

# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

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## Introduction

### I. Authorship

#### A. Internal Evidence

1. The author of the Gospel is identified in Jn. 21:20, 24 as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."<sup>1</sup> Though many deny that a Christian author would refer to himself that way, claiming "the expression smacks of exclusivism and is better thought of as something someone else would say *about* another disciple," D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo explain why that is not the case.

When a New Testament writer thinks of himself as someone whom Jesus loves, it is *never* to suggest that other believers are *not* loved or are somehow loved less. . . . The suggestion betrays a profound ignorance of the psychological dynamics of Christian experience: those who are most profoundly aware of their own sin and need, and who in consequence most deeply feel the wonders of the grace of God that has reached out and saved them, *even them*, are those who are most likely to talk about themselves as the objects of God's love in Christ Jesus. . . . If a "son of thunder" has become the apostle of love, small wonder he thinks of himself as the peculiar object of the love of Jesus. But that is scarcely the mark of arrogance; it is rather the mark of brokenness.<sup>2</sup>

2. "The same sort of reasoning probably explains why the evangelist does not name himself. He prefers to refer to himself obliquely, the better to focus on the One he serves; to achieve his purpose in writing, he does not need to stand explicitly on his apostolic dignity. He is already well known by his intended readership (21:24-25)."<sup>3</sup> This is less difficult to accept than the notion that some other author would fail to name the apostle John despite mentioning so many others by name.

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<sup>1</sup> In the statement in Jn. 21:24b ("and *we* know that his testimony is true"), the "we" may refer to the community of faith or the church that accepts the revelation of the Spirit through the apostle, but it is perhaps best understood as what Bauckham calls "the 'we' of authoritative testimony." In other words, the "we" is not a genuine plural but stands for "I." See Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 369-383. He states (pp. 379-380):

In light of the previous examples, it is now unmistakable that 21:24 uses the "we" of authoritative testimony. The same person, the writer, speaks of himself first as "the disciple who is testifying to these things." This third person reference is necessary to make the transition from the narrative (up to 21:23) in which he had appeared as a character in the third person. Then, now revealed as the author and directly addressing his readers, he switches to the first person. He uses the first person plural ("we know") because this is Johannine idiom when solemnly claiming the authority of testimony. Finally, he uses the first person singular ("I suppose") as the natural way to address his readers when it is no longer a matter of solemn testimony. Awkward as these shifts may seem to us, they are readily intelligible once we recognize the idiomatic "we" of authoritative testimony.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 241.

<sup>3</sup> Carson and Moo, 242.

3. We know from Jn. 13:23 and 21:20 that this disciple, "the one whom Jesus loved," was present at the Last Supper. And since Mat. 26:20, Mk. 14:17, and Lk. 22:14 tell us that Jesus ate the Last Supper with his twelve apostles, we know that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was one of the apostles.

4. We also know that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is not Peter, as he is expressly distinguished from him in multiple places (Jn. 13:23-24, 20:2, 21:7, and 21:20), but four of the five references to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" are in association with Peter (Jn. 19:26 being the sole exception). Given that Peter, James, and John seem to have been a kind of "inner circle" of the Lord's apostles (Mat. 17:1, 26:37; Mk. 5:37, 9:2, 13:3 [Andrew included], 14:33; Lk. 8:51, 9:28), the consistent association of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" with Peter favors identifying him with either James or John, the sons of Zebedee. Since James was executed by Herod Agrippa in the early 40s (Acts 12:2), he is not a realistic option as the author of the Gospel.

5. In Jn. 21:2 the seven disciples who are together include "the sons of Zebedee." Edward Klink remarks, "Since v. 7 mentions the presence of the Beloved Disciple, he is certainly to be included among the seven disciples and is almost certainly one of the two unnamed disciples who are the sons of Zebedee, mentioned only here in the Gospel (John and James; see Mark 1:9)."<sup>4</sup>

6. John the son of Zebedee as the author of the Gospel is consistent with the fact the author is familiar with Galilee, Samaria and Judea (see 1:28 [11:1]; 2:1, 12; 3:23; 4:20; 11:54; 12:21), with the city of Jerusalem (see 5:2; 9:7; 11:18; 18:1, 28; 19:17), and with the Temple (2:14, 20; 8:2, 20; 10:23). Barry Smith states:

The author is acquainted with the social and religious conditions of Palestine (see 4:9; 7:35; 11:49; 18:13, 28, 31, 39). Likewise, he is also familiar with Jewish and Samaritan religious beliefs (see 1:41, 46; 4:9, 25; 6:15), and he is well acquainted with how Jewish festivals were celebrated at the Temple and with purification rites: Passover (2:13, 23; 6:4; 13:1; 18:28); Tabernacles (7:2, 37); Dedication (10:22); Purification rites (2:6; 3:25; 11:55; 18:28; 19:31). . . .

To have such detailed knowledge of the social and religious conditions of Palestine and Jewish and Samaritan religious beliefs implies that the author had first-hand experience of Jews and Samaritans, which suggests that he is from Palestine. His good knowledge of the Temple and Jewish festivals implies that he was a participant in the various Jewish festivals, which suggests that he was a Palestinian Jew. His knowledge of Jewish purification rites is consistent with first-hand experience.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Edward W. Klink, *John*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 895.

<sup>5</sup> Barry D. Smith, "[The Gospel of John](#)" (accessed on 10/4/21).

## B. External Evidence

1. Irenaeus in *Against Heresies*, a work dated to around A.D. 180, attributes the Gospel to the apostle John, as do the late second-century writings known as the Muratorian Canon and the anti-Marcionite prologue.<sup>6</sup> According to Eusebius, Irenaeus based his claim of authorship on Polycarp, with whom he was personally acquainted as a boy, and Polycarp, who was martyred around A.D. 156 at the age of eighty-six, claimed to have learned the identity of the author directly from the apostles.<sup>7</sup>

2. Other notable early church figures who recognized the apostle John as the author include Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen.<sup>8</sup> C. H. Dodd remarked, "It is significant that Eusebius, who had access to many works that are now lost, speaks without reserve of the fourth gospel as the unquestioned work of St. John."<sup>9</sup> Carson and Moo comment, "The silence is most significant precisely because it was Eusebius's concern to discuss the doubtful cases."<sup>10</sup>

3. *All* the ancient Greek manuscripts of the Gospel According to John include a title which identifies John as the author. The oldest, known as p<sup>66</sup>, dates to the late second century. This manuscript contains only a tiny fragment of the Gospel, but it includes the first page, which reads: "The Gospel according to John." John is likewise identified as the author in p<sup>75</sup> (second-third century) and in the codexes of the fourth and fifth centuries (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Washingtonianus, Alexandrinus, and Bezae).<sup>11</sup>

4. Andreas Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles Quarles conclude their examination of the authorship issue this way:

Therefore, a close examination of all the available internal and external evidence provides plausible grounds for the following three conclusions about the authorship of John's Gospel: (1) the author is an apostle and eyewitness (1:14; see 2:11; 19:35); (2) he is one of the Twelve (13:23; see Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14); (3) he is John, the son of Zebedee (the strongest candidate on the basis of the above-adduced internal and external evidence). While the hypothesis of the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel is regularly the object of derision in recent Johannine scholarship, the hypothesis has never been decisively refuted and continues to be at least as plausible as alternative explanations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Grant Osborne, "The Gospel of John" in Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 13:3.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 269-270.

<sup>8</sup> Guthrie, 271.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in Carson and Moo, 232.

<sup>10</sup> Carson and Moo, 232.

<sup>11</sup> Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (New York: Image, 2016), 15-18.

<sup>12</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 298. See also, Erik Manning, "[Why Everyone Should Believe the Apostle John Wrote the Last Gospel](#)" (accessed on 4/13/22).

## II. Date

A. That the apostle John lived a long life is implied by Jn. 21:23, which reveals there was a widespread rumor among Christians that Jesus had indicated he would not die. A long life would have fueled such a rumor.

B. Irenaeus (late second), Clement of Alexandria (late second-early third), Hippolytus (late second-early third), Eusebius (early fourth), and Jerome (late fourth-early fifth) all indicate that John's exile on Patmos, reported in Rev. 1:9, occurred during the reign of Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96).<sup>13</sup> These same church fathers report that John returned to Ephesus following Domitian's death and died there not long into Emperor Trajan's reign, which began in A.D. 98.<sup>14</sup> Accepting the apostle John as the author of the Gospel, this sets the latest possible date for the writing.

C. In 1920 Bernard Grenfell acquired in Egypt a small fragment (3.5 x 2.5 inches) of a papyrus codex the front (recto) of which has parts of Jn. 18:31–33 and the back (verso) has parts of Jn. 18:37-38. It is known as the Rylands Papyrus or P<sup>52</sup> and is on display in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England. Based on the style of writing, it probably dates from the first half of the second century.<sup>15</sup> So even if one rejects the apostle John as the author, the Gospel could not have been written very far into the second century. It would take time for copies to circulate in Egypt in sufficient numbers that a fragment plausibly could survive.

D. Though a few scholars argue that John was written before A.D. 70, it is common for evangelical scholars to date it in the 80s or 90s. For example, Carson and Moo tentatively advance a date of 80-85.<sup>16</sup> Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles conclude that "a date of composition in the mid-80s or early 90s best fits all the evidence."<sup>17</sup> Craig Blomberg states, "The traditional idea of a date in the 80s or 90s remains best."<sup>18</sup> These are educated guesses based on differing assessments of bits of data, the details of which are available in the cited sources.

## III. Place of Writing

A. Early patristic testimony indicates the Gospel of John was written in Ephesus. Carson and Moo write:

The traditional view is that the fourth gospel was written in *Ephesus*. In large part this view depends on the weight given to the uniform but sometimes difficult patristic evidence. Eusebius (*H.E.* 3.1.1) says that Asia (i.e., Asia Minor, approximately the western third of modern Turkey) was allotted to John when the

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<sup>13</sup> W. Brian Shelton, *Quest for the Historical Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 140.

<sup>14</sup> Shelton, 140-141.

<sup>15</sup> See "[Rylands Library Papyrus P52](#)" (accessed on 10/6/21).

<sup>16</sup> Carson and Moo, 267.

<sup>17</sup> Köstenberger, et al., 300.

<sup>18</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 197.

apostles were dispersed at the outbreak of the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70). Some of the allotments and assignments that Eusebius lists are likely legendary, but perhaps this one is reliable, since it agrees with other sources, for example, Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.2), who says that "John, the disciple of the Lord . . . published the gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia."<sup>19</sup>

B. As previously mentioned, church fathers report that John was exiled on Patmos during Domitian's reign and returned to Ephesus following Domitian's death. The vision of Revelation was given to him on Patmos, but accepting the testimony that the Gospel was written in Ephesus, we do not know if it was before or after his exile.<sup>20</sup>

## IV. Purpose and Audience

A. John 21:30-31 states: *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* I share Grant Osborne's interpretation of the purpose statement:

Some (Morris and especially Carson) believe John wrote primarily to evangelize Jews; others (Brown, Kysar, Michaels, Ridderbos) think he wrote mainly for believers. This is certainly a false dichotomy. I am not convinced by either extreme. Rather, John wrote both to awaken faith in the lost and to quicken faith in the followers of Jesus (so Bruce, Beasley-Murray, Whitacre, Burge). . . . John wanted to win the lost as well as strengthen the believers.<sup>21</sup>

B. This dual purpose would have been pursued by directing the Gospel to the church. According to Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, "it seems that John's purpose encompassed both aspects, evangelism of unbelievers and edification of believers, and that John pursued an indirect evangelistic purpose, aiming to reach an unbelieving audience through the Christian readers of his Gospel."<sup>22</sup> The testimony that circulated within the church would become a basis for outreach to others.

## V. Relation to the Synoptic Gospels

A. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the "Synoptic Gospels," which refers to the fact they have a significant degree of similarity. They have identical wording in places, and yet they also have some significant differences in content, wording, and order. There clearly seems to be some kind of literary relationship between the Synoptics, some kind of sharing of written material, but the nature of that relationship is unclear. That is what is popularly known as the

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<sup>19</sup> Carson and Moo, 254. See also, Köstenberger, et al., 300-301.

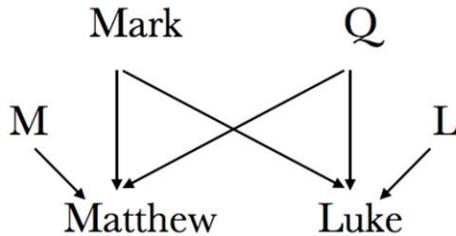
<sup>20</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *John*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 31-32.

<sup>21</sup> Osborne, 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Köstenberger, et al., 304.

"Synoptic Problem," though it is better termed a puzzle than a problem, and it has been the subject of intense scholarly study.

B. Most scholars today are convinced the Gospel of Mark was the first of the four Gospels to be written. They think that in composing their Gospels Matthew and Luke each used Mark and a hypothetical second source (dubbed "Q") and also drew on a source or sources unique to each. This is known as the "Four-Source Theory."



C. Recall that Luke in 1:1-4 notes the existence of prior accounts and implies his use of them in composing his Gospel, so none of this poses a threat to the doctrine of inspiration or the inerrancy of Scripture. Other scholars continue to reject both Markan priority (favoring Matthew) and the alleged use of Q.<sup>23</sup>

D. The Gospel According to John is quite different from the Synoptic Gospels. It *includes* material about Jesus that is not found in the Synoptics, and it *excludes* material that is found in them. Here are two charts prepared by Mark Powell.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Some Stories about Jesus Unique to John's Gospel**

- calling of Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael (1:35–51)
- changing of water into wine at Cana (2:1–12)
- conversation with Nicodemus (3:1–21)
- encounter with a Samaritan woman at a well (4:1–42)
- healing of a crippled man at Pool of Bethesda (5:1–18)
- rescue of an adulterous woman from stoning (7:53–8:11) [not original]
- healing of a man born blind (9:1–41)
- raising of Lazarus (11:1–44)
- washing of disciples' feet (13:1–20)
- prayer for believers to be united (17:1–26)
- resurrection appearance to Thomas (20:24–29)

#### **Material Not Found in John's Gospel**

John's Gospel is notable for its lack of material that is very familiar in the other Gospels:

- no stories of Jesus' birth

<sup>23</sup> For a good presentation of the majority view, see Daniel Wallace's online article [The Synoptic Problem](#) (accessed on 1/30/22).

<sup>24</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 178-179.

- no mention of Jesus' baptism
- nothing about Jesus being tempted or tested by Satan
- no mention of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners
- no transfiguration of Jesus
- no parables
- no exorcisms
- no condemnations of the rich or words about helping the poor
- nothing about loving one's neighbor (or one's enemy)
- no call for people to repent (from either John the Baptist or Jesus)
- no call for disciples to deny themselves or renounce their possessions
- no predictions of Jerusalem's downfall (but cf. 2:19–22)
- no mention of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper (but cf. 6:53–56)
- almost no mention of the kingdom of God (only in 3:3–5; but cf. 18:36)
- almost no references to a second coming (just once: 21:22–23; usually, 14:3, 18, 28 are read as Jesus coming for individuals at the hour of their death)

E. John and the Synoptics have a different geographical focus. "John reports far more of Jesus' ministry in the south, in Judea and Samaria, than in Galilee, while the focus of the synoptists is the opposite."<sup>25</sup> There are also differences in the style and focus of Jesus' teaching that is reported. Powell states:

Whereas Jesus is noted for short, pithy sayings in the other Gospels, the Johannine Jesus delivers long, philosophical discourses (5:19–47; 6:25–70; 7:14–52; 8:12–59; 10:1–18, 22–39; 12:23–46; 14:1–16:33). Furthermore, where the Synoptic Gospels summarize the content of Jesus' proclamation as "the good news of the kingdom of God" (see, e.g., Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:14–15), in John, Jesus talks mostly about himself: he talks about his identity as the one who comes to reveal the Father and about what it means for people to believe in him, love him, obey him, and abide in him.<sup>26</sup>

F. But there are also significant points of contact between John and the Synoptics. These include John the Baptist's testimony of the Spirit's anointing of Jesus (Mk. 1:10; Jn. 1:32), the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, and John 6), and Jesus' walking on water (Matthew 14, Mark 6, John 6). Carson and Moo state:

Many sayings are at least partially parallel, though not decisively attesting literary dependence (Matt. 9:37–38 par. And John 4:35; Mark 6:4 par. And John 4:44; Matt. 25:46 par. And John 5:29; Matt. 11:25–27 par. And John 10:14–15; Mark 4:12 par. And John 12:39–40; and many more). More significant yet are the subtle parallels: both John and the synoptists describe a Jesus given to colorful metaphors and proverbs, many drawn from the world of nature (e.g., 4:37; 5:19–20a; 8:35; 9:4; 11:9–10; 10:1ff; 12:24; 15:1–16; 16:21). All four gospels depict Jesus with a unique sense of sonship to his heavenly Father; all of them note the distinctive authority Jesus displays in his teaching; all of them show Jesus

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<sup>25</sup> Carson and Moo, 257.

<sup>26</sup> Powell, 179.

referring to himself as the Son of Man, with no one else using that title to refer to him or to anyone else (John 12:34 is no real exception).<sup>27</sup>

G. In addition, there are places where John seems to presuppose knowledge of the Gospel stories and where information he provides fits neatly with or interlocks into the accounts in the Synoptics.<sup>28</sup> Craig Blomberg states, "We may thus assume that John was familiar with many if not all of the contents of the Gospels that preceded him even if he did not borrow from them in a strict, literary fashion. We may assume that he knew that at least some, if not many, in his audience would be familiar with the basic stories about Jesus and that he did not want to repeat many of these accounts."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, John notes in 20:30 that Jesus did many other signs that are not recorded in his book and says in his very last verse (21:25), "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

H. In the late second century, Clement of Alexandria wrote, "Last of all John perceiving that the bodily (or external) facts had been set forth in the (other) Gospels, at the instance of his disciples and with the inspiration of the Spirit composed a spiritual Gospel."<sup>30</sup> "[Clement] says that he received this tradition from the 'early presbyters', which shows that it represents an ancient and probably widely-held viewpoint."<sup>31</sup> This tradition suggests that John wrote a different kind of Gospel that was intended to supplement the familiar Gospel stories more from the divine side of the subject.

## VI. Structure

A. The Gospel According to John opens with a prologue in 1:1-18 and closes with an epilogue in 21:1-25. The material in between is commonly divided into two large sections: The Book of Signs (1:19-12:50) and the Book of Glory (13:1-20:31).

B. The Book of Signs is so called because it relates stories of amazing things Jesus did that are repeatedly called "signs." Sixteen of the Gospel's seventeen uses of the word "sign" (*sēmeion*) occur in this first section. "The second part of John's Gospel is called the 'Book of Glory' because it deals with the last week of Jesus' life when, in the words of this Gospel, the time for Jesus to be 'glorified' had come (17:1; cf. 13:1; see also 7:39; 12:16, 23-24)."<sup>32</sup>

C. Scholars vary in how they subdivide the material within these large sections. The outline I use is a combination of different sources, including section headings from the ESV, and my own reflection.

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<sup>27</sup> Carson and Moo, 258.

<sup>28</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 48-49, 53-54.

<sup>29</sup> Blomberg (2001), 48-49.

<sup>30</sup> Guthrie, 285.

<sup>31</sup> Guthrie, 286.

<sup>32</sup> Powell, 170.

## The Text

### I. Prologue (1:1-18): The Word Became Flesh<sup>33</sup>

#### A. The Word in creation (1:1-5)

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

1. The Gospel According to Mark does not inform us of Jesus' birth or his lineage. It begins with an account of John the Baptist at the start of Jesus' public ministry. The Gospel According to Matthew, on the other hand, includes an account of Jesus' birth and traces his genealogy back to Abraham. Luke also has an account of Jesus' birth, but he traces his genealogy all the way back to Adam. The Gospel According to John explains in its prologue that Jesus is the preexistent "Word" (*Logos*) incarnated; he is the person whom "the Word" became. Verse 14a is explicit: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

2. This "Word" who became flesh, who became the person Jesus, is declared in vv. 1-2 to have been in existence *when creation began*. He was there when the beginning began. He was not part of creation, not a created thing, but rather was the preexisting agent of creation. As verse 3 declares, "All things were made *through him*, and without him was not any thing made that was made." This truth is echoed by Paul in Col. 1:16: "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things were created through him and for him." See also, 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:10.

3. John reveals that "in the beginning," a reference from Gen. 1:1 to the time of creation, this "Word," this agent of creation, was both "*with God*" and "*was God*." This is a clear pointer to the doctrine of the Trinity, the notion that the one *being* God exists as three distinct but unified *persons*. The Word who becomes Jesus *is* God in that he is God the Son, one of the persons of the Godhead, and he is *with* God the Father at creation in their trinitarian fellowship.

a. Murray Harris well expresses the meaning of v. 1:

In the first proposition of verse 1 John affirms that the Logos [Word] existed before time and creation and therefore implicitly denies that the Logos was a created being. In the second, he declares that the Logos always was in active communion with the Father and thereby implies that the Logos cannot be personally identified with the Father. In the third, he states that the Logos always was a partaker of the deity and so implicitly denies that the Logos was ever

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<sup>33</sup> The translation used throughout is the ESV, with rare modifications.

elevated to divine status. The thought of the verse moves from eternal preexistence to personal intercommunion to intrinsic deity.<sup>34</sup>

b. Harris includes Jn. 20:28 as another text in which Jesus is "certainly" referred to explicitly as God. Those in which Jesus is "very probably" referred to explicitly as God are Rom. 9:5, Tit. 2:13, Heb. 1:8, and 2 Pet. 1:1. He is "probably" referred to explicitly as God in Jn. 1:18 and is "possibly" referred to explicitly as God in Acts 20:28, Heb. 1:9, and 1 Jn. 5:20.<sup>35</sup>

c. In the incarnation, the divine "Word," already and eternally a person of the Godhead, took into union with himself a human *nature* with the result that Jesus Christ is *one* person with an unmixed and unseparated divine nature and human nature.<sup>36</sup> That is why he is often described as "fully God" and "fully man." It is the ultimate mindblower. As Wayne Grudem says of the incarnation, "The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe."<sup>37</sup>

d. Early theologians devoted much effort to filling in details about the relationship of the divine and human natures in Jesus in response to various challenges, culminating in the formulation at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. The issues and discussions are about as deep as it gets, but it is important to recognize that in becoming Jesus, the Word did cease to be God, did not do away with his divine qualities and attributes. Rather, in taking on a human nature for the purpose of human redemption he, in accordance with the Father's will, refrained from using some divine powers or accessing some information out of his omniscience. Carson states:

The Son of God abandoned any use of his divine prerogatives and capabilities which, as a man, he would not have enjoyed, *unless his heavenly Father gave him direction to use such prerogatives*. He therefore would not use his powers to turn stones into bread for himself: that would have been to vitiate his identification with human beings and therefore to abandon his mission, for human beings do not have instant access to such solutions. His mission prohibited him from arrogating to himself the prerogatives rightly his. But if that mission required him to multiply loaves for the sake of the five thousand, he did so. Even his knowledge was self-confessedly limited (Matt. 24:36).<sup>38</sup>

4. Only John identifies Jesus as the incarnate "Word" (Jn. 1:1, 1:14, Rev. 19:13). As one's speech or word is an expression of one's thoughts, one's inner being, John may intend to communicate that Jesus is a living word, a bodily expression of God's nature and being. This is

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<sup>34</sup> Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 71.

