated what the angels said. There is little wonder that the Apostles are incredulous, and run to see for themselves what has happened.

John tells us that both he and Peter were the first to arrive. They see the linen Joseph of Arimathea had wrapped Jesus in, but no body. It is interesting that Jesus appeared to the women, but not to the Apostles until that night. Again, their particular patience and love for Him comes to mind.

The Apostles leave and Mary is left alone. It is then in John that Mary sees two angels in the tomb. When angels appear in heaven, they typically have quite magnificent or even frightening appearances³; however, when they are seen on earth, their appearance is always that of a man. After briefly speaking to them, she turns around and sees Jesus. However, she does not recognize Him.

There are multiple times when Jesus appeared after His resurrection and is not recognizable. On the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, the two disciples walk, talk and eventually share a meal and do not recognize Jesus. When Jesus appears to the Apostles again in John 21, He will not be recognized until He causes them to overflow with fish. There is no direct explanation as to why Jesus is unrecognizable; it may be that He simply did not wish to be known. We do know that the Apostle Paul tells us that once the resurrection occurs, we will be changed in the flesh.

1 Corinthians 15:37-38 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain--perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

In the same passage, Paul tells us that Jesus is the “first fruit” of this changed body; therefore, we would expect that if the change is as dramatic as Paul suggests, then it is not surprising Jesus is unrecognized.

³ Ezekiel 1:5-7; Revelation 4:6

Some of the most beautiful ideas of the New Testament are expressed in simple statements. Thus, Mary's statement of recognition, "*Rabboni*", captures for us all of the emotion Mary felt in the moment that Jesus revealed Himself. Jesus tells Mary an important point: He has not yet ascended to the Father. He will soon, however. This is a momentary view to the place of Jesus; He has not been in heaven, but in the grave, in Hebrew *Sheol*, in Greek *Hades*⁴. It is not the literal tomb of which we speak, but the place in which the soul waits.

Jesus Appears to the Apostles

With the exception of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus did not appear to anyone else on that day. We can only imagine the confusion, the fear, the excitement that they were experiencing. We do know that they are meeting behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. It is at that time that Jesus appears to them. Jesus has told them He will meet them in Galilee, but that does not exclude this first appearance⁵.

Two important and perhaps confusing events take place in that locked room in John's record. First is the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The second is the power of the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus has promised the Apostles the Holy Spirit to come to them. Is this that? We need to note that Jesus said He would first go to the Father (in heaven), and we know He has not yet done that

⁴ Acts 2:31

⁵ Mark 16:7

from what He told Mary. He also said He would be gone when the Holy Spirit came⁶. Therefore, this cannot be the Holy Spirit being received as promised earlier. The answer to what this is may be found in the Gospel of Luke. There, the words are not the same, but Luke records:

Luke 24:44-45 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Here Luke simply tells us that Jesus opened their understanding to the necessity of His death. Thus, the receiving of the Holy Spirit was in that moment for the comprehension of the need for the death on the cross, not total recollection and understanding that the Counselor would later bring them.

The second event is the authority Jesus gives them to forgive sins. We are told in Scripture that only God can forgive sins⁷. Later, the Apostles would make that plain too, such as when Peter told Simon he must repent to God to be forgiven⁸, or John saying that Christian must confess their sins to God⁹. There is not one example

⁶ John 16:7

⁷ Mark 2:7; Isaiah 43:25; Luke 5:21

⁸ Acts 8:22

⁹ | John 1:9

of an Apostle forgiving the sins of another (by forgiving, we mean removing the guilt of sin in the presence of God, not forgiveness all Christians are commanded to practice¹⁰).

So what could Jesus mean? We might note that this sounds similar to what Jesus told the Apostles twice in Matthew:

Matthew 16:19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 18:18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

From a standpoint of Scripture, the "Key" is a representation or symbol of knowledge¹¹ and/or authority¹². If the symbol holds true, what Jesus is doing is giving them the authority to provide the knowledge of forgiveness of sins. All whom they preach this message to will either receive it and then be forgiven, or reject it, and not be forgiven. Thus, the power of the message is now given to the Apostles.

¹⁰ Matthew 6:15

¹¹ Luke 11:52

¹² Isaiah 22:22

When viewed in these terms, we realize that this is what is mentioned by Jesus in the other Gospel accounts, which we commonly refer to as the Great Commission.

*Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All **authority** has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen*

*Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be **saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

Believing Thomas

We are told that Thomas was not present, and when he is told by the other Apostles what has occurred, he does not believe them. He sets a standard that must be met in order to believe: to touch the very wounds of Jesus. The next week the Apostles are meeting again, and Jesus appears to Thomas. He is permitted to see the wounds, and Thomas believes.

We have often heard of the "doubting Thomas", and perceived an absence of faith in him. However, if we are to understand the Scriptural model of faith, Thomas is not a model of the absence of faith, but a standard thereof. He did not refuse to believe, but instead set a standard at which point he would believe.

Since the other Apostles had seen Jesus, it was not unreasonable that Thomas should too. Consider for a moment the Bereans; when Paul preached to them the Gospel, they did not believe what he said until they searched the scriptures themselves. They are called “*noble-minded*” by Luke for this skepticism¹³. Consider the Samaritans, who did not take the woman at the well’s testimony at face value, but inquired of it themselves. Thomas is a model of what faith ought to be: a desire to believe, but a need to have all things proven.

Jesus commended Thomas’ acceptance once he saw the Lord; but the real blessing Jesus holds is for those who believe in Him without seeing, but by the testimony of the book.

Conclusion

Here we are brought full circle from our introduction. John tells us that there is much more, some of which we find in other Gospels, some of which is found in the epistles, and some of which we will never know. But what is written has a specific purpose and value: it is sufficient to believe that Jesus is the savior of the world, and is God in the Flesh.

Faith causes us to believe this: if someone were to set a standard beyond the words of John in order to believe Jesus was the savior, or that Jesus is God in the flesh, they have set a standard that is not right with God. This book, the events recorded therein, are sufficient to believe.

¹³ Acts 17:11

Gospel of John

Chapter 21

The Gospel Epilogue

The last chapter of John's Gospel is interesting, in that it is not about the Christ or the Gospel as much as it is about two of the Apostles who would bring this Gospel, Peter and John. It is possible that Peter and John represent the oldest and youngest of the Apostles (Peter may be the oldest by the deference given to him by the other apostles; John may be the youngest by his advanced age according to traditions). Peter and John were the two who raced to the tomb. Peter and John were the two who followed Jesus in His trial. Peter asked John to ask Jesus at the table who was going to betray Him. In Luke's account, Peter and John were the two who were sent to prepare the Passover. Later in Acts, Peter and John are teaching in the Temple, and perform the first miracle after Christ has ascended. They and their brothers are fishing partners, and

several times the four of them are unique witnesses to miracles Jesus performed.

At the Sea of Galilee

Jesus had told the Apostles to return to Galilee, where He would meet them once more and then ascend to heaven. There are a number of Apostles present with Peter, who endeavors in his profession of fishing all night without success.

Now Jesus appears on the beach, unrecognized. With His admonition to cast the net again, on the other side of the boat, the fishermen are unable to return the net to the boat due to the number of fish. This has happened before; when Peter was called by Jesus to be an Apostle in Luke 4, then too Jesus instructed them to cast their nets on the other side successfully. We did not place this into our list of miracles in John, as it is not by definition a miracle (that which violates a law of nature), but instead is a model of providence, or God's power acting within the laws of nature in an unusual way.

The Apostles identify Christ by this action, not by recognition of His features. We catch Peter's excitement in recognizing Jesus by his jumping into the sea to meet Him. There we find Jesus on the beach, preparing a meal for the Apostles.

John enumerates the meeting with Jesus as the third time; as we have mentioned John does this so that we will be counting events. We have paid attention to the "sevens" in John; however, there have been a number of "threes" we have not been as attentive to visit. There were three days in the grave; three statements on the cross in John; three denials by Peter; three prayers by Jesus; three

references to the Holy Spirit coming; three times Jesus is nearly stoned; three Passover feasts mentioned. It is more difficult to capture the list of three's, as it (being a relatively low number) is more likely to appear without significance. However, because John tells us this is the third time, this number too has meaning to us.

One perspective to this use of numbers is that it gives us a sense of totality. Perhaps when we find this number spread throughout the Gospels (such as the three times that God speaks in the life of Jesus, or the seven words Jesus spoke on the cross), we are seeing a divine statement that these four Gospels are in fact the totality of the message of God to Man. There is no "missing" Gospel (as some "scholars" speculate), nor is it the case that there are Gospels that do not belong (as some other "scholars" suggest). Instead, perhaps these enumerations are the proof that we have truly received the exact measure of understanding we need to be saved.

Peter and Jesus

Jesus three times asks Peter about the love He has for Him. The word for "love" in the first two questions is the word *agapeos*, the love by choice or action. The third "love" is the lesser type, *phileo*, lesser because it does not require the will to love, but merely an affection or brotherly love. We cannot help but to see that these three questions may well counter the three denials Peter made before Jesus was crucified. Peter is grieved by these series of questions, and asserts that Jesus must know of his love for Him.

Then Jesus tells Peter that one day he will die for this confession of love. In a sense, this is the acceptance of the repentance Peter seems to be making. Jesus has said before that if you love Him, and are His friend, you would lay down your life; Peter will do just that. We cannot help but to wonder if this statement comforted Peter in prison in Acts 12, knowing that it was not yet his time to die. Knowing that death would come when he was old, and against his will, must have been bittersweet knowledge. Yet when that time came, Peter is not melancholy or depressed, but faithful to feed the sheep even to the end.

2 Peter 1:12-15 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Peter then asks the Lord of the fate of John. Jesus responds that it was not for Peter to know. John states that this statement has been misunderstood by some to indicate that John would not die. Tradition tells us that John was the only Apostle to die of natural causes, although the only possible support for this is what is written in this chapter. Jesus' reference to returning likely refers to the final coming, but we know from the other Gospels that Jesus had promised a "return" of a form when Jerusalem was destroyed in

70AD¹. Most of the Apostles had been killed prior to that date, so this may well reference that time too.

Closing

John's closing statement reminds us that there was much more, but that what is written is enough to know God. Though we may crave to have more details of the life of our Savior, we must content ourselves in faith that this was sufficient to know of the love that God had for us, and how it was manifested in the life of His son Jesus of Nazareth.

That these men believed the truth of what they saw and spoke cannot be reasonably questioned. They would die horrific deaths, suffer many things, and their reward on this earth was sometimes to be rejected by those they loved most. They did these things because they believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. These things are written so that we too can believe as they did, and by believing, have eternal life.

¹ Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21

The Seven Types in the Gospel of John

The Seven Waters of John

1. Water of John's Testimony - John 1:31
2. Water of Sin and Righteousness - John 2:7-8
3. Water of the New Birth - John 3:5
4. Water of Everlasting Life - John 4:13-14
5. Water of Healing - John 5:2-4; 9:7
6. Water of Divine Authority - John 6:19-20
7. Water of Sacrifice - John 19:34

The Seven Testimonies of John the Baptist

1. Jesus is the Light of the World - John 1:7-9
2. Jesus was before John - John 1:15
3. John was not the Christ - John 1:9-12
4. Jesus is the Lamb of God - John 1:29
5. The Holy Spirit marked Jesus - John 1:32
6. Jesus is from Heaven - John 3:31-32
7. John Testified of Truth - John 5:32-33

The Seven Witness Testimonies

1. Testimony of the Apostles - John 15:27, 21-24
2. Testimony of John the Baptist - John 3:28-32, 5:33
3. Testimony of God the Father - John 5:37, 8:17-18
4. Testimony of Jesus - John 8:14-18
5. Testimony of the Scriptures - John 5:39
6. Testimony of Miracles - John 5:36, 10:25
7. Testimony of the Holy Spirit - John 15:26

The Seven Feasts

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Passover | - John 2:23 |
| 2. (An unnamed feast) | - John 4:45 |
| 3. (An unnamed feast) | - John 5:1 |
| 4. Passover | - John 6:4 |
| 5. Feast of Tabernacles | - John 7:2 |
| 6. Feast of Dedication | - John 10:22 |
| 7. Passover | - John 11:56 |

The Seven Timeliness Statements

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. "My hour has not yet come" | - John 2:4 |
| 2. "My time has not yet come" | - John 7:6 |
| 3. His hour had not yet come | - John 7:30 |
| 4. His hour had not yet come | - John 8:20 |
| 5. "The hour has come" | - John 12:23 |
| 6. His hour had come | - John 13:1 |
| 7. "Father, the hour has come." | - John 17:1 |

The Seven Identities of Christ

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. I AM the Bread of Life | - John 6:35 |
| 2. I AM the Light of the World | - John 8:12 |
| 3. I AM the Door | - John 10:7 |
| 4. I AM the Good Shepherd. | - John 10:11 |
| 5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life | - John 11:25 |
| 6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life | - John 14:6 |
| 7. I AM the Vine | - John 15:1 |

The Seven Statements of Life

- 1. Everlasting life to those who believe - John 3:15**
- 2. Everlasting life form the Living Water - John 4:14**
- 3. Everlasting life to those who believed, - John 5:21**
- 4. Everlasting life from the Bread of Life - John 6:58**
- 5. Everlasting life by keeping His word - John 8:51**
- 6. Abundant life by Jesus' coming - John 10:10**
- 7. Life after death for those who believe - John 11:25**

Gospel of John

Chapter 2

The First Sign

John tells us in the end of his book that the signs of the book are what convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In chapter two we find the first of these signs: turning water to wine.

The First Miracle

Is this the first miracle Jesus performed, or is it the first miracle that John is enumerating for us? The language John uses when he says “*beginning of signs*” could indicate either. Let us consider though that John states Jesus performed miracles in Jerusalem after this, but before the “second” sign

John 2:23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.

John then calls the sign of the official (in chapter four) the second sign. Therefore, the most likely conclusion is that John's enumeration is not chronological, but for the purpose of the book. Perhaps the significance is meant for us to begin our own count of miracles. Once we do so, we find the following:

- 1. Turning Wine into Water** - John 2:1-11
- 2. Healing of the official's son** - John 4:46-54
- 3. Causing the lame man to walk** - John 5:1-8
- 4. Feeding the 5000** - John 6:5-13
- 5. Walking on Water** - John 6:15-21
- 6. Healing the blind man** - John 9:1-7
- 7. Raising Lazarus from the dead** - John 11
- 8. The Resurrection of Christ** - John 20:1-27

Eight miracles are recorded. Why not the seven we were expecting? Perhaps we ought to consider that the first seven were performed by Jesus Christ (and we already have been told that the signs testify themselves of Christ), but the last one was performed by the Father.

Acts 2:32 "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Acts 3:15 "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

Romans 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 Corinthians 6:14 And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.

So in fact we have seven miracles performed by Christ, fitting nicely into our pattern. We might wonder why we do not call certain other events in the Gospel “signs”? Some advents (such as Jesus discerning hearts, God speaking from heaven) are not included as “wonders”; John does not call them such. Consider that in 2:11 the Cana miracles is identified as the first, and in 4:54 this is identified as the second; in between these passages Jesus discerns hearts in 2:24 and 4:16-18, but John does not consider them the second and third signs.

Let us return to the water and wine. The stone basins are identified being used for ceremonial washing. Similar stone basins are found in archaeological surveys in the Middle East today. There is no water in them, so we wonder if they have indeed already been used. Such use would likely occur at a wedding, considering the tradition of the rabbis:

Mark 7:2-3 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders.

So this action is likely to have occurred at the wedding, a feast which sometimes lasted several days. There is no specific record of whether the water itself became ceremonially “unclean” after being used, but it would seem that at least some stigma might remain with it.

John said that the significance of the miracles was to prove one of two things: Jesus is the Christ (Savior), or Jesus is God. The symbolism here is rather clear; from what was common, came something extraordinary. If the water from those vessels was symbolically unclean itself, the symbolism becomes even more pronounced: from what was unclean came something extraordinary. This miracle is also the second of the seven waters of John. This water is a metaphor for the spiritual transformation that occurs in the life of a believer through Christ.

One last thought: was Jesus authorizing the use of alcohol by this miracle? We ought to consider that the word for wine in Greek (“*oinos*”) refers to a number of beverages, ranging in their alcoholic content. Nothing in the wording tells us if this is alcoholic or not; we are left to the context to discern the beverage’s nature. The context of a wedding feast causes us to ask: if the wedding guests were concerned about being ceremonially clean for the wedding, is it likely they would then defile themselves with strong drink?