<sup>35</sup> Harris, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Robert L. Reymond, "Incarnation" in Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 424.

<sup>37</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 563.

<sup>38</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 35-36.

like Heb. 1:3, which states that the Son is "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." John also may be suggesting the role of God the Son as creative agent, the role he specifies in v. 3. Since Genesis 1 reports that God in the beginning brought things into existence through his speech, identifying God the Son as "the Word" implies he was the means of creation.

5. Life was in the Word in the sense he was capable of imparting life, which he did in his creative work. He not only was the instrument of creating inanimate things but also imbued certain created things with the gift of life. Carson comments:

In the rest of his book, John is largely interested in 'light' and 'life' as they relate to salvation: the 'light' is revelation which people may receive in active faith and be saved, the 'life' is either resurrection life or spiritual life that is its foretaste. If 1:4, by contrast, is read in the context of the first three verses, it is more likely that the life inhering in the Word is related not to salvation but to creation.<sup>39</sup>

6. Through his dispensing of life at creation, the life that was in the Word became the light of mankind.<sup>40</sup> This probably refers to the fact the life given to humanity is a life in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 5:1, 9:6; Jas. 3:9), which includes a unique capacity for perceiving and understanding. Thus, that life is the light of mankind in the sense it enables humanity to see in a way lesser creatures cannot.<sup>41</sup> We are distinctively intelligent and rational creatures.

7. The creation through the Word that was done in the beginning involved the creation of light amid complete darkness. As darkness was over the face of the deep, God said, "Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen. 1:2-3). And from that time, the darkness has not overcome that light, has not extinguished it. Carson says, "This verse [1:5] is a masterpiece of planned ambiguity."<sup>42</sup> The non-Christian Jew may hear it only as an allusion to the creation in the beginning, but for the Christian, this work of the Word in creation, his bringing light into darkness, anticipates his work in the incarnation. Jesus is the spiritual light shining in the darkness of this fallen world, the light who has not been overcome by the spiritual darkness. John draws this parallel in the next few verses.

## B. Role of John the Baptist (1:6-9)

**<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came**

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<sup>39</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 119.

<sup>40</sup> As Carson puts it (1991, 119), "The self-existing life of the Word was so dispensed at creation that it became the light of the human race (*tōn anthrōpōn*, 'of human beings')."

<sup>41</sup> John McHugh states in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on John 1-4*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 16, "The primary meaning must therefore be that the life which God has from the beginning given to human beings contains a special, and indeed unique, kind of enlightenment, namely, the faculty of reason." Kruse states (p. 63), "Some suggest it relates to our creation in the image of God so that we participate in the light of reason in a way lesser created beings do not. Others suggest it refers to the light of general revelation, whereby the character of God is reflected in creation itself to be understood by human beings (cf. Rom. 1:19-20)."

<sup>42</sup> Carson (1991), 119.

**to bear witness about the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.**

1. John the Baptist (not the apostle) was sent from God in that he was conceived through God's direct intervention for a specific purpose. In keeping with prophecy, he was brought into existence to bear witness about the light, now unquestionably referring to the Lord Jesus, the one who reveals to all the way to God.

2. The account of John's miraculous conception, in which God overcame Elizabeth's barrenness and her and Zechariah's advanced age, and the announcement of his divine mission are given in Luke 1. As David Wenham explains: "The distinction between John and Jesus is the difference between the police outrider in a procession and the royal or other dignitary following in his or her official car or carriage. In other words, John was a prophet looking forward, the last in the line in fact; Jesus was the one looked forward to, the fulfillment of the prophetic hopes."<sup>43</sup>

3. John's bearing witness about Jesus was to prepare the people for belief in Jesus, but for many it sadly did not have that result. Despite his advance work, his testimony about Jesus, some refused to believe.

4. Since John was the Lord's divinely appointed herald, his presence on earth signaled the coming of the true light into the world. With John's conception in Elizabeth, the stage was set for the incarnation of the Word. Indeed, it was some six months after Elizabeth became pregnant with John that the Virgin Mary became pregnant with Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit (see Mat. 1:18-20; Lk. 1:34-35).

### C. The Incarnate Word and John's witness (1:10-15)

**<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")**

1. With Jesus' presence, the Word was in the world; Jesus is the Word incarnate, the Word embodied as a human being. And though the Word was the one through whom the world was made, the world did not know him. Rather than receive him with gratitude, honor, and celebration, as fitting his role in creation, the world largely ignored or treated him with hostility.

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<sup>43</sup> David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 124.

2. Moreover, he came to his own creation *as a Jew*, in the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet even the Jewish people, in large part, did not receive him.<sup>44</sup> They would not accept him for who he was. But to all who *did* receive him, all who believed in him (believed in his name), meaning all who give him their allegiance as the one he claims to be, he gave the right (or power or authority) to become children of God.

a. The fact all who have penitent faith in Jesus, the Word incarnate, are given a right to become children of God anticipates the exercise or realization of that right in submission to the divinely ordained rite of baptism. That is the prescribed means for those of penitent faith to call out to God for mercy and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, and it is in conjunction with that spiritual cleansing that one is born again of the Spirit, as Jesus indicates in his conversation with Nicodemus in Jn. 3:1-8.

b. Paul expresses the same idea in Gal. 3:26-27, where he declares, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,<sup>27c</sup> for as many as were baptized into Christ, clothed yourselves with Christ." G. R. Beasley-Murray said of these verses:

Baptism is the baptism of faith and grace, so that in it faith receives what grace gives. Above all grace gives Christ, for Christ is the fullness of grace; faith therefore receives Christ in baptism. If Paul were pressed to define the relationship of the two statements in vv. 26-27, I cannot see how he could preserve the force of both sentences apart from affirming that baptism is the moment of faith in which the adoption is realized – in the dual sense of effected by God and grasped by man – which is the same as saying that in baptism faith receives the Christ in whom the adoption is effected.<sup>45</sup>

3. Becoming a child of God, being born of God, is a spiritual event, in contrast to physical conception and birth referred to here as being born of bloods (plural), of the desire of the flesh, or of the will of a husband/man. Being born from "bloods" refers simply to being born from human parents. As Keener notes, "to ask one from what blood (*quo sanguine*) one came was to ask from what parentage one had sprung."<sup>46</sup> Thus, it is sometimes translated "by human parents" (NET), "by natural generation" (NAB), "of natural descent" (NIV), "from human stock" (NJB). "That children were conceived in parental passion was an ancient commonplace (hence 'the will of the flesh,' 1:13). . . . The 'will of man' . . . probably refers to the father's authority in deciding to 'have' a child."<sup>47</sup>

4. In v. 14 the incarnation is declared expressly. The Word, who in the beginning was *with* God and *was* God and who was the instrument for the creation of everything, became flesh, became the man Jesus (named in v. 17), and dwelt among us on earth, between his arrival and ascension back to heaven. Kruse remarks:

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<sup>44</sup> Kruse states (p. 66), "When he says that 'his own (*hoi idioi*) did not receive him', he means the Jewish people by and large did not receive him."

<sup>45</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 151.

<sup>46</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1:404.

<sup>47</sup> Keener, 404.

The expression 'made his dwelling' translates one word (*eskēnōsen*), which, when rendered literally, means 'pitched a tent' or 'tabernacled'. The allusion is to the time when God's presence was localized in the tabernacle in the midst of the camp of Israel (Ex. 40:34-38). The evangelist is saying that the Word becoming flesh and living among us is like God tabernacling among the tribes of Israel, or, put in other words, the presence of God was localized in Jesus the incarnate Word.<sup>48</sup>

5. "As the glory of God was once present in the tabernacle [Ex. 40:34-35], so it was now present in the Word made flesh."<sup>49</sup> And John and others saw this glory in that they saw Jesus; they saw God in the flesh.

a. He calls the glory they saw in Christ "the glory as of the *monogenēs* from the Father." The NET note states:

Although this word is often translated "only begotten," such a translation is misleading, since in English it appears to express a metaphysical relationship. The word in Greek was used of an only child (a son [Luke 7:12, 9:38] or a daughter [Luke 8:42]). It was also used of something unique (only one of its kind) such as the mythological Phoenix (*1 Clem.* 25:2). From here it passes easily to a description of Isaac (Heb 11:17 and Josephus, *Ant.*, 1.13.1 [1.222]) who was not Abraham's *only* son, but was one-of-a-kind because he was the child of the promise. Thus the word means "one-of-a-kind" and is reserved for Jesus in the Johannine literature of the NT. While all Christians are children of God, Jesus is God's Son in a unique, one-of-a-kind sense. The word is used in this way in all its uses in the Gospel of John (1:14, 1:18, 3:16, and 3:18).<sup>50</sup>

b. In other words, the unique glory of Jesus is the glory he has as the one-of-a-kind Son from the Father. He is the Word incarnate, the God-man. Klink remarks that the phrase "glory *as of* the only Son from the Father" in v. 14d "is not a focus on comparison ('glory similar to that of') but a focus on quality ('glory which truly is that of'),"<sup>51</sup> which is why he translates it "glory *as* the unique Son from the Father" (see also, NJB, HCSB, NIV, NET, CSB).

6. This glory Jesus has as the unique Son includes his being full of the divine qualities of grace and truth. This is widely understood to be an allusion to Ex. 34:6, where in revealing his glory to Moses God proclaims that he is "abounding in steadfast love (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*emet*)." Though the LXX translated *hesed* as *charis* only once (Est. 2:9) in its hundreds of occurrences in the OT,<sup>52</sup> it is thought John used *charis* in Jn. 1:14 as a parallel to *hesed* in Ex. 34:6. That may be correct, but it is far from certain. Indeed, v. 16 suggests *charis* has its common NT sense of unmerited favor. But, of course, "steadfast love" naturally encompasses a disposition of grace, unmerited favor, toward its object.

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<sup>48</sup> Kruse, 68.

<sup>49</sup> Kruse, 68.

<sup>50</sup> Modern English translations often opt for "one and only" (HCSB, NIV, NET, CSB) or "only" (RSV, NEB, NJB, REB, NRS, NAB, ESV).

<sup>51</sup> Klink, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Carson (1991), 129.

7. Verse 15 is a parenthetical comment about John the Baptist's testimony of Jesus' preexistence. Though Jesus' earthly life and public ministry began after that of John, he is of greater status or significance than John because he in fact existed before John.

a. Klink comments:

This statement playfully moves from the historical chronology (and implied rank) that Jesus first "follows" John to the surpassing greatness of Jesus rooted in his cosmological chronology (and implied rank) that Jesus was actually "prior" to John. That is, the Baptist is stating unequivocally that the successor is greater than the forerunner because the successor is the true forerunner. The Baptist moves the comparison beyond his own historical ministry and harkens back to the Word who was "in the beginning."<sup>53</sup>

b. This is a more explicit recognition by John of Jesus' preexistence than appears in the Synoptics, but in the Synoptics John does acknowledge that Jesus is greater than he is despite coming after him (Mat. 3:11; Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3:16; see also, Acts 13:25). The report in John reveals the Baptist's insight into the root of that surpassing greatness.

D. The means of new covenant grace and revealer of the Father (1:16-18)

**<sup>16</sup> For from his fullness we have all received, grace [in place of] grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

1. According to v. 16, the grace with which Jesus is full (v. 14) is something that has been received by (and thus given to) all Christians. That grace is a divine quality that blesses people, a quality that includes a merciful disposition that bestows unmerited favor. That blessing has been poured out on us in connection with Jesus.

2. John says we have all received "grace *anti* grace," and there is a question about how that preposition should be understood here. Most translations take it to mean "grace *upon* grace," in the sense of grace on top of grace, receiving one gracious gift on top of another (an accumulation). But the normal meaning of *anti* is "instead of" or "in place of" rather than "upon," which it arguably never means. This yields "we have all received grace *in place of* grace already given" (NIV; see also, NAB, NJB, and ESV footnote).

3. Verse 17 explains the sense in which we received from Jesus' fullness grace in place of grace already given: "*For* the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." This does not mean the Mosaic covenant had no grace, any more than it means it had no truth. Grace clearly was extended under the Mosaic covenant in that God graciously forgave sins under that covenant. Rather, the point is that the grace and truth that came with Christ *replaced* the earlier, less complete display of grace and truth in the Mosaic law,

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<sup>53</sup> Klink, 112.

which law anticipated and pointed toward his coming. The grace and truth that came through the incarnation replaced (and surpassed) what previously was given through the law.

4. The statement in v. 18 that no one has ever seen God was standard fare in Judaism. Carson states:

*No-one has ever seen God*, John writes, as if to remind his readers not only of a commonplace of Judaism, but also of the fact that in the episode where Moses saw the Lord's glory (Ex. 33 – 34), to which allusion has just been made (1:14), Moses himself was not allowed to see God (Ex. 33:20). 'We should perhaps say, less anthropomorphically but equally metaphorically, that Moses saw, so to speak, the afterglow of the divine glory' (Bruce, p. 44). In that diminished sense, God speaks with Moses 'face to face', and Moses 'sees the form of the Lord' (Nu. 12:8). The vision of the Lord seated on his throne that Isaiah saw was so vivid and terrifying, so close to the 'real thing', even though it was but the hem of the Lord's garment that filled the temple, that he could cry, 'Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips . . . and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty' (Is. 6:5). . . . The fact remains that the consistent Old Testament assumption is that God cannot be seen, or, more precisely, that for a sinful human being to see him would bring death (Ex. 33:20; Dt. 4:12; Ps. 97:2). Apparent exceptions are always qualified in some way.<sup>54</sup>

Jesus says in Jn. 6:46 that the only one who has seen the Father is he who is from God.

5. There is a question whether the original text of v. 18b was *monogenēs* God (*theos*) or the *monogenēs* Son (*huios*).<sup>55</sup> Harris concludes his investigation of the issue stating, "A strong preference may therefore be expressed for μονογενῆς θεός as the primitive text."<sup>56</sup> Philip Comfort likewise declares, "It is now clear that μονογενῆς θεός is the earlier – and preferred – reading."<sup>57</sup> The NET note states, "But θεός as the older and more difficult reading is preferred."

6. Accepting *monogenēs theos* (God) as the original reading yields translations like "the only/unique *God*," "the only One, *who is God*," and "the only Son (implying 'Son' from *monogenēs*), *who is God*." The point is that, in contrast to all mere humans, none of whom has seen God in a full sense, the only God (or "the only One/Son, who is God"), who is at the Father's side, has made him known. In other words, Jesus, the one-of-a-kind Word incarnate, and thus the only God or the only One/Son, who is God, is at the Father's side (lit. in the bosom of the Father, implying intimacy), having ascended back to heaven. He has revealed God the Father in an unprecedented way because his intimate familiarity with him far exceeds what can be known of him by those who have never seen him.

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<sup>54</sup> Carson (1991), 134.

<sup>55</sup> As put in the NET note, "Externally, there are several variants, but they can be grouped essentially by whether they read θεός or υἱός."

<sup>56</sup> Harris, 82.

<sup>57</sup> Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 255.

7. The word translated "has made known" at the end of v. 18 is *exēgeomai*. Kruse remarks: "[It] means to 'set forth in great detail' or 'expound'. Its cognate is *exēgēsis*, which in its Anglicized form is used to mean 'exegesis'/'exposition'. The evangelist is saying, then, that the Word (Jesus), being God the one and only, at the Father's side, the only one who has seen God, has 'expounded' him, made him known, through his person, words and works."<sup>58</sup> Again, one is reminded of Heb. 1:3, which says that the Son is "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature."

## II. Book of Signs (1:19-12:50): Jesus' Work in the World

### A. Jesus prepares for his ministry (1:19-51)

#### 1. John the Baptist explains himself to Jews of Jerusalem (1:19-28)

**<sup>19</sup> And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" <sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." <sup>24</sup> (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) <sup>25</sup> They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" <sup>26</sup> John answered them, "I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, <sup>27</sup> even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." <sup>28</sup> These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.**

a. The Synoptics report the ministry of John the Baptist, and the first-century Jewish historian Josephus confirms that he preached repentance, baptized, drew large crowds, and was executed by Herod Antipas.<sup>59</sup> The Jews in Jerusalem, almost certainly referring to the Sanhedrin, sent priests and Levites to John to question him. They did so because "[p]art of their responsibility was to assess the genuineness or otherwise of those claiming to be prophets or the Messiah."<sup>60</sup>

b. The Baptist denies that he is the Christ, which is not surprising, but his denial that he is Elijah raises some questions. Based on Mal. 4:5, the Jews expected Elijah to return in advance of the Messiah. The angel told Zechariah in Lk. 1:17 that John would go before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah," and Jesus elsewhere expressly identifies John as the Elijah who was to come (Mk. 9:11-13; Mat. 11:14, 17:10-13). John's denial here that he is Elijah was probably because he was not *literally* Elijah, which is how most Jews understood the

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<sup>58</sup> Kruse, 74.

<sup>59</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.116-119.

<sup>60</sup> Kruse, 75.

prophecy.<sup>61</sup> He was, however, the *prophesied Elijah*, meaning the one who came in the spirit and power of Elijah as the forerunner to the Messiah. J. H. Bernard states:

In a sense, John the Baptist was the Elijah of Jewish expectation, and so Jesus declares (Matt. 11:14; cf. Luke 1:17), but in the sense in which the Jewish emissaries put the question, '*Art though Elijah?*' the true answer was *No*; for, while the Baptist fulfilled the preliminary ministry of which Malachi had spoken, he was not Elijah returned to earth in bodily form.<sup>62</sup>

c. John also denies he is "the Prophet." This refers to the belief in some quarters of Judaism that the prophet like Moses promised in Deut. 18:15-19 was a figure who would arise before the Messiah and was distinct from Elijah.

(1) Klink states:

The Jewish tradition conceived of all sorts of "prophets" who would appear before the coming of the messiah (cf. Matt 16:14; Mark 6:15; Luke 9:19; 1 Macc 4:46; 14:41; 4 Ezra 2:18), but the traditions were inconsistent and did not provide a clear picture overall. However, there was more specific belief and hope that "the Prophet," a new prophet, would be sent to the assistance of Israel, though it too was still inconsistent and unclear. The "Prophet" was given greater emphasis in Samaritan and Qumran literature.<sup>63</sup>

(2) Whatever they believed about the relationship of "the Prophet" to the Messiah, the people in Jn. 6:14 and 7:27 declare that Jesus is the Prophet (see also, 1:45). And that is true; he is the prophet promised by Moses. This is certain from the fact Peter applied Deut. 18:15, 18 to Jesus in Acts 3:22-23 when speaking to the people in the temple. Stephen implied that same connection in Acts 7:37 where he quoted Deut. 18:15 when defending his faith in Christ. But as Jesus is the Messiah, the idea circulating in Judaism that the "the Prophet" was distinct from the Messiah was mistaken.

d. The delegation presses him to describe positively who he is so they can report back to those who sent them. John identifies himself as the one spoken of in Isa. 40:3: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

(1) Isaiah spoke of an unidentified voice calling out for a way to be prepared in the wilderness, for a highway in the desert to be supernaturally contoured, in anticipation of God coming to his people in their captivity in Babylonia. It is a word of encouragement implying their deliverance from captivity. John Goldingay remarks,

This is not in the first instance a road for Israel to travel but a road for Yahweh to travel. In verses 9-11 it will become more explicit that Yahweh is to make a

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<sup>61</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 118-119.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 76.

<sup>63</sup> Klink, 129.

journey back to Jerusalem (but bringing the exiles, too) and part of the background to this picture may be the conviction that Yahweh had left the city in 587 B.C. (see Ezek. 10-11). But the background prior to that is the picture of Yahweh's coming from afar through the desert to act in power on the people's behalf (30:27-33).<sup>64</sup>

(2) This coming of God to free his people from Babylonian captivity foreshadowed his coming in the person of Jesus, the Word incarnate, to free his people and then all others from the spiritual captivity of Satan. John is the divinely appointed voice calling out to prepare the way for Jesus' appearance in terms of his public ministry, a preparation that involves urging people to repent that they may be receptive to the truth of Jesus.

e. Rather than understand v. 24 as saying that the delegation had been sent from the Pharisees, it is better to understand it as saying the delegation that was sent included Pharisees. As the REB renders it, "Some Pharisees who were in the deputation asked him" (see also, NIV, NAB). Klink states, "The more likely meaning is that 'some who were sent belonged to the Pharisees,' implying that some of the delegates were from the party of the Pharisees."<sup>65</sup> Köstenberger states, "Most likely, there was only one delegation of Jewish leaders, some of whom were Pharisees."<sup>66</sup> He elaborates, "While thus the delegation included some Pharisees, this does not mean that the Pharisees were responsible for sending out the delegation, since the Sadducees had a majority on the Sanhedrin. (Carson 1991:144)."<sup>67</sup>

f. Some Pharisees in the delegation ask him why he is baptizing given his admission that he is neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet. Despite the OT's silence on the matter, "[t]hey viewed baptism as an eschatological rite to be performed by a leader in the last days."<sup>68</sup> Since John denied he was one of the great eschatological figures anticipated in Judaism, they want to know by what authority he is baptizing Jews. Notice that the apostle John assumes his readers were familiar with the fact John baptized.

g. The Baptist does not answer them, but instead he refers to the one to whom his ministry, including his baptism, pointed. He tells them that there is already among the people one who is far greater than he, implying that this one is the Messiah, whose ministry will largely follow his. But they do not know him, do not recognize him for who he is.

h. The apostle John specifies the location where this interaction took place: in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The phrase "Bethany beyond the Jordan" is obviously intended to distinguish this Bethany from the more familiar Bethany, the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, which was about two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. The Bethany to which John here refers is unknown to us.

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<sup>64</sup> John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, UBC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 224.

<sup>65</sup> Klink, 130.

<sup>66</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 63 (citing Ridderbos, Morris, Carson, and Beasley-Murray, to which one could add Bruner, Kruse, Osborne, Mounce, and Klink).

<sup>67</sup> Köstenberger, 63 (fn. 24).

<sup>68</sup> Robert H. Mounce, "John" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 10:378; see also, Morris, 123; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 102.

## 2. John the Baptist bears witness to Jesus (1:29-34)

**29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" 30 This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." 32 And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."**

a. The next day, John sees Jesus coming toward him and says, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" As indicated in v. 32, John previously had seen the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove and remain, so he already knew, from that fact and what God had revealed to him about its significance (v. 33), that Jesus was the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. We know from the Synoptics that the Spirit descended on Jesus when John baptized him, but the writer (the apostle John) does not mention Jesus' baptism. He seems to take that knowledge for granted.<sup>69</sup>

b. There is a question about what the Baptist meant in saying Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It seems obvious on this side of the cross that it is a reference to his sacrificial death in atonement for sin, but "before the coming and death of Jesus, [the Lamb of God] was not an obvious messianic designation."<sup>70</sup>

(1) If John knew Jesus' work involved his dying, it is puzzling why he later questioned whether Jesus was "the one who is to come" when he was sitting in Herod's prison (Mat. 11:2-3; Lk. 7:18-20). It seems that question was motivated by a disappointed expectation that the Messiah would depose the forces of evil rather than be a victim of them, which fits with John's emphasis on the judging aspect of the Messiah's role (Mat. 3:11-12; Lk. 3:16-17). Since Jesus had not deposed the forces of evil, but rather left John to endure an unjust imprisonment, John wonders if he possibly misunderstood who Jesus is. The question is how he could know Jesus would die as a sacrifice and be caused to doubt he was the Messiah by his failure to eliminate injustice.