The First Passover

The common belief that Jesus died at 33 years old is taken from the account of John, from the three Passover feasts that are recorded therein. This does not mean Jesus was necessarily 33 years

old (Irenaeus dubiously records his age at death as 50¹), but that the youngest he was at death was 33. We are not surprised to find out that there are seven feasts² recorded in John's Gospel:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Passover | - John 2:23 |
| 2. (An unnamed feast) | - John 4:45 |
| 3. (An unnamed feast) | - John 5:1 |
| 4. Passover | - John 6:4 |
| 5. Feast of Tabernacles | - John 7:2 |
| 6. Feast of Dedication | - John 10:22 |
| 7. Passover | - John 11:56 |

At this first Passover, the record is made of Jesus attacking the venders in the Temple court. It parallels what the other Gospel writers record, except that they each place this event at the end of their Gospels, in the final week (Matthew 21:12-14, Mark 11:16-18, Luke 19:45-46). Is this the same event, or did Jesus drive these men out of the Temple two times in His life? It is possible that this is the same occurrence, and that John's Gospel is not recording a separate Passover from the last feast/Passover, but that we are jumping back and forth in chronology. We know John is not meant to be understood in a chronological manner, as Luke asserts his Gospel was meant to be read.

¹ *"The 30 aeons are not typified by the fact that Christ was baptized in his 30th year: He did not suffer in the twelfth month after his baptism, but was more than 50 years old when he died."*— Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 2.22

² The feast in John 4:45 could be the Passover of John 2:23; if so, can we call the wedding a feast, as it is in John 2:8-9?

The simplest answer is usually the correct answer; in this case, the easiest determination is that this happened twice in the life of Christ. So we will proceed under that assumption. This first time we see Jesus full of the righteous zeal of God, driving out those who profited from sacrifice.

Is it the case that it is a sin to make a profit in selling religious items? We note that the Apostle Paul said that those who serve God have a necessity to be compensated for such:

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

We must conclude that the issue here is not the sale of sacrificial products as much as it is the exchange of money that these booths practiced. The Law of Moses stated that usury was wrong³. The reason for the money changers was that the coinage of the realm, that is, Roman or Greek coins, were refused in the Temple by the authorities because of the graven images that they contained⁴. This was ironic, since as we see in Matthew 22:19-20 that these same people had no problem possessing such coinage. Instead, the Temple authorities required either Tyrian or Judean shekels, which were not without graven images, but such images

³ Exodus 22:25

⁴ Sanders, E. P. The Historical Figure of Jesus. Penguin, 1993

were not nearly as pagan. There was no such prohibition given in the Law of Moses to the use of foreign coins.

There is a similar event in the Old Testament, where Nehemiah, in the process of restoring the Temple worship, performed a similar “purging”:

Nehemiah 13:7-8 and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

The offense in Nehemiah was that a place had been prepared for an unbeliever in the assembly to profit from the Israelites. Perhaps in John this is also the issue; fundamentally it is that the Temple had been turned into a market, thus changing the purpose of the Temple.

While at the Temple, Jesus makes the proclamation that “this” Temple will be torn down and rebuilt in three days. We realize that this is a reference to His death, which is something that John tells us. What is interesting is that this statement is brought up as the primary accusation against Jesus in the record of Jesus’ trials in the Gospel of Matthew and Mark, but it is not brought up during His trial in John’s account. At the same time, this original statement made by Jesus is not recorded in Matthew, Mark or Luke, but only in John. Once again we are reminded that John’s Gospel necessitates

knowledge of the other Gospels, and vice-versa. The truth of the Gospel is a four part volume.

Gospel of John

Chapter 3

You Must Be Born Again

John three introduces one of several righteous Pharisees in the person Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a member of the Sanhedrin, and in the end of the Gospel account he is one of the men who removed Jesus' body from the cross. It seems that while Jesus is in Jerusalem, Nicodemus will use this opportunity to personally ask Him if He is "The Prophet". When he comes to Jesus, Jesus answers a question that does not seem asked; He tells Nicodemus that in order to "see" the Kingdom of Heaven, one must be born again.

Throughout the Old Testament, prophets spoke about a coming kingdom that would be the eternal one, of which the Messiah would be in control.¹ The use of the word "kingdom" is the

¹ Daniel 2:44, Micah 4:1, Isaiah 2:2

expression for the authority of God² (consider that the Greek word translated kingdom, *basileaus*, means authority) and it is identified with heaven because this is the location of the throne (source of authority) of God. Jesus speaks in John of seeing as being an allegory to understanding, or acceptance³.

Jesus then elaborates to end Nicodemus' confusion. Being born again is a spiritual act, obtained through water and the Spirit. Later, after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, John adds the blood of Christ, not because it was not originally part of the new birth, but because the effect of the new birth could not occur until after the blood:

1 John 5:6-8 This is He who came by water and blood-- Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

What does this mean? The Spirit we presume is the Holy Spirit; Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is manifested in His words later in this Gospel⁴. The Spirit is the mind of God made known, and John will tell us that the Spirit is the Revealer of all things⁵.

² Isaiah 66:1

³ John 9:41

⁴ John 6:63

⁵ John 14:26

Thus, the Spirit needed to be born again is manifested by the knowledge given by God. Peter makes a great point of the place of knowledge in our salvation:

II Peter 1: 2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

The water might be the living water of chapter four, but that really would be a redundant reference, since that water is identified with the Holy Spirit. The likeliest conclusion is that the water is the water of baptism. The Apostle Paul describes a water in which we are “regenerated”, or made again, along with the Holy Spirit:

Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the people there that their salvation from sin could only be accomplished through this same water and the Spirit:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We can see a pattern taught by all of the apostles, that to be of God, one must be born again of water and the Spirit. The water is clearly baptism, the immersion of a person into water.

The blood can only refer to the blood of Christ, the purchase price of the human race⁶. John reminds us of this blood when telling of the Roman soldier piercing the side of Christ on the cross, where we see blood and water immediately after Jesus has given up His spirit.

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

There is little debate that the blood is the very grace of God, manifested by His love in sending His son. Blood is the purchase price of our salvation, thus making it “free” for us. The Spirit is the means in which we know this to be true. As all Scripture is Spirit filled⁷, the Spirit is manifested as the Bible now, the message of the Gospel in the time of John (before it was written down). The Water is the action(s) one must take to accept this gift. John is fundamentally clear, that the gift is free and conditional all at once. The blood, the water and the Spirit testify to individual salvation⁸.

Jesus places a great deal of importance on the idea of believing in Him. This must be seen in the context of the purpose of the book, which is to believe He is the Christ, the Son of God. Let us

⁶ Acts 20:28

⁷ II Timothy 3:16-17

⁸ I John 5:8

not interpret these passages exclusively, as some are wont to do; Jesus makes clear that to love Him was equal to keeping the commandments He gave⁹. Later, Paul would make us understand that to believe is necessarily to obey:

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

Jesus is not saying that belief alone is sufficient to save (for as James said, even demons believe in Jesus¹⁰). He is saying that He will provide the necessary proof that people can believe in, and thereby can know the way to eternal life. Faith is the beginning of salvation, not the end.

The Testimony of John

Once again we are brought to John the Baptist. He has not yet been arrested or executed, as we know will happen. Perhaps John himself knows this; we cannot miss the allusion in his words that "He must increase, but I must decrease". With these words we see John as an extraordinary prophet, one who know both when he speaks, and when he is finished. He is telling his disciples (who seem to be quite considerable, as we meet them again in Ephesus several decades later¹¹) that he is not in a competition with Jesus;

⁹ John 14:15

¹⁰ James 2:19

¹¹ Acts 19:3

John's purpose was to be the herald of the Christ, and he has made that proclamation. One testimony only is insufficient; John must now leave the witness stand, so to speak, that other witnesses may come forward.

On another note, the esteem many held John the Baptist in (as has happened with others such as Mary or Peter) would go beyond that which was scripturally intended, and would evolve into a false worship. The *Mandaeans*, a religious group prominent in modern Iraq, regard John as the true Messiah, something John the Baptist himself denied in the first chapter of John¹².

¹² *Mandaeans*, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church; Oxford University Press (2005)

Gospel of John

Chapter 4

The Samaritan Woman

The Samaritans were the descendents of the remaining Israelites and the Gentile nations brought in to occupy the country of Israel (the Northern Ten Tribes) by the Assyrian King Sargon II in 721 BC. In II Kings 17 we are told that these Gentiles failed to honor Jehovah, and a plague of lions came upon them. In order to rectify the situation, the Assyrian king sent a Levite priest to teach the Gentiles the ways of Jehovah. The recorder of II Kings notes that these people then created a religion which combined their paganism and the Law of Moses. They took the name of the previous inhabitants of the land, and are known as the Samaritans. They saw themselves as the children of Israel, as seen when in this chapter the woman at the well calls Jacob her father.

The relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews was volatile. When the Jews had first returned from Babylonian captivity, the Samaritans offered to assist in rebuilding the temple, and were refused¹. Again, decades later, Nehemiah's restoration efforts opposed the Samaritans nearly to the point of war². The Samaritans constantly sought to worship in the temple in Jerusalem, but were always refused. Their position is worthy of some pity; having a knowledge of God, they are excluded from worship in the temple. Sometime after this, the Samaritans built a temple for (their) Jehovah on Mount Gerizim³. Even today, Samaritans maintain that this is the true Mount Moriah (as opposed to the identification in II Chronicles 3:1 as it being at the city of Jerusalem), and therefore the true location God desired the Temple. The tension of this temple's existence culminated either under the Greeks (per the Jewish Talmud) or the Hasmoneans (per Josephus), when Jews destroyed this Samaritan temple.

Thus, we can see the animosity of the Jew and the Samaritan in the background as Jesus meets with the Samaritan woman at the well. We can understand why she is astonished that He, a Jew, would even speak with her, a Samaritan. Jesus speaks of the living water that He can provide; this is the third of the seven waters John describes. This is the idea of the life that is in Jesus Christ, a life that Jesus has described already as being born again. How can Jesus prove He is one who can give this? By discerning her spiritual

¹ Ezra 4:1-5

² Nehemiah 4:2

³ Lipschitz, Knoppers, Albertz; Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.; Eisenbrauns, 2007 pg 157

condition. She is morally wrecked; a woman with five husbands, and living in fornication even now with someone else. To her credit, she is not offended by Jesus' critical eye, but astounded that He knows these things. She concludes that He is a prophet.

Now begins an even more wonderful conversation: the worship of God. Here is the contention between the Jew and the Samaritan, one which has produced wars, and left the Samaritans with no place to worship. Jesus pulls no punches, so to speak. He is clear that the Samaritans are not a people of promise, and that their traditions of the place of worship were not of knowledge (fact), but tradition only. What is not of knowledge is not of truth; we need to have that in mind for the next few statements. Then Jesus makes an even a more astonishing statement: soon, the temple in Jerusalem will cease to be the place of worship. If that is not sufficiently shocking, Jesus then suggests that Samaritans will be welcome at the new temple, since God's desire is than anyone who is willing to worship Him in spirit and truth is invited to worship.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

Truth is a prominent point of John's Gospel. He has introduced us to truth in chapter one, telling us that Grace and Truth are through Jesus, that Jesus is the truth, that the Word is the Truth, that there is a Spirit of Truth, that the truth will make you free, and that those who perish do so because they lack the truth. No wonder then when faced with Christ, Pilates asks "what is truth". We know it is much more than a single answer. The Samaritan woman confesses that she believes in the Christ. Jesus tells her: I am He.

Jesus is suggesting that there are two kinds of worship: spiritual worship, and earthly, or physical (sometimes called carnal) worship. We might consider that this is a theme expounded on much by later New Testament writers, that is, the contrast between the physical worship of the Old Covenant, and the Spiritual worship of the New Covenant. We know the Truth is the knowledge of God; now we know the Spirit is the spiritual mind.

The Old Physical Covenant

Hebrews 9:1-8

Physical Temple	I Kings 6:12-14
Physical Priesthood	Exodus 40:15
Physical Sacrifices	Leviticus 1:2
Physical Music	I Chronicles 6:32

The New Spiritual Covenant

Hebrews 9:9-15

Spiritual Temple	Ephesians 2:20-22
Spiritual Priesthood	I Peter 2:5
Spiritual Sacrifices	Romans 12:1
Spiritual Music	Hebrews 13:15-16

The disciples return at the conclusion of this conversation. They are puzzled at the discussion they see with Jesus and the Samaritan woman, but do not ask what is occurring. The woman returns to her village, to testify to her people that she has met one she believes to be the prophet. These people then ask Jesus to stay, and are ultimately convinced that Jesus is the Savior of the World.

When Jesus ascended to heaven in Acts chapter one, He told His apostles that they would spread the Gospel to the Jews of Jerusalem and Judea, then to the Samaritans, then to the rest of the world. The Samaritans represent the transition between the Jew and Gentile. Perhaps we can even see the providence of God, in creating a people that would be a perfect bridge for the Gospel to cross from the Jew first then to the Gentile.

The Official's Son

The second recorded miracle (identified as the second miracle in verse 54) is the healing of a royal official's son. As with many of the people in John's Gospel, no names are given. The son is healed with Jesus not needing to be in the presence of the son. This reminds us of the centurion in Matthew chapter eight, who understood that the authority of Jesus was spiritual, not physical, and that His presence was not necessary for His works.

The man took Jesus at His word, and left to return home. Such is the faith that is expected of all who call upon the Lord, that they take Him at His word. We will note that this is often the case in the healing Jesus performed; that the hearer was expected to act before they received the blessing. The lame man would need the faith to stand before his legs were healed; the blind man would need the faith to wash in the pool before receiving his sight.

Gospel of John

Chapter 5

The Lame Man Walks

When the Messiah was spoken of in the Old Testament, there are certain miracles identified with Him. Specifically, that the lame should walk, the blind should see, and the dead should be raised. Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that these unique works were identifiable with the Messiah

Matthew 11:5 "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Isaiah 35:5-6 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For

waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

The pool of Bethesda was discovered by archeologists in the 19th century¹. When excavated, it was located near the Sheep Gate, with five porticos. The movement of the waters by an angel is unknown to us except by John's account. We are now in the third miracle and the third water as well.

Jesus' question to the man is of significance: "*Do you want to be healed?*" We might consider at first, who does not? But if physical healing is a metaphor for the cleansing of sin, as suggested in places such as Matthew 9:4-6, then the question has more significance. John's Gospel will make it clear that many people, or more accurately most people, do not wish to be healed of that ultimate sickness, sin. Instead, they prefer to be ignorant of their condition.

The command to pick up the mat and walk, in which when the man obeys by faith, he is healed, is viewed as a violation of the Sabbath rules of work by the Jews. It is not the Sabbath itself which is violated, but the traditions defining work on the Sabbath. Jesus does not break the Law of Moses at any time.

The miracle is significant to us as it places Jesus as the promised Savior of the world, and as we will see in a moment, God Himself. Later, when the blind man is healed, like the lame man here he too will have very limited knowledge of Jesus as the Christ. It also demonstrates that while Jesus does the work of healing, it is meaningless unless we meet the condition of obedience set before

¹ Charlesworth, James H., Jesus and Archaeology, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006. pp 560-566

us. If the man had not gotten up and walked, would he still be lame? If the blind man in chapter nine refused to go to the pool to wash, would he still be blind? The gift of God is free and conditional, all at once. Arising to walk, or washing in the pool, are both conditions to the free gift of being healed.

The Identity of Jesus

All of the Gospels make clear that the Jewish leaders are personally offended that Jesus would work miracles on the Sabbath². In other Gospel accounts, Jesus appeals to the simple fact that He, being God, was the Lord of the Sabbath, and that He would not be able to violate the Sabbath *de facto*. Here though, John records the response of the Jews to this to ascertain early on that the Jews understand that Jesus is identifying Himself as God. In John's words, Jesus "*said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God*". We have already understood this, but to remind us, we know that this book is written to know that Jesus is the Son of God; being the "*monogenes*" son of God (translated "*only begotten*" in John 3) is saying that Jesus has the Divine Nature of God. Simply put, Jesus is God.

Now Jesus begins to explain His purpose in coming to earth. He and the Father have the same purpose, that the Love of God should be made manifest to men, and that men might be saved by God. Jesus says that all judgment is His; we know that Jesus will judge the living and the dead when He returns. This is not just

² Matthew 12:10, Mark 3:2, Luke 13:14

about being a judge, but about the authority to be a lawgiver. Only one who has the authority to judge has the authority to make law.

It is confusing to some degree, that Jesus will say that He is both the Judge, and He does not judge. But we need to consider that Jesus is speaking to the two “halves” of the world; the saved and the lost. For the saved, Jesus will not judge them for their deeds; they will pass through this judgment. This is not to say that the saved are not judged at all, as Peter makes it clear:

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

This is the judgment of the righteous. Those in Christ will be judged, but not for the sins they had committed. Instead, the judgment of the house of God is whether they have continued to abide in Christ. Those not in Christ are judged for their sins, and the wage of any sin is death.