(2) Perhaps John's question from Herod's prison reflected an expectation (or hope), developed or highlighted in the pain of his suffering, that, whatever the Messiah's "endgame," he in the interim would fight injustice in the society. In other words, maybe John knew that Jesus *ultimately* would be sacrificed as the Lamb of God but assumed he would be more active or aggressive in battling evil political powers prior to that time. In that case, Jesus' seeming complacency was causing the disconnect rather than the continuation of evil itself.

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<sup>69</sup> "The writer seems to assume that we know about it." Tom Wright, *John for Everyone – Part 1* (London: SPCK, 2002), 12.

<sup>70</sup> Carson (1991), 148.

(3) It is very likely that "Lamb" would invoke the image of sacrifice, even if not tied to a specific text or event, and the language of taking away the sin of the world signifies a substitutionary atonement.<sup>71</sup> Morris comments, "'Jesus bears the consequence of human sin in order that its guilt might be removed' (Hoskyns). It is removed completely, carried right off."<sup>72</sup> This is the center of Christ's work.

c. John declares that Jesus is the one of whom he was speaking when he said, as reported in 1:15, "After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me." Though Jesus' earthly life and public ministry began after that of John, he is of greater status or significance than John because he in fact existed before John. He is the Word incarnate who was present at creation.

d. As a relative, John certainly knew Jesus personally for years, but he did not know Jesus' true identity before it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit visibly descending and remaining on Jesus. God, the one who sent him (v. 6), had told him that the one on whom the Spirit descends and remains is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Kruse states, "In contemporary Jewish belief the Messiah was to be the bearer of God's Spirit, so John was being told how to identify the Messiah."<sup>73</sup>

e. The Baptist says that the purpose for which he was sent by God to baptize was that Jesus might be revealed to Israel, meaning revealed as the Messiah. The good news relating to Jesus began in earnest with Jesus' public ministry, which was launched by the ministry of John the Baptist. John's baptizing ministry is frequently presented in the NT in this initiating role (e.g., Mat. 3:1-17, 11:12; Lk. 3:1-20, 16:16; Jn. 1:6-8, 19-36; Acts 1:22, 10:37, 13:24).

f. John declares that he has seen and borne witness that Jesus is "the Son of God" or "the Chosen One of God" (v. 34), there being a question about the original text. Based on the stronger manuscript evidence, most English versions accept "the Son of God." The first and most obvious meaning that this deep and rich phrase would have for the Baptist's audience is the Messiah.<sup>74</sup> "It is significant that the titles 'the Christ (Messiah)' and 'the Son of God' stand in apposition as virtual synonyms in 20:31."<sup>75</sup> Nathanael in 1:49 uses "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel" as virtual synonyms. The term points to a close personal relationship with the Father and in the Lord's case carries implications of deity.

### 3. Jesus' initial connection with some disciples (1:35-42)

**<sup>35</sup> The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup> and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What are you seeking?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where**

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<sup>71</sup> Morris, 130.

<sup>72</sup> Morris, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Kruse, 82.

<sup>74</sup> Wright, 12-13.

<sup>75</sup> Kruse, 83-83.

are you staying?"<sup>39</sup> He said to them, "Come and you will see." So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour.<sup>40</sup> One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.<sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).<sup>42</sup> He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).

a. This first contact between Jesus and some of his disciples in Judea is not mentioned in the Synoptics. They report only the later call Jesus issued to Peter, Andrew, James, and John at the Sea of Galilee to journey permanently with him, which was after John the Baptist was dead (Mat. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; cf. Lk. 5:1-11). That was when he told them he would make them "fishers of men," more active agents in his work of rescuing people from sin and death by calling them into God's kingdom. They now would be proclaimers of the gospel. With hindsight, Peter, Mark's primary source, may have viewed that call in Galilee as a pivotal stage in their discipleship.

b. The next day, John repeated his testimony about Jesus as the Lamb of God, and two of his disciples heard him. Verse 40 tells us that one of those disciples was Andrew, Peter's brother, but the other is not identified. He may well have been John the son of Zebedee, the author of the Gospel. That is the traditional identification.

c. The two disciples followed Jesus, who at some point turned and asked them, "What are you seeking?" or "What do you want?" In response, they address him as "Rabbi," which John explains for the sake of his Greek readers means "Teacher." Carson states, "[A]t this point in the century . . . the title was used as a courtesy honorific, applied by respectful people to those they recognized as public teachers of divine subject matter."<sup>76</sup> In asking him where he is staying, the disciples are asking for an audience with him, to be able to spend time with him and learn from him. When Jesus says, "Come and see," he was inviting them to a time of personal engagement. They stayed with him that day, and John notes in v. 39c that it was about the tenth hour (4 p.m.) when they came to his place (the "for" placed at the beginning of the clause in KJV, RSV, NAS, and ESV is not in the Greek text).

d. After their personal time with Jesus, which no doubt confirmed the hopes they had from John's identification, Andrew straightaway found his brother Simon and told him "We have found the Messiah" (a term for which John provides the Greek translation, Christ). He brought Simon to Jesus, who announced that he shall be called Cephas, which means Peter.

(1) Peter's given name at birth was the Aramaic name *Shim'on*, which is transliterated into Greek both as *Simōn* (Σίμων) and *Simeōn* (Συμεών). These Greek names are transliterated into English as Simon and Simeon, respectively.

(2) Jesus' nickname for Simon probably was the Aramaic word *kēphā'*, which means "rock." That word was transliterated into Greek, the language in which John was writing, as *Kēphas* (Κηφᾶς). And *Kēphas* is transliterated into English as Cephas.

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<sup>76</sup> Carson (1991), 155.

(3) The Greek equivalent of Simon's Aramaic nickname was *Petros* (v. 42), a word that originally referred to a smaller loose stone, but which came to be used interchangeably with *petra*, a word that normally referred to a large rock or rock formation. *Petros* is transliterated into English as Peter. So Peter is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *translation* (*Petros*) of the Aramaic nickname (*kēphā*), and Cephas is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *transliteration* (*Kēphas*) of the Aramaic nickname. Peter is most often referred to in the NT simply as Peter, but sometimes in the Gospels and in 2 Pet. 1:1 his given name and his nickname are combined, yielding Simon (or Simeon) Peter.

#### 4. Philip and Nathanael come to Jesus (1:43-51)

**<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."**

a. The next day, Jesus decided to go from Judea to Galilee. He found Philip, who was from Bethsaida, as were Andrew and Peter,<sup>77</sup> and said to him, "Follow me." Bethsaida was a town near the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee just east of the Jordan River. Like the others before him, Philip becomes convinced Jesus is the Messiah, and as Andrew had recruited Peter, Philip finds Nathanael and informs him that Jesus of Nazareth is the one Moses (referring to Deut. 18:18) and the prophets had written about, meaning the Messiah. We learn in Jn. 21:2 that Nathanael was from Cana in Galilee, the very place where Jesus was heading.

b. When Philip identified the Messiah as Jesus *of Nazareth*, Nathanael was skeptical because of the insignificance of Nazareth. He asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Carson comments:

As Galileans were frequently despised by people from Judea, so it appears that even fellow Galileans despised Nazareth. Nathanael's scathing question probably reflects more than local rivalry between villages. From John's perspective, the fact Jesus was reared in Nazareth not only obscured his origins in Bethlehem for those who did not search very far (7:41-42, 52), but also reflected the self-abasement of the man from heaven. He was known as 'Jesus of Nazareth' or 'Jesus the Nazarene'

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<sup>77</sup> Though originally from Bethsaida (v. 44), Peter and Andrew lived in nearby Capernaum as adults (Mk. 1:21, 29; Mat. 8:5, 14).

(cf. Mt. 2:23), not 'Jesus the Bethlehemite', with all the royal, Davidic overtones that would have provided. Some years later, Christians could be contemptuously dismissed as the 'Nazarene sect' (Acts 24:5).<sup>78</sup>

c. Philip invites him to come and see Jesus and then to assess the claim himself. As Nathanael was coming toward him, Jesus said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" Jesus knows that Nathanael is an honest and sincere person, a man who is not duplicitous or underhanded, because he has supernatural insight into the nature of people. As noted in 2:25, Jesus "needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man." Accordingly, Nathanael's coming to see Jesus is, despite his skepticism, a genuine seeking, not a pretense of seeking. And since Nathanael knows his own integrity and forthrightness, he is struck by how Jesus could know that about him without having met him.

d. Jesus further displays his supernatural knowledge by telling Nathanael he saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him. This impresses Nathanael so much because it obviously was something Jesus would have had no natural way of knowing. Given his honesty and sincerity, his genuineness, that display, in conjunction with Philip's testimony, caused Nathanael to confess Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

e. Jesus tells Nathanael that he will witness greater displays from him than the supernatural insight he has just demonstrated. He then says (v. 51) to Nathanael and the others listening ("you" is plural), "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." This is a reference to Jacob's experience in Genesis 28.

(1) On his way to Haran, Jacob came to Luz, which he renamed Bethel (meaning House of God), where he had a dream of a ladder or staircase reaching to heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending (Gen. 28:20-22). The Lord appeared to him in the dream and told him that the covenant blessings would be fulfilled through him and that he would continue to be with him and would bring him back to the land he was leaving. The next day Jacob anointed a stone to commemorate the event and committed himself to God.

(2) Jesus is saying that Nathanael and others will see through their association with him that he is the bridge between heaven and earth, the ultimate vehicle of God's revelation. It will be shown to them (they will "see" that he has this function and significance) throughout the Gospel of John that Jesus is *the* revealer of heavenly things. Here is how Morris states it:

In this passage the place of the ladder is taken by "the Son of Man." Jesus himself is the link between heaven and earth (3:13). He is the means by which the realities of heaven are brought down to earth, and Nathanael will see this for himself. The expression then is a figurative way of saying that Jesus will reveal heavenly things, a thought that is developed throughout this Gospel. Philip's view of Jesus (v. 45) is true but inadequate. Jesus is indeed the fulfiller of prophecy, but he is

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<sup>78</sup> Carson (1991), 160.

also the Son of man, the revealer of God, the means of establishing communication between earth and heaven.<sup>79</sup>

f. It is likely that Nathanael is the apostle identified in the Synoptics as Bartholomew. Köstenberger comments:

Since the name "Nathanael" is not mentioned in the Synoptics, it is likely that this was the personal name of Bartholomew (Bar-Tholomaios = son of Tholomaios), who is linked with Philip in all three Synoptic apostolic lists (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; though not in Acts 1:13) yet is not mentioned in John's Gospel (Leidig 1980). Since "Bartholomew" was a patronymic, it is very plausible that this man was also known by another name (Morris 1995:143; Hill 1997:47; cf. Carson 1991:159).<sup>80</sup>

## B. The public ministry of Jesus: signs and teaching (2:1-12:50)

### 1. The wedding feast at Cana (2:1-12)

**On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup> Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. <sup>3</sup> When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup> Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. <sup>9</sup> When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup> and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." <sup>11</sup> This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. <sup>12</sup> After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.**

a. The promise of v. 51 begins to be fulfilled almost immediately, "on the third day." Including the day the promise was uttered as the first day, "on the third day" means two days later.<sup>81</sup> On that day, Jesus and his disciples, presumably the five mentioned in 1:35-51 (Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciple of v. 35), attended a wedding in Cana at which his mother was also present. Given that Cana was only about eight miles northeast of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, his family was no doubt friends with or relatives of the family of the bride and/or groom.

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<sup>79</sup> Morris, 149-150.

<sup>80</sup> Köstenberger, 79-80.

<sup>81</sup> Köstenberger, 91.

b. "This may not have been the first day of the wedding, since weddings lasted for a whole week (see Judg. 14:12), and it is unlikely that the wine ran out immediately."<sup>82</sup> When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine." Köstenberger remarks, "At a cultural level, running out of wine was considered to be a major social faux pas, since the host was responsible to provide the wedding guests with wine for seven days."<sup>83</sup> Whether as a relative or an assisting friend, Mary (she is not named in this Gospel) felt an obligation to attempt to remedy the situation. In informing Jesus of the problem, she was making an implied request, hoping he would take care of it.

c. Jesus addresses his mother as "Woman." That is his normal, polite way of addressing women (Mat. 15:28; Lk. 13:12; Jn. 4:21, 8:10, 19:26, 20:15), but it is unusual for a son to address his mother that way without some qualifying term, like "dear woman." NET note states, "It probably indicates that a new relationship existed between Jesus and his mother once he had embarked on his public ministry. He was no longer or primarily only her son, but the 'Son of Man.' This is also suggested by the use of the same term in 19:26 in the scene at the cross, where the beloved disciple is 'given' to Mary as her 'new son.'"

d. A literal rendering of John's report of Jesus' reply is, "What to me and to you?" NET note states:

The phrase . . . is Semitic in origin. The equivalent Hebrew expression in the Old Testament had two basic meanings: (1) When one person was unjustly bothering another, the injured party could say "What to me and to you?" meaning, "What have I done to you that you should do this to me?" (Judg 11:12, 2 Chr 35:21, 1 Kgs 17:18). (2) When someone was asked to get involved in a matter he felt was no business of his, he could say to the one asking him, "What to me and to you?" meaning, "That is your business, how am I involved?" (2 Kgs 3:13, Hos 14:8). Option (1) implies hostility, while option (2) implies merely disengagement. Mere disengagement is almost certainly to be understood here as better fitting the context (although some of the Greek Fathers took the remark as a rebuke to Mary, such a rebuke is unlikely).

e. Jesus then comments, "My hour has not yet come." It is widely understood that "hour" or "time" is a reference to the hour of his glorification in his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

(1) To quote the NET notes again:

The Greek word translated *time* (ὥρα, *hōra*) occurs in John 2:4; 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28, 29; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:25; and 17:1. It is a reference to the special period in Jesus' life when he was to leave this world and return to the Father (13:1); the hour when the Son of man is glorified (17:1). This is accomplished through his suffering, death, resurrection (and ascension - though this last is not emphasized by John). John 7:30 and 8:20 imply that Jesus' arrest and death are

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<sup>82</sup> Köstenberger, 91.

<sup>83</sup> Köstenberger, 93.

included. John 12:23 and 17:1, referring to the glorification of the Son, imply that the resurrection and ascension are included as part of the "hour."

(2) I think Jesus is taking the opportunity of being called upon to provide for this wedding feast to give a hint about his true identity and role and to turn his upcoming action into a pointer to that identity and role. Though he will now supply what is needed for this feast, as Mary's following instruction shows she understood, the time of his providing for the ultimate feast, the messianic banquet, is the future hour of his glorification, the time of his death, resurrection, and ascension.

(3) Carson comments: "Jesus remembers that the prophets characterized the messianic age as a time when wine would flow liberally (e.g., Je. 31:12; Ho. 14:7; Am. 9:13-14; cf. 2 Baruch 29:5; 1 Enoch 10:19). Elsewhere he himself adapts the wedding as a symbol for the consummation of the messianic age (e.g., Mt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13)."<sup>84</sup> The miracle he does is thus a revelation of his "glory" (2:11) both in what it demonstrates of his power and how it points to his coming glory in "purchasing" the messianic banquet through the cross.

f. Mary tells the servants to do *whatever* Jesus tells them to do, recognizing that he may meet the challenge in unexpected ways, but I doubt she is expecting a miracle, as John says (2:11) that this miracle was the *first* of his signs. Rather, she is relying on the resourcefulness of her oldest son to take care of business, as she had learned to do in the years since her husband, Joseph, had died.<sup>85</sup>

g. At the site, there were six stone jars, each with a capacity of twenty or thirty gallons, that held water used for ritual purification, such as cleansing the hands of the guests and perhaps the utensils. Jesus instructs the servants to fill the jars with water, meaning some of the water had previously been used so the jars were no longer full, and the servants, who would draw water from a nearby well, filled them to the brim. The volume of water involved highlights the magnitude of the miracle. Jesus then tells them to draw some out and take it to the "master of the feast," probably an honored guest selected to preside over the festivities, which role included the regulation and distribution of wine.<sup>86</sup>

h. When the master of the feast tasted the water that at some point had been turned to wine, he was unaware of its origin and thus unbiased in his assessment of it. The servants, on the other hand, knew that what they brought to him had been water only a few moments earlier. Not only did the Lord turn the water into wine, but he turned it into high quality wine. So much so that the master of the feast registered his surprise with the bridegroom, the family putting on the feast. He remarked that everybody on such occasions leads with the good wine and then later, after much drinking has dulled the palate, brings out the poor wine, but the bridegroom brought out the good wine when the feast was well along.

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<sup>84</sup> Carson (1991), 172.

<sup>85</sup> Osborne, 43.

<sup>86</sup> Klink, 167; Köstenberger, 98.

i. The reason Jesus provided such a great quantity of wine was not for people to drink without restraint. He may have intended the excess as a wedding present to the newlyweds, but he almost certainly intended to magnify the miracle he performed and perhaps to point to himself as the kingdom bringer. Kruse notes:

In the OT abundant wine (and oil or milk) are signs of the age of fulfillment [citing Jer. 31:12; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13-14]. Jesus' conversion of such a large quantity of water into wine would indicate the long-awaited kingdom of God had arrived. God himself had drawn near in the person and ministry of Jesus, and the fulfillment of the promise of abundant blessings was beginning to be fulfilled.<sup>87</sup>

j. John identifies this as "the first of [Jesus'] signs" and states that in it Jesus manifested his glory. As I said, it does so both in what it demonstrates of his power and how it points to his coming glory in "purchasing" the messianic banquet through the cross. The remark that "his disciples believed in him" (v. 11c) means their conviction about his identity was intensified. Mounce states, "The faith that John speaks of in the present context is an ever-deepening trust on the part of the disciples rather than their initial step of faith in following Jesus."<sup>88</sup>

k. Osborne comments on v. 12:

Finally, in a brief side note (2:12), John tells us that Jesus went down from Cana in the hill country of Galilee to Capernaum (about 16 miles away) with his disciples, his brothers (mentioned again in 7:1-5; Mark 6:3 names them as "James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon") and his mother. This may have been a transition to his move to Capernaum around this time, for we know from the Synoptics that near the start of his ministry Jesus made Capernaum the headquarters (Matt 9:1, "his own town") for his Galilean ministry. That was a natural move, for Capernaum was a central fishing village on the lake with a major north-south thoroughfare passing through it.<sup>89</sup>

2. Jesus in Jerusalem for Passover (2:13-25)

**13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. 15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22**

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<sup>87</sup> Kruse, 94-95.

<sup>88</sup> Mounce, 388.

<sup>89</sup> Osborne, 45.

**When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.<sup>23</sup> Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.<sup>24</sup> But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people<sup>25</sup> and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.**

a. The clearing of the temple reported by John occurs early in Jesus' ministry, whereas the clearing of the temple reported in the Synoptics occurs at the end of his ministry. Many scholars claim there was only one temple-clearing event which occurred at the end of Jesus' ministry and that John relocated it to the beginning of his ministry to make a theological point. But there are good reasons for thinking that "John is reporting a different event from the Synoptics, and that there were thus two of these incidents, one at each end of Jesus' ministry."<sup>90</sup> This was the view of most commentators throughout history,<sup>91</sup> and among modern commentators it is the view of Carson, Morris, Köstenberger, Mounce, Osborne, and Klink.<sup>92</sup> Carson states, "In short, it is not possible to resolve with certainty whether only one cleansing of the temple took place, or two; but the arguments for one are weak and subjective, while the most natural reading of the texts favors two."<sup>93</sup>

b. Around Passover Jesus went to Jerusalem. "The 'Passover' takes place three times in John at 2:13-23, 6:4, and 11:55 (cf. 19:14), suggesting that the ministry of Jesus took place for at least two years (hence, the typical understanding of a three-year ministry of Jesus)."<sup>94</sup> In the temple, referring to the entire temple complex, Jesus found in the outer courtyard, the court of the Gentiles, the money changers and those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons. They provided for pilgrims the animals necessary for sacrifice at the temple and the form of currency that was prescribed for temple payments (Tyrian coinage, because of the high purity of its silver).

c. Jesus, in righteous anger, fashions a whip and drives them out of the temple declaring to those who sold pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." Unlike the Synoptics, where the rebuke was for turning the house of prayer for all nations into a robbers' den, implying dishonesty, here the rebuke centered on turning his Father's house into a market.<sup>95</sup> The objection is to their presence. Though these services needed to be provided at a place convenient to the temple, "A 'convenient' place need not be within the temple precincts."<sup>96</sup>

d. Jesus' action reminded his disciples, at some point, of Ps. 69:9, "Zeal for your house will consume me." Kruse comments: "Here the psalmist speaks of being consumed

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<sup>90</sup> Allan Chapple, "Jesus' Intervention in the Temple: Once or Twice?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58:3 (2015), 546.

<sup>91</sup> Blomberg (2001), 88.

<sup>92</sup> For a full discussion, see the article by Chapple noted above and Lydia McGrew, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Gospel of John and Historical Reportage* (Tampa, FL: DeWard Publishing, 2021), 283-296.

<sup>93</sup> Carson (1991), 178.

<sup>94</sup> Klink, 179.

<sup>95</sup> Morris, 171-172; Osborne, 48; Mounce, 392; Klink, 180; Michaels, 160.

<sup>96</sup> Morris, 172.

with zeal for God's house and how this brought down upon him the antagonism of his fellows. Jesus, like the psalmist, and like Phineas, Elijah and Mattathias before him (Nu. 25:6-13; 1 Ki. 19:10, 14; Sirach 48:1-4; 1 Maccabees 2:23-26), was consumed with zeal to preserve God's honor."<sup>97</sup>

e. The Jews, meaning the temple authorities, ask him to show them a sign sufficient to establish that he has the authority from God to take such audacious action in the temple. They probably were asking for him to perform an impressive miracle. Jesus points them cryptically to the sign of his resurrection, saying, "Destroy this temple," referring to his body, "and in three days I will raise it up." Kruse notes:

The sign Jesus offered the temple authorities was in effect the same as that he offered the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 12:39-40: "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."<sup>98</sup>

f. The authorities take him to be referring to the literal stone temple and point out that it had taken forty-six years to build it. They are referring to the massive reconstruction project that was begun by Herod the Great in 20/19 B.C. and was not completed until A.D. 63, just seven years before the Romans destroyed it.<sup>99</sup> Forty-six years from 20/19 B.C. means the present encounter occurred in A.D. 27/28 (there being no year zero). They are incredulous that he could claim to rebuild it in three days, but of course, they are not about to tear the temple down to test it. According to Matthew (26:61, 27:40) and Mark (14:58, 15:29), Jesus was later falsely accused of claiming that *he* would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, but only John reports the source of this claim.

g. When Jesus was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered Jesus' words, "and they believed the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken." This means that after the fact they understood the Scripture and Jesus' statement as predictions of his resurrection and believed them because they had witnessed their fulfillment. It is not that they *disbelieved* the Scripture and Jesus' statement prior to his resurrection but simply that they did not grasp their meaning to be able really to believe them. Carson observes, "No specific Scripture is cited; perhaps John is thinking of a number of passages that promise the vindication of the Messiah, or more specific ones (e.g., Ps. 16:8-11, cited by Peter in Acts 2:25-28) at which we can only guess."<sup>100</sup>

h. We see in v. 23 that Jesus was performing signs while he was in Jerusalem for this Passover Feast and that many people believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. But their faith appears to have been shallow or inadequate because Jesus,

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<sup>97</sup> Kruse, 100.

<sup>98</sup> Kruse, 101.

<sup>99</sup> Though Herod's construction replaced the existing temple, it is conventionally viewed as a new version of the prior Second Temple rather than as a Third Temple.

<sup>100</sup> Carson (1991), 183.

having divine insight into the true nature of their belief, was unwilling to entrust himself to them. "R. H. Lightfoot points out that it is 'only a first attraction to the Lord (cf. 4<sup>45,48</sup>), and does not yet know Him as the Son of man, still less as the unique Son of God, and is therefore imperfect and liable to be overthrown; and of this He, the Word, is well aware.'"<sup>101</sup>

### 3. Jesus and Nicodemus (3:1-15)

**Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."**

a. A Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council (Sanhedrin), came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." The fact he came at night was "possibly because he wanted to avoid being seen by his fellow leaders in light of their opposition to Jesus (cf. 19:38) or because he wanted some uninterrupted time with Jesus."<sup>102</sup> He presumably is one of the many people in 2:23 who believed in Jesus' name when they saw the signs that he was doing. Those signs led Nicodemus and others to see him as a teacher from God, but that is far short of the essential truth. Bruner comments:

[T]he final and serious wound in Nicodemus's faith (and perhaps in the faith of the immediately preceding unbelievable believers) is *who* they believe Jesus is. The *Person* of Jesus Christ makes all the difference in the content of saving faith. Jesus *the wise Teacher* is not the person Jesus will "teach" in this Sermon. Jesus the Son of Man, *who came down from heaven* and who *alone* has access to heaven (v. 13), who is hung on wood like the saving snake in Israel (v. 14) – this heaven-sent hell-bent Jesus is the One who saves. If the content of believers' faith does

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<sup>101</sup> Morris, 181.

<sup>102</sup> Osborne, 52.

not graduate from Teacher to Savior there is no birth from above, there is no credible "faith" in the full Christian sense of the word.<sup>103</sup>

b. Jesus responds to Nicodemus's acknowledgement that he is a "teacher who has come from God" (NIV, NET) by addressing the fundamental issue of salvation. Knowing what was in people (v. 25), he cuts to the chase and declares that no one will see the kingdom of God unless he has been born again.

(1) "See" here means "enter," as v. 5 makes clear. Köstenberger remarks, "The expression 'see the kingdom of God' (elsewhere in the NT also in Mark 9:1 = Luke 9:27) means 'to participate in the kingdom at the end of the age, to experience eternal, resurrection life' (Carson 1991: 188; cf. Beasley-Murray 1999: 48)."<sup>104</sup> The phrase "enter the kingdom of God/heaven" is used repeatedly in the Synoptics.

(2) Jesus declares that being born "again" or "anew" is essential to receiving this blessing. He means it in terms of a new *spiritual* birth, a second birth so to speak (hence "again"), but Nicodemus takes him to be referring to a second physical birth.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps his view of his own religiosity blinded him to the possibility he needed a spiritual change so radical to warrant being called a new birth. Morris states:

There are references to proselytes who were admitted to the Jewish religion as being like children newly born. Nicodemus may have felt that the term appropriate to the Gentile as he entered the ranks of the chosen people was the last word that should be applied to one who was not only a Jew but a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin. So, not liking the way the conversation is going, he chooses to misunderstand.<sup>106</sup>

c. In response, Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He explains that the new birth that is essential for entering the kingdom of God is not a second physical birth from a human mother but a birth "of water and Spirit," a "birthing work" of the Spirit that occurs in conjunction with Christian baptism. Though many balk at the idea this is a reference to baptism, it is significant in that regard that in the very next scene (3:22-4:2) John reports that Jesus (through his disciples) was baptizing people. Many scholars understand the phrase "of water and Spirit" to refer to Christian baptism.

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<sup>103</sup> Bruner, 167.

<sup>104</sup> Köstenberger, 122.

<sup>105</sup> This misunderstanding does not require that the Aramaic phrase or term Jesus used had a double meaning like John's Greek word *anōthen*, which means "again" and "from above." See, e.g., David [no last name], "[The 'Born Again' Narrative in John 3: An Aramaic Impossibility? Well, No!](#)" (accessed on 1/30/22). McGrew states (p. 222):

[I]f the conversation did take place in Aramaic, Jesus may have spoken of the need to be born a second time, born anew, or something of the kind, and John may have chosen to translate this into Greek using a word that could *in principle* mean "from above" as an *added* play on words while giving quite a faithful representation of what Jesus historically said and not trying to convey that Jesus himself made such a play on words.

<sup>106</sup> Morris, 190.

(1) Barnabas Lindars states:

To be born of (lit. from) water and the Spirit can only mean 'as a result of', as in 1:13. The spatial idea has fallen into the background. It refers to an act, and that act can only be water-baptism and the giving of the Spirit which that conveys. It is not absolutely necessary to assume John is referring to the Christian sacrament of baptism when he uses the phrase. . . . But the impression that Christian baptism is meant is hard to resist.<sup>107</sup>

(2) J. Ramsey Michaels states:

It is more likely that born of water and the Spirit is a metaphor for baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit. . . . Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he cannot enter the kingdom of God unless he takes the step of initiation into the new community of faith forming itself around Jesus. He must leave the group he is in and join the new group by being baptized in water and the Holy Spirit.<sup>108</sup>

(3) Herman Ridderbos states:

The message of the kingdom was bound up from the beginning not only with the call to repentance but also with water baptism, in close connection with which the baptism of the Holy Spirit had been held out as the gift of the Coming One (cf. 1:33). Therefore, "water and Spirit" can be used together of the birth needed to enter the kingdom: baptism as the putting off of the old, the Spirit as the creator and gift of the new life.<sup>109</sup>

(4) Francis Moloney states:

In 1:29-34 the Baptist witnessed to one among them, but unknown, who would baptize "with the Holy Spirit" (1:33). Rebirth from above is thus marked by the continuation of the ritual of a baptism "of water," now perfected with the baptism of the Spirit brought by Jesus. . . . Seeing and entering the kingdom of God are consequences of a ritual of water that accompanies the gift of the Spirit.<sup>110</sup>

(5) D. Moody Smith, Jr. states, "Birth by water is almost certainly a reference to Christian baptism, which would be accompanied by the Spirit."<sup>111</sup>

(6) Wright states:

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<sup>107</sup> Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCBC, paper ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 152.

<sup>108</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 56-57. In his 2010 commentary (p. 184), he favors an interpretation that "does not exclude a baptismal reference, but allows the reader to think more broadly about 'water and Spirit' than simply the act of water baptism."

<sup>109</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 128.

<sup>110</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 92-93.

<sup>111</sup> D. Moody Smith, Jr., *John*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999) 95.

The new birth Jesus is talking about is the same thing that has been spoken of in 1:33. 'Water and spirit' here must mean the double baptism: baptism in water, which brings people into the kingdom-movement begun by John the Baptist and continued by Jesus' disciples (3:22; 4:1-2), and baptism in the spirit, the new life, bubbling up from within, that Jesus offers, which is the main thing that this whole book is about. . . . But the point of this passage is that this double-sided new birth, which brings you into the visible community of Jesus' followers (water-baptism) and gives you the new life of the spirit welling up like a spring of water in you (spirit-baptism), was now required for membership in God's kingdom.<sup>112</sup>

(7) David Wenham states:

When Jesus says in John 3:5 that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God," it is amazing that anyone sees the water as anything but baptismal. It is amazing given (a) the emphasis on baptism in John chapters 1 – 4, especially in chapters 3 and 4 where Jesus and his disciples are baptizing and thus "making disciples" (4:1), and (b) the evidence elsewhere in the New Testament that baptism was the normative way of becoming a Christian and that it was associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:12).<sup>113</sup>

(8) Mounce states:

[I]t is clear John intended *his* readers to understand ["born of water and the Spirit"] as a reference to Christian baptism and the resulting gift of the Holy Spirit. The immediate background is the testimony of John the Baptist regarding baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Spirit (see 1:33). Water baptism by itself is inadequate; it must be accompanied by what it signifies – the cleansing work of the Spirit. Far from teaching a doctrine of baptismal regeneration, this verse informs us that the initiatory rite of baptism is intended to lead to a life infused by the cleansing power of the Spirit.<sup>114</sup>

(9) Bruner states:

Even the Greek preposition used, *ek*, "[up out of] water and the Spirit," rather than *en*, "in [water]," suggests the immersion of baptism. . . . The New Birth occurs when a human being is moved to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by the divine Spirit through the Christian message (all of which will be laid out in some fullness in the coming Sonspell and Godspell of vv. 10-21) and so to seek public Christian initiation in baptism (see Acts 2:38 classically; also 1 Cor. 12:13).<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Wright, 30.

<sup>113</sup> David Wenham, "Paradigms and Possibilities in the Study of John's Gospel" in John Lierman, ed., *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 8.

<sup>114</sup> Mounce, 396.

<sup>115</sup> Bruner, 175-176.

d. At the time of this conversation, the gift of the Spirit was separated from the expression of faith in Christ made at baptism in that the sending of the Spirit was not until Jesus' crucifixion (Jn. 7:39), but the two still are linked in divine purpose. The reception of the Spirit in conjunction with baptism because of faith in Christ was delayed until Pentecost in fulfillment of God's purpose that the ascended Jesus be glorified as the one who pours out the Spirit. As disciples who had submitted to the pre-Spirit baptism administered in Christ's name (Jn. 3:22; 4:1-2; 7:39),<sup>116</sup> they were like the Samaritans in Acts 8 on whom the gift of the Spirit was delayed after their baptism, albeit for a different divine purpose.

e. Some commentators I respect reject the notion that the essential new birth, which Jesus describes as a birth "of water and Spirit," has anything to do with Christian baptism. They do so because they are convinced that, prior to Pentecost, Nicodemus would have no way of associating a "birthing work" of the Spirit with Christian baptism. I think that objection is overrated. Jesus reasonably could have expected Nicodemus to associate a transforming work of the Spirit with his baptism because: (1) The Pharisees were prepared for the Messiah to baptize with water (Jn. 1:24-25), (2) Jesus (through his disciples) was baptizing in water (3:22, 26, 4:1-2), (3) The OT connected water with the transforming activity of the Spirit (e.g., Ezek. 36:25-27), and (4) John the Baptist had proclaimed publicly that the one who was coming would *baptize with the Spirit* (Jn. 1:33; Mk. 1:8; Mat. 3:11).

f. Then Jesus tells him not to be surprised that he said to him, "You [all - plural] must be born again." Nicodemus is surprised and incredulous about that teaching, at least ostensibly because he cannot fathom how a rebirth can happen. Jesus tells him that he need not understand the "birthing work" of the Spirit to accept its reality or necessity. Like the wind, which one hears but does not know its origin or destination or reason for its direction, the Spirit produces effects in those born of the Spirit despite whatever mysteries surround his working.

g. Nicodemus remains incredulous. Whatever his blinders were, he does not see how what Jesus is telling him can be correct. At this point, Jesus indicates by a rhetorical question that as a teacher of Israel he *should* understand what he is telling him. Indeed, the need for renewal and regeneration by the Spirit is a theme in the OT (e.g., Isa. 44:3, 59:21; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:19-20, 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29; Ps. 51:10).<sup>117</sup>

h. Jesus goes on to chide Nicodemus for his resistance, whatever its source, because there is no excuse for not receiving Jesus' testimony, given that he, the unique Son (1:1-5, 10-15; 3:13), is one who knows and has seen. Klink remarks, "In light of the context

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<sup>116</sup> John Moschus, in his early 7<sup>th</sup> century work *Spiritual Meadow* (5.176), attributes to Clement of Alexandria (late second to early third century) the statement "Christ is said to have baptized only Peter, and Peter Andrew, and Andrew James and John, and they the others." Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 319-320. Augustine (late fourth to early fifth century) refers to those who believed the apostles were baptized by Christ and found that view more credible than the claim they had been baptized by John. Harry A. Echle, "The Baptism of the Apostles: A Fragment of Clement of Alexandria's Lost Work Ὑποτιπώσεις in the Pratum Spirituale of John Moschus," *Traditio* 3 (1945), 365-366. Echle states (p. 368), "Thus Clement's version of the baptism of the apostles found an echo down through the centuries in the East. Whether these later writers were influenced by Clement's Ὑποτιπώσεις or whether they and Clement obtained their information from the same unknown source cannot be determined."

<sup>117</sup> Kruse, 109; Köstenberger, 125.

of the Gospel, Jesus is referring to what he uniquely has seen and heard, what is uniquely his to know as 'the unique Son.' He is the one who has descended from heaven (v. 13) and has seen heaven (cf. 5:19-20)."<sup>118</sup> Regarding the plurals – *we* know, *we* have seen, *our* testimony – I agree with Kruse's assessment: "As there is no indication that the disciples are in view in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, it is best to take the 'we' to denote Jesus and his Father. This is in line with the fact that Jesus repeatedly says he speaks in the name of his Father and says what his Father commissions him to say (8:28; 12:49; 14:10; 15:15)."<sup>119</sup>

i. If Nicodemus's group ("you" is plural) does not believe the "earthly things" Jesus has told them (in telling Nicodemus), how can they believe if he tells them "heavenly things"? In other words, given they are balking at the necessity of being born again, being born of water and Spirit, which is an "earthly thing" in the sense it involves earthly beings and is done and experienced in this world, how will they accept the even grander truths about the nature and glory of the heavenly realm and its ultimate unification with creation in the new heavens and new earth?<sup>120</sup> Carson states:

But [the new birth] is 'earthly' in that it takes place here on earth when people are born again. More important, Jesus' teaching on the new birth is elementary. . . . if Nicodemus stumbles over this elementary point of entry, then what is the use of going on to explain more of the details of life in the kingdom? The 'heavenly things' are then the splendors of the consummated kingdom, and what it means to live under such glorious, ineffable rule.<sup>121</sup>

j. That Jesus speaks of what he knows and has seen and is in a unique position to tell them of heavenly things is reinforced in v. 13. "No one has ascended into heaven" refers, by way of texts like Deut. 30:12 and Prov. 30:4, to the fact no one has brought direct knowledge of heaven to earth by ascending and returning. The sense seems to be: No one has ascended *into* heaven [to bring direct knowledge of heaven to earth] but only<sup>122</sup> he who descended *from* heaven [has brought such knowledge]. Carson comments:

Only in heaven can true wisdom be found (cf. Pr. 30:4). But Jesus can speak of heavenly things, not because he ascended to heaven from a home on earth and then descended to tell others of his experiences, but because heaven was his home in the first place, and therefore he has 'inherently the fulness of heavenly knowledge' (Westcott, 1.53). He is *the one who came from heaven*; he is the revelatory *Son of Man*.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Klink, 201.

<sup>119</sup> Kruse, 109 (fn. 1). Keener (p. 560), says, "Jesus and the Father testified, but Nicodemus and his allies did not receive their witness (3:11)." Osborne (p. 55) opts for "Jesus and the Spirit."

<sup>120</sup> Kruse, 110; Osborne, 55.

<sup>121</sup> Carson (1991), 199; Klink states (p. 202), "The 'heavenly things,' then, would be not merely what has been inaugurated with the arrival of Jesus but the things that will arrive at the consummation of history, namely, heaven and the full-blown kingdom of God."

<sup>122</sup> On this rendering of *ei mē*, see Carson, 200.

<sup>123</sup> Carson (1991), 201; see also, Osborne, 55; Moloney, 95.

k. As the one who descended from heaven and speaks the truth to which he was uniquely privy in that heavenly realm, he indicates for Nicodemus the foundational truth of the new birth, the coming event that is the essential basis for mankind's eternal life. He tells him that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

(1) In Num. 21:5 the Israelites once again spoke against God and Moses saying, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." The Lord then sent poisonous snakes among them, and there being no antivenom or cure, anyone who was bitten had no hope of life; he was already dead, a dead man walking. The only time he had left was how long it took for the venom to kill him. And, in fact, many people of Israel died.

(2) The people came to Moses and said in 21:7, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he may take away the serpents from us." Moses prayed for the people, and rather than taking the snakes away, God told Moses to make an image of a poisonous snake and to set it up on a pole. He said that when anyone who had been bitten by a snake saw that snake replica on the pole, he would live. Verse 9 says, "So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live."

(3) There is a sense in which all mankind has been bitten by a deadly serpent. All have sinned through the influence of the evil one, the ancient serpent, and as a result all at one time were without hope of life; we were dead men walking. Jesus says in vv. 14-15 that he must be "lifted up," which as will become clear, is a reference to his being lifted up on the cross (e.g., 12:32-33) and the glorious exaltation that accompanies it. Carson comments, "John makes it clear that Jesus' return to the glory he had with the Father before the world began (17:5) is accomplished by being 'lifted up' on the cross. It is the exaltation that draws people to him (8:28; 12:32)."<sup>124</sup> Jesus is going to be sacrificed as the true atonement for sin. And whoever "looks at" him in the sense of seeing him through the eyes of faith, believing in him, will be healed, freed from certain death that our sin had brought upon us.

#### 4. John's comments (3:16-21)

**<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."**

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<sup>124</sup> Carson (1991), 201.

a. Because ancient texts had no quotation marks, it is not always clear where the words of a quoted speaker end and the author's resume. A large majority of scholars recognize that vv. 16-21 are John's commentary motivated by the words of Jesus he has just provided. Carson states: "Some argue that Jesus' monologue extends to the end of v. 21. But vv. 16-21 read more plausibly as the Evangelist's meditation. For instance, the expression 'one and only' (*monogenēs*) is a word used by the Evangelist (1:14, 18; cf. 1 Jn. 4:9), and is not elsewhere placed on the lips of Jesus or anyone else in this Gospel. Nor does Jesus normally refer to God as *ho theos* ('God')." <sup>125</sup>

b. God's love for humanity is such that he gave his only Son – Jesus, the Word incarnate – as an atoning sacrifice for humanity, that whoever accepts him for who he is shall not perish, shall not fail to be rescued and thus die in his sin, but shall have eternal life. However things may appear in the difficulty and darkness of life in this fallen world, this fact establishes once for all and forever that God is for us, that he seeks our good and desires to bless us. Regarding the eternal life that is promised to those who believe in Jesus, Kruse states:

Eschatologically speaking, 'eternal life' is life of the age (to come), which is the literal meaning of *zōē aiōnios*. Understood in the light of Christ this involves a changed perspective, for eternal life is now understood to be something that may be experienced in part in the present age: 'I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life' (5:24). This is in line with the nature of primitive Christian eschatology: God's plans were inaugurated through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and will be consummated at his return as the Son of Man. In the Synoptics this is expressed in terms of the kingdom of God, which is already present but yet to come in its fullness. In Paul it is expressed in terms of salvation – believers are already saved, presently being saved, and yet to be fully saved. But in the Fourth Gospel this primitive Christian eschatology is expressed in terms of eternal life experienced now and consummated in the resurrection. <sup>126</sup>

c. Verse 17 echoes the provision of eternal life by the Son in that God did not send the Son to condemn the world. That was not the purpose of his coming. The world did not need any help in being condemned; it accomplished that on its own with flying colors. Rather, he was sent as the means of rescue from the condemnation the world had earned through its sin. Whoever believes in Jesus, accepts him for who he is, is delivered from the condemnation they deserve, but whoever does not believe in him is condemned already, meaning they remain in their lostness, their preexisting state of condemnation, <sup>127</sup> precisely because they have rejected its only solution.

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<sup>125</sup> Carson (1991), 203.

<sup>126</sup> Kruse, 112.

<sup>127</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 185, says the idea here "is the necessity of escaping an already existing condemnation."

d. The Spirit's verdict, his assessment (through John) of the reaction to the incomparable truth that the glorious light of God came into the world in the person of Jesus, is that many people rejected him. They loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. In other words, they were living in sin and did not want to accept the truth of Jesus because that would mean accepting his morality as authoritative, as true light, the result of which would be the exposure of their works as evil, the end of denials and rationalizations. They had hardened their hearts toward God; their descent into sin had made them averse to the truth.

e. On the other hand, whoever "does the truth," whoever through God's enablement and acceptance of his working conforms his life to the truth of God, not only resists living wickedly but comes to the light, accepts the truth of Jesus, that it may clearly be seen that this is God's work in his life. So those who have hardened their hearts will not believe, and those who have learned from God to love truth will believe in Jesus.

#### 5. John the Baptist exalts Jesus (3:22-30)

**<sup>22</sup> After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. <sup>23</sup> John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized <sup>24</sup> (for John had not yet been put in prison). <sup>25</sup> Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. <sup>26</sup> And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness-- look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him." <sup>27</sup> John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup> You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' <sup>29</sup> The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. <sup>30</sup> He must increase, but I must decrease."**

a. Sometime after the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus and his disciples went to the Judean countryside, presumably near the Jordan River, where he remained with them some time and was baptizing. John's Gospel is the only one that mentions Jesus' baptizing activity. John 4:2 specifies that it was Jesus' disciples who were doing the actual baptizing, but the fact 3:22, 26 attribute the baptizing to Jesus means his disciples were performing the baptisms on his behalf, in his name. That does not rule out the possibility that Jesus had earlier baptized one or more of his disciples personally. That would make sense, and as noted above (fn. 116), there is some support for this in early church tradition.

b. Many claim that the baptism Jesus administered was a temporary continuation of *John's baptism*, which they use to explain why the Synoptics do not mention it, but there is no evidence that John ever delegated his baptizing role to another. Moreover, the claim flies in the face of the author's emphasis on Jesus' uniqueness and supremacy, the fact John's disciples complained that so many people were going to Jesus for baptism (3:26), which they would not do if he were acting as John's agent, the fact John responded to their complaint by saying Jesus is the bridegroom who must increase while he (John) decreases, and the statement in 4:1 that *Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John*.

c. I think the baptism being administered by the disciples was a kind of Christian baptism in that submission to it was motivated by faith in and identification with Jesus as the Messiah, pursuant to John's testimony. They were identifying as disciples of Jesus (4:1). But there is a sense in which it was anticipatory of the fuller experience that characterized baptism after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Borchert comments:

[W]e must not forget that the evangelist had just finished relating the Nicodemus encounter and that the discussion there was centered on birth by water and the Spirit (3:5). Whatever else may be suggested by these verses, it seems quite clear at this point that he wanted the reader to understand precisely that baptism was affirmed by Jesus. But as this story unfolds, it is certainly not the baptism of John the Baptist that seems to be advocated.<sup>128</sup>

Bruner is worth quoting at length here:

The water of John 3:5 is baptismal water and, as that text made clear, that water is joined intimately with the New Birth-working gift of the Holy Spirit. Hence when we will read again that Jesus (through his disciple band, 4:1-2) "*was baptizing,*" we know that Jesus and his disciples were giving the kind of trust-creating message we have just heard, which leads those who entrust themselves to Jesus to come to the commitment of public baptism. (And notice the *real-water* ambience of the next verse, v. 23, the first verse in transition to John the Baptist's Valedictory: "*Now John, too, was baptizing – at Aenon near Salim, because there was a lot of water there.*")

The time Jesus spent with his disciples, therefore, he also spent with truth-seekers and truth-doers, like Nicodemus, who came to talk with Jesus. And when they said to him, "I believe you," they were not just sent away with a pat on the back and a prayer for blessing; no, they were baptized with and into the (promise of the) Spirit so that they became official and public members of Jesus' School, a group that will later be called and become the Church. While the Holy Spirit was not given in intended fullness until after Jesus' Passion (7:39; 20:22), we may be sure (in the light of our Sermon) that a pledge or promise of this Spirit was in some way given to those baptized by Jesus and his community before his Passion.<sup>129</sup>

d. If Jesus' disciples had submitted to a pre-Spirit baptism in his name, it provides context for the Lord's command to baptize in Mat. 28:19. As R. T. France explains:

There is, then, good reason to believe that baptism did not fall into disuse after the imprisonment of John, only to be reintroduced suddenly after the resurrection, but that it remained for Jesus, as it had been for John, the normal means of enrolling those who joined this eschatological restoration movement. Not only at the beginning, but throughout his ministry, Jesus was a second 'Baptist'. . . .