There is too the discussion of the raising of the dead. Jesus speaks that some will hear and believe in Him, and will pass from death to life. Then Jesus says that one day the dead in the graves will hear His voice and be raised, to life and death. There are two resurrections in the text here, which might be a bit confusing. It might help to consider what John says in Revelation pertaining to the first and second deaths, and first and second resurrections:

Revelation 20:6,13-14 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ,

and shall reign with Him a thousand years..... The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Let us simply say: the first death is physical death, and the second is eternal damnation. The first resurrection is in baptism³, the second is the physical raising of the dead. The first resurrection is spiritual, and the second is physical. No man can avoid the first death or the second resurrection. It is the choice of all men as to whether we are part of the first resurrection, or the second death. As John plainly said in Revelation 20:6, those who choose to partake of the first resurrection (baptism, or all obedience in general) avoid the second death (eternal damnation).

Jesus now returns to the idea of testimony. He makes the case that it is not merely Jesus who speaks of Himself, but He is testified to by the law (and by extension Moses) and by the Father. Jesus makes it clear that because they refuse to believe what is written in the Scriptures, they are not going to be saved.

³ Romans 6:3

Gospel of John

Chapter 6

Feeding of the 5,000

This is the only miracle that is common to all of the Gospel accounts. With only five loaves of bread and two fish, 5,000 (men, not counting women and children) are fed. In a culture where the next meal is not always predictable, such an event would no doubt have made a considerable impression on those who received the benefit thereof. Consider the moment when the sixth person reached into the basket; having seen the five loaves placed inside, and the five previous persons removed them, what incentive is there to reach inside? Hunger drives people in strong ways. Jesus will use this miracle to teach those who so hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Isaiah 55:1-2 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

The miracle results in the people proclaiming that Jesus is “the” Prophet. This idea of being “the” Prophet is the foretelling by Moses pertaining to the Christ. This statement is fundamentally the same as the one made by Philip in chapter one, the Samaritans in chapter four, and by Mary later. As we have seen before, there are three roles that the Christ would fulfill: Prophet, High Priest, and King. We know that “Christ” means anointed one, and these three offices were all given by anointing. Each of these roles was prophesied in Scripture, and with each of them there is a “foreshadow” person who are prophesied to “return”. It would take a unique person to satisfy the qualification of all three:

David the King		
Prophetic Return	Anointing	Christ Fulfils
<i>Ezekiel 34:24 "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them;</i>	1 Kings 19:16a <i>Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.</i>	Luke 1:32b "...the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

Moses the Prophet

Prophetic Coming	Anointing	Christ Fulfils
Deuteronomy 18:15 <i>"The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear"</i>	1 Kings 19:16b <i>"And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place</i>	John 7:40 <i>Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet."</i>

Melchizedek the High Priest

Prophetic Return	Anointing	Christ Fulfils
Psalms 110:4 <i>The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."</i>	Exodus 28:41b <i>You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.</i>	Hebrews 6:20b <i>even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.</i>

As the people realize the identity of Jesus, John says that their desire is to make Jesus King by force. Jesus has spoken previously about the desire of some to "force" the Kingdom¹. Jesus

¹ Matthew 11:12

will have no part of this, for as He has said previously, “my time has not yet come”.

Walking on the Water

That evening Jesus’ Apostles cross the Sea of Galilee by ship. The events that transpire are recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. A storm arises, and the Apostles see Jesus walking to them on the water. We know additionally from Matthew’s account that Peter attempted to walk to Jesus unsuccessfully. Mark’s account tells us that the amazement of the Apostles was because they failed to grasp the meaning of the miracle of the feeding of 5,000².

John’s use of miracles, as we have already considered, is very limited. Why this? The miracles cause us to believe that Jesus is Savior and God. This miracle leads us to the latter, that Jesus is able to manipulate the materials of nature in a manner that only the one who created them could.

The Bread of Life

The next day, Jesus is found again by the people on the far side of Galilee. Jesus makes it clear that He understands their motivation for seeking Him; not for truth, but to be fed. While Jesus is one quick to show mercy and compassion on the poor, He is also one who points out the carnal nature of the same. His desire has been for men to seek the spiritual things over physical ones, as He

² Mark 6:52

told the woman at the well. So now Jesus begins to speak about greater, spiritual bread, the Bread of Life.

In the Old Testament, *Manna* was the bread that “came from heaven” to sustain the Israelites. We recall that it ended the moment that they crossed into the Promised Land³. *Manna* meant “What is it?” Jesus now says that He is the answer to that mystery. “I am the Bread of Life”.

This is not a reference to communion, as is sometimes supposed. Jesus describes this sustenance in the same way He described the living water of John 4; that it will provide an eternal end of hunger or thirst. Obviously, the Lord’s Supper is, as a memorial, limited in application to being a spiritual means of discernment, and there is no description of a physical benefit to the recipient in the Bible. It is done as a matter of worship to God. The Bread of Life is life to the hearer; whoever “eats” of the Bread of Life lives forever.

Jesus goes on to say that He, being the bread of life, is the sustenance of men. Again, we must perceive this to be spiritual, not physical. Jesus promised that many who followed him would physically be put to death for doing so. As *manna* kept the Israelites while they wandered in the wilderness, so Jesus will sustain the believer who wanders in the wilderness that is this world, this life. We do not miss that the allegory follows to conclude that the Promised Land is in fact heaven⁴. How often we sing songs that point to Caanan’s Land as our heavenly hope; here we see the fitting of *manna* into that allegory.

³ Joshua 5:12

⁴ Hebrews 4:1-11

What specifically is the Bread of Life? Jesus uses the analogy of His flesh and blood as sustenance, something that the Jews hearing this found repugnant. But how else could He explain we would be saved by the stripes of His flesh⁵, and the purchase of His blood⁶? His physical life was absolutely necessary to solve the problems of the sins of the world.

After the lesson is over, many depart from Jesus. Such it is when we meet obstacles, we depart too. In the Parable of the Seeds⁷ Jesus taught that of those who turned to Him, who let the seed enter their hearts⁸ and give them life, two thirds would fall away. This is not meant to be an exact numerical prediction, but a prediction that most who follow Jesus fall away; they will fall either because they have no root, or because the cares of the world choke them out. We might say that many fall in this place in John because they were not prepared to receive the spiritual meaning of what Jesus would say.

Jesus does explain the metaphorical meaning of the Bread; His words are the Bread. Later, we will be told that the Holy Spirit would come to the Apostles, to cause them to remember these words⁹, and then to speak these words to others¹⁰. But too many were unwilling to take the time to think through the difficult sayings of the Son of God.

⁵ 1 Peter 2:24

⁶ Acts 20:28

⁷ Mark 4:3-21

⁸ James 1:21

⁹ John 14:26

¹⁰ Matthew 28:20

The chapter concludes with Jesus looking at His Apostles and asking if they desired to depart. Peter responds for them:

John 6:68-69 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

This is Peter's confession of faith, much like that which he made in Matthew 16:16. But the value of this passage is more than the substance of Peter's confession. When in the spiritual walk of faith a believer is confronted with that which is not easily understood, it is easy to become discouraged or disheartened. Peter's words are a powerful tool to remember; where else do we turn? There is no other salvation offered, no other place to turn to for hope. Even when it is difficult to understand or serve the Lord, it is always better than any and all alternatives. Too, Peter points to what they do understand: Jesus is the Savior. Perhaps the "Bread of Life" teaching was too difficult for the moment, but the plain truth of the identity of Jesus was far too important to be discouraged by lesser matters which are not yet fathomed. Let us endeavor to have the same mind.

Gospel of John

Chapter 7

Jesus at the Feast

The chapter begins with an unusual interaction between Jesus and His brothers of the flesh. We know that Jesus was the oldest of multiple brothers and sisters; we often do not consider the familial issues that may have arisen because He was the Messiah. His brothers desire Him to go to the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, and to make Himself known. John clarifies that they did not believe that He was the Christ at that time, which causes us to wonder what their motivation in this is. Once more Jesus announces that His time has not yet come; since the first verse tells us that they are now seeking to kill Him, it seems likely that these refer to the eventually death on the cross. Jesus tells them He will not go with them yet, but then goes in secret, alone and later.

John/Jesus mentions the “time” or “hour” of his departure seven times; four times in telling us that His time had not yet come, and three times telling us that His time had come.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. “My hour has not yet come” | - John 2:4 |
| 2. “My time has not yet come” | - John 7:6 |
| 3. His hour had not yet come | - John 7:30 |
| 4. His hour had not yet come | - John 8:20 |
| 5. “The hour has come” | - John 12:23 |
| 6. His hour had come | - John 13:1 |
| 7. “Father, the hour has come.” | - John 17:1 |

We need to understand that such language tells us that Jesus will not die until He arrives at the time He has determined it to occur. Jesus tells Pilate that it is the authority He has permitted him to have that allows Him to be put to death¹

John 10:17-18 “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

We can see that Jesus has made such a powerful presence in His teaching that the danger now is that He will be seized and made King by force, or seized and put to death. From here on many of the actions Jesus does are secretive, or not publically announced, until

¹ John 19:11

the last week in Jerusalem. Chapter eight reflects a great deal of the impact of Jesus among the people of His time.

Jesus begins teaching at the Temple, and the people are amazed at His understanding. It reminds us of the events at the Temple when He was just 12 years old². Jesus confronts them about their intentions: they seek Him dead. Perhaps they themselves have not realized yet it is their desire, as they seem to in chapter 11:49-55. Jesus commands that they, and we, need to make a righteous judgment about Him. Either acknowledge Him as Christ, and all that means, or reject Him.

Here marks a change in the minds of many. Some are beginning to esteem Him as the Christ, something that the Apostles have done for some time. They make an excellent analysis: what more could the Christ do that Jesus has not done, to prove He is the Christ? Others point to what they perceive as faults in Jesus that prevent Him from being the Christ; they know where Jesus is from (Nazareth), and that Messiah would be an unknown figure. Conversely, others reject Him because they see Messiah as only coming from Bethlehem³, and are unaware of the circumstances of Jesus' birth that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke relate to us.

Jesus finishes the feast with another reference to the living water, which we are clearly told here is the Holy Spirit, received when we believe (and obey⁴). With these words, many proclaim He is the Prophet or the Christ, perhaps not realizing that both are the

² Luke 2:47

³ Micah 5:2

⁴ Acts 2:38

same. There is an attempt to seize Jesus which fails, because the guards are astonished as to the teaching of Christ. There will be other failed attempts to force Jesus, either to become Messiah, or to be stopped.

Perhaps we are seeing the division of those who believe, and those who do not. John is clear that those who demand answers for the Christ with the right heart, will receive them. Nicodemus in chapter three and Thomas after the resurrection reflect the “noble minded” attitude that does not accept on face value, but seeks proof of belief. The others, who reject Christ, seek proof that cannot be established, thus rejecting the Christ before He is revealed.

Gospel of John

Chapter 8

A Woman Caught In Adultery

Some Bible translations may contain a note here that this text does not appear in all early Bible manuscripts. There are some 5,300 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament¹, and so it is not surprising that there are some with passages removed or redacted. Nothing in the passage contradicts the message of Christ, or causes us to consider it false, so there is no real reason to debate its validity or testimony at this time.

It is notable that the woman taken in adultery was taken “in the act”; the question is of course, where is the man that was also caught? This tells us that the issue here is not the justice of the Law

¹ Lightfoot, Neil How We Got the Bible, (1963) pp34

of Moses, but a test of Jesus. There is no question here as to her guilt, or the appropriate penalty. The Law is clear:

Leviticus 20:10 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

How can it be fair that they have chosen to punish only one of the parties involved? Obviously it is not, and we are left to wonder why they have only chosen to punish one of the parties. Is he a friend, or is it that these men are hesitant to punish the man for the crime?

Perhaps what is most important is not our supposition, but that this is a trap. It is possible that putting her to death at Jesus' order might well create a reason for the Roman's to arrest Him; this seems unlikely, since the Romans are not very concerned about the Jews enforcing matters of their own law². Perhaps it is more the case that this will put a wedge between the people and Jesus. Jesus has been a teacher of mercy and grace, and has promoted the heart of the law. John's very Gospel is established to show how grace came through Jesus.

"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." We cannot miss the absolute brilliance of this answer to the issue. It does not suggest at all that the Law of Moses should be invalidated; it is in fact an encouragement to follow through. However, it puts to the enforcer of the law an obvious qualification:

² John 19:6-7; Acts 7:58; Acts 18:15

only one who is sin free has the authority to carry through with the punishment. This brings to mind something that Jesus' half-brother would tell us later:

James 4:11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

Jesus would qualify this a bit further, to tell us that we have an authority to make judgments, but only if we ourselves have been attentive to be attentive, or have corrected ourselves. In the last chapter we were commanded not to judge by appearance, but with righteous judgment. We consider this in perspective with another commandment to judge:

Matthew 7:2-5 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

The men depart; the older first, perhaps seeing the point in their experiences before the younger men. In the end, it is Jesus and the woman. The last statement Jesus makes is that she is to “leave your life of sin”.

The Testimony of Jesus

The subject moves back to the testimony of the identity of Jesus. In the course of this chapter, the conversation becomes heated, with the Jews who are against Christ accusing Jesus of being illegitimate, and ultimately attempting to kill Him. Jesus will make one of the most personal testimonies of His identity as being God.

Jesus now testifies that He is the light of the world. The Pharisees make the point that a single witness is insufficient; Jesus responds to say that the Father testifies with Him. He may have pointed to this conversation in chapter five, that John the Baptist testified of Him, and the Scriptures testified of Him. For our sake we are adding the Father’s testimony now.

Jesus says that His witness testimony is based on the place He has come from: heaven. Since the Throne of God is in Heaven, this testimony is one of absolute authority. “Where is your father” is the question; all of the Gospel accounts are mute about the presence of Joseph after Jesus begins to preach, leaving us to conclude that he is deceased. This is the father they are thinking of, one they seem to know about³.

³ John 6:42

In verse 31 Jesus begins speaking to some of the Jews who believed Him. We need to note that John does not generalize or stereotype anybody in his Gospel; there are faithful, believing Jews, and there are unfaithful, disbelieving Jews. Even of the Pharisees, John tells us of some who believe, and some who do not. However, in this point of the passage, even the Jews who believe in Him will become hostile. Perhaps we are subtly being told that “believing” in Jesus does not make one a disciple of Jesus⁴.

Jesus tells them that they are slaves, slaves to sin. The response of these Jews is their statement that as descendants of Abraham, they are no one’s slave. However, considering the history of the last 600 years, this is rather problematic statement. Their people have been captives some time, with Assyria, Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, and now the Romans. They are not “free” even in a worldly sense. However, Jesus does not speak to this type of freedom, but to the freedom that truth brings from sin.

If the idea of slavery was not offensive, the next comparison must be; Jesus tells them that Satan is their father. This is a true insult, one Jesus would reserve for the Pharisees and Lawyers elsewhere who make men slaves of sin⁵. They identify their father first as Abraham, then as God Himself. Yet Jesus continues to berate them, to tell them that they desire to commit murder. Again, they do not seem to believe the accusation themselves, as it seems in chapter seven.

The insults continue. Jesus is called a Samaritan, and then He is identified as one who has a demon. Jesus never stoops to

⁴ James 2:19

⁵ Matthew 23:15

slander, simply telling them that so long as they oppose Him, they oppose God Himself, and therefore, are serving the purpose of Satan. Perhaps the most offensive slander is the one hinted at in verse 41; that Jesus is a son of fornication. As we know, they are aware of the background of Jesus Christ, of His father Joseph and mother Mary. Perhaps they know this too, having sent out men to investigate him as these did John in chapter one, or will do to the blind man in chapter nine. Jesus was born to a woman who was only engaged to be married when she conceived; in the eyes of all men (even a righteous man), who would believe what Mary or Joseph said about the visitations of an angel? It may be that the very character of His mother is being slandered; who among us would not rise to this bait? If it is in fact what is being hinted at, the fact that Jesus does not lose His self-control is marvelous.

Jesus closes His sermon with the promise that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. The Jews see this as an insult to their esteemed father Abraham, one who is known as a friend of God⁶. If Abraham died, how can Jesus offer the opportunity for eternal life? Jesus tells them that Abraham looked for His coming, saw it, and rejoiced in it. The Jews mock Him, seeing what they perceive as a simple impossibility. Then Jesus makes the most dramatic statement of the book: *"Before Abraham was, I AM."*

How did Abraham see the day of Christ? For one thing, Jesus makes it clear that Abraham is not dead, to the extent that He lives yet now.