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<sup>128</sup> Borchert, 189.

<sup>129</sup> Bruner, 210.

When at the end of Matthew's Gospel Jesus sends his disciples out to "make disciples of all nations," the first element in that disciple-making is baptism, followed by teaching (these being the two participles which function together to specify the nature of "disciple-making"). In light of our previous discussion this may not have been the complete surprise which most commentators have to assume. Rather than introducing a new rite, oddly reminiscent of John's practice which, *ex hypothesi*, Jesus had earlier deliberately abandoned, the risen Jesus is in fact simply instructing his followers to continue with the practice which has throughout his ministry been the normal and expected visible form of "disciple making."<sup>130</sup>

e. This also explains why the initial disciples are not mentioned as being among those who were baptized on Pentecost. They had already been baptized in Jesus' name and received the Spirit as poured out by the ascended Lord.<sup>131</sup> It was the crowd that gathered around the disciples, those identified as "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem" (Acts 2:14), that Peter instructed to repent and be baptized. Those who accepted his message were baptized (Acts 2:41) and in so doing were added by God to *the already existing community of the redeemed* (Acts 2:41, 47).

f. The difficulty with thinking that baptism was an ongoing part of people's response to Jesus' message is in explaining why the Synoptics do not mention it. There is no easy answer. Perhaps the Synoptic material was influenced by latter-day followers of John the Baptist claiming that he was greater than Jesus. That might lead to ignoring information about Jesus baptizing because mentioning it may unduly divert the narrative by requiring an explanation of how his pre-Spirit baptism was not an imitation of John. Otherwise, it would provide the rivals "ammunition against the independence and authority of Jesus."<sup>132</sup>

g. John the Baptist was also baptizing at that time, and people were coming to him. We thus have a brief period of overlap between the completion of John's public ministry and the beginning of the Lord's. There is some uncertainty about the precise location of Aenon and Salim, but it is commonly thought to be near the modern Ainun, which lies east of Mount Gerizim and ancient Shechem.<sup>133</sup>

h. The note that John had not yet been put in prison is interesting, given there is no mention in this Gospel of John being put in prison. This suggests the author is aware of the comment in Mk. 1:14 that Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God *after* John was put in prison. Kruse remarks, "It appears that the Fourth Evangelist was aware of what Mark had written and felt the need to explain to readers of Mark's Gospel that the parallel ministry of John and Jesus occurred prior to John's imprisonment."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> R. T. France, "Jesus the Baptist?" in Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 107, 109.

<sup>131</sup> In that regard, they were like the Samaritans in Acts 8 on whom the gift of the Spirit was delayed after their baptism, albeit for a different divine purpose.

<sup>132</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 230.

<sup>133</sup> Keener, 576.

<sup>134</sup> Kruse, 119.

i. A discussion or dispute arose between some of John's disciples and an unnamed Jew over ceremonial washing or ritual purification. It may have focused on the implication of John's baptism for the traditional cleansing rituals of Judaism, but apparently in the discussion a contrast was made between Jesus and John. This prompted John's disciples to remark (or complain) to John that Jesus also was baptizing and that all the people were going to him instead of to John. This is the passing of the spiritual torch, as John's role as the witness or herald of Jesus closes.

j. John's response is beautiful. He notes that his role is set by what has been given to him from heaven, and the role he has been given is not that of the Christ but of the forerunner, the herald, of the Christ. The bride, the people of God, are to enter into a relationship with the bridegroom, the Christ, not with someone else. John is not the bridegroom but is like the friend of the bridegroom, one who serves the bridegroom to facilitate the wedding and who rejoices at the bridegroom's voice, meaning when the bridegroom appears to unite with his bride in marriage. That is the joy John feels in Jesus coming publicly to his people, and with his role completed, it is to be all about Jesus from this point forward.

#### 6. John's comments (3:31-36)

**<sup>31</sup> He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup> He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. <sup>33</sup> Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup> For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup> The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. <sup>36</sup> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.**

a. The author John now comments on the uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus. As the Word incarnate, the one who came to earth from heaven, he is different from and greater than all other people, including John the Baptist. Jesus told Nicodemus (3:11) that he speaks from a position of unique knowledge and experience. The author here echoes that in saying Jesus bears witness to what he has seen and heard in the glory of heaven. Klink comments, "[T]he unique origin of Jesus gives him (and makes him) the final 'Word' of God and the perfect 'witness' to the things of God."<sup>135</sup>

b. In saying "yet *no one* receives his testimony," John is using hyperbole.<sup>136</sup> He means his testimony is largely rejected, as the next verse makes certain (cf. 1:11, 3:11).

c. Whoever receives Jesus' testimony, accepts the truth that he brings into the world, sets his seal to the assertion God is true, meaning he approves that statement as true. Accepting Jesus' words as true is to agree that God is true because (v. 34a) "he whom God has sent utters the words of God." Kruse states, "To accept Jesus' testimony is to certify that God is

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<sup>135</sup> Klink, 221.

<sup>136</sup> See, e.g., Köstenberger, 139.

truthful, because Jesus, in his testimony to the world, passes on the message/words given him by God (cf. 7:15-18; 8:38, 46-47; 12:49; 14:10, 24; 17:8)."<sup>137</sup>

d. That Jesus utters the words of God is explained ("for") with the declaration "he gives the Spirit without measure," that is, "without using a measure."<sup>138</sup> Kruse states, "In context this can only mean that God gave his Spirit to the incarnate Jesus without limit or measure, *i.e.* in a full and unrestricted way."<sup>139</sup> Unlike the prophets, to whom later rabbis said God gave the Spirit by measure in accordance with the task he assigned to them, "Jesus has been given the Spirit without measure so that he speaks God's words continuously."<sup>140</sup> As the recipient of the Spirit in a full and unrestricted way, he is also the "distributor of the Spirit."<sup>141</sup> Köstenberger remarks, "In keeping with this notion, the Book of Revelation portrays Jesus as the one who holds the seven spirits of God (3:1; cf. 5:6)."<sup>142</sup>

e. One wonders how the Spirit functions in Jesus' life, given that he is God the Son, the Word incarnate, but clearly the Spirit plays a role. For example, Lk. 4:14a states, "And Jesus returned *in the power of the Spirit* to Galilee." It no doubt involves the mysteries of the incarnation, the fact a person of the Trinity became a human being, so that he is one person but with two distinct natures, divine and human. A good place to begin exploring the matter in more detail is Gerald F. Hawthorne, *The Presence & the Power* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991).

f. The Father loves Jesus, the Son, and has not only given him the Spirit without measure but has also placed everything in his hands (13:3, 17:7). The God-man has been supremely exalted by the Father. Indeed, Jesus is the way of eternal life in that whoever *believes* in him, whoever trusts that he is who he has been revealed to be, has eternal life, which life he will "see," enter into fully, at some future time. Conversely, whoever does not *obey* the Son, obedience being the inevitable concomitant of saving belief, will not inherit eternal life on that Day. Rather, he will experience the wrath of God that remains on him because of his unforgiven sin.

## 7. Jesus and the Samaritan woman (4:1-42)

### *a. The setting (4:1-6)*

**Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John <sup>2</sup> (although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), <sup>3</sup> he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. <sup>4</sup> And he had to pass through Samaria. <sup>5</sup> So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son**

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<sup>137</sup> Kruse, 123.

<sup>138</sup> Klink, 222.

<sup>139</sup> Kruse, 123.

<sup>140</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to St. John*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 162.

<sup>141</sup> Köstenberger, 139.

<sup>142</sup> Köstenberger, 139.

**Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.**

(1) When Jesus learned the Pharisees had heard that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John, he left Judea to go again to Galilee. The implication is that the Pharisees' knowledge of his rising popularity is what prompted him to leave, but we are not told why that motivated him. Maybe he was seeking to avoid the particular confrontation he knew that knowledge would produce because it would interrupt the timing of the divine plan. Or maybe he knew the Pharisees would use his proximity to John to inflame jealousy or resentment among John's disciples.

(2) As I already stated, Jn. 4:2 specifies that it was Jesus' disciples who were doing the actual baptizing, but the fact 3:22, 26 attribute the baptizing to Jesus means his disciples were performing the baptisms on his behalf, in his name. That does not rule out the possibility that Jesus had earlier baptized one or more of his disciples personally. That would make sense, and as noted above (fn. 116), there is some support for this in early church tradition.

(3) The statement in v. 4 that he had to pass through Samaria means that the route he chose, which "was the shortest and normal way people travelled between Jerusalem and Galilee,"<sup>143</sup> went through Samaria. Kruse adds, "However, in light of the narrative that follows (the conversation with the Samaritan woman and the Samaritan townspeople coming to believe in him), Jesus' need to go through Samaria may have been determined by the divine will as well as geographical factors."<sup>144</sup>

(4) John notes that the Samaritan town of Sychar was near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Genesis 33:18-19 and Josh. 24:32 locate this field at Shechem. John 4:20 indicates they were at the foot of Mount Gerizim. There is no reference to a well being dug by or for Jacob in the Bible, but it is conceivable that was done. It is also possible that Jacob's connection to the well was a traditional belief rooted in its proximity to Jacob's field in Shechem.

(a) A well located at the base of Mount Gerizim less than one-half mile southeast of ancient Shechem (Tell Balata, just east of modern Nablus) and about one-half mile south of the village of Askar, thought to be ancient Sychar, is accepted by Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Muslims as Jacob's well. It is now located in a Greek Orthodox Church which has been under construction since the early twentieth century.

(b) This well was mentioned in A.D. 333 by the Pilgrim of Bordeaux and in the mid-fourth century by Eusebius. Jerome indicated in A.D. 380 that a church had been built on the site. That church was destroyed in the seventh century and replaced by another church in the twelfth century. The Greek Orthodox Church bought the well and the surrounding property in 1885. In 1881 C. W. Barclay published dimensions of the well. The opening was 17.5 inches, the width of the well shaft was 7 feet six inches, and the depth of the

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<sup>143</sup> Kruse, 126.

<sup>144</sup> Kruse, 126.

well was 67 feet. The depth apparently has fluctuated as a man named Claude Conder found the depth in 1875 to be 75 feet.

(5) It was about noontime, a hot part of the day, and Jesus was sitting beside the well because he was weary from the journey. He probably was on day two of the trip, having walked all morning to reach Sychar. Morris remarks, "In speaking of the weariness of Jesus, our Evangelist points to his true humanity. While he consistently depicts the full deity of Jesus, he is insistent also that he really became man, with all that that means in terms of human limitation."<sup>145</sup>

*b. The conversation (4:7-30)*

<sup>7</sup> A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."<sup>8</sup> (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."<sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"<sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."<sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."<sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."<sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';<sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."<sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."<sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father."<sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.<sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."<sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"<sup>28</sup> So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people,<sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"<sup>30</sup> They went out of the town and were coming to him.

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<sup>145</sup> Morris, 228.

(1) A Samaritan woman, apparently alone, came to draw water from the well. Normally women would do so in a group in the morning or evening, when it was cooler, but this woman may have been avoiding other women because she had been shamed for her behavior.

(2) "In the culture of that day, it was strange for a man to initiate conversation with a woman in public, something noted by Jesus' disciples [in v.] 27."<sup>146</sup> But Jesus asks her to give him a drink. He does so, we are told in v. 8, because ("for") his disciples were not with him at the well; they had gone into the city to buy food. Otherwise, one of them would have obtained the water for him. He could not do it himself because, as the woman observes (v. 11), he has nothing with which to draw water from the deep well.

(3) The woman was amazed by Jesus' request, not only because it was strange for a man to initiate a conversation with a woman in public, but mainly because he was a Jew and she was a Samaritan. As v. 9b explains, Jews did not deal with Samaritans. (*Buying* food from them, as opposed to accepting food *given* by them, was an exception recognized by even the strictest Jews.)<sup>147</sup>

(a) The Jews viewed Samaritans as somewhat in between Jews and Gentiles. Polhill writes:

They were descended from the northern tribes of Israel, the old kingdom of "Israel" that had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Those who were not taken captive to Assyria but remained in the land intermarried extensively with the native Canaanite population and the peoples whom the Assyrians resettled in the conquered territory. These Samaritan descendants of the old northern tribes considered themselves still to be the people of God. They had their own form of the Pentateuch for their holy Scriptures, circumcised their sons, and built a temple on Mt. Gerazim to rival the one in Jerusalem (cf. John 4:20). The Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.) destroyed their temple and made them subservient to the Jews. Later liberated by the Romans from Jewish domination, they continued to worship God in their own independent manner and to look for the *taheb*, a prophetlike messiah who would restore the true worship on Gerazim, a messianic expectation based on Deut 18:15 (cf. John 4:25). The Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans is well-known. To the Jews the Samaritans were half-breeds and heretics.<sup>148</sup>

(b) Kruse comments: "There was a long and ongoing history of animosity between Jews and Samaritans, which meant that neither group welcomed contact with the other. Among Jews the name 'Samaritan' was used as a term of abuse for fellow Jews (8:48). The Samaritan woman was, therefore, amazed that Jesus asked her for a drink."<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Kruse, 128.

<sup>147</sup> Kruse, 128.

<sup>148</sup> John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 214-215.

<sup>149</sup> Kruse, 128.

(4) Jesus tells her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." That is, if she had understood the gift that God offers to mankind and recognized Jesus as the vehicle of that gift, she would have been the one doing the asking, and he would have given her the gift of God, which he refers to here as "living water."

(a) In normal parlance, "living water" meant fresh running water, especially that bubbling from a spring, but because of its great value and benefit in a desert climate it took on the metaphorical sense of a great spiritual blessing, the specifics of which varied with the context. Thus, Yahweh calls himself "the fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13) and is called "the fountain of living water" (Jer. 17:13). Zechariah 14:8 declares that on the day of the Lord "living waters" shall flow out from Jerusalem. The portrait of the redeemed in heaven in Rev. 7:9-17 ends with the statement (v. 17), "For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

(b) In vv. 13-14 Jesus indicates that the "living water" of which he is speaking is something that will be perpetually satisfying, a notion reinforced by the statement it will become a spring of water, and it will result in eternal life for those who receive it. It is all that is involved in granting eternal life, which includes the renewing gift of the Spirit, all of which is mediated by Jesus.

(5) The woman understands Jesus only at the surface level and is incredulous that he would claim to provide living water for her when he has no means to draw water from the deep well, which was supplied with living water from an underground spring. She suggests by her question that to claim he could provide fresh water at that site without resort to the well was to claim he was greater than Jacob because Jacob found it necessary to dig the well to provide water for himself, his family, and his livestock.

(6) Jesus tells her that he is talking about a different kind of water than what can be brought out of the well. The metaphorical water of which he is speaking will be perpetually satisfying and will result in eternal life. But she remains stuck in her misunderstanding and asks for this literal water that will keep her from ever being thirsty and eliminate the need to go to the well to draw it out.

(7) Jesus then asked her to go and get her husband. Osborne states, "Then Jesus made an abrupt change of direction – but again it was carefully calculated, for it forced her to come face to face not only with who she was (she already knew that) but with who he was."<sup>150</sup> The woman replied, "I have no husband," hoping to shut down any further conversation along those lines. But Jesus responded, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."

(a) Her statement that she has no husband is true, but it conceals the fact the man she now "has," in the same way she "had" her five husbands (i.e., in a

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<sup>150</sup> Osborne, 69.

sexual relationship), is not someone she had married. She is in an immoral sexual relationship with him.

(b) Jesus does not call out her sin only to awaken her to her spiritual need. In doing so, he is also revealing to her his supernatural knowledge of her situation to draw her toward the realization of who he is. He knows her complete and complicated marital history and her current living arrangement despite the fact she is a total stranger!

(8) His supernatural knowledge prompts the woman to acknowledge that he is a prophet, someone gifted with divine insight. And then she immediately deflects the conversation by mentioning a longstanding religious dispute, perhaps as a veiled justification of her immorality. Wright comments: "I was brought up to think that this mountain, here in Samaria, was God's holy mountain. But you Jews think yours is the right one.' Implication: we can't both be right, maybe nobody knows, maybe nothing is that certain, and maybe (the hidden punchline of the argument) the morality we were taught is equally uncertain."<sup>151</sup>

(9) Jesus takes her mention of the religious dispute as an opportunity to reveal his identity further. He responds authoritatively. Mark 1:22 says they were astonished at *how* Jesus taught, as one who had authority and not as the scribes (see also Mat. 7:29). The scribes apparently taught by citing previous teachers as authoritative voices in establishing the steps of their argument. This is like the way attorneys argue by appealing to various authorities to construct an argument. Jesus did not support his teaching with appeals to others. Rather, he taught based on his inherent and transcendent authority as the Messiah and Fulfiller of the Old Testament.

(10) Jesus makes clear in his response (v. 22) that, though the situation regarding the temple is changing, the Jews were in fact correct regarding the status of the Jerusalem temple. Kruse notes, "Jesus insisted that Samaritan worship on Mount Gerizim was worship based upon ignorance. Jewish worship in Jerusalem was based on knowledge because it was in line with the revelation of God to his people. They worshipped at the place God himself had chosen."<sup>152</sup> He "also insisted that God's purposes for salvation were being worked out through the Jewish people, not the Samaritans."<sup>153</sup>

(11) What Jesus tells the woman in vv. 21-24 is the starting point for appreciating that the new covenant did away with the material, external worship rituals of the Jewish temple. His words have major implications for Christian worship, but those implications are today largely unappreciated or ignored. In the following excursus, I expand on that.

## Excursus on the Implications for Christian Worship

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<sup>151</sup> Wright, 45.

<sup>152</sup> Kruse, 134.

<sup>153</sup> Kruse, 134.

The first thing to recognize is that worship in spirit and truth *in the sense Jesus means* is something new, something he is in the process of instituting that was not true of worship under the old covenant. This is clear from the fact he tells the woman in v. 21 that the *hour is coming* when God's people will worship him neither on Mount Gerizim nor at the temple in Jerusalem. He is referring to a time when the practice of worship will be changed.

He speaks of that same time in v. 23 when he says the *hour is coming*, repeating the identical phrase, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. The statements are parallel; the future hour when people will worship neither on Mount Gerizim nor at the temple in Jerusalem is the future hour when true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth. The parallels are readily apparent:

v. 21 – **the hour is coming when**  
you will worship the Father  
**neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem**

v. 23 – **the hour is coming . . . when**  
the true worshipers will worship the Father  
**in spirit and truth**

The fact Jesus in v. 23 follows the repeated phrase "the hour is coming" with the new phrase "and now is here" does not mean he is distinguishing the coming time when people will worship neither on Mount Gerizim nor at the temple in Jerusalem from the coming time when people will worship in spirit and truth. He is merely adding the fact that the future time to which he is referring has already begun to be ushered in by his life and ministry. The one who institutes the new way of worship is already on the scene. He does the same thing in Jn. 5:25 when speaking of the resurrection of the dead. He says there, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an *hour is coming*, and *is now here*, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Jesus makes clear in Jn. 5:28-29 that he is referring to the bodily resurrection of the dead at his return. As Kruse remarks, "Jesus could say not only that this hour was coming but also that it had 'now come', because through his life (and imminent death and resurrection) he had set things in motion that would culminate in the resurrection of the dead."<sup>154</sup>

Since this new practice of worship to which Jesus refers in John 4, what he labels worship in spirit and truth, is still something future that is only now being ushered in by him, whatever went before was *not* worship in spirit and truth in the sense Jesus means. And since the worship that went before, worship under the old covenant, was *not* worship in spirit and truth, we can be sure that worship in spirit and truth means something *other than* worshipping with a sincere heart and in accordance with God's directives (which is how we often take it).

We can be sure of that because worshipping with a sincere heart and in accordance with God's directives was not anything new; God always required that of his worshipers.

- Deuteronomy 6:5, cited by Jesus as the greatest command, says, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

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<sup>154</sup> Kruse, 153.

- Deuteronomy 26:16 states, "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul."
- Proverbs 15:8 declares, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him."
- Texts like Isa. 1:10-17, 66:1-4, and Amos 5:21-24 speak powerfully of God's revulsion over hypocritical worship, worship that is not heartfelt.
- In Mat. 15:7-9 (and Mk. 7:6-8) Jesus cited Isaiah's rebuke of hypocritical worship: "You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

So again, since God's people always were required to worship with sincere hearts and in accordance with God's directives, and since worship in spirit and truth represents a change, something new that Jesus is bringing about, it cannot refer to worshiping with sincere hearts and in accordance with God's directives. We, of course, *need* to worship with sincere hearts and in accordance with God's directives, but that is not what Jesus is talking about in John 4.

The next thing to see is that worship in spirit and truth is worship that is not restricted to a physical holy site. As I already noted, Jesus says in v. 21 that the *hour is coming* when God's people will worship him in a way that is not restricted to a physical holy site, neither Mount Gerizim nor the temple in Jerusalem. By the parallel statement in v. 23, he identifies that coming hour as the time when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. He notes in v. 23b that the Father is seeking such people to worship him. In other words, he tells her that God is now recruiting such true worshipers through Jesus' ministry. His disciples are the true worshipers whose worship will not be restricted to a physical holy site. Rather, their worship will rightly be done in whatever city, town, or village they are located.

The next thing to glean from the text is that worship in spirit and truth is required by the fact God is spirit. Verse 24 states, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The assertion "God is spirit" is not a random interjection that is unrelated to the remainder of the sentence. Rather, it gives the reason or basis for the statement that God must be worshiped in spirit and truth.

This relationship is widely recognized. For example, Köstenberger writes, "*Because* God is spirit, proper worship must be performed 'in spirit and truth'."<sup>155</sup> Mounce says, "It is *because* 'God is spirit' that those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."<sup>156</sup> According to Carson, the statement that God is spirit "serves as further explication and grounding for the

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<sup>155</sup> Köstenberger, 56.

<sup>156</sup> Mounce, 413.

reiterated truth that God's worshippers must worship in spirit and truth."<sup>157</sup> Klink states, "Worship is done in 'Spirit and truth' because God's essential nature is Spirit."<sup>158</sup>

In fact, verse 24 could be translated, "God is spirit, and [so] those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (see, e.g., Heb. 3:19; BDAG, 495). The conjunction can carry that meaning.

Since the fact God is spirit requires worship to be in spirit and truth (to be ideal), and since worship in spirit and truth cannot be restricted to a physical holy site, the fact God is spirit requires that worship not be restricted to a physical holy site (to be ideal). The logic can be set out this way:

- Because God is spirit, worship must be in spirit and truth (to be ideal).
- Worship in spirit and truth cannot be restricted to a physical holy site.
- Because God is spirit, worship cannot be restricted to a physical holy site (to be ideal).

How is the requirement that worship not be restricted to a physical holy site related to the fact God is spirit? The first step in answering that is to identify what is meant by the statement "God is spirit." I am with those commentators, ancient and modern, who understand that statement to mean that God the Father is a spirit-being, that he is a nonmaterial, nonphysical entity.

Ancient commentators expressing this view include Origen (third century), Didymus the Blind (fourth century), Hilary of Poitiers (fourth century), John Chrysostom (fourth century), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (fourth/fifth century).<sup>159</sup> Among modern commentators, Köstenberger states, "'God is spirit' does not refer to the Holy Spirit . . . much less to the human spirit . . . but identifies God as a spiritual rather than material being. The spiritual nature of God is taught clearly in the OT (cf. Isa. 31:3; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27)."<sup>160</sup> Morris says, "[Jesus'] meaning is 'God's essential nature is spirit.' . . . We must not think of God as material, or as bound in any way to places or things."<sup>161</sup> Keener states, "[John] merely intends that God is not physical. . . . God's nature is spirit rather than flesh."<sup>162</sup> Merrill Tenney states, "Jesus was endeavoring to convey to the woman that God cannot be confined to one place nor conceived of as a material being."<sup>163</sup> And Michaels says, "To say 'God is Spirit' is not so different from saying God is invisible (1:18; 6:46), incorruptible, not to be worshiped in the form of idols or images (Rom.

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<sup>157</sup> Carson (1991), 225.

<sup>158</sup> Klink, 245.

<sup>159</sup> Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 1-10*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), IVa: 160-161; Homily 33 of Chrysostom's *Homilies on the Gospel of John*.

<sup>160</sup> Köstenberger, 156.

<sup>161</sup> Morris, 240.

<sup>162</sup> Keener, 618.

<sup>163</sup> Merrill Tenney, "John" in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 9:56.

1:22; Acts 17:29), and that God does not live in temples made with human hands (Acts 7:48-49; 17:24)."<sup>164</sup>

As some of the quoted remarks indicate (as do several ancient comments I did not quote), because God is a spirit-being he is not confined to any physical location. So worship that is restricted to a physical holy site is suboptimal, less than ideal, because *it does not fit or correspond to God's nature as well as worship that is not so restricted*. The more fitting worship of a spirit-being is worship not dependent on an external, material circumstance like the existence of a physical holy site.

John Henry Bennetch, quoting Marcus Dods, states, "What does Christ mean by talking as He does to the Samaritan? The primary meaning seems obvious enough. 'God has not a body,' He is saying, 'and consequently is subject to none of the limitations and conditions to which the possession of a body subjects human persons. He needs no local dwelling place, no temple, no material offerings.'"<sup>165</sup> This is echoed by more recent commentators.

Carson states, "This means: (1) With the coming of Christ Jesus and the dawning of the new covenant, appropriate worship will no longer be tied to a specific geographical location. Implicitly, this announces the obsolescence of the temple. Worship will be as geographically extensive as the Spirit, as God himself who is spirit (4:24)."<sup>166</sup> Köstenberger states, "Worship in spirit and truth, then, is superior to worship at physical locations such as the temple for a number of reasons. (1) Such spiritual worship is commensurate to God's nature as spirit."<sup>167</sup> Jo-Ann A. Brant states, "Jesus continues to develop this theology by pointing out that 'God [is] spirit,' that is, God is not a physical being and so has no need for a physical building or temple worship, 'and it is necessary for those worshiping him [as spirit] to worship in spirit and truth' (4:24)."<sup>168</sup>

So Christ's work marks a shift in the kind of worship God accepts. The worship that is *required* in the new covenant (v. 24, those who worship him *must* worship in spirit and truth), worship "in spirit and truth," is worship *that is more consistent with the spiritual nature of God than the worship that was prescribed under the old covenant*, worship that is here typified by its dependence on the external, material circumstance of the temple in Jerusalem. It is worship that is decoupled from Jewish temple worship. Kruse remarks, "Worship 'in spirit and truth' is easy to understand negatively: worship is no longer tied to sacred sites."<sup>169</sup>

This more fitting, more desirable worship is called worship "in spirit and truth." The same preposition governs both spirit and truth which suggests the words encompass a single idea (even though they are probably not a formal hendiadys). It is worship in spirit and truth because

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<sup>164</sup> Michaels (2010), 253; see also, Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 88; Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 267; Grudem, 186-187; and Ben Witherington III, *The Indelible Image Volume Two* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 336.

<sup>165</sup> John Henry Bennetch, "John 4:24a: A Greek Study," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 107:425 (1950), 72-73.

<sup>166</sup> D. A. Carson, *For the Love of God: A Daily Companion for Discovering the Riches of God's Word, Volume 1* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 14.

<sup>167</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 429.

<sup>168</sup> Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 86.

<sup>169</sup> Kruse, 134.

it is worship in a "spirit manner," a manner that accords with the truth God is spirit. Morris writes, "The linking of the two nouns under a single preposition shows that they belong together. There is one complex idea. E. C. Blackman takes the expression as demanding worship 'conformable to the divine nature which is spirit, and determined by the truth which God has made available concerning himself.'"<sup>170</sup>

This means that, even though it was specifically commanded by God (e.g., Deut. 12:1-14), the localized worship in the Jerusalem temple was not the divine ideal but a temporary accommodation. That was not worship in spirit and truth, not the worship that God ultimately desired, but a temporary manner of worship preceding that of the new covenant.<sup>171</sup>

The fact the localized worship in the Jerusalem temple was not the divine ideal but a temporary accommodation raises the question of whether other aspects of worship under the old covenant also were accommodations and not the divine ideal. Specifically, were the external, material elements employed in the suboptimal worship at the Jerusalem temple (vestments, animals, musical instruments, incense) likewise suboptimal, mere shadows of a higher, more pleasing form of worship instituted by Christ? That certainly seems to be the case.

The writer of Hebrews makes clear in chapters 7-10 that, along with the old covenant itself, the ceremonies of old covenant worship – the external, material elements of that worship – have been superseded by the higher worship instituted by Christ. And various theologians of the early church saw that Christ's words in Jn. 4:24 not only removed geographical restrictions on worship but implicitly abrogated the system of sacrificial worship that was bound to the Jerusalem temple.

For example, Origen wrote in the middle of the third century:

And because the prescriptions of the law were obeyed both by Samaritans and Jews in a corporeal and literal manner, our Saviour said to the Samaritan woman, "The hour is coming, when neither in Jerusalem, nor in this mountain, shall ye

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<sup>170</sup> Morris, 239 (fn. 56).

<sup>171</sup> The fact the first Christians often were present in the temple courts (Acts 2:46-47, 3:1-3, 5:19-25, 5:42) need not mean they were still devoted to the temple cult. Referring to the presence of Christians in the temple in the early chapters of Acts, Craig Blomberg states in "The Christian and the Law of Moses" in I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 402:

Not one word of the text ever refers to the sacrifices, and what is mentioned adequately accounts for the references to temple and time. (1) The temple courts were the only place of adequate size in Jerusalem for so large a public gathering (note the contrast between 'temple courts' and 'homes' in 2:46). (2) It was an optimal site for witness and proclamation, as the unfolding events of chapter 3 demonstrate (see esp. v. 11). (3) 3 p.m. was also one of the fixed times of prayer, which is mentioned in the text (3:1), and which all would have participated in (vs. only a few who offered sacrifices on any given day). Pesch and Schneider are correct: 'According to Luke, "the temple for Christians is not a place of sacrifice, but, as for Jesus, a place of teaching and prayer" (cf. Luke 19:46f; Acts 2:46).

If at that time they *were* participating in the temple cult, engaging in its worship rituals, as many believe, it would mean they had not yet grasped the implications of the Lord's teaching and sacrifice not that the temple cult remained viable in the new covenant. Hebrews and other NT texts make abundantly clear that it does not. As Paul indicated in 2 Tim. 2:7, some insights from God are given in conjunction with pondering and theological reflection. Perhaps that was the case regarding the infant church's understanding of its relationship to the temple.

worship the Father. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." And by these words He taught men that God must be worshipped not in the flesh, and with fleshly sacrifices, but in the spirit.<sup>172</sup>

In the late fourth century, John Chrysostom wrote:

For the Gentile is both fleshly and in error, and the Jewish is true indeed, yet even this is fleshly. But that of the Church is the opposite of the Gentile, but more lofty than the Jewish by a great deal. For the mode of our service is not with sheep and oxen and smoke and fat, but by a spiritual soul, which Christ also shows in saying that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."<sup>173</sup>

Since Scripture is clear that musical instruments were a divinely prescribed part of the external, material worship rituals of the Jewish temple and were closely associated with the offering of sacrifices, this explains why the church did not worship with musical instruments for roughly its first 900 years.<sup>174</sup> Many theologians throughout history have recognized the significance of the new covenant's abrogation of temple worship on the use of musical instruments in Christian worship, including from the early centuries of the church, Eusebius, John Chrysostom, Niceta, Theodoret, and Isidore of Pelusium. To quote just one post-Reformation figure, John Girardeau, a professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, wrote in the late nineteenth century:

Those who have urgently insisted upon [Old Testament authorization for musical instruments in worship] have acted with logical consistency in importing priests into the New Testament church; and as priests suppose sacrifices, lo, the sacrifice of the Mass! Instrumental music may not seem to stand upon the same foot as that monstrous corruption, but the principle which underlies both is the same; and *that* whether we are content with a single instrument, the cornet, the bass-viol, the organ, or go on by a natural development to the orchestral art, the cathedral pomps, and all the spectacular magnificence of Rome. We are Christians, and we are untrue to Christ and to the Spirit of grace when we resort to the abrogated and forbidden ritual of the Jewish temple.<sup>175</sup>

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(12) The woman does not understand or is not sure of all that Jesus is saying. This prompts her to declare her confidence that the Messiah, the Christ, is coming and that he will explain everything. Whatever differences there were between Samaritan and Jewish concepts of the Messiah, Jesus ignores them and takes the opportunity to declare to her that he is

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<sup>172</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book VI, Chapter LXX (translation from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*).

<sup>173</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Homily II (translation from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*).

<sup>174</sup> See Ashby Camp, "[Beyond the Argument from Silence: A Covenantal View of A Cappella Worship](#)" (accessed on 1/30/22).

<sup>175</sup> John Girardeau, *Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1888), 79.

in fact the Messiah. Whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile, all people must come to him if they wish to receive the "living water."

(13) The disciples returned from buying food and were amazed to find Jesus speaking with the woman. As I said, men generally did not have conversations in public with women they did not know. But Jesus' mission takes precedence over that cultural norm. Though clearly curious, the disciples did not explore the matter. They rightly deferred to Jesus' judgment.

(14) Having been told by Jesus that he is the Messiah and having been impressed by his supernatural knowledge of her life, the woman leaves her water jar, so it will not slow her down, and goes to the nearby town to tell the people about him. She said to them, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

(a) If her coming alone at noon to draw water implied avoidance of others out of a sense of shame, her growing sense of Jesus' identity has produced quite a contrast. Now she is heading into town to gather people to come to him.

(b) Her claim that Jesus told her "*all* that [she] ever did" is obviously an exaggeration. It is a way of emphasizing the fact he had inexplicable insight into her life. She is still cautious but is moving toward the conviction that Jesus is who he said he is, the Christ.

(15) John reports that the people leave the town and are on the way to Jesus. He then focuses on the discussion between Jesus and his disciples that occurred in the meantime.

*c. Jesus instructs his disciples (4:31-38)*

**<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."**

(1) The disciples are urging Jesus to eat some of the food they had purchased, and he takes the opportunity to instruct them. He tells them he has food to eat that they do not know about, and they are baffled as to where he could have gotten food. Jesus then explains to them that the food of which he is speaking is to do the will of him who sent him and to accomplish his work. Kruse comments, "Jesus was saying that the most satisfying thing for him, his 'food and drink' as it were, was doing the Father's will and completing his work. . . ."

Satisfaction for us, as for Jesus, comes more from pursuing the will of God than from meeting our various physical needs (important as they are)."<sup>176</sup>

(2) There apparently was a proverbial saying reflecting the fact there was a substantial lag between the time of sowing and the time of reaping.<sup>177</sup> Jesus cites it to draw a contrast with the rapidity with which sowing the divine message can produce a harvest of souls. He tells them to lift their eyes to see that the fields are white for harvest, referring to the approaching horde of Samaritans who were prepared for harvest (converting) by the advance work (sowing) the woman had just done.<sup>178</sup> *Already*, i.e., with no significant lag, the reaper is reaping, action that is described as him receiving his wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, the latter meaning bringing the people into the blessing of eternal life.

(3) The result of this harvesting is that the sower and reaper rejoice together; they have a shared goal so there is not competition or hostility between them. In this case, the sower among the Samaritans, the one who prepared the approaching horde for harvest (conversion), was the woman in whom Jesus had sowed the word. As he indicates in v. 37, in terms of the spiritual harvest ("In this"), it is true generally that "one sows and another reaps." The one who will reap this harvest, who will actually convert those in whom the woman's word had germinated, is Jesus (and possibly also his disciples).

(4) Because of their embryonic belief in Jesus based on the woman's testimony about his supernatural knowledge (v. 39), the Samaritans invited him to stay with them, which he did for two days. Many more believed because of his word, now not only that he was a divinely insightful man who may be the Messiah, but that he was indeed the Savior of the world (v. 42). He was reaping the harvest from the word sowed among them.

(5) Having noted that, in contrast to earthly farming, sowing the divine message can produce a harvest rapidly, as with the Samaritans, Jesus cites another common saying to make the point that it is generally true in terms of the spiritual harvest that one sows and another reaps (v. 37). In keeping with that norm, he tells the disciples (v. 38), "I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

(a) Jesus sent the disciples to reap when he made them baptizers on his behalf (3:22, 26; 4:1-2). Michaels notes, "Evidently they were acting as his agents or representatives. While the verb 'send' was not used there, the idea was clearly present. This raises the possibility that sending them 'to harvest' is a metaphor for sending them 'to baptize.'"<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Kruse, 139.

<sup>177</sup> Keener (p. 625) states, "Many commentators think 'four months, then the harvest' was probably a proverb otherwise unknown to us."

<sup>178</sup> As Lincoln notes (p. 180), in this context, the fields that are ripe for harvesting refers "to the Samaritans who are about to meet Jesus." See also, Kruse, 139; Morris, 247 (fn. 84); Mounce, 415; Michaels (2010), 262; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 182.

<sup>179</sup> Michaels (2010), 266.

(b) In the reaping to which he has called them, he wants them to appreciate the labor of those who went before them and helped to bring the people to the point of harvest. Carson comments, "They have already been commissioned to significant ministry (4:2); here, they are told that their fruitfulness is possible because of the work of others before them."<sup>180</sup> That is not only fitting but also helps to keep a person from thinking more highly of himself than he should.

*d. Jesus and the Samaritan townspeople (4:39-42)*

**<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."**

(1) The woman's testimony that Jesus told her "all that [she] ever did" caused many Samaritans to have sufficient belief in him as a holy man and possibly the Messiah that they asked him to stay with them. He did so for two days.

(2) During that time, many more believed because of his word. As I said, they now believed not only that he was a divinely insightful man who may be the Messiah, but that he was indeed the Savior of the world (v. 42). Jesus was reaping the harvest from the word sowed among them, indicating already that his saving work was intended to transcend all human divisions.

*8. The healing of the royal official's son (4:43-54)*

**<sup>43</sup> After the two days he departed for Galilee. <sup>44</sup> (For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) <sup>45</sup> So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast. <sup>46</sup> So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. <sup>47</sup> When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. <sup>48</sup> So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." <sup>49</sup> The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." <sup>50</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. <sup>51</sup> As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. <sup>52</sup> So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." <sup>53</sup> The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. <sup>54</sup> This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.**

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<sup>180</sup> Carson (1991), 231.

a. Recall that Jesus left Judea for Galilee because his increasing fame was about to trigger a confrontation with the Pharisees that would interfere with the divine timing or be exploited to cause division (4:2-3). After his brief "detour" in the Samaritan town, he resumes that journey. A reader may wonder how going to Galilee, the region of his hometown (1:45-46), makes sense as a reaction to growing fame, the problem that precipitated his departure from Judea, so John notes the proverbial truth, acknowledged by Jesus, that a prophet has no honor in his homeland (v. 44).

b. I think two reactions are in play here, and there is some tension between them. Though one would expect a level of community pride in a local boy who made good, one also would expect familiarity to breed resistance to acknowledging his greatness, in keeping with the proverb. It is difficult for those who know a person well to accept that he can be vastly more special than they are. Because Galilee was Jesus' homeland, they welcomed him as one of their own, proud of whatever great things they had seen him do in Jerusalem at the feast (v. 45), which implies more happened there than was reported by John, but they were resistant to giving him his due. I think that is reflected in Jesus' words in v. 48: "Unless you see [plural verb] signs and wonders you will not believe."

c. Jesus returned to Cana, where he had turned the water into wine. In Capernaum, about 16 miles northeast of Cana (as the crow flies; travel by the Roman road would be significantly longer) on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee, there was an unnamed royal official, presumably someone in the administration of Herod Agrippa, king (technically a tetrarch) of Galilee and Perea. When he heard Jesus was in Cana, the official made the trek to ask him to come down to Capernaum to heal his son, who was gravely ill. He is desperate and has apparently heard that Jesus can perform miracles, which holds out hope for his son.<sup>181</sup>

d. Jesus responds with, "Unless you see [plural verb] signs and wonders you will not believe." Carson remarks, "These words, addressed to the Galileans at large and not just to the royal official (hence *you people* in NIV), dominate the account and reinforce the impression that the welcome the Galileans accorded Jesus was fundamentally flawed, based as it was on too great a focus on miraculous signs (v. 45; cf. 2:23-25)."<sup>182</sup> He adds: "In John's Gospel, too much interest in the raw miracles themselves is spiritually dangerous (2:23-25; 6:26). Miracles cannot compel genuine faith (*e.g.* 11:45-46). But the apologetic value of miracles, though often exaggerated, should not be despised: Jesus himself can encourage faith on that basis, especially among those too skeptical to trust his word (10:38; 14:11)."<sup>183</sup>

e. The official implores Jesus to come to Capernaum, assuming that would be necessary for him to perform the healing, but Jesus tells him simply, "Go; your son will live." The official took Jesus at his word, believed without seeing a sign, and departed for Capernaum. Some of his servants from Capernaum met him on his way back and informed him that his son was recovering. He found out that the change in his condition began at the very hour Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." The belief he had in Jesus' word is now reinforced and transmitted to the others in his household.

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<sup>181</sup> Carson (1991), 238.

<sup>182</sup> Carson (1991), 238.

<sup>183</sup> Carson (1991), 238-239.

f. John notes that was the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee. The first was the miracle of turning the water into wine at Cana (2:11). Carson comments, "John is not including the signs performed in Judea (2:23). Of those done in Galilee, this was but the second (cf. 2:11), though many Galileans had witnessed more while they themselves were in the south (2:23; 4:45)."<sup>184</sup>

9. Jesus heals an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-47)

*a. The setting and the healing (5:1-9a)*

**After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. <sup>3</sup> In these lay a multitude of invalids-- blind, lame, and paralyzed. <sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" <sup>7</sup> The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." <sup>8</sup> Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." <sup>9</sup> And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.**

(1) Sometime later, at an unidentified feast of the Jews, Jesus went back to Jerusalem. John mentions a pool in the city, located near the Sheep Gate, that in Aramaic is called Bethesda. It had five roofed colonnades.

(a) The Sheep Gate is known to be located north of the Temple Mount. The Copper Scroll from Qumran, which dates prior to A.D. 70, refers to Beth Eshdathayin, which means "House of the Twin Pools." Eusebius also identifies the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem as having twin pools, as does the Pilgrim of Bordeaux, and alludes to it being in proximity to the Temple area. This fits with five roofed colonnades in that there was one on each of the four sides around the perimeter of the two pools and one running between the two pools.

(b) Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, two large pools were found north of the north wall of the Temple Mount. They had been cut into rock and plastered. Many fragments of column bases, capitals, and drums were found which, in John McRay's words, "probably belonged to the five porches (i.e. porticoes or colonnaded walkways) of the pool John mentions."<sup>185</sup>

(2) Many disabled people – the blind, lame, and paralyzed – would lie in these covered colonnades around and between the two pools because, as indicated in v. 7, they believed the water could heal at certain times. Many later manuscripts include some

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<sup>184</sup> Carson (1991), 239.

<sup>185</sup> John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 187.

additional language at the end of v. 3 and a verse 4, but it is almost certainly not part of the original text. The NET note states:

The majority of later MSS (C<sup>3</sup> Θ Ψ 078 f<sup>1, 13</sup> ̄) add the following to **5:3**: "waiting for the moving of the water. **5:4** For an angel of the Lord went down and stirred up the water at certain times. Whoever first stepped in after the stirring of the water was healed from whatever disease which he suffered." Other MSS include only v. 3b (A<sup>c</sup> D 33 lat) or v. 4 (A L it). Few textual scholars today would accept the authenticity of any portion of vv. 3b–4, for they are not found in the earliest and best witnesses (̄<sup>66, 75</sup> ̄ B C\* T ̄ pc co), they include un-Johannine vocabulary and syntax, several of the MSS that include the verses mark them as spurious (with an asterisk or obelisk), and because there is a great amount of textual diversity among the witnesses that do include the verses.

(3) A man who had been disabled for 38 years was among those surrounding the pools. Jesus saw him and knew that he had already been there a long time, meaning he had been coming to the pool or been in that condition for a long time. In asking the man, "Do you want to be healed?" Jesus is not, as we often claim, asking if that is what he really desires, if deep down he would prefer to live with the familiarity of being a disabled person. The man clearly is eager to be healed, as he is at the pool in the hope of that happening. Rather, the question is intended to suggest to the man that Jesus is able to heal him. For example, if you said to someone who was desperate for a ticket to a championship game in some sport, "Do you want to go to the game?" you could, depending on your tone of voice, be intimating that you could arrange that. I think Jesus is seeking to awaken the man to the truth of his identity.

(4) The man takes the question, as we often do, as an inquiry into the sincerity of his desire, which prompts him to explain that it is not a lack of desire that keeps him from being healed but the fact his disability prevents him from entering the pool on his own, and he has no one to assist him so he can be the first to enter when the water is stirred. In other words, he shared the belief that healing was provided to the first person who entered the pool after the waters were stirred. Kruse comments, "Later tradition, reflected in the additions to the text in 5:3-4, attributed the stirring of the waters to an angel, but it is more likely to have been caused by the movement of subterranean water."<sup>186</sup> Köstenberger states, "Official Judaism almost certainly did not approve of the superstition associated with the alleged healing powers of the pool of Bethesda. After all, healing shrines were characteristic of pagan cults. Apparently, however, the authorities looked the other way, tolerating this expression of popular religion."<sup>187</sup>

(5) Without any indication of faith in this man, Jesus tells him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." He was healed immediately, by the powerful word of the Lord, and took up his bed, a mat normally made of straw, and walked. Osborne notes, "The healing was done apart from the pool, and it was not an angel but the Son of God who was at work."<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Kruse, 147. On the source of the stirring, see also, Köstenberger, 180; Borchert, 232; Mounce, 422.