⁶ II Chronicles 20:7

Matthew 22:32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Abraham either saw the day of Christ by faith, or in the sense that he yet lived in God, he saw it come about. Luke's account of the story of Lazarus and the rich man suggest that Abraham had some awareness of the events in the world⁷

When God met Moses at the burning bush, He revealed that most special name that would be the covenant name for generations: *YHWH/Yahweh*, or as it is translated into English, Jehovah. We know that this is a rendering of the expression "I Am That I Am", or more specifically, "I AM". Jesus is using this unique name of God, not in the third person, but first; He was clearly saying He was God.

It was not missed by the opponents of Jesus. They pick up stones to kill Him, but He slips away. As we know, it is not yet His time, and therefore they have no power to put Him to death.

⁷ Luke 16:29

Gospel of John

Chapter 9

What the Blind Man Saw

This is a chapter unique in the Gospels, in that it is primarily from the view of the unnamed man who is healed by Jesus. The event begins with the disciples coming to a blind man, and asking Jesus “who sinned” that the man should be born blind. The idea that sickness was only the result of sin was popular throughout the Old Testament (as we see with Job’s friend accusing Job of sin based on his suffering), and into this passage now.

The idea that sin is punished in this life is not an accurate representation of scripture. Though many have attempted to identify all suffering with sin, it simply does not work with a Scriptural context. The penalty of sin is the death of the soul¹. While

¹ Romans 6:23

there are consequences to sin, those consequences cannot be perceived as the wage or punishment of sin. The wages of sin are imputed ONLY to the person guilty of sin; God makes it clear in Ezekiel that to believe otherwise was an offense to His divine justice:

Ezekiel 18:2-4 "What do you mean when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die."

The inheritance of the wages of sin is a false doctrine, although one which is commonly believed, as propagated by Augustine of Hippo, and later by John Calvin. While nothing is said in Scripture of an inheritance of the wages of sin, there are many examples of the inheritance of the consequences of sin. The consequences of sin are various, and affect many people, and may not affect the sinner at all. The consequences of sin are not divine justice, but something that allows us to see in the world around us that sin is harmful.

God told Adam that the day he ate of the tree of knowledge, he would die². As God does not lie, we know that the day Adam ate, he died. However, since he did not die in the flesh, we can

² Genesis 2:17

conclude this was a reference to the death of his soul before God³. Subsequently, God removed Adam from the Garden to prevent his physical life from immortality⁴. Over 900 years later Adam died in the flesh; this death was passed on to his descendants, and it affected the whole of creation in a consequential manner⁵.

The Blind Man

After Jesus places mud in the eyes of the blind man, the events follow the blind man rather than Jesus. We need to remember several important points from here on: first, the man does not know the identity of the one who healed him, apart from the name Jesus; second, Jesus did not tell the blind man to confess him before others. What the man does know is that he was told to wash, he did, and now he can see.

The miracle occurred on a Sabbath, as did the other miracle of healing in chapter five. Thus, the Pharisees want to interrogate the man healed. His testimony is simple, and does not change. However, we see the blind man begin to make some necessary inferences from what he does know.

There is a division among the Pharisees as to what is occurring. This division has been around for years now, as it was mentioned by Nicodemus in chapter three. To those who believe, it is clear that a sinner could not work such signs. To those who

³ James 5:12; Matthew 10:28

⁴ Genesis 3:22-23

⁵ Romans 8:20

disbelieve, the Sabbath issue is the evidence of Jesus' evil intentions. There is also the question of the miracle itself; it is not believed by the Pharisees; perhaps it is because, as we shall see in a moment, this is an absolute proof of Messiah. His parents are called in to testify to this, but to nothing else; they fear the threat of being cast out of the synagogue for calling Jesus the Christ.

Finally, the blind man is interrogated a third time. He has already concluded in verse 17 the obvious: whoever this Jesus is, He is a prophet. When the Pharisees confront the blind man about his conclusions, and say that they do not know where Jesus is coming from, the blind man seems unable to hold back his astonishment. It is simple: a blind man cannot be healed without the power of God; therefore, this Jesus is the Christ. Since God does not hear sinners⁶, Jesus cannot be the sinner they suppose.

The blind man gives us an important fact that tells us that Jesus is no mere prophet, but He is The Prophet, The Christ. Even the blind man recognizes that it is remarkable that he is the only one who seems to realize: no one in recorded history has ever been blind and then had their sight restored. Lepers have been healed in times past by prophets⁷; the dead have been raised⁸; people have been miraculously fed⁹. But no one has ever had their sight restored. Yet the Scriptures were clear that the Messiah would do just this:

⁶ Isaiah 59:2

⁷ II Kings 5:14

⁸ I Kings 17:22

⁹ I Kings 17:16

Isaiah 29:18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Isaiah 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Isaiah 42:7 To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Isaiah 42:18 Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see.

We might be tempted to think that with an absolute proof looking them in the eye, the matter would be resolved. The result is not the acceptance of clear logic, of scriptural soundness. Instead, it is the pronouncement of inherited sin, and the total rejection of clear testimony. The man who could see is cast out.

There are not many people in Scripture who were sought out by Christ. When Jesus hears of the man's ejection, He seeks him out. Jesus asks him if he believes in the Christ; the man tells Jesus that He need but identify the Christ, and the man would believe. When Jesus identifies Himself, the man worships Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

In a finally note to this conversation, Jesus applies the metaphor of blindness and sight to the recognition of sin. Those who know that they are sinful can be healed. But those who refuse

to “see” cannot be healed, and their sin remains. It reminds us of the allegory of Jesus as a physician:

Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

The Pharisees seem to understand his point, and ask Him if they are blind then. Jesus replies in the affirmative. They are blind to their own sins; as such, they cannot be healed by Christ, and will ultimately die in their sin¹⁰. The prophet Isaiah saw the rejection of Christ by many of the Jews, and described it in just this language:

Isaiah 6:9-10 And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.”

Jesus had not asked the blind man to stand up for Him among men (as He does ask us). Yet the blind man did so, simply because it was right. One of the most remarkable events in the Bible, and we never know the man’s name.

¹⁰ John 8:24.

Gospel of John

Chapter 10

Jesus the Good Shepherd

Following Jesus' conversation on blindness, He begins a sermon on His identity as the Shepherd of God. Jesus will identify Himself with two characters here: He is the Good Shepherd, and He is the Door of the sheep. We already saw the statement by Jesus that before Abraham was, "I AM". Now that powerful name expounded on into seven "I AM" statements by Jesus in the Gospel of John:

- 1. I AM the Bread of Life** - John 6:35
- 2. I AM the Light of the World** - John 8:12
- 3. I AM the Door** - John 10:7
- 4. I AM the Good Shepherd.** - John 10:11
- 5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life** - John 11:25
- 6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life** - John 14:6
- 7. I AM the Vine** - John 15:1

Jesus is the Door

Jesus begins the sermon discussing how those who follow Him are comparable to sheep. Many shepherds will tell you that sheep are fairly intelligent when it comes to identification of the master; they are able to recognize the voice of the one who leads them. Jesus desires that believers be followers; that those who seek Him trust Him to lead them to “good pasture”.

Jesus is the Door, or the Sheep’s Gate, to the good pasture. He is the means through which believers pass on to other things. The Apostle Paul speaks of how it is that the believer passes through Christ in order to have access to God. Jesus Himself tells us later that access to the Father is only through Him.

Ephesians 2:18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus the Shepherd

In the Old Testament, the prophet Zechariah was told by God to act out the work of bad shepherding.

Zechariah 11:15-17 And the LORD said to me, “Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal

those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded."

Jesus wants the followers to understand: no one has ever cared for them as He does. In this way, Jesus is the ultimate Shepherd. He is willing to die for His charges. The word shepherd later finds place in the New Testament church as a synonym for the Elder/Bishop/Overseer's work¹, where it is sometimes translated "Pastor"². Particularly, Peter uses this image and term to compel fellow Elders to look to the example of Christ as Shepherd:

1 Peter 5:1-4 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

¹ Acts 20:28

² Ephesians 4:11

He ends this sermon again discussing the laying down of His life for the sheep. Those who hear are again divided, some claiming he is demon-possessed, others pointing to the miracle of the healing of the blind as evidence of His identity.

Confrontation at Chanukah

If the preceding events happened while Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, we have now moved from late September to December, to what is the only reference in Scripture to the Feast of Dedication, or in Hebrew, Chanukah. The Feast of Dedication came about during the Maccabean revolt, when the Seleucid King Antiochus Epiphanies IV desecrated the temple with the sacrifice of pigs. When the revolt ended, the priests rededicated the Temple, and by tradition, an eight day “feast of lights” was held³. This occurred around 166 BC.

While in Jerusalem Jesus is confronted by the Jews, and they want Him to directly tell them whether He is the Christ. He replies that He has already “told” them by the signs He has performed; they are the works of the Messiah. Those who truly look for the Messiah have “heard” Him, as sheep who hear the Shepherd. They are going to have eternal life, which cannot be taken away from them. We need to understand that Jesus is not saying that eternal life cannot be lost, but that it cannot be taken away; men can choose to abandon eternal life, as some have done in this very Gospel.

³ Josephus, Jewish Wars, i 34

This answer is very much like the one Jesus gave to John the Baptist's disciples in Matthew 11. In that passage, the same question is asked, and in effect, the same answer is given. It is not that Jesus is hesitant to proclaim He is Messiah, but that the things He has done speak stronger than words. If men would not "hear" what He has done, they will not listen to what He says.

Matthew 11:2-5 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Jesus says that He and the Father are One. This statement of a shared identity of God is blasphemy in their eyes; they understand perfectly that this is one more time Jesus is saying He is God. This is the third time in the Gospel of John Jesus claims to be God, and is nearly murdered for this:

John 5:18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 8:58-59 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went

out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Jesus then confuses them by asking a difficult question: why does Scripture say that men are gods?

Psalm 82:6 I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High.

It is an interesting passage; some translations try to make it more palpable by translating the word as "angels", but the Hebrew word is *Elohim*, the name for God in plurality. John told us in chapter one that everyone who believes in Christ has the right to become Children of God⁴; so it is no wonder that we are also told that through Christ we become partakers of the Divine Nature.

2 Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

With this, Jesus departs from Jerusalem, escaping yet one more failed attempt to put him to death. Jesus will only permit them their murder when the time is right.

⁴ John 1:12

Gospel of John

Chapter 11

The Death and Life of Lazarus

The question is often asked: why does God permit evil things to happen to good people? The book of Job is devoted to examining this difficult question, and we know from that book sometimes the answer is that we cannot fathom the reason why bad things happen. Can we agree that “a very bad thing” occurs to some very good people in this portion of the Gospel? If we consider it from the view of the spectators, it seems unreasonable that Jesus would allow it to happen. Yet He did, because there was a greater purpose in letting it occur.

Lazarus is identified only in the Gospel of John. He is the brother of Mary and Martha, who are identified in Luke’s account as followers of Christ. John tells us what we need to know about these women: they are loved by Jesus. But when He hears Lazarus

is sick, He does not go, although he makes plans to enter Judea (this may follow in chapter 12). Jesus' statement about the death of Lazarus tells us that He knew Lazarus would die. He then says He is glad He was not there, so that He could make them believe what is perhaps the most important virtue of Christ: He is life.

The words of Martha are haunting: *"if you had been here, my brother would not have died"*. Perhaps not an accusation, but more of a regret; Martha knows Jesus had the power to stop this; she and her sister had asked Him to come to aid their brother. Yet we and the Apostles know He did not. Jesus then tells her that her brother will live. The reason is that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

We are not surprised that Jesus makes seven life statements in the Gospel of John:

- 1. Everlasting life to those who believe - John 3:15**
- 2. Everlasting life form the Living Water - John 4:14**
- 3. Everlasting life to those who believed, - John 5:21**
- 4. Everlasting life from the Bread of Life - John 6:58**
- 5. Everlasting life by keeping His word - John 8:51**
- 6. Abundant life by Jesus' coming - John 10:10**
- 7. Life after death for those who believe - John 11:25**

This last one seems to be the most powerful: Jesus is life itself, the very promise of eternal life. He embodies life, and His presence here and now will manifest this truth. With His statement to Martha, Martha makes the confession: You are the Christ, the Son of God. There are seven such confessions in this Gospel; we will look at them in chapter 20.

Mary comes next, also saying what Martha had: that if Jesus had been there, this would not have happened. The text then says that Jesus “*groaned in the spirit and was troubled*”. Let us understand here that the meaning of this is not sympathetic sorrow. The word for “groaned” means a noise of anger (the same word used to describe the Apostles reaction to Mary pouring oil on Jesus in Mark 14:5); the “troubled” means angry or upset. His emotion is not in sympathetic sorrow, but in frustration that even now, He is not believed. He is even blamed, perhaps subtly by Mary and Martha, and openly in verse 37 by some of the mourners.

How is it different today, when we suffer? Are we not quick to blame God, even when we should understand it is the consequences of our own actions that we suffer for? Consider the emotional state of our Lord here, when His followers are blaming Him for something He has (at best) permitted in order for greater works; perhaps it is the same when we are the ones to be angry with God for His will.

Angry again, Jesus tells the mourners to move the stone. Should we ask questions why the Resurrection and the Life wishes to move the stone? The disciples do. Jesus tells them that they will see the glory of God. Jesus then prays to the Father (so that they know who raises men from the dead), and then calls Lazarus to come out. And Lazarus came forth from the grave.

The Plot to Kill Jesus

This is an extraordinary event. We are told in chapter 12 that those who are seeing Lazarus are deciding that Jesus is the Christ¹.

¹ John 12:11

The chief priests and the Pharisees call a meeting of the Sanhedrin. There is no debate among them that Jesus is performing miracles; they do not once accuse Him of being a false teacher or prophet. Instead, their concern is that Jesus *may actually be* the Messiah; if so, their belief of the Messiah is that He will restore the Kingdom of Israel with military might. If people believe in Him, the Romans will act.

The Priests owe some great measure of their authority to the Romans. It was the Pharisees who first pleaded with the Roman General Pompey to oppose the Jewish Hasmonean kings, and give them a place in controlling the priesthood². This warfare between the sects would again emerge during the Jewish War in 67 AD. Their place in society was in no small part given to them by the Romans. Jesus of Nazareth could possibly end their place, and even their country.

Caiaphas the High Priest now speaks to the council. Joseph Ben Caiaphas was appointed to the rotating role of High Priest by the prefect prior to Pilate in 18AD. He was married to the daughter of the previous (and sometimes current) High Priest Annas Ben Seth³. It seems that the role of High Priest was rotated by the Romans between their appointee and the Jewish choice of High Priest. The historicity of Caiaphas was solidified even further when in 1990, the ossuary of Caiaphas was unearthed in the modern country of Israel.

Caiaphas says what many have been plotting in their hearts and even half-heartedly attempting for some time: Jesus of

² Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews xiv. 3, § 2

³ Metzger & Coogan Oxford Companion to the Bible, 1993. p 97

Nazareth must die. To provide a noble reason, it is for the preservation of the people. John tells us that this was a prophetic utterance that Caiaphas was unaware he was making.

The other Gospel accounts tell us that the plot intended for Jesus to die after the Passover, for a fear of the people rising to His support if it happened while a number of people were there. However, Jesus is predicting that He will die at the Passover, contrary to their plans. His desire is that many people witness this event.

Matthew 26:1-5 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified." Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

We know that it is Jesus who is correct. Why then do they do exactly what Jesus said they would, contrary to their own plans? John's Gospel does not go into this, but presumes we know that Jesus fulfills the last week by confronting the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians so forcefully that they are left without any words to speak. These confrontations are covered in length in the other Gospel accounts.

Matthew 22:46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

Ultimately, it seems that the real motivator for moving the murder of Jesus of Nazareth to the Passover was the opportunity presented by Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. While not recorded in John, we know from the other accounts that Judas went to the Jews and traded Jesus for the “princely sum” of 30 pieces of silver. Everyone supposes (correctly) that Jesus will come for the feast, and that this would be the time to capture Him.

Gospel of John

Chapter 12

In Bethany

The other Gospel accounts identify the house that Jesus is in as belonging to Simon the Leper. Jesus is gathered here with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. As it is identified as being six days before the Passover, this may be Saturday night. The text says that Mary used an amount (about ½ liter) of pure nard (the other accounts tell us it was so precious as to be contained in an alabaster container) and poured it on Jesus' feet. The other Gospels also tell us it was poured on His head too.

Even more remarkable is that Mary then used her hair to wash His feet. Such an act of humility could only have been done by someone who had much to be grateful for; we are aware of her brother's presence in the house at that moment. Those of us who have lost loved ones know what it would have meant if they were

then returned to us. Thinking of this in those terms, this act of supplication becomes much more credible.

John makes a point to specify Judas Iscariot's wicked intent, when Judas makes the point that this could have been used to aid the poor instead of poured on Jesus' feet. The other accounts tell us that the other Apostles agreed with Judas. To be fair, this was an unusual action; such vials were purchased to wait for the funeral of the buyer, not to be used as a common foot wash. Today we invest a great deal of money into funerary items such as caskets; what if, having purchased a casket in advance, it was then used to make a bonfire?

Ultimately, the importance of this event is that Jesus makes the point that this is not an act done carelessly; He is about to die, and this is the preparation for this event. Does Mary truly know that it is about to occur? The text does not say, but she very well should have, as should all of the Apostles; Jesus has been telling them He will die in Jerusalem for some time¹, and has begun telling them it would be the Passover². We need to understand that Jesus has known this fate all along, and it has been at His control all along.

Entering Jerusalem

Immediately prior to the passages telling us of Jesus entry into Jerusalem, we are told that the people are becoming moved to acknowledge Jesus because of the resurrection of Lazarus, so much

¹ Matthew 16:21

² Matthew 26:2

so that the chief priests seek to kill Lazarus too. The other Gospel accounts do not tell us why the people gather on a Sunday morning to praise the Messiah as He enters, and it might have left us to wonder why Jesus received such a “triumphal” entry; it is John’s Gospel that puts this into context, that the people have heard of this man who raised another man of some notable identity.

As Jesus rides in, we are reminded by John that this was spoken of by Zechariah the prophet:

Zechariah 9:9-10 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'

His mount is not the mighty battle horse that ascribed to Him in Revelation 6:2; instead, this is a lowly animal, two of them to be precise. The prophecy goes on to say He will bring peace to the nations, from the river to the end of the earth. Consider the etymology of “Jerusalem”; *Yarah* means “to flow” (like a river), and *Shaloam* is “peace”. Thus, Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, enters the city of Peace, to die for the sins of the world.

The Gospel accounts describe with different details the same thing: those opposed to Jesus are offended by this event. Luke tells us that they want Jesus to command them to cease calling Him the King; Matthew tells us the entire city was asking to His identity.

Josephus records that as many as a two million people came for the Passover³; many believe this was an overestimate, and it really would be a little less than half this amount⁴. Regardless, this is an extraordinary number of people to be put into a tumult over the coming of one man.

In Jerusalem

Several Grecian Jews come to Philip (his name suggests he too was a Grecian Jew) and ask to see Jesus. Jesus response is to tell His disciples that shortly He must die; there is no longer time for such things. Recall that throughout the book Jesus has told us He must work while there is light; that His time had not yet come. Now the light is fading, and there is no more time. His time has come.

Jesus calls on the Father to glorify Him. This glorification is a reference to the sacrifice, and the accomplishment it will achieve. There is a voice from heaven that proclaims *“I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again”*

There are three times in the New Testament that the Father spoke from Heaven (excepting the symbolic Revelation). Each of those times it is suggested or stated that the voice was manifested not for Jesus, but for the audience. When Jesus was baptized, we are told that the Father manifested Himself invisibly by His voice, and the Holy Spirit manifested Himself similar to a dove. John’s Gospel

³ Josephus, Jewish War, 6.9.3 422-427

⁴ Sanders, EP; Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE - 66 CE (p. 126).

has revealed that this occurred so that John the Baptist would know the identity of the Messiah when he baptized Him⁵.

Matthew 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The second time is at the transfiguration of Christ, when He meets with Elijah and Moses, and discusses His coming death in Jerusalem.

Luke 9:34-35 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"

Now the Father states that He will glorify the name of Jesus. What is in a name? Even today, we use the word "name" as a synonym for authority (such as "stop in the name of the law"). We are told this is true of the name of Jesus:

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

The Father is speaking to the authority that He will give to the name of Jesus, and He calls this passing of authority

⁵ John 1:32-33

“glorification”. The authority given to Jesus had already begun to manifest itself in the works or testimonies given to Him. Consider the testimony of His miracles; these came by the will of God, and are called a manifestation of glory:

John 2:11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

John 11:4 When Jesus heard that, He said, "(Lazarus') sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

John would have us understand how important it is that it was necessary for Jesus to die to receive authority. Jesus tells us in John 17:

John 17:1-2 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him"

When Jesus arises from the grave, we are told that He has been glorified

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Jesus continues in the text to make it clear that He must soon die. The people perceive this as a contradiction, since they are aware that Scripture reveals that Messiah would be forever.

*Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of His government and peace
There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over
His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment
and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal
of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

This is not merely an issue of ignorance; very educated men struggled to reconcile the suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53 with the victorious Messiah of Isaiah nine. We see this dilemma with the Ethiopian Eunuch:

*Acts 8:30-32 So Philip ran to (the Ethiopian Eunuch), and
heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you
understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How
can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to
come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture
which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the
slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He
opened not His mouth.*

It is only we, who have been blessed to live in the last days⁶, that understand the fullness of Messiah, and how He fulfills both of these prophecies at once.

⁶ Hebrews 1:1-2

Jesus points to that this is the moment when the “ruler of this world” will be cast out. Satan is identified as the Ruler of the World:

2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

The power that Satan holds is death. This power is because of sin. Therefore, all who sin are under this power. Jesus will die to overcome this power, thus “binding the strong man” and defeating His power over all who would believe in Him.

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

1 Corinthians 15:56a The sting of death is sin

Revelation 20:1-2 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

Jesus' Last Speech

The second part of chapter 12 finishes the preaching of Jesus. The events from chapter 13 on are on the night of His betrayal leading to His death and resurrection. John points to the prophetic message from Isaiah six we have looked at before which tells us of the refusal of many to hear or see the Christ. The point is to understand that Jesus has performed enough signs, and there have been enough testimonies of His identity, that now anyone who is undecided of His identity is ignorant by a choice to ignore or hide from the truth that is plainly in front of them. Even to this day, those who refuse to hear or believe have sufficient evidence to do so, but have made a choice in their hearts to be blind and deaf to the truth.

Jesus finishes His ministry to all men by telling them that those who will believe on Him will have life, but those who do not are judged by their own words in the last day. Let us not be confused by what Jesus says; He clearly tells us that He has the authority of judgment⁷. At the same time, Jesus tells us that those in

⁷ John 5:22, 9:39

Him have no judgment⁸. We conclude that Jesus is offering to those who believe (and obey⁹) Him the chance to avoid the judgment of God for sin, and instead be judged by Christ for righteousness.

⁸ John 5:24

⁹ John 14:21

Gospel of John

Chapter 13

The Last Supper Discourse

Chapter thirteen begins the second part of the Gospel of John. The events from chapter 13 through chapter 19 are all within the space of hours. The next four chapters are the teachings Jesus gave to the Apostles after the Lord's Supper. The other Gospel writers can only afford to dedicate a few paragraphs here, but John makes this the main event in his Gospel.

The Passover

There is no reason stated why John does not describe the Lord's Supper. We know that John himself has told us that for the sake of space most of the events in the life of Jesus are not found within his book. Recall our understanding too that John's Gospel requires us to have already read the other Gospels. His Gospel is

not so much to provide us with the primer of Christian life, but to give us the necessary events in the life of Christ to believe He is God, Savior of the World.

Was the Passover celebrated on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday? There is a bit of confusion on the date of celebration, as some hold it to be held on Wednesday due to the “three days and three nights” Jesus said He would be in the grave¹. Traditionally we hold the date to be Thursday night, as we are told that Jesus hung on the cross the day prior to the Sabbath². Some hold it to be Friday night this occurred, as this was the night the Passover was observed in the Old Law³. At this moment we will proceed on the presumption it is on Thursday night; later in the book we will examine this in depth.

Passover was a family meal. The head of the household was obligated to speak to the family as to the importance of the day⁴. This makes it a bit more unusual that Jesus requested all of the Apostles share the Passover with Him, seemingly without their families present⁵. As Jesus tells them in the other Gospel accounts, He had desired to observe this with them for some time.

The Passover traditions were complex even in the time of Christ. While not mentioned in the Law of Moses, there were a number of ceremonies included in the Passover by Christ, such as

¹ Matthew 12:40

² Mark 15:42

³ Leviticus 23:5

⁴ Exodus 12:26-27

⁵ Mark 14:17

the four cups⁶ or the *Hallel* song⁷. The traditional Passover contained perhaps two times when there was a ceremonial washing of the hands. We know that it was the tradition of the Jews to do this to prevent defiling themselves.

John makes it clear that it is in the midst of the serving of the Passover that Jesus disrobed and began to wash the feet of the Apostles. It is a shocking action, and when Jesus reaches Peter, Peter refuses to allow Him to do so. We might understand Peter's appalled response if we were to consider attending a religious service and the spokesman of the service takes off his shirt, and begins washing our feet.

Jesus tells Peter that if he does not permit it, he has no part of Him. Peter's response is that if such washing is necessary, then perhaps all of him should be washed. But Jesus tells Peter it is this one part that needs to be cleaned. It reminds us that our duty to Christ is not to offer more than He has asked, or less, but to do that which He has commanded.

Why did Jesus do this? The chapter tells us that it was to teach the Apostles that they were to be servants to others from this time on. Jesus is telling them that their apprenticeship has come to an end; He will tell them He is leaving, and they cannot (immediately) follow. He tells them that He will send another to teach them. They need to know that it is now time for them to rise to the esteem that Jesus held them in when He selected them.

⁶ Luke 22:17-20

⁷ Mark 14:26

The Betrayers

Jesus then makes the statement that He knows one of the 12 will betray Him. All of the Gospels record the confusion that this statement makes. Each of the Apostles seem to be asking Him if He is referring to them personally; here in John's account Peter asks John (John identifies the disciple whom Jesus loved as Himself in John 21:24) to ask Jesus who is the betrayer. Jesus says it is the one with whom He shares the sop. Whether He did so immediately or later is unclear, but Mark makes clear that Judas knew he had been identified. All of the accounts tell us that no one understood that Jesus had identified Judas as His betrayer. Judas leaves, and then Jesus begins His last teaching to His disciples.

Jesus then speaks to His imminent departure. He says that He will teach them now a new commandment, to love one another. Of course, this is not new in the sense that Jesus has spoken of love quite often in the past, such as loving enemies, loving neighbors, etc. But this time, He qualifies it to say that they must love as He loves, and within the next few hours that love will be manifested. Peter asks where He is going, and Jesus tells Him He will not follow. Peter refuses to believe this, and Jesus points to the fact that before dawn Peter will have betrayed Him three times.

Peter has in the past refused to accept the death of the Messiah. We recall in Matthew 16, almost immediately after Peter identifies Jesus as Messiah, that Jesus states He must die in Jerusalem.

Matthew 16:22-56 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this

shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

We note that there have been times when Peter simply spoke because he did not know what else to do⁸. It is easy to judge Peter as for his rash statements from our view of the kingdom, but his statements really reflect a fairly reasonable attitude. Jesus was telling them that He would shortly die, and not merely die, but by the method of execution reserved only for the worst of criminals. A death on the cross seemed, even in the last hours here, to be simply impossible.

⁸ Mark 9:6

Gospel of John

Chapter 14

The Master Must Soon Depart

The next three chapters are the teachings of Jesus to the Apostles. Some of these things are meant for the Apostles only, and some are meant for all believers. We can see this in chapter 17, when Jesus prays both for His Apostles and then for all believers.

Jesus: The True and Living Way

Jesus again tells the disciples that He is leaving for the Father's abode. Thomas asks how they will be able to follow, and Jesus replies that He Himself is the way to get to the father, He is the truth of the Father, and that He is the life of the Father.

This statement is one of several that Jesus makes that we might call absolute statements. Such a statement leaves no room for question or doubt: a person can only get to God in Heaven if they

are in Jesus Christ. The Apostles would later teach this by saying that there is no other name given in which someone can be saved¹. The question is asked many times about the noble infidel, the good atheist, etc. The answer here is the answer to all: no salvation apart from Jesus Christ.

Philip now asks about the Father. Recall in chapter one we were told that the Father cannot be seen by men, but is seen through Jesus Christ. This is the Jesus' response to Philip. If one has seen (or more accurately, understood) Jesus Christ, they know the Father.

Finally, Jesus lets the Apostles know that from here (actually, from His ascension) on, they have a special ability to ask of Him and He will pass it to the Father. Jesus will say this again in 16:26; to ask anything in His name (authority) and it is presented to the Father. We often consider this passing when praying, and sometimes conclude our prayer with the expression "In Jesus' Name". Do we fully understand the meaning here? It is not merely a "stamp" necessary on prayers, as though it is postage. This is the means of mediation. Merely saying "in Jesus name" is insufficient cause to be heard; we must be speaking to God in Jesus' authority. We must be in Christ, for that mediation to work.

What is a mediator? We are told that Jesus is a mediator between God and man². In order for someone to mediate, they must be approachable to both parties. For example, Moses mediated between Israel and Pharaoh for the release of the Israelites. He could approach Pharaoh as an equal, as he too was a child of Pharaoh, an Egyptian. His name was even Egyptian (if it was

¹ Acts 4:12

² | Timothy 5:12

Ramses II of Thutmose II, both even shared their names with Moses). Too, he was also an Israelite, with an Israelite name. He could engage both parties as an equal.

What Jesus offers is mediation between God and Man. He is unique in all of history in that only He could approach both parties as an equal. This perhaps is why we must believe in both a human nature of Christ, and a divine nature of Christ; otherwise, He could not mediate between God and man.

Philippians 2:6-7 (Jesus Christ) being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

John 5:18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

Hebrews 2:14a, 17 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, (Jesus Christ) Himself likewise shared in the same Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

The mediation of Christ is when we dwell in Him, or as John elsewhere says, abide in the doctrine of Christ³. It makes sense then

³ || John 9

why God “cannot here sinners”⁴; if Christ is the mediator of that ability, and a sinner is by definition one who is not in Christ, then Christ does not mediate for all men. Hence the judgment John has repeatedly spoken of falls upon the one outside of Christ. Jesus Christ is the only way to have access to the Father.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

In the course of speaking Jesus will make multiple promises of sending someone once He has departed. The One is identified as the Holy Spirit, the third person of God. Jesus calls Him the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is clear to identify the Holy Spirit as a Person rather than a power; in the next three chapters we find one of the more powerful testimonies as to the identity of the Holy Spirit.

The promise of the Holy Spirit has multiple qualifications. First, He cannot come until Jesus has departed the earth. Second, He will not be received by the world. Finally, He will be received only by the Apostles. The reception occurs in limited release in John 20:22, but the true baptism that was promised was received on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. This baptism was not for all believers, but limited to the Apostles only. This can be seen both in the context of the promises here in John, as well as the means the Holy Spirit was manifested in Acts.

*Acts 2:3-4 Then there appeared to them divided tongues,
as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all*

⁴ John 9:31

filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 10:46-47 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

That the Holy Spirit will submit to Jesus does not mean He is less than God; Jesus states in 16:15 that this is the same as His submission to the Father. The Holy Spirit's purpose will be to bring to the minds of the Apostles what Jesus has taught them; the great commission given in Matthew 28 was to teach the world what Jesus had taught the Apostles. As the Apostles manifested the Holy Spirit, they inscribed the teachings of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Thus, their reception of the Holy Spirit, and His work of teaching us all things pertaining to Christ, is accomplished even now by the medium of the Bible, the Inspired Word of Truth. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is today manifested to us in the Bible.

2 Peter 1:20-21 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who

have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven--things which angels desire to look into.

The promise of the Holy Spirit finishes in chapter 16, when Jesus tells the Apostles that the Holy Spirit would reveal everything to them. This leaves no room to believe that other men would need to come after the Apostles, since the work of the Spirit in them was to reveal everything, so that the world would stand either convicted or saved. It then becomes clear what is meant when the inspired writers, towards the end of the Apostle's time on earth, spoke in terms of a Gospel finished and fully delivered to men.

2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Gospel of John

Chapter 15

I am the Vine

Jesus uses a vine as an analogy of His person. He is linked to each believer, and the analogy follows that if we are severed from Him, we die. Verse five makes it clear this is not speaking about churches, as many denominations have said to justify divisions in ideology. This also sets up an expectation: the branches must bear fruit or perish.

There are expectations of Christians. Jesus will make clear that He expects obedience to His commandments. He is saying here that He expects our faith to yield fruit. Anyone who would say that once we are in Christ we cannot be lost is not grasping the clear message here: for failing to bear fruit, Jesus will remove you from His grace.