<sup>187</sup> Köstenberger, 179.

<sup>188</sup> Osborne, 79.

*b. Objection that healing was on the Sabbath (5:9b-18)*

**Now that day was the Sabbath. <sup>10</sup> So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." <sup>11</sup> But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" <sup>12</sup> They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" <sup>13</sup> Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. <sup>14</sup> Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." <sup>15</sup> The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. <sup>16</sup> And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." <sup>18</sup> This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**

(1) The healing was on the Sabbath, and by carrying his mat, as Jesus had instructed him, the man was violating the Pharisees' interpretation of the divine command not to work on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:9-10, 23:12, 31:13-15, 34:21; Num. 15:32-36; Deut. 5:13-14; Neh. 13:15-19; Jer. 17:21-25). According to their oral tradition, as later codified in the Mishnah, the command prohibited one from carrying a load from one domain to another.<sup>189</sup> Though they recognized exceptions for defensive warfare and in matters of life and death,<sup>190</sup> these Jewish leaders gave no thought to the possibility that the prohibition was not intended to cover the case of a former cripple carrying his mat as visual testimony and in celebration of his miraculous healing. They tell the man, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed."

(2) The healed cripple defends himself by saying the man who healed him told him to take up his bed and walk, which prompts the leaders to ask for the identity of the one who gave him that instruction. The healed man did not know the identity of his healer, and since Jesus by that time had gone into the crowd, he could not point him out.

(3) Jesus later found the man in the temple and reminded him that he had healed him ("See, you are well!") to add weight to his admonition: "Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." He was calling him to surrender to God, to commit to a life of righteousness, that he not experience a judgment far worse than his prior disability. Osborne states:

Jesus challenged the man to get right with God lest he face divine judgment for sin, which is far worse than simple illness. This was more than a moral challenge. Jesus offered the man life from above (3:3, 5; so Whitacre). He had shown a glimmer of faith when he responded to Jesus' command by getting up and carrying his mat. Now he had to make the second step and turn from sin to God. He had to choose between life and judgment. There was no middle ground.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Köstenberger, 181; Kruse, 148-149; Osborne, 79-80.

<sup>190</sup> Keener, 642.

<sup>191</sup> Osborne, 80.

(4) The man goes to the Jewish leaders and identifies Jesus as the one who had healed him, and thus as the one who had instructed him to carry his mat on the Sabbath. The leaders then got after Jesus "because he was doing these things on the Sabbath," referring to the healing itself and the instruction to get up and carry the mat. Jesus responded to them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

(a) After completing (through the Word) his work of miraculously creating the founding state of the universe over the course of six days (Gen. 2:2-3; Ex. 20:11), the initial state from which subsequent states descended through secondary causes, God rested, meaning ceased, from that specific creative work. The writer of Hebrews explains that God's seventh-day rest at creation continues and points to the ultimate rest of God's people (Heb. 4:3-11).

(b) But it was understood that God at no time was *inactive* in creation but rather was perpetually at work in *sustaining* the creation, even on the weekly Sabbath days.<sup>192</sup> The consensus "was that God works on the Sabbath, for otherwise providence itself would go into weekly abeyance."<sup>193</sup> Or, as Bruce expresses the consensus, "God was active all the time, on sabbath days as much as on ordinary days."<sup>194</sup> In justifying his healing work on the Sabbath by appeal to the fact God works on the Sabbath without violating the commandment, Jesus was identifying himself with God in a way that would be improper for any mere mortal. Indeed, he was claiming God was his Father in a unique sense, one that allowed him to appeal to God's conduct as authorization for his own.

(5) This made the Jews want to kill him even more. Not only was he (in their eyes) breaking the Sabbath by healing and instructing the recipient of the miracle to take up his mat and walk, but he also was calling God his own Father in a sense that made himself equal with God.

### *c. The authority of the Son (5:19-30)*

**So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.<sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.<sup>21</sup> For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.<sup>22</sup> For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,<sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son,**

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<sup>192</sup> See, Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 114.

<sup>193</sup> Carson (1991), 247.

<sup>194</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 127. Brown states (pp. 216-217):

Verse 17 must be set against the background of the relation of God to the Sabbath rest. In the commandment concerning the Sabbath (Exod xx 11, but contrast Deut v 15) we have this explanatory clause: "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth . . . but on the seventh He rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath and made it holy." However, the theologians of Israel realized that God did not really cease to work on the Sabbath. There are a whole series of rabbinic statements . . . to the effect that Divine Providence remained active on the Sabbath, for otherwise, the rabbis reasoned, all nature and life would cease to exist.

**just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.** <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. <sup>25</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. <sup>26</sup> For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. <sup>27</sup> And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. <sup>28</sup> Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. <sup>30</sup> I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

(1) In response, Jesus tells them that he, the Son, acts not on his own initiative but strictly in accord with the will of God the Father. He does whatever the Father does and therefore is an in-the-flesh revelation of the Father. This unity of action is facilitated by the fact the Father loves him, the Son, and therefore shows him all that he himself is doing. So accusing Jesus of wrongdoing is a nonstarter because, accept it or not, he is the unique One, the Word incarnate, who in the words of Heb. 1:3, is "the radiance of the Glory and [the] exact representation of his nature."

(2) He adds that the Father is going to show him greater works than those he had already performed, meaning he was going to perform those greater works because he does whatever he sees the Father doing. When he does so, they, his detractors, will marvel. Among those greater works will be his raising of the dead and his exercise of judgment, both of which were understood to be the exclusive province of God. Köstenberger states, "The OT and Second Temple literature concur that raising the dead and giving life are the sole prerogatives of God. . . . [A]ccording to the Hebrew Scriptures, judgment is the exclusive prerogative of God (e.g., Gen. 18:25; Cf. Judg. 11:27; though see Ps. 2:2). . . . Rabbinic writings likewise ascribe judging the world to God alone."<sup>195</sup> So clearly, Jesus is not backing off the claim of a unique relationship with God.

(3) The identity of "the Judge" in the Gospel of John is complex and confusing but ultimately coherent. The solution lies in the different aspects of Christ's two comings and in his relationship with the Father. Jesus' first coming was not the final judgment but rather was a rescue mission. The purpose and intent were not to condemn but to save. Yet, inherent in that rescue mission is the condemnation of all who reject the way of salvation, all who refuse to trust in Jesus as he is revealed in the gospel. Jesus is the criterion of salvation and conversely the criterion of God's judgment. God will judge the world *by Christ Jesus* (e.g., Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). Jesus is the separator; people are saved or condemned based on their response to him. In executing the judgment of the Father at his second coming, based on the criterion of faith in him, there is a sense in which Jesus is judging (Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:42) – he is carrying out the judgment – but there is also a sense in which the judging is not his but the Father's because it is pursuant to the Father's will (Jn. 5:30). So Paul says in Rom. 14:10 that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God and in 2 Cor. 5:10 that we must all appear before

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<sup>195</sup> Köstenberger, 187-188 (regarding raising the dead and giving life, he cites Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7; Tob. 13:2; Wis. 16:13).

the judgment seat of Christ. I think that framework can account for Jn. 3:17-19; 5:22-32; 8:15-16, 26, 50; 9:39; 12:47-49.

(4) The Father's purpose in having the Son do these great works that will cause people to marvel is that *all* may honor the Son *just as* they honor the Father. Wow! And since the Father is honored as God, so is the Son to be honored, however they may be distinguished; the distinctions are not relevant to the honor owed. He adds, "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." To refuse to give the Son the honor he is due, which is the same honor due the Father, is to fail to honor the Father.

(5) Jesus tells them that whoever *hears* his message and *believes* him who sent him has eternal life. Since the word, the message, that Jesus delivers is the message of the Father who sent him (Jn. 7:16; 8:28, 38-40; 12:49-50; 14:10, 23-24; 15:15; 17:8), he is saying that whoever believes the word he speaks has eternal life. He will not be condemned on the day of judgment ("come into judgment") but has already passed from the realm of death to the realm of eternal life, which life will be realized in the resurrection at Christ's return, as he specifies in the next verses. Eternal life is the present destiny of those in Christ. Carson states:

This is perhaps the strongest affirmation of inaugurated eschatology in the Fourth Gospel. Nevertheless, it does not mean the Evangelist has adopted the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17-18), who insisted the resurrection had already taken place. The following verses (especially vv. 28-29) demonstrate that John still anticipates a final resurrection. But the stress on realized eschatology is typically Johannine.<sup>196</sup>

(6) Jesus says that a time (hour) is coming when the dead, all who are in the grave (tombs), will hear the voice of the Son of God (v. 25) / Son of Man (v. 27), return to life, and come out. He clearly is referring to the general resurrection of the dead that will occur at his return. As Kruse remarks, "Jesus could say not only that this hour was coming but also that it had 'now come', because through his life (and imminent death and resurrection) he had set things in motion that would culminate in the resurrection of the dead."<sup>197</sup>

(7) This will happen because, as the Father has life in himself and thus can bestow life, he has granted Jesus, the Word incarnate, also to have life in himself and thus to be able to bestow life. And having been resurrected, the formerly dead will be assigned to different fates depending on whether they had "done good" or "done evil," meaning whether they had been people of genuine faith, which is necessarily and inevitably reflected in one's life. Jesus' role in this assignment is because the Father has given him authority to execute judgment. The faithful, those who had done good, will enter the "resurrection *of life*," an eternal state of ultimate blessing. Those without faith, those who had done evil, will enter the "resurrection *of judgment*," an eternal state of punishment and sorrow.

(8) The judgment Jesus executes at that time will be perfectly just because it will be an expression of the judgment of the Father who sent him. As I said, in

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<sup>196</sup> Carson (1991), 256.

<sup>197</sup> Kruse, 153.

executing this judgment, there is a sense in which Jesus is judging (Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:42) – he is carrying out the judgment – but there is also a sense in which the judging is not his but the Father's because it is pursuant to the Father's will (Jn. 5:30). So Paul says in Rom. 14:10 that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God and in 2 Cor. 5:10 that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

*d. Witnesses to Jesus (5:31-47)*

**<sup>31</sup> If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. <sup>32</sup> There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. <sup>33</sup> You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. <sup>34</sup> Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. <sup>35</sup> He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. <sup>36</sup> But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. <sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, <sup>38</sup> and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. <sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. <sup>41</sup> I do not receive glory from people. <sup>42</sup> But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. <sup>43</sup> I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. <sup>44</sup> How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? <sup>45</sup> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. <sup>46</sup> For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. <sup>47</sup> But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"**

(1) Jesus has indicated (v. 24) that the message he delivers is the message of the Father who sent him, so if it were the case that his message about his identity was his alone, not a message from the Father, his testimony that it *was* from the Father would be untrue. The fact, however, is that there is another, namely the Father, who bears witness about him in what he gives Jesus to say, and Jesus knows innately, as the Word incarnate, that this testimony given to him by the Father is true. Carson comments:

He has already said in the strongest terms that all he says and does – including therefore his witness – is nothing other than a reflection of his perfect obedience to the Father. He says and does only what the Father wants him to say and do. His witness is therefore not simply his own witness; it is the witness of the Father. There is another who testifies in my favor (v. 32), he declares, and in the light of the preceding verses this 'another' must be the Father. . . . In this context the Father's witness is for others only indirectly, *i.e.* through Jesus, who speaks and does what his Father wishes.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Carson (1991), 259-260. In Jn. 8:14, Jesus is not referring to his general claim that his testimony is also the Father's but to the specific claim of 8:12 that he is the light of the world. That statement is true regardless of whether he is alone in making it.

(2) In terms of evidence of Jesus' identity that is independent of Jesus' testimony, they have the testimony of John the Baptist. "Not only had he borne witness to the delegation sent by the religious leaders of Jerusalem (1:19-28), but he had also publicly identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, the Spirit-anointed Son of God (1:29-34)."<sup>199</sup> Jesus notes that he needs no human confirmation of his identity; he knows who he is and his relationship with the Father. He is pointing them to John the Baptist's testimony for their sake, that they might believe the truth of who he is and thus be saved.

(3) John was a burning and shining lamp, one who illuminated the truth, and for a time he was popular among the people. He did indeed testify about Jesus, but Jesus says the works he is doing, works the Father has given him to accomplish, are an even greater testimony that the Father has sent him. Kruse states:

Far more important than the testimony of John was the testimony of the works Jesus performed; works he had been commissioned to do by the Father. Jesus referred frequently to these works (9:3, 4; 10:37; 17:4) and their evidential value (10:25, 37), and he encouraged those who doubted his words to believe him when they contemplated his works (10:38; 14:11). Nicodemus believed Jesus' works were evidence that God was 'with him' (3:2). Jesus said they were evidence that the Father had 'sent him'.<sup>200</sup>

(4) Evidence of Jesus' identity that is independent of Jesus' testimony includes not only the testimony of John the Baptist and the works that Jesus does but also the independent testimony of the Father. As Köstenberger observes, "By stating that 'the Father . . . he has borne witness concerning me,' Jesus may be referring to the voice at his baptism (Matt. 3:17 pars.), an event not explicitly mentioned in John, though the primary reference probably is to God's witness in Scripture."<sup>201</sup>

(5) Though they were not part of the generation that experienced the divine epiphany, saw something of God's form (Ex. 19:11, 16, 18; 24:16; Deut. 5:4), and heard his voice at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:9; Deut. 4:33, 5:24), they had received God's written word, but they have not allowed that word to abide in them, to sink into them. The proof is that they do not believe him, the one whom God has sent. Those very Scriptures testify about Jesus, and though they search them because they realize they are a key to eternal life, they refuse to come to Jesus to have the life they are seeking!

(6) Jesus tells them that he does not accept praise or honor from people in the sense he does not allow it to influence or direct him. He is motivated exclusively by his love of God, something his detractors are lacking, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. This is obvious from the fact he has come in his Father's name, has come as God's unique presence, and yet they do not accept him. On the other hand, if someone comes in

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<sup>199</sup> Carson (1991), 260.

<sup>200</sup> Kruse, 156.

<sup>201</sup> Köstenberger, 192. If he is referring to the voice at Jesus' baptism, the statement in the next clause (v. 37b) that they had never "heard" his voice would mean they never accepted it.

his own name, someone merely posing as God's man, they accept him readily enough. That would not be the case if they truly were motivated by a love of God. Kruse comments: "In OT times the people of Israel often embraced false prophets while persecuting the ones sent by God. In NT times Theudas and Judas the Galilean were accepted as Messiahs and led people in futile revolt against the Romans (Acts 5:36-37). . . . 'The Jews' were taken in by false Messiahs, but rejected their true Messiah."<sup>202</sup>

(7) A bar to their accepting him for who he is, which is tied to their lack of love for God, is their preference for praise from men over praise from God. The popular, and we would say the "politically correct" thing in terms of the Jewish leadership, was to deny who Jesus is. Only those who love God and seek to please him, who put the highest priority on praise from him, are willing to swim against the popular current.

(8) Jesus concludes his response by telling them that their comfort in their rejection of him, their lack of concern about him as a potential accuser of them before God, ignores the fact there is someone else who will accuse them before God for their rejection of him, someone regarding whom they are very concerned, namely Moses. They set their hope on Moses as God's faithful messenger, and it was this very Moses who wrote about Jesus. So Moses will accuse them to the Father because in rejecting Jesus they were rejecting his word. And given their exaltation and trust of Moses, if they do not believe what Moses wrote about Jesus, there is no way they are going to believe what Jesus says.

#### 10. The feeding of the five thousand (6:1-15)

**After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. <sup>3</sup> Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. <sup>5</sup> Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" <sup>6</sup> He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" <sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.**

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<sup>202</sup> Kruse, 158.

a. The scene now shifts from Jerusalem, the site of the healing of the invalid, to the Sea of Galilee with no mention of the journey there or indication of the amount of time that has elapsed. Köstenberger says, "As much as half a year may have passed since the previous event recorded in John."<sup>203</sup> John gives the alternate name for the Sea of Galilee because by the time he wrote his Gospel it was known popularly as the Sea of Tiberias, the effect of Herod Antipas having founded a city on the southwest side called Tiberias.<sup>204</sup> Jesus is moving from one location at the Sea of Galilee to another, and a large crowd follows him because they saw the signs he was doing on the sick. According to Lk. 9:10-12, they are in a remote region some distance (presumably east) from Bethsaida. John notes that it was soon before the Passover.

b. There are some seeming inconsistencies with this account of the feeding of the five thousand and those in the Synoptics, but as McGrew states, "It is quite possible that such apparent contradictions are subject to reasonable harmonization."<sup>205</sup> For example, after teaching the crowds most of the day, a fact John omits, Jesus and his disciples retired to the nearby hills,<sup>206</sup> a fact the Synoptics omit, perhaps hoping to signal to the crowd that it was time for them to disperse. But instead, the large crowd came toward them, at which time the disciples urged Jesus to send them away so they could go buy food in the villages. Jesus said to the disciples, "You give them something to eat" (Mk. 6:37), intending to remind them of the miracle in 2 Ki. 4:42-44. When it became apparent they were missing the point, Jesus may have turned to Philip (because Philip, being from Bethsaida, was familiar with the area) and said, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" The disciples may have asked incredulously, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" (Mk. 6:37), to which Philip added, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little."

c. The details of harmonization aside, after Jesus tested Philip with his question, Andrew tells him that a boy is present who has five barley loaves (probably pita-sized flatbread about eight inches in diameter and an inch thick) and two fish (dried or smoked), which Andrew notes is nothing given the size of the crowd. Jesus instructs the disciples to have the people sit down, there being about five thousand men, and after giving thanks for the loaves, distributed them to everyone. He did the same with the fish, and the people had as much food as they wanted. As in the account of Elisha, so much food was provided there were leftovers, which were gathered up, presumably for future use.

d. Those who realized what had been done said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world," referring to the prophet promised by Moses. This is certain from the fact Peter applied Deut. 18:15, 18 to Jesus in Acts 3:22-23 when speaking to the people in the temple. Stephen implied that same connection in Acts 7:37 where he quoted Deut. 18:15 when defending his faith in Christ. But as Jesus is the Messiah, the idea circulating in Judaism that the "the Prophet" was distinct from the Messiah was mistaken.

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<sup>203</sup> Köstenberger, 199.

<sup>204</sup> Köstenberger, 199.

<sup>205</sup> McGrew, 146.

<sup>206</sup> Carson (1991, 268) says, "The Greek *to oros* does not necessarily refer to a particular mountain or hillside, but may simply mean 'the hill country' or 'the high ground.'"

e. Kruse comments on v. 15: "Moses led Israel out of Egyptian captivity, and now this people wanted Jesus (whom they believed was the Prophet like Moses) to free them from Roman occupation. They wanted to 'make him king by force'."<sup>207</sup> That was not the Lord's plan. Reading John's account with Mat. 14:22-23 and Mk. 6:45-46, it appears that Jesus instructed the disciples to *go ahead of him* to the region of Bethsaida, suggesting there was a plan for him to meet them there later. He then dismissed the crowd and withdrew again to the nearby hills by himself to pray. Commenting on Mark's account, Mark Strauss theorizes:

Jesus sent his disciples ahead of him to nearby Bethsaida, "while he dismissed the crowd" (ἕως αὐτὸς ἀπολύει τὸν ὄχλον). He planned to meet them there, but if he was delayed, they were to embark westward toward Capernaum and Gennesaret. This solution finds some support from Matthew's account, which says they were to go ahead of him "while [ἕως οὗ] he dismissed the crowd" (Matt 14:22). It would also explain why the disciples were still in the middle of the lake hours later (v. 48), i.e., they first went to Bethsaida and waited several hours for Jesus. Only later, when Jesus was delayed on the mountain, did they embark toward Gennesaret.

After sending off the disciples and "saying farewell" (ἀποταξάμενος) to the crowds, Jesus goes up the mountain to pray.<sup>208</sup>

#### 11. Jesus walks on water (6:16-21)

**16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.**

a. By the fall of darkness, Jesus still had not caught up with the disciples in the region of Bethsaida, so they, presumably pursuant to a prior arrangement, set sail toward Capernaum (6:16-17). Kermit Zarley remarks, "John, therefore, has omitted the detail of the short side trip to Bethsaida."<sup>209</sup>

b. John's account of this event is highly compressed.<sup>210</sup> In the midst of a storm at night on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus comes to the disciples' boat walking on the water. They had rowed several miles but were a considerable distance from land (Mat. 14:24) toward the middle of the lake (Mk. 6:47), presumably having been blown off course by the storm winds.

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<sup>207</sup> Kruse, 163.

<sup>208</sup> Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 284-285; see also, Kermit Zarley, *The Gospels Interwoven* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1987), 311-312.

<sup>209</sup> Zarley, 312. The reference in Mk. 6:45 to Bethsaida being on "the other side" may be a function of John's cognitive map of the lake as a Galilean fisherman (see Richard Bauckham's online lecture "[Mark's Geography and the Origin of Mark's Gospel](#)" accessed on 1/30/22). The "home side" was centered on the north/northwest area of the lake, and the rest, including not too far east of Bethsaida, was the "other side."

<sup>210</sup> Morris, 308.

They did not recognize Jesus in the darkness at a distance and were frightened. Matthew and Mark tell us that they thought he was a ghost.

c. In 1986 Moshe and Yuval Lufan found in the mud of the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee a wooden boat dating to the first century. It was 26 feet long and 8 feet wide, large enough to hold thirteen to fifteen people, which makes it like the boats in which Jesus and the disciples would have traveled. One notable feature is how low it would have sat in the water. Various reconstructions of that boat are available.

d. Jesus comforts them by identifying himself and telling them not to be afraid. They then were glad to take him into the boat, which immediately arrived "at the land to which they were going." This immediate transport was a further miracle. Matthew 14:34 and Mk. 6:53 specify the area as Gennesaret, "the fertile plain on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum on the north and Magdala on the south."<sup>211</sup> So they landed just south of Capernaum.