What is the fruit of which Jesus speaks? The Apostle Paul wrote about the spiritual fruits of faithfulness, and the Apostle Peter spoke of Christian growth; both were really speaking to the expectation of spiritual maturity if we abide in Christ

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

2 Peter 1:5-8 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Commandment of Love

We are drawn again to the Commandment of Love. To the senses of the unspiritual, love may not seem like a difficult commandment. However, to the spiritually minded, love is the ultimate and sometimes most difficult commandment. Love is not the beginning of spiritual maturity, it is the end. Peter's path to spiritual maturity above culminates with love; one must learn other things in order to reach the Christian *agapeo* love. In Christianity, love is not an emotion, but action.

Love can be defined in this single word: sacrifice. Here Jesus states to His disciples that there is no greater love than to lay down our life for another. Elsewhere, Jesus tells His disciples to love their neighbor as themselves¹, and even to love our enemy². Jesus calls His followers to the simple yet profoundly unnatural, nearly impossible task of loving others as He has loved us.

Romans 5:7-8 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Perhaps it is with this imagery of loving enemies that Jesus goes on to explain that as His disciples, the world is going to hate the believer. This is strong language that we must believe as a straightforward truth: the world hates the believer. We might be tempted to say this is a generalization, or exaggeration, but we need to understand that John records the use of the “world” with two ideas: the “world” that is all men, such as found in John 3:16, or the “world” that is all things unspiritual. This is found in John’s definition in another book:

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the

¹ Mark 12:31

² Matthew 5:44

Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

That which is of the unspiritual “world”, or those people who are given over to that world, will hate spiritual things. Not the mental or emotional determination to despise, but will stand opposed in every way naturally, perhaps unwittingly. Later the Apostle Paul would tell Timothy:

II Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Upon a believer there is a great persecution in being opposed by men; in being in the smallest of minorities, in taking positions on subjects that are immensely unpopular. Jesus is clear: the believer will be hated because of their love for Christ. If we consider this in depth, we can perceive how Jesus knew He would die, even if it were not a matter of fore-knowledge. Because He would live His life as the very identity of spiritual righteousness, the world would necessarily hate Him to His death.

Gospel of John

Chapter 16

The Apostle's Directives Concluded

Jesus continues to expound on the things He has previously told us. We know that we will be persecuted as Christians; Jesus points out that those doing so may think that they are in the moral right. We cannot help but to think of the Apostle Paul, who persecuted the way to death¹ believing it was the will of God.

Jesus also returns to the Holy Spirit's work with the Apostles. He makes it clear that the Holy Spirit will be the force that awakens the world to the mind of God; men will stand either convicted or justified because of the Holy Spirit's work in them. He also makes it clear that the Holy Spirit will not be giving them a new doctrine, but the one that Jesus has been teaching them. Even

¹ Acts 22:4

the things that the Holy Spirit says that Jesus did not, the Holy Spirit is saying for Jesus.

Grief into Joy

As we see and can understand, the Apostles are becoming more and more alarmed by the tone and content of this lesson. Jesus is leaving them, and they will not be allowed to follow. Jesus has sent them away before, but they were always reunited. If Jesus is the Messiah, His great work, in their mind, of restoring the kingdom of Israel has yet to be done. Imagine, as a comparison, that we have a man who promises to build a great business in our town. We invest much money and time with him. One night he tells us he is soon leaving, and will not be back. To the Apostles credit, they do not consider that Jesus has defrauded them, but are simply confused.

Jesus compares this to the pains of birth. We all can understand the great pain of giving birth, but then the great joy of having a child. So it will be for the disciples. John may well be using this imagery again in Revelation 12:2, as he describes the birth of the church.

Jesus tells them it is simple: He would soon be gone, and they would mourn Him. Worse, the world, that which hates the believer, will rejoice. But then there will come again joy, and it will remain forever. Jesus is of course speaking of His death the next day. He tells them again that the greatest joy will be because they have received the ability to call on God in His name. Perhaps we might consider what it would be like for Jesus to ask something of His Father. Would the Father say no? They are one, so they could

not. Now Jesus says that if a believer asks, it is as though Jesus asks, if it is in His name. This makes us think that then anything we ask must be granted; this is true, but we must see that Jesus too would never ask anything that was not the Father's will. So too is it with a believer.

This is the end conversation with the Apostles. It seems from what Jesus said that there is more He either personally desired to say, or needed to say, that would have to be communicated by the Holy Spirit. However, the time has now arrived. Jesus will pray in the next chapter, and then depart for the Garden of Gethsemane, where He will be arrested.

Gospel of John

Chapter 17

The Prayer of Jesus of Nazareth

A very complicated event throughout all of the Gospels is the record of Jesus in prayer. It is complicated considering that Jesus repeatedly identifies Himself as God. Many who deny the deity of Jesus Christ point to these prayers as proof of His separate nature. There is no question that these events do demonstrate a separation between the Father and Son; however, the problem that such face in their ideology are the many times where Jesus makes clear that He is the Father, and the Father is in Him.

The Gospel of John does not spend the time revealing the prayers of Christ as the other Gospels do. Chapter 17 is the only example; it is not likely that this is the same prayer that was offered in the Garden of Gethsemane, as John does not have Jesus leaving for the Mount of Olives until after this prayer in chapter 18.

Jesus, the Son of God, spent a considerable amount of time in prayer. Sometimes, this was done with no one around¹. Other times, it was done with Apostles or even children present. Jesus did not pray merely to be observed by us, but because He needed prayer to strengthen Himself. He prayed alone all night before He appointed the 12 Apostles²; He was praying when He was transfigured³.

Jesus Prays for Himself

We know from the other Gospel accounts that when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane that He prayed for Himself:

Mark 14:35-36 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

While Jesus often spoke of the desire to be glorified, He also spoke of the desire not to experience what would be suffered. Perhaps we see in this the pains of childbirth; the desire of the mother to end her pregnancy and be blessed with a child, contrasted with the desire not to go through the birthing process.

¹ Matthew 14:23

² Luke 6:12

³ Luke 9:29

In chapter 17 Jesus' prayer points to the purpose of His coming. When He is glorified, He will have authority over all people. In the Old Testament, the prophets foretold many times that Messiah's authority would not be limited to Israel alone, but would cover the world;

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Many have misunderstood these statements, seeing the kingdom as a literal kingdom (Jesus well explain to Pilate the error of that idea). As His kingdom is spiritual, the dominion is spiritual as well. Jesus will remove the Old Law which divided men (by legally creating the Jew and Gentile), so that in the eyes of God, no nation is favored above another. All men will be under one Law, the Royal Law, the Law of Liberty, the Law of Christ.

Ephesians 2:14-15 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

James 2:12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Jesus Prays for the Apostles

As mentioned before, the prayer separates the work of the Apostles from all believers. As the Holy Spirit was promised uniquely to the Apostles, so they are remembered uniquely by Christ. Jesus says that they belonged to the Father before they were His; we see this in the fact that these were Godly men prior to their calling. They were disciples of John the Baptist, or men who had reputations as “true Israelites”⁴

Ultimately, these men are ready to be the foundations of the church Jesus would build by being the Lamb of God. They believe Jesus is the Christ, He is the Son of God. They are not worldly; that is, they are not carnally minded, but spiritual seekers. Jesus says that He does not wish for them to be removed from the world; many have seen the admonitions of Scripture as a command to withdraw ourselves into communes, monasteries, or other such closed societies. Yet we know that we cannot be a city on a hill, a light that shines among men to glorify the Father if we do that. Jesus does not desire His believers to be removed from the world, for we are the very light that is Christ to the world now.

Jesus asks the Father to sanctify them by the Word of Truth. The word “sanctify” means to make holy; we are often reluctant to identify men as holy, yet here Jesus says that the impact of the Word of God is that it can make men holy.

⁴ John 1:47

Jesus Prays for All Believers

In the third part of His prayer, Jesus prays for the unity of all believers. The means to achieve unity is a matter of dispute today; some believe that unity is achieved by compromising ideas or doctrines, or coming together with the lowest common denominator. This is not at all the unity spoken of by Jesus or the Apostles. Instead, Jesus expresses the desire that believers be one with God in Christ as Jesus was one with the Father. This unity is expressed throughout this Gospel as being achieved by the submission of Jesus to the Father, and the obedience of Jesus. Therefore, the only unity that believers can have is because of our submission and obedience to Jesus Christ. This is called “*fellowship*”

In the New Testament, it is the Apostle John who provides the simplest but most concrete definition of the word fellowship. In I John 1, he describes the condition of believers who “*walk in the light*” as Jesus did as being in the condition of fellowship. Fellowship is not a work or a task, it is not something we can offer or revoke. Fellowship is a condition. It could be translated as “brotherhood”, the condition of being a brother.

1 John 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Jesus concludes the prayer with the expression of the desire for the love of God to be given to men. This love was shown by God in the gift of His Son. It is returned to God in the obedience to the commandments He has given us.

1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

It is personally overwhelming to think that as Jesus was looking to the death on the cross, just hours away then, He took the time to pray for me.

Gospel of John

Chapter 18

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

What is the “Gospel”? Throughout the New Testament the word, which means “good news”, is used to portray the message of hope in Jesus Christ. But it is the Apostle Paul who gives us a very specific definition in I Corinthians 15:

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

Chapter 18 begins the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is this record that makes the book of John one of the four Gospels, or accounts, of the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God.

Arrest of Jesus of Nazareth

It is in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus is arrested by soldiers of the High Priest. When Jesus sees them, He asks whom they are seeking. When they reply Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus answers "I am". The additional word "he" is not in the text, but only "I am". It is the same words used by Jesus to proclaim His Divine Identity in John 8:58. Thus, when these words are said, the men there fall to the ground, certainly unwillingly, perhaps at the very power of the Name of God.

Jesus tells the guards again His identity, and that the others (the Apostles) should be released. It seems that the disciples have been somewhat prepared for a physical conflict; Luke tells us that they had earlier that night armed themselves with two swords¹. When the guards arrive, Peter attacks, striking a servant named Malchus. This is a critical point, perhaps one that the Apostles have been waiting for; when the battle to establish the Messiah begins. And yet, precisely the opposite happens. Jesus orders them to cease their fighting; He tells them that if it was meant for strength of arms to overcome the world, He would call forth legions of angels.

¹ Luke 22:38

Instead, He heals the injured servant², and meekly submits to the arrest by the Temple Guards.

Since the Apostles were prepared to fight, and even raised their weapons to strike, we cannot say that they were fearful of the armed force before them. All of the Gospel accounts agree that it was after Jesus surrendered Himself to the guards that they all fled. Perhaps we can see their dismay; they have been with this Rabbi for years, preparing for great things with Him, and He simply surrenders to the enemy without a fight. He even insists that His own do not fight, and even aids the enemy.

Matthew 26:56 But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Peter's Betrayal

Peter and John follow Jesus in secret, and are able ultimately to gain access to the home of Annas. Interspersed in the trial record is the account of Peter's denial of Christ. All of the Gospel accounts record this, as well as the abandonment of Jesus by all of the Apostles. Peter's betrayal is the most ironic, as John and the other Gospel writers tell us that Peter made it a clear point that he would never fail. It is John's Gospel that contains what seems to be an epilogue to this event in chapter 21. Peter's refusal to acknowledge Christ is a testament to our pride going before our fall. We are

² Luke 22:51

reminded repeatedly that when we believe we cannot fail, we are quite likely to do just that.

Trials of Jesus of Nazareth

When we examine the proceedings of the events in the time between His arrest and His death, we find the most remarkable miscarriage of justice in history. As the events in all of the accounts play out, here is the series of events:

1. Jesus is taken to Annas for trial
2. Jesus is taken to Caiaphas for trial
3. Jesus is taken to Pilate for trial
4. Jesus is taken to Herod for trial
5. Jesus is taken back to Pilate for trial

What is remarkable is that much of the shuffling of the multiple trials is caused by the absence of guilt. Five times Jesus is proclaimed innocent by the Roman judges. No one is able to truly find guilt, but needing to do so, they each pass Jesus along to another. Jesus was abused at each of these trials. And yet, without a word, the Son of God bore all of these things, as it was foretold.

Isaiah 53:7-8 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For

He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

The Jewish Trials

The illegality of the Jewish trial of Jesus is blatant. The Law of Moses forbade false witnesses in the Ten Commandments³, and it also dictated that there must be two or more witnesses to verify the truth⁴. Yet Jesus is arrested, and according to the other Gospel account, witnesses had to be found and ultimately fabricated after His arrest. The Law required that the witnesses themselves be the first to strike the accused when guilt was established⁵, and that the manner of death be stoning⁶. Finally, it was a sin to permit a mob to act in a trial⁷, and yet the Jewish leaders incited the crowds to accomplish just that⁸.

It is also remarkable to note the illegality of the Jewish portions of the trial by their own standards. While there is no precise codification in the first century of Jewish trials, we presume that the *Mishnah Sanhedrin* was the legal structure in effect. The Mishnah was the compiled traditions and practices of the Rabbis

³ Exodus 20:7

⁴ Deuteronomy 17:6

⁵ Deuteronomy 17:7

⁶ Deuteronomy 17:5

⁷ Exodus 23:2

⁸ Matthew 27:20

from before the time of Christ until after the temple was destroyed. It was written down sometime after the rebellions of 132AD in fear that it would be forgotten if it remained oral. These are the “traditions of the elders” that are so often referenced in the New Testament⁹. For absence of a better source, we will presume that these are the rules that the Sanhedrin applied for trial; these are the rules of court that they themselves created, and they themselves broke here.

First, the Sanhedrin tradition was for all capital offense trials to occur in daylight¹⁰. Yet here Jesus is arrested and tried by the leaders in darkness. We cannot miss that Jesus, who has been speaking much about the works of darkness, and His work while there is light, would then make this arrest in darkness a metaphor for their greater evil.

Luke 22:53 But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Second, the Sanhedrin tradition was that a trial of a false prophet could only occur with the presence of the full council, called the Greater Sanhedrin¹¹. It is apparent that since the entirety of the Sanhedrin would prosecute Jesus, but we know that the Sanhedrin was in fact split as to the identity of Jesus, that likely this was not a Greater Sanhedrin but a council called the Lesser Sanhedrin.

⁹ Mark 7:3

¹⁰ Mishna, Sanhedrin 4.1

¹¹ Mishna, Sanhedrin 1.5

Third, the reaching of a verdict was never to occur at the same time in a capital matter, but it was required that a day space between them. Therefore, it was not legal to adjudicate capital offenses before a feast or a Sabbath¹².

Fourth, the acceptance of the testimony of the witnesses was not according to procedure. Again, the Mishna speaks to witness verification: *“Witnesses were examined by seven queries: In what Sabbatic period? In what year? In what month? On what day of the month? On what day? At what hour? and, Where?”*¹³ The false witnesses in this trial were arranged, and had no verification of their accuracy.

Finally, when a death sentence was reached, there was only a few authorized methods of execution: stoning, decapitation, or being burned¹⁴.

The Gospel accounts together tell us that there was some difficulty in making accusations against Jesus. Jesus Himself repeatedly asked the judges to solicit their witnesses from among those who heard Him teach. How frustrating would it be if it were us falsely accused, and nearly anyone could testify on our behalf of what we really said, but the judges refuse to permit any other witnesses beyond their own.

Jesus is moved from the residence of Annas to the residence of Annas’ son-in-law Caiaphas. It is here that Jesus ceases to speak or answer the charges; truly, what would be the point? Ultimately,

¹² Mishna, Sanhedrin 4.1

¹³ Mishna, Sanhedrin 5.1

¹⁴ Mishna, Sanhedrin 6.1

two false witnesses are found, willing to perjure themselves. They manipulate what John told us Jesus had said:

Jesus Said: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."¹⁵ The False Witnesses said: "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

Even this, to a court which was predisposed to guilt and execution, struggles to make a conviction on this charge. However, the High Priest puts Jesus under oath, based on a rule found in the Old Testament. Under the oath, Jesus confirms what they want Him to say: He is the Son of God.

Leviticus 5:1 'If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter -if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.

Matthew 26:62-64 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

¹⁵ John 2:19

Thus, with this last confession, the need for witnesses in the mind of the judges is no longer necessary. They pronounce guilt on Jesus.

Why is it that the High Priests and Sanhedrin do not carry out the execution of Jesus by stoning themselves? There are a number of possible answers from Scripture; for one, the High Priests feared the people¹⁶, and executing Jesus by stoning would certainly bring reproach on them for their actions. They needed someone to carry this out whose love or hate was irrelevant; someone with both the power to end life, and the power to resist any anger that might arise from this. Even more likely is that this is a reflection of their hate for Jesus. Stoning would be a quick execution, while the Roman methods could be much crueler. This possibility becomes even more likely when we consider that the Romans had many means of execution available to them, but that it is the Jews who demand it be crucifixion.

We know that both John the Baptist¹⁷ and the Apostle James¹⁸ were beheaded by the Romans; crucifixion is described by the Romans as the ultimate penalty for only the most extreme crimes. The Romans saw crucifixion as “*the extreme punishment*”¹⁹, at the top of the list of execution methods available for use. Applying it to someone whose “crime” was purely religious, with no Roman law broken, would be most unlikely. However, the Jewish leaders

¹⁶ Luke 22:11, Mark 11:18

¹⁷ Matthew 14:10

¹⁸ Acts 12:2 (put to death by the sword)

¹⁹ Cicero, Against Verres, 2.5.168

will manipulate the circumstances to the point that the Roman Governor, Pilate, will seem to have no choice.

The Roman Trials

The lengthy process of putting Jesus through trial by the Romans is not fully covered in any single Gospel. To be clear, there is no disagreement among them as to the events, but there is such much to record, that all of the Gospel writers focus on the point, not the events themselves. The point is that Jesus was unjustly accused, unjustly convicted, and unjustly executed by a series of circumstances that a few men manipulated.

John does not include the intermission of Pilate's trial with Herod's interrogation. It is Luke who covers that event, and the fundamental importance is that it demonstrates that neither of the rulers of the Romans knew what to do with Jesus, or how to handle the situation. That Jesus spoke not at all to Herod (whom He had earlier called a "fox"²⁰) may suggest that Herod had neither part nor authority in this matter; Jesus will tell Pilate that he has the



²⁰ Luke 13:32

authority in this God gave him.

At dawn, Jesus is brought to the governor, Pontius Pilate. In 1961, a stone was found in Caesarea that mentioned Pilate as Prefect of Judea.²¹

Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor (called both the Prefect and Procurator) of Judea from 26AD to 37AD. There are several references to Pilate outside of the Bible. Josephus tells us that when he arrived in Jerusalem, he nearly instigated a revolt by permitting the Roman Soldiers to bring their standards into the city, which on top bore eagles, an emblem of the Roman god Mars²². The Jewish Scholar Philo, a contemporary of Josephus, records a similar offense by Pilate with golden shields covered with graven images²³. Josephus also records that Pilate massacred a group of Jews who protested when he used funds from the temple to build an aqueduct²⁴. While these historians are sometimes questionable in their historicity, it is Jesus who points to Pilate's cruel ruling style in Luke's Gospel:

Luke 13:1-3 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such

²¹ Photograph by Marion Doss, 2007 – Flickr; with permission

²² Josephus, Jewish War 2.9.2-4

²³ Philo, On The Embassy of Gaius Book XXXVIII 299-305

²⁴ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18.3.2

things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

Jesus may well be describing the event Josephus suggested. Regardless, we now see that Pilate is a cruel tyrant, who is concerned with his authority above his fairness.

According to Josephus, Pilate was dismissed from his position by the Roman Governor Vitellius in 36AD after an assault on some Samaritans attempting to worship on Mount Gerizim. What is interesting to note is that Vitellius also removed Caiaphas from the High Priest office at the same time²⁵. Perhaps what this suggests is that Caiaphas and Pilate worked together on issues, and it might suggest why Caiaphas was confident to bring Jesus before Pilate.

We presume that John's account of these events encompasses both times Jesus appeared before Pilate. Pilate was residing in Herod's Palace, which may have sat roughly on the location of Solomon's Palace, overlooking the Temple. Pilate's request is to know the charges against Jesus, to which the Jews present give the non-answer that Jesus would not be there if He were not a criminal. It becomes clear that there is no crime that Jesus has committed that Pilate (or Herod) had any jurisdiction over. As a later Achaian Proconsul would do²⁶, Pilate dismisses them to handle the punishment on their own. However, the Jews refuse, stating that they have no legal right to execute Jesus, which is what their law demands. Again, we are struck by the falsity of this statement. They

²⁵ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18.4.2

²⁶ Acts 18:14

have already attempted to put Jesus to death several times²⁷. They had no problem putting Stephen to death five years from this point. Ultimately, Pilate even gives them permission to crucify Jesus themselves. However, this is not what they desire; they want the Romans to be the ones that actually execute Jesus. There is some debate that the Jews here are referring to the absence of a “King of the Jews”, as Herod had identified himself, or later Herod Agrippa would be called, in which case there was some approval needed to act out the penalty. But with Pilate authorizing them to continue, and their refusal, it is clear that the legal concern is not valid; they desire Jesus to be murdered by the Romans for political ones.

Pilate and Jesus then begin a dialogue, one of the most remarkable in the entire Gospel. Pilate the Tyrant and the Man accused of being the King of the Jews begin to discuss the authority of kings, and the meaning of Truth. This title, “King of the Jews” was a specific title that, as mentioned before, had once belonged to Herod the Great. In Herod’s case, it had been bestowed on him by the Roman Senate in 37BC²⁸. We can see why Herod was so concerned in Matthew’s Gospel when a group of Chaldean emissaries arrive to honor the one born “King of the Jews”. Jesus would be born to this title, and after birth His life was in jeopardy because of this title, and ultimately would die for the crime of holding this title.

Pilate is perplexed that the Jews do not wish to elevate this Man as “King of the Jews”, but wish to execute Him. Jesus had a genealogical right to identify Himself as heir to the throne of

²⁷ John 8:39, John 10:31

²⁸ Josephus, Jewish War, 1.14.4

David²⁹, but instead makes clear that His Kingdom was not one in competition with Rome, but instead was a spiritual authority.

Pilate tries repeatedly to release Jesus. We are told that he perceives that the issue here is not legal, but was envy³⁰. Too, we might wish to understand that the penalty of crucifixion was one not to be engaged in lightly; Roman rulers had been removed (and one even crucified himself³¹) for invoking the extreme penalty without merit. Finally, let us not miss that some of this is consideration that Pilate may be believing that Jesus is something more than a mere man, as evidenced by his fear in John 19:8, or the message he received from his wife in Matthew 27:19. Likely, all of the above were on his mind, and we see Pilate attempting with several different ploys to release Jesus and still appease the Jews. Let us consider them as follows:

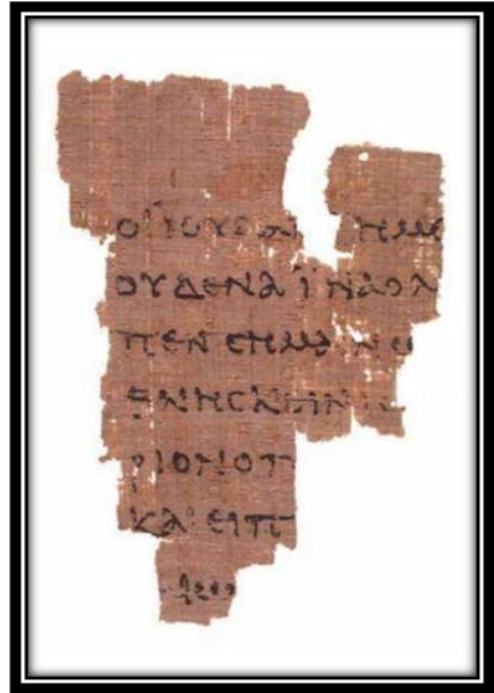
1. He sends Jesus to Herod for trial (Luke 23:6)
2. He demands the Jews try Jesus by their own laws
3. He offers to release Jesus according to custom
4. He makes the counter-offer to release Barabbas instead
5. He abuses Jesus as “King of the Jews”, and tells them
Jesus is only a man
6. He orders the Jews to crucify Jesus
7. He made other unrecorded attempts to release Jesus (John 19:12)

²⁹ Matthew 1:1

³⁰ Mark 15:10

³¹ Cicero, Against Verres 2.5.165

“What is truth” is Pilate’s reply to his interrogation of Jesus. Of course, we know that in some ways John is the Gospel of Truth, as it is discussed more often in this Gospel than the others combined, or anywhere in the entirety of the Bible. Jesus Himself is Truth, and Pilate is looking into Truth and being humiliated. Some have suggested that Pilate



walks out before Jesus could answer, because perhaps he could not bear the answer. On a historical note, the oldest fragment from the New Testament, dating to the first century AD, is the fragment of this passage³².

Now we are introduced to the criminal Barabbas. Barabbas has the distinction of being mentioned in all of the Gospel accounts. Why is he of such importance? Let us consider that first, he demonstrates the level of animosity against Christ. What seems to occur is that Pilate offers to release Jesus, which is rejected. He then names a “notorious” criminal named Barabbas; if we put all four

³² Photo courtesy of John Rylands University Library

Gospel accounts together, we find that Barabbas is a thief, a murderer and an insurrectionist. He is the very face of the type of criminal that no one would desire to be released. In a sense, Pilate has offered a choice that is really not a choice; free the man who has only offended your sense of religious piety, or free the dangerous criminal. No one in their right mind would choose the later, the “Charles Manson” of their community. And yet, to what must have been Pilate’s shock, they choose Barabbas.

Perhaps there is a spiritual allegory in Barabbas too that should not be missed; that this man was condemned (presumably to die, possibly even with the other two criminals that morning), but was released, and someone else died in his place.

1 Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

Ultimately, we see that even in his name there is a message to us. “Bar” is the Aramaic word for “Son”; “Abba” is the Aramaic for “Father”. Those who have been freed by the sacrifice of Christ are known too by the name “Bar-Abba”

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

All of the things that have worked in place here to bring Jesus to trial, and to ultimately have Him executed, could be summed up in the unique Proverb of the seven things God hates:

Proverbs 6:16-19 These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

Perhaps long ago the prophets looked into the very heart of the murderers of the Son of God, and therein found the darkest potential of the human race.

Gospel of John

Chapter 19

The Roman Trial Concludes

The chapter breaks in the middle of the trial with Pilate. This scene begins with Pilate making a mockery out of Jesus' identity as King of the Jews. This derision is seen in physical abuse, a robe of purple, and a crown of thorns. When Pilate then brings out Jesus, he points to Him (whom he has found not fault) and proclaims "here is the man". Pilate likely seeks to satisfy the growing crowd's blood-lust by humiliating Jesus in manner that makes Jesus seem ridiculous; perhaps Pilate thinks that by mocking Jesus as a king, and telling everyone He is clearly only a man, they will themselves be satisfied and Jesus is no longer a threat. However, now the entire crowd, as worked by the Jewish Elders, will accept only one outcome: crucifixion.

Here too we see Pilate give the authority to the Jews to crucify Christ. It was not unheard of for Jews to crucify others; one record suggests a number of Pharisees were crucified by the ruling Sadducees and Hellenistic Jews during the Hasmonean period¹. This offer is rejected by the Jews, who claim Jesus must die for the crime of being the Son of God.

This statement frightens Pilate, who has lost control of this situation. He returns and asks Jesus where He is from. Jesus is finished speaking with Pilate, as recorded in the other Gospels. Pilate pleads with Jesus to respond, attempting to gain control over Jesus by asserting his authority of life and death in this matter. Jesus tells Pilate a most frightening truth: the authority over life and death was given to him by the Father. This terrifying revelation is followed with a statement of guilt: these who turned Him over to Pilate were guilty of the greater sin. This is not an absolution of Pilate, who stands guilty of many things.

When Pilate presents himself again, the Jews make the most dramatic argument in their case: if Pilate supports Jesus, he necessarily opposes Caesar. Pilate, despite the reputation of viciousness, is subjugated by his fear. He comes to the seat of judgment (it is here that Matthew records Pilate receiving word from his wife to avoid dealing with “that just Man”²). The exact location of “Gabbatha” is unknown, but we presume it was the location that official edicts of judgment were given, perhaps similar in nature to the judgment seat of Acts 18:12. With one last attempt

¹ Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, 13.14.2

² Matthew 27:19

to identify Jesus as someone they should revere, Pilate is placed in the predicament of being the less loyal of Romans to these Jews. They shout that they have no king but Caesar; a remarkable act of blasphemy³. Pilate now turns Jesus over to his own soldiers to be taken for crucifixion.

It is remarkable to think that it has only been about six hours since this all began. In that time: Jesus is passed between three courts; Jesus is pronounced innocent five times; Jesus is beaten/scourged at least four times; Jesus is verbally abused at least three times. Once again, the miscarriage of justice is outrageous.

One final act of defiance on the part of Pilate is to signify the crime for which Jesus would die. This posting was called the *Titulus*; we presume that on either side of Jesus the *tituli* would read "thievery". The cross on which Jesus would be hung bore the crime in three languages (Latin, Greek and Hebrew), so that no one would mis-understand, regardless of their nationality. The Jews are offended, as this is an official recognition of Jesus' authority, and seek to have it changed. Pilate, in contrast with the rest of his decisions, stands firm.

Let us understand that it is not one party, the Jews or the Romans, that John places guilt on; it is both. The death of Jesus was begun in envy, and ended with cowardice.

The Crucifixion

Jesus is taken to the execution place, which John tells us is called the Skull, or Golgotha. None of the passages indicate that it

³ | Samuel 8:7

was a hill, as commonly called. It must have been outside of Jerusalem proper, in a place where the pilgrims would pass by going into Jerusalem.

Here we must note that the record of events from all four Gospels is tremendous; it is often suggested that there is a fault in this, but we can see that if this is the most important event in history (as a Christian believes it to be), then the events recorded were too numerous to be contained in one chronicle. In addition to what is recorded in John, the other accounts tell us that there was an earthquake, that Saints arose from their tombs and later appeared in the city, that the Temple veil was split from top to bottom, that Simon of Cyrene carried the cross at least some of the way, that the two thieves at first mocked Jesus, but then one of them made the great confession, and that darkness was on all of the land from noon until three.

John is careful to tell us this is the Day of Preparation, and that it is the sixth hour. There is some confusion as to the ceremonies going on in Jerusalem at this time. Some of this is because both the Gospel writers and even contemporary writers merged the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover, calling them both Passover at times. Because of the number of people coming to Jerusalem for Passover and the Passover week/Feast of Unleavened Bread, a tradition may have arisen from events in the time of Hezekiah⁴. In that time, the priests are recorded to have begun butchering the sheep for the Passover.

⁴ II Chronicles 29-30

2 Chronicles 30:17 For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone who was not clean, to sanctify them to the LORD.

In the time of Christ, the priests were still butchering the lambs. During the reign of Nero, the Roman Governor Gallus ordered a census of Jerusalem by counting the sheep slaughtered in the Passover; the Priests came up with the number 256,500⁵. This may have been alleviated by the likelihood that Judeans and Galileans (both Jews) observed the Passover on different days. According to the Mishnah, the Galileans counted the day before the Passover as the preparation, while the Judeans counted the day of the Passover as a day of preparation⁶. Thus, Jesus and other Galileans may have been celebrating on Thursday night what the Judeans were celebrating Friday night.

There is another record which bears some consideration. The Jewish theologian Philo, writing a few years after Jesus' death, made the statement that the slaughter of the lambs began at noon⁷. As Jesus, the Lamb of God is hung on the cross to die, the slaughter of the Passover lambs may have begun in the Temple.

John also mentions the fulfillment of the prophetic words of David when the soldiers began dividing up Jesus possessions. They

⁵ Josephus, Jewish Wars, 6.9.3

⁶ Mishnah, Passover, 4.5

⁷ Philo, DeSeptenario 18

tore apart His outer garment, and then cast lots for the inner garment.

We are told in John that Jesus' mother Mary is present, as is her sister, and Mary the wife of Clopas/Alpheaus, and Mary Magdalene. The other Gospels identify the un-named sister as Joanna/Salome, the mother of James and John. This is our introduction assertion that John was in fact a cousin to Jesus.

The Words From the Cross

Putting the four Gospel's together, we are given these seven expressions as being those Jesus made from the cross. The first is unique to Matthew and Mark; the second, third and fourth are from Luke, and the final three come from John.

- 1. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**
- 2. "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."**
- 3. "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."**
- 4. "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."**
- 5. "Woman, behold your son!"**
- 6. "I thirst"**
- 7. "It is finished"**

Each expression is a rich revelation of prophecy, of love and compassion, and of hope. John's record is of three things Jesus said. The first was to John and Mary; Jesus turns over the care of Mary to John, His cousin. It is an unusual act, as we know Jesus had brothers

too. But perhaps it is because only John is there, and the others have not come, that Jesus passes care to John. Jesus statement of thirst is prophetic.

The last expression in John (which may not be the last expression on the cross) is of particular importance: "It is finished", or *tetelestai* in Greek. This word is found in association with accounting ledgers or tax documents⁸; it could be rendered by our more common expression "Paid in Full".

Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount of not removing the Law of Moses, but fulfilling it⁹. Thus, on the cross, as He died, He fulfilled the Law of Moses by being the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God.

Death and Burial

We note too that the last of the seven waters in John is revealed, when the soldier pierced the side of Jesus, and both water and blood left. This was done at the request of the Jews, who did not desire for dead bodies to be left hanging through the Passover week. John was himself a witness to this, as he solemnly testifies. John has been pointing us to the identity of Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God; once more, we see that with Jesus suffering incredible abuse and no bones begin broken, He fits this pattern.

When it is confirmed Jesus is dead, two Pharisee members of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, request Pilate's permission to bury the body. After verifying that Jesus was

⁸ Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, (1997) pp 768

⁹ Matthew 5:17

dead, Pilate consents. Nicodemus purchases a significant amount of burial material, and they take Jesus' body to a new tomb. It is interesting that none of the Gospel accounts make a direct reference to the prophecy of Isaiah, although there is no doubt that they have all made a point to tell us it is a new tomb with this prophecy in mind.

Isaiah 53:9 And they made His grave with the wicked-But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

In the Grave

It is worth a moment to consider a couple of events recorded in this time in the other Gospels. First, there is the issue of the time in the grave. There is some debate as to the date of Jesus crucifixion; that is, was it on a Thursday or a Friday? It is not necessarily a relevant issue, as the significance is always placed on the day He arose. Jesus did state that it would be "three days and three nights"¹⁰, but we know that from other references to this, that it was not necessarily an exact 72 hours¹¹. Therefore, we have presumed it was a Friday on which Jesus died, but a Thursday would not present any more difficulty.

We also know from the other accounts that it was not only the women who watched where Jesus was laid, but the enemies of the cross too. On the following day they appeared before Pilate, and

¹⁰ Matthew 12:40, John 2:19

¹¹ Esther 4:16-5:1

requested that he place a guard to avoid the robbery of the body by the disciples, who might seek to steal the body and then claim Jesus arose.

What irony that this occurred; the only men who are concerned about the promise of a resurrection on the third are the men who killed Jesus, and the disciples seem to be the most surprised (and disbelieving) when Jesus does what He promised.

*When all the days are over,
And added good and bad,
This will be the best and worst
That we have ever had.*

Author Unknown

Gospel of John

Chapter 20

The Resurrection

All of the Gospels make it clear that the Resurrection of Christ occurred on the first day of the week, as we call Sunday. We note that later, when the Saints would soon after gather in the church of Christ, that they would on that same day of the week partake of the memorial called the Lord's Supper¹.

When we put together the Gospel accounts, we are overwhelmed with the number of angels present; which perhaps should not surprise, since the Gospel was something that angels desired to look into². There was an angel who moved the stone (and

¹ Acts 20:7

²² I Peter 1:12

incapacitated the guards) (Matthew); perhaps that same angel is the one sitting on the stone and telling the women to look inside (Matthew). Upon entering the tomb they see another angel inside (Mark). Two angels then appear to the women and ask them why they seek the living with the dead (Mark), possibly the same two Mary sees in the tomb (John).

The first human witnesses to the fulfillment of the Gospel are the women who were the most devoted followers of Christ. These were the ones who stood and watched as He died; they are the ones who are blessed to be the first witnesses of His glorification.

John only discusses the experience of Mary Magdalene coming to the grave. We know that others were with her, and John's account does not necessitate Mary was alone. There may be reasons John only mentions this Mary; the other women were older, and at the time of John's Gospel may have not have been alive to provide the testimony John was so intent on providing.

In some ways the confusion of the morning is revealed with a side by side comparison of all of the accounts. The women return to the Apostles, perhaps not all at the same time or the same place (it is sensible to see that the Eleven would not all be in one location). Their stories seem confused; some tell the Apostles that Jesus' body has been stolen; others repeated what the angels said. There is little wonder that the Apostles are incredulous, and run to see for themselves what has happened.

John tells us that both he and Peter were the first to arrive. They see the linen Joseph of Arimathea had wrapped Jesus in, but no body. It is interesting that Jesus appeared to the women, but not to the Apostles until that night. Again, their particular patience and love for Him comes to mind.

The Apostles leave and Mary is left alone. It is then in John that Mary sees two angels in the tomb. When angels appear in heaven, they typically have quite magnificent or even frightening appearances³; however, when they are seen on earth, their appearance is always that of a man. After briefly speaking to them, she turns around and sees Jesus. However, she does not recognize Him.

There are multiple times when Jesus appeared after His resurrection and is not recognizable. On the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, the two disciples walk, talk and eventually share a meal and do not recognize Jesus. When Jesus appears to the Apostles again in John 21, He will not be recognized until He causes them to overflow with fish. There is no direct explanation as to why Jesus is unrecognizable; it may be that He simply did not wish to be known. We do know that the Apostle Paul tells us that once the resurrection occurs, we will be changed in the flesh.

1 Corinthians 15:37-38 And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain--perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

In the same passage, Paul tells us that Jesus is the “first fruit” of this changed body; therefore, we would expect that if the change is as dramatic as Paul suggests, then it is not surprising Jesus is unrecognized.

³ Ezekiel 1:5-7; Revelation 4:6

Some of the most beautiful ideas of the New Testament are expressed in simple statements. Thus, Mary's statement of recognition, "*Rabboni*", captures for us all of the emotion Mary felt in the moment that Jesus revealed Himself. Jesus tells Mary an important point: He has not yet ascended to the Father. He will soon, however. This is a momentary view to the place of Jesus; He has not been in heaven, but in the grave, in Hebrew *Sheol*, in Greek *Hades*⁴. It is not the literal tomb of which we speak, but the place in which the soul waits.

Jesus Appears to the Apostles

With the exception of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus did not appear to anyone else on that day. We can only imagine the confusion, the fear, the excitement that they were experiencing. We do know that they are meeting behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. It is at that time that Jesus appears to them. Jesus has told them He will meet them in Galilee, but that does not exclude this first appearance⁵.

Two important and perhaps confusing events take place in that locked room in John's record. First is the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The second is the power of the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus has promised the Apostles the Holy Spirit to come to them. Is this that? We need to note that Jesus said He would first go to the Father (in heaven), and we know He has not yet done that

⁴ Acts 2:31

⁵ Mark 16:7

from what He told Mary. He also said He would be gone when the Holy Spirit came⁶. Therefore, this cannot be the Holy Spirit being received as promised earlier. The answer to what this is may be found in the Gospel of Luke. There, the words are not the same, but Luke records:

Luke 24:44-45 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

Here Luke simply tells us that Jesus opened their understanding to the necessity of His death. Thus, the receiving of the Holy Spirit was in that moment for the comprehension of the need for the death on the cross, not total recollection and understanding that the Counselor would later bring them.

The second event is the authority Jesus gives them to forgive sins. We are told in Scripture that only God can forgive sins⁷. Later, the Apostles would make that plain too, such as when Peter told Simon he must repent to God to be forgiven⁸, or John saying that Christian must confess their sins to God⁹. There is not one example

⁶ John 16:7

⁷ Mark 2:7; Isaiah 43:25; Luke 5:21

⁸ Acts 8:22

⁹ | John 1:9

of an Apostle forgiving the sins of another (by forgiving, we mean removing the guilt of sin in the presence of God, not forgiveness all Christians are commanded to practice¹⁰).

So what could Jesus mean? We might note that this sounds similar to what Jesus told the Apostles twice in Matthew:

Matthew 16:19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 18:18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

From a standpoint of Scripture, the "Key" is a representation or symbol of knowledge¹¹ and/or authority¹². If the symbol holds true, what Jesus is doing is giving them the authority to provide the knowledge of forgiveness of sins. All whom they preach this message to will either receive it and then be forgiven, or reject it, and not be forgiven. Thus, the power of the message is now given to the Apostles.

¹⁰ Matthew 6:15

¹¹ Luke 11:52

¹² Isaiah 22:22

When viewed in these terms, we realize that this is what is mentioned by Jesus in the other Gospel accounts, which we commonly refer to as the Great Commission.

*Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All **authority** has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen*

*Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be **saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

Believing Thomas

We are told that Thomas was not present, and when he is told by the other Apostles what has occurred, he does not believe them. He sets a standard that must be met in order to believe: to touch the very wounds of Jesus. The next week the Apostles are meeting again, and Jesus appears to Thomas. He is permitted to see the wounds, and Thomas believes.

We have often heard of the "doubting Thomas", and perceived an absence of faith in him. However, if we are to understand the Scriptural model of faith, Thomas is not a model of the absence of faith, but a standard thereof. He did not refuse to believe, but instead set a standard at which point he would believe.

Since the other Apostles had seen Jesus, it was not unreasonable that Thomas should too. Consider for a moment the Bereans; when Paul preached to them the Gospel, they did not believe what he said until they searched the scriptures themselves. They are called “*noble-minded*” by Luke for this skepticism¹³. Consider the Samaritans, who did not take the woman at the well’s testimony at face value, but inquired of it themselves. Thomas is a model of what faith ought to be: a desire to believe, but a need to have all things proven.

Jesus commended Thomas’ acceptance once he saw the Lord; but the real blessing Jesus holds is for those who believe in Him without seeing, but by the testimony of the book.

Conclusion

Here we are brought full circle from our introduction. John tells us that there is much more, some of which we find in other Gospels, some of which is found in the epistles, and some of which we will never know. But what is written has a specific purpose and value: it is sufficient to believe that Jesus is the savior of the world, and is God in the Flesh.

Faith causes us to believe this: if someone were to set a standard beyond the words of John in order to believe Jesus was the savior, or that Jesus is God in the flesh, they have set a standard that is not right with God. This book, the events recorded therein, are sufficient to believe.

¹³ Acts 17:11

Gospel of John

Chapter 21

The Gospel Epilogue

The last chapter of John's Gospel is interesting, in that it is not about the Christ or the Gospel as much as it is about two of the Apostles who would bring this Gospel, Peter and John. It is possible that Peter and John represent the oldest and youngest of the Apostles (Peter may be the oldest by the deference given to him by the other apostles; John may be the youngest by his advanced age according to traditions). Peter and John were the two who raced to the tomb. Peter and John were the two who followed Jesus in His trial. Peter asked John to ask Jesus at the table who was going to betray Him. In Luke's account, Peter and John were the two who were sent to prepare the Passover. Later in Acts, Peter and John are teaching in the Temple, and perform the first miracle after Christ has ascended. They and their brothers are fishing partners, and

several times the four of them are unique witnesses to miracles Jesus performed.

At the Sea of Galilee

Jesus had told the Apostles to return to Galilee, where He would meet them once more and then ascend to heaven. There are a number of Apostles present with Peter, who endeavors in his profession of fishing all night without success.

Now Jesus appears on the beach, unrecognized. With His admonition to cast the net again, on the other side of the boat, the fishermen are unable to return the net to the boat due to the number of fish. This has happened before; when Peter was called by Jesus to be an Apostle in Luke 4, then too Jesus instructed them to cast their nets on the other side successfully. We did not place this into our list of miracles in John, as it is not by definition a miracle (that which violates a law of nature), but instead is a model of providence, or God's power acting within the laws of nature in an unusual way.

The Apostles identify Christ by this action, not by recognition of His features. We catch Peter's excitement in recognizing Jesus by his jumping into the sea to meet Him. There we find Jesus on the beach, preparing a meal for the Apostles.

John enumerates the meeting with Jesus as the third time; as we have mentioned John does this so that we will be counting events. We have paid attention to the "sevens" in John; however, there have been a number of "threes" we have not been as attentive to visit. There were three days in the grave; three statements on the cross in John; three denials by Peter; three prayers by Jesus; three

references to the Holy Spirit coming; three times Jesus is nearly stoned; three Passover feasts mentioned. It is more difficult to capture the list of three's, as it (being a relatively low number) is more likely to appear without significance. However, because John tells us this is the third time, this number too has meaning to us.

One perspective to this use of numbers is that it gives us a sense of totality. Perhaps when we find this number spread throughout the Gospels (such as the three times that God speaks in the life of Jesus, or the seven words Jesus spoke on the cross), we are seeing a divine statement that these four Gospels are in fact the totality of the message of God to Man. There is no "missing" Gospel (as some "scholars" speculate), nor is it the case that there are Gospels that do not belong (as some other "scholars" suggest). Instead, perhaps these enumerations are the proof that we have truly received the exact measure of understanding we need to be saved.

Peter and Jesus

Jesus three times asks Peter about the love He has for Him. The word for "love" in the first two questions is the word *agapeos*, the love by choice or action. The third "love" is the lesser type, *phileo*, lesser because it does not require the will to love, but merely an affection or brotherly love. We cannot help but to see that these three questions may well counter the three denials Peter made before Jesus was crucified. Peter is grieved by these series of questions, and asserts that Jesus must know of his love for Him.

Then Jesus tells Peter that one day he will die for this confession of love. In a sense, this is the acceptance of the repentance Peter seems to be making. Jesus has said before that if you love Him, and are His friend, you would lay down your life; Peter will do just that. We cannot help but to wonder if this statement comforted Peter in prison in Acts 12, knowing that it was not yet his time to die. Knowing that death would come when he was old, and against his will, must have been bittersweet knowledge. Yet when that time came, Peter is not melancholy or depressed, but faithful to feed the sheep even to the end.

2 Peter 1:12-15 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Peter then asks the Lord of the fate of John. Jesus responds that it was not for Peter to know. John states that this statement has been misunderstood by some to indicate that John would not die. Tradition tells us that John was the only Apostle to die of natural causes, although the only possible support for this is what is written in this chapter. Jesus' reference to returning likely refers to the final coming, but we know from the other Gospels that Jesus had promised a "return" of a form when Jerusalem was destroyed in

70AD¹. Most of the Apostles had been killed prior to that date, so this may well reference that time too.

Closing

John's closing statement reminds us that there was much more, but that what is written is enough to know God. Though we may crave to have more details of the life of our Savior, we must content ourselves in faith that this was sufficient to know of the love that God had for us, and how it was manifested in the life of His son Jesus of Nazareth.

That these men believed the truth of what they saw and spoke cannot be reasonably questioned. They would die horrific deaths, suffer many things, and their reward on this earth was sometimes to be rejected by those they loved most. They did these things because they believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. These things are written so that we too can believe as they did, and by believing, have eternal life.

¹ Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21

The Seven Types in the Gospel of John

The Seven Waters of John

1. Water of John's Testimony - John 1:31
2. Water of Sin and Righteousness - John 2:7-8
3. Water of the New Birth - John 3:5
4. Water of Everlasting Life - John 4:13-14
5. Water of Healing - John 5:2-4; 9:7
6. Water of Divine Authority - John 6:19-20
7. Water of Sacrifice - John 19:34

The Seven Testimonies of John the Baptist

1. Jesus is the Light of the World - John 1:7-9
2. Jesus was before John - John 1:15
3. John was not the Christ - John 1:9-12
4. Jesus is the Lamb of God - John 1:29
5. The Holy Spirit marked Jesus - John 1:32
6. Jesus is from Heaven - John 3:31-32
7. John Testified of Truth - John 5:32-33

The Seven Witness Testimonies

1. Testimony of the Apostles - John 15:27, 21-24
2. Testimony of John the Baptist - John 3:28-32, 5:33
3. Testimony of God the Father - John 5:37, 8:17-18
4. Testimony of Jesus - John 8:14-18
5. Testimony of the Scriptures - John 5:39
6. Testimony of Miracles - John 5:36, 10:25
7. Testimony of the Holy Spirit - John 15:26

The Seven Feasts

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Passover | - John 2:23 |
| 2. (An unnamed feast) | - John 4:45 |
| 3. (An unnamed feast) | - John 5:1 |
| 4. Passover | - John 6:4 |
| 5. Feast of Tabernacles | - John 7:2 |
| 6. Feast of Dedication | - John 10:22 |
| 7. Passover | - John 11:56 |

The Seven Timeliness Statements

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. "My hour has not yet come" | - John 2:4 |
| 2. "My time has not yet come" | - John 7:6 |
| 3. His hour had not yet come | - John 7:30 |
| 4. His hour had not yet come | - John 8:20 |
| 5. "The hour has come" | - John 12:23 |
| 6. His hour had come | - John 13:1 |
| 7. "Father, the hour has come." | - John 17:1 |

The Seven Identities of Christ

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. I AM the Bread of Life | - John 6:35 |
| 2. I AM the Light of the World | - John 8:12 |
| 3. I AM the Door | - John 10:7 |
| 4. I AM the Good Shepherd. | - John 10:11 |
| 5. I AM the Resurrection and the Life | - John 11:25 |
| 6. I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life | - John 14:6 |
| 7. I AM the Vine | - John 15:1 |

The Seven Statements of Life

- 1. Everlasting life to those who believe - John 3:15**
- 2. Everlasting life form the Living Water - John 4:14**
- 3. Everlasting life to those who believed, - John 5:21**
- 4. Everlasting life from the Bread of Life - John 6:58**
- 5. Everlasting life by keeping His word - John 8:51**
- 6. Abundant life by Jesus' coming - John 10:10**
- 7. Life after death for those who believe - John 11:25**