#### 12. First part of Bread of Life discourse (6:22-40)

**<sup>22</sup> On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. <sup>36</sup> But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. <sup>37</sup> All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. <sup>39</sup> And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. <sup>40</sup> For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."**

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<sup>211</sup> Strauss, 291. He notes there was also a town by that name.

a. The crowd that remained in the location of the feeding of the five thousand knew that there had been only one boat available for transport and that the disciples had left in it without Jesus. So they were expecting to find Jesus the next day, but when they realized he was no longer there, they got into boats that had subsequently arrived from Tiberias and went looking for him in Capernaum. When they found him, they asked him when he had arrived there, having seen that he did not leave in a boat, and Jesus takes the opportunity of their seeking him to do some serious teaching.

b. Jesus tells them that they were not seeking him because they appreciated the truth to which his miracles pointed, the fact he is the Christ, but because his last miracle fed them. They were working, expending effort in pursuing him, for the sake of physical food that perishes, but he tells them that they rather should be expending effort in pursuit of the food that endures to eternal life, which he, the Son of Man, will give to them. He is telling them they need to elevate their expectation of what he can provide, which is eternal life, or in terms of the parallel, "food" that lasts forever and thus is able to sustain life eternally. They should seek this from him, the Son of Man, because God the Father has set his seal on him. In other words, he is the uniquely authorized agent of the Father.

c. Speaking of works, the people want to know what works God demands of them that they might receive the eternal life to which he alluded. Jesus tells them that the work of God, what he demands of them, is that they believe in him, the one whom God has sent. As John states in 20:31, "these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

d. Since believing in him is essential for eternal life, they ask what miraculous sign he will do before them that will prove he is that important. Apparently, they are looking for something even more spectacular than the miracles he has already performed, which suggests they are looking for or trying to create reasons *not* to believe. As an example of the kind of thing they have in mind, they point to the continuous provision of manna throughout the time when Israel was in the wilderness, referring to Ps. 78:24, perhaps influenced by Ex. 16:4 and Neh. 9:15.

e. Jesus does not take the bait but instead reminds them that the provision of manna was not a miracle performed by Moses, so it does not serve as an example of a miracle verifying the stature of a divine servant. But it is relevant to the situation in that, as God the Father for a time provided that physical bread to the Israelites to sustain their temporary physical lives, so now he is giving them the true bread of heaven in the one who comes down from heaven, a bread that gives eternal life to the world.

f. The Jews apparently slid over Jesus' assertion that the true bread of which he is speaking is a person, he who comes down from heaven, and are thinking in terms of a literal kind of bread, like manna. Their words, "Sir, give us this bread *always*," sound like a request for ongoing provision of physical sustenance for their temporary lives. Kruse comments, "Just like the Samaritan woman asked for the water that wells up continuously so she would not

have to come and draw water any more (4:15), so these people were asking for a continuous supply of bread so that they would not have to provide for themselves any more."<sup>212</sup>

g. Jesus tells them that he is not the *giver* of bread but rather *is the bread of life*, meaning those who partake of him, those who by faith appropriate the benefit of his work, receive the blessing of eternal life. They shall not hunger or ever thirst because coming to him satisfies one's ultimate spiritual want. Carson comments:

So the hungry and thirsty person who comes to Jesus finds his hunger satisfied and his thirst quenched. This does not mean there is no need for continued dependence upon him, for continued feeding upon him; it does mean there is no longer that core emptiness that the initial encounter with Jesus has met. The consummating satiation occurs when those 'who have washed their robes . . . in the blood of the Lamb' stand 'before the throne of God' and experience the oracle: 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst' (Rev. 7:14-16).<sup>213</sup>

h. Though they had heard Jesus and seen his works, they did not believe in him because their worldly desires and perceptions prevented them from seeing the truth to which those words and works were pointing. He is faulting them, rebuking them, for not believing despite what they had seen and heard.

i. He then says (v. 37), "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

(1) I disagree with Calvinist claims that God chooses unconditionally certain individuals for salvation and then irresistibly calls them, makes them, and only them, believe in Jesus. Certainly God is working out his will and purpose in salvation, but that will and purpose includes genuine human choosing. As Lincoln comments, "believing is a matter both of human responsibility and divine initiative."<sup>214</sup> It is because humans have a responsibility in accepting or receiving God's gift that he repeatedly faults them for not believing, most recently in v. 36. It is because they have a choice that they are culpable for

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<sup>212</sup> Kruse, 170.

<sup>213</sup> Carson (1991), 288.

<sup>214</sup> Lincoln, 230. For a good and concise critique of Calvinism, see the online lecture by Jerry Walls titled "[What's Wrong with Calvinism](#)" (accessed on 1/30/22). For book treatments, see, Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield, MO: Westcott Publishers, 1970); William G. MacDonald, "The Biblical Doctrine of Election" in Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1989), 207-229; Robert E. Picirilli, *Grace, Faith, Free Will* (Nashville: Randall House, 2002); Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell, *Why I Am Not a Calvinist* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004); David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010); Roger E. Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011); Austin Fischer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2014); William W. Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election*, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015); Jerry L. Walls, *Does God Love Everyone? The Heart of What's Wrong with Calvinism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016); Robert E. Picirilli, *Free Will Revisited* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017); Ken Wilson, *The Foundation of Augustinian-Calvinism* (Montgomery, TX: Regula Fidei Press, 2019); Ronnie W. Rogers, *Does God Love All or Some?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019); David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke, eds., *Calvinism: A Biblical and Theological Critique* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2022).

loving darkness rather than the light (3:19), for refusing to come to him (5:40), and loving the praise of men over pleasing God (5:44). It is those who *received him* who were given the right to become children of God (1:12).

(2) Jesus is referring in v. 37 to those whom God has prepared to accept the truth about him. More specifically, in the context of Jesus' ministry to Israel, I think "all that the Father gives me" refers to "true Israel," the Jews who received rather than resisted the Father's gracious work in their lives, who yielded to his molding efforts, which produced in them the faith of Abraham, a genuine and humble faith in God that seeks the truth and therefore accepts the revelation of Jesus' identity.

(a) Jesus indicated in 5:38 that if the Father's word was abiding in them, if they had embraced that word and made room for it in their hearts, they would have believed who he is. Similarly, he says in 5:46 that if they believed Moses, they would believe him because Moses wrote about him. He says in 6:45, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" and in 8:42, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me." So those whom the Father gives to Jesus are those who embraced the Father's word and made room for it in their hearts, those who believed Moses, those who heard and learned from the Father, those who truly related to God as their heavenly Father.

(b) Jesus tells his opponents in 8:39-40 that if they were Abraham's children, in a faith sense rather than merely a biological sense, they would act like Abraham. Instead, they are seeking to kill him, even though he is delivering them the truth that he heard from God. This is not how Abraham reacted to the message of God. In contrast, one is reminded of Jesus' description of Nathanael as a "true Israelite" (or an "Israelite indeed") in whom there is no deceit (1:47).

(3) Jesus will never reject or cast out those who come to him because he has come from heaven to do the will of his Father. And the will of his Father is that he should lose nothing of all that the Father has given him (and thus who have come to him) but rather should raise them to resurrection life on the last day.

j. Jesus then elaborates saying, "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Note that the present participles may refer to a continuous action ("Everyone who *is looking* on the Son *and believing*"), so the verse does not prove it is impossible to lose one's salvation.

(1) Jesus will raise them up to eternal resurrection life on the last day, the day when he returns and the final judgment is carried out. As he said in 5:28-29, "an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to *the resurrection of life*, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."

(2) Notice that the present possession of eternal life through faith does not eliminate a future resurrection but rather demands it. Köstenberger states:

The possession of eternal life can be cast as in the present (6:40 and elsewhere in this Gospel), but this is balanced by repeated references to raising up on the last day. Thus, futuristic eschatology is not swallowed by John's "realized" eschatology. Precisely because believers' future raising up by Jesus is a certainty, it can be said that they have eternal life already in the here and now.<sup>215</sup>

### 13. Response to grumbling of the Jews (6:41-59)

**<sup>41</sup> So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." <sup>42</sup> They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me-- <sup>46</sup> not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." <sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. <sup>55</sup> For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." <sup>59</sup> Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.**

a. The Jews were complaining about him among themselves because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They thought they knew all there is to know about his origin: he was the son of Joseph and Mary, a family that was known in that part of Galilee. So his claim to "have come down from heaven," his claim to such a distinct and exalted origin, seemed like a delusion of grandeur or shameless self-promotion.

b. Jesus tells them to stop grumbling among themselves. He then explains that no one can come to faith in him unless the Father who sent him draws him. In other words, no one can come to faith in him on his own, without God taking the initiative and enabling, inviting, and facilitating that move to faith. The fact the Father draws people to faith in Jesus

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<sup>215</sup> Köstenberger, 212.

means the Father desires for people to come to that faith. Therefore, resisting that faith, as expressed in their grumbling, is to oppose the will of the Father.

c. Jesus says in v. 45 that everyone who has *heard and learned* from the Father comes to him. The Jews who had been receptive to the Father's preparatory work, who had yielded to his drawing, come to Jesus, whereas those who had refused to receive the Father's gracious influence refuse to believe in him. And again, those who come to him, believe in him, he will raise to resurrection life on the last day, the day of judgment at his return.

d. Having spoken of the Father's drawing work, Jesus says again that only he has seen the Father. To repeat Carson's comment given in the discussion of 1:18:

*No-one has ever seen God*, John writes, as if to remind his readers not only of a commonplace of Judaism, but also of the fact that in the episode where Moses saw the Lord's glory (Ex. 33 – 34), to which allusion has just been made (1:14), Moses himself was not allowed to see God (Ex. 33:20). 'We should perhaps say, less anthropomorphically but equally metaphorically, that Moses saw, so to speak, the afterglow of the divine glory' (Bruce, p. 44). In that diminished sense, God speaks with Moses 'face to face', and Moses 'sees the form of the Lord' (Nu. 12:8). The vision of the Lord seated on his throne that Isaiah saw was so vivid and terrifying, so close to the 'real thing', even though it was but the hem of the Lord's garment that filled the temple, that he could cry, 'Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips . . . and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty' (Is. 6:5). . . . The fact remains that the consistent Old Testament assumption is that God cannot be seen, or, more precisely, that for a sinful human being to see him would bring death (Ex. 33:20; Dt. 4:12; Ps. 97:2). Apparent exceptions are always qualified in some way.<sup>216</sup>

e. Regarding their complaint that he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven," Jesus doubles down, asserting that whoever believes, meaning believes *in him*, has eternal life. He then says again that he is "the bread of life" (see 6:35) and contrasts that bread to the manna that their forefathers ate in the wilderness. Despite eating the manna, they still died. He, on the other hand, is the bread that comes from heaven so that one may "eat of it," partake of it, and as a result have eternal life (not die). He then repeats the point, now describing himself as "the living bread" that came down from heaven. If anyone "eats," partakes of, this bread, he will live forever.

f. Jesus, the Word who became flesh (1:14), adds that the bread that he will give for the life of the world is his flesh. In other words, the means of eternal sustenance that he provides for the world, the bread of eternal life that he is, will be given through the crucifixion of his body. In the words of 1 Pet. 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (see also Isa. 53:4-5). Paul wrote in Col. 1:22 that Jesus has now reconciled us "in his body of flesh by his death." In Heb. 10:19-20 the writer refers to Jesus' sacrifice in terms of his blood and his flesh.

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<sup>216</sup> Carson (1991), 134.

g. This triggered arguments among the Jews as to what Jesus could mean in saying that the bread they are to "eat," the bread he will give for the life of the world, is his flesh. They are disagreeing over how, in what way, he intends to give his flesh for people to eat. Carson comments:

Any dullard could see that Jesus was not speaking literally: no-one would suppose Jesus was seriously advocating cannibalism and offering himself as the first meal. But if his language was figurative, what did he mean? Perhaps one argued for this view, another for that, all of them repeating the same literal, unintelligent question to get at the point: *How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*<sup>217</sup>

h. Jesus repeats the point in even more startling terms. He says to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." The Mosaic law forbid the consumption of blood (e.g., Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:26-27, 17:10-14; Deut. 12:16, 23), so adding this to the imagery of eating his flesh made the statement even more shocking. The key to the metaphorical meaning is in Jesus' words in v. 40. Kruse states, "Placing these two verses [vv. 54 and 40] side by side, it is clear that eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood is a metaphor for believing in him."<sup>218</sup> As Carson similarly observes:

Verses 54 and 40 are closely parallel: 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day' (v. 54) ' . . . everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day' (v. 40). The only substantial difference is that one speaks of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking Jesus' blood, while the other, in precisely the same conceptual location, speaks of looking to the Son and believing in him. The conclusion is obvious: the former is the metaphorical way of referring to the latter.<sup>219</sup>

i. The statement in v. 55, "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink," does not mean they are literally to consume his flesh and drink his blood. As Michaels notes, "'Real' or 'true,' does not mean 'literal,' as if Jesus were proposing cannibalism."<sup>220</sup> Rather his flesh and blood, when metaphorically consumed by believing in him, are "true" or "real" food and drink in the sense they are the ultimate sustenance in that they provide eternal life. Michaels says, "Jesus' flesh qualifies as 'real' food and his blood as 'real' drink because they do what food and drink are supposed to do, and do it better. They nourish and give life, not for a day or even a lifetime, but forever (see vv. 50-51, 54)."<sup>221</sup> Klink states:

Jesus is declaring that the food he gives – that the food he is – is real, that is, it fulfills the ideal, archetypal function of food and drink, for its caloric effects

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<sup>217</sup> Carson (1991), 296.

<sup>218</sup> Kruse, 175.

<sup>219</sup> Carson (1991), 297.

<sup>220</sup> Michaels (2010), 399.

<sup>221</sup> Michaels (2010), 399.

secure eternal life. No other food was as qualitatively real as his food, for nothing and no one else can provide eternal life – not the food given to the large crowd (6:1-15), or the manna of Moses, or any other food humanity can discover or invent for itself.<sup>222</sup>

j. Whoever eats<sup>223</sup> Jesus' flesh and drinks his blood, in the metaphorical sense of partaking of his sacrifice by believing in him, abides in Jesus and Jesus abides in him. As Michaels states, "Mutual indwelling expresses an intimate relationship between Jesus and his disciples, mirroring the relationship between God and Jesus."<sup>224</sup> The present participles ("eating" and "drinking") are consistent with a continuing or ongoing belief, so the verse need not be read to mean the mutual indwelling is a permanent consequence of a one-time act of believing.<sup>225</sup>

k. The Word, having been sent from the Father, became in his incarnation the God-man, Jesus (1:14). Jesus lives because of the Father in that the Father, through the Spirit, conceived him in Mary's womb (Lk. 1:30-35), brought him to birth, and continues to sustain, protect, nurture, and guide his life. As stated in 5:26, the Father has, as part of the incarnation, granted Jesus to have life in himself and thus to be able to bestow life. That is why he can say that whoever "eats" him, whoever believes in him, will live because of him.

l. Jesus concludes with a restatement of the claim that he is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike the manna, which the fathers ate and still died, whoever partakes of the bread that he is will live forever.

m. John specifies that Jesus said these things when teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. A large limestone synagogue was discovered in Capernaum that was thought to belong to the first century, but in the early 1970s it was determined that this structure dates from the fourth and fifth centuries. In 1975 excavators discovered black basalt walls under all four corners of the limestone synagogue. Further work revealed that these walls are four feet thick, much too thick for a private dwelling, and associated pottery demonstrates that the basalt structure was built in the first century. Recall from Lk. 7:1-5 that a centurion was praised for having built the synagogue in Capernaum. The underlying structure is the same size as the limestone synagogue and is laid out like that synagogue. These reasons and the tendency to build religious sites on existing ones have convinced many that the basalt structure is a first century synagogue on which the later synagogue was built. Archaeologist John McRay, for example, says it "is certainly the remains of the synagogue in which Jesus preached."<sup>226</sup> Others are not yet convinced it is a synagogue.

#### 14. Many disciples turn away (6:60-71)

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<sup>222</sup> Klink, 340.

<sup>223</sup> The use of τρώγω in vv. 54, 56-58 does not differ significantly from ἐσθίω that is used elsewhere. See, e.g., Carson (1991), 296 and Morris, 336 (fn. 137).

<sup>224</sup> Michaels (2010), 400. Klink states (p. 340), "It is nothing less than a depiction of an intimate relationship."

<sup>225</sup> See, e.g., Ridderbos, 243.

<sup>226</sup> McRay, 163-164.

**<sup>60</sup> When many of his disciples heard it, they said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" <sup>61</sup> But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, "Do you take offense at this? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) <sup>65</sup> And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." <sup>66</sup> After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. <sup>67</sup> So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, <sup>69</sup> and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." <sup>70</sup> Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." <sup>71</sup> He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.**

a. Jesus had more disciples than the Twelve, people who had attached themselves to him however loosely, and many of this larger circle heard what he said in the synagogue and found it difficult to tolerate. We are not told what bothered them specifically, but from Jesus' response it seems they thought his claims were "over the top," too grandiose. That he came down from heaven and was himself the essential means of eternal life puts him uncomfortably beyond the most distinguished of rabbis, forefathers, and even beyond common notions of the Messiah, not to mention the surface offensiveness of his metaphor of eating flesh and drinking blood.

b. Jesus knows "in himself," probably suggesting supernatural knowledge, that they are grumbling about what he said. Given their offense, he asks what if they were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before. In other words, what he said is true, and when it becomes evident, as it would if they saw him return miraculously to the heaven from which he came, what will they then say about their refusal to believe?

c. The provision of eternal life is trinitarian; it is a supernatural work of the Spirit in coordination with Jesus to whom the Father has granted the ability to bestow life (5:20, 26; 6:33). The flesh, the merely physical, is incapable of producing eternal life. The words Jesus has spoken, words that reveal his identity and essential role in the provision of eternal life, are "spirit and life" in the sense they are a message of truth from the Spirit, whom the Father gives to the Son without limit (3:34), which message is key to the giving of life by the Spirit.

d. But despite the life-giving value of his words, the sad fact is that some among his followers do not believe them. Ridderbos says, "Those whom Jesus is referring to had indeed followed him, were impressed by his words and works, and in that sense had begun to believe in him (cf. 2:23; 7:31; 8:30). But that faith was to suffer shipwreck and would manifest as unbelief, . . ." <sup>227</sup> John notes that Jesus knew from the beginning who did not believe, including the one of the Twelve who would betray him, so none of this was a surprise to him.

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<sup>227</sup> Ridderbos, 248.

e. In light of this unbelief among some disciples, Jesus says, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father" (6:44, in so many words). Their unbelief is explained by the fact unbelief is the default state of mankind (since the Fall), something that requires God to take the initiative to overcome. No human can come to Jesus, and thus to God, on his own; he can only do so if the Father opens the door for that coming by working graciously in the person's heart and life. God must draw a person, though he does not compel him. The presence of unbelievers is not proof that God has not taken the initiative on their behalf, has not enabled and sought them, but that that they have resisted his efforts. As Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:3-4, God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, so if God calls people to faith irresistibly, he would do so for all.

f. After this, many of the disciples abandoned him. They realized that he was calling them to a more radical discipleship than they had bargained for. The Greek signals that Jesus' question to the Twelve expects a negative answer,<sup>228</sup> so it is better translated, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" (e.g., NIV, NET, CSB).

g. Peter answers for the group expressing their realization that Jesus alone is worthy of their allegiance, as he alone has the words of eternal life, the truth that imparts eternal life. He then adds that they believe and know that he is the Holy One of God. Carson says of this title:

Probably it is a messianic title, though clear evidence of such usage is lacking. At the same time, the adjective 'holy' groups Jesus with his 'Holy Father' (17:11). Jesus is the one whom the Father has 'set apart [lit. "sanctified", same root as "holy"] as his very own' (10:36). Indeed, Jesus sanctifies himself (17:19). He could not but be the Holy One if he was to deal effectively with 'the sin of the world' (1:29). Doubtless Peter and the other members of the Twelve entertained at that time a significantly muddier conception of what the expression meant than they did after Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. It was enough that their messianic hopes (1:41, 45) were being confirmed, that they saw in Jesus one who was greater than a prophet, greater than Moses, none less than 'the Holy One of God'.<sup>229</sup>

h. Jesus responds to Peter's unqualified confession on behalf of the Twelve by reminding them that he had chosen all the Twelve, and yet he was aware that one of them was the devil.<sup>230</sup> This one did not "believe and know" in the same way as the others that Jesus in the

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<sup>228</sup> See, e.g., Kruse, 178.

<sup>229</sup> Carson (1991), 303-304.

<sup>230</sup> NET note states:

Although most translations render this last phrase as "one of you is *a* devil," such a translation presupposes that there is more than one devil. This finds roots in the KJV in which the Greek word for demon was often translated "devil." In fact, the KJV never uses the word "demon." (Sixty-two of the 63 NT instances of δαιμόνιον [*daimonion*] are translated "devil" [in Acts 17:18 the plural has been translated "gods"]. This can get confusing in places where the singular "devil" is used: Is Satan or one of the demons in view [cf. Matt 9:33 (demon); 13:39 (devil); 17:18 (demon); Mark 7:26 (demon); Luke 4:2 (devil); etc.]?) Now regarding John 6:70, both the construction in Greek and the technical use of διάβολος (*diabolos*) indicate that the one devil is in view. To object to the translation "the devil" because it thus

Holy One of God. John explains that Jesus was referring to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, who was going to betray him.

#### 15. Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-13)

**After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. <sup>2</sup> Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. <sup>3</sup> So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. <sup>4</sup> For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup> For not even his brothers believed in him. <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. <sup>7</sup> The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup> You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup> After saying this, he remained in Galilee. <sup>10</sup> But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. <sup>11</sup> The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" <sup>12</sup> And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." <sup>13</sup> Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.**

a. The feeding of the five thousand and the surrounding events occurred in Galilee around Passover (6:4), which is in March-April. Jesus was avoiding Judea because the Jews there were seeking to kill him. When it came time for the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths), which was in September-October, Jesus' brothers, who did not believe in him, told him to go to Judea that his disciples may see the works he is doing. Since their lack of belief is given as an explanation ("For") for their advice, it seems they were aware of the talk of his miracles and his growing reputation and were issuing a kind of challenge. They were saying, in essence, "If you are the man we hear (but do not believe) you are, you need to take your act to the big city, to the heart and center of the nation, where you can reveal your greatness not only to your 'disciples,' those accepting or attracted to you who will be in Jerusalem (perhaps including those who recently turned away), but also to the world." It is an expression of their unbelief.

b. Jesus tells them his time has not yet come, meaning his time to travel to Jerusalem, but any time is the "right time" for them because they are not on a mission with a heavenly timetable. On the contrary, they are part of the world, which is why the world cannot hate them. But the world hates him because his mission to redeem it involves testifying that its works are evil, and that hatred must be managed correctly in keeping with the divine plan and schedule. As indicated in v. 11, the Jews wanting to kill him were expecting him to arrive at the beginning of the Feast. Carson comments, "[H]e is saying that the 'time' for his going up to Jerusalem for this Feast of Tabernacles is not yet at hand. . . . Jesus' brothers are free to go up to Jerusalem for the Feast any time they like, while Jesus is under special constraint (*cf.* v. 8)."<sup>231</sup>

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equates Judas with Satan does not take into consideration that Jesus often spoke figuratively e.g., "destroy this temple" [John 2:19]; "he [John the Baptist] is Elijah" [Matt 11:14]), even equating Peter with the devil on one occasion (Mark 8:33).

<sup>231</sup> Carson (1991), 308.

c. Jesus tells his brothers to go. They are not part of the divine drama, so they have no timing concerns. He adds, "I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."<sup>232</sup> Carson states:

But Jesus, whose itinerary is regulated by the Father, must at this point decline, because (he says) *for me the right time (kairos; cf. v. 6) has not yet come*. . . . Jesus' response to his brothers is not that he is planning to stay in Galilee forever, but that because his life is regulated by his heavenly Father's appointments he is not going to the Feast when they say he should. The 'counsel of the wicked' (Ps. 1:1) cannot be permitted to set his agenda. His 'not' turns down his brothers request; it does not promise he will not go to the Feast when the Father sanctions the trip.<sup>233</sup>

d. Jesus remains in Galilee until after his brothers had gone up to the feast, and then he went up "not publicly but in private." Carson says:

The assumption in this verse is that the Father has signaled Jesus in some way, so Jesus goes to Jerusalem, leaving Galilee for the last time before the cross. Even so, his journey is marked by maximum discretion, exactly the opposite of what the brothers had in mind. . . . John the Evangelist, far from depicting fickleness, is in fact portraying Jesus' firm resolve to do exactly what the Father gives him to do, and at the Father's time (*cf.* 5:19ff).<sup>234</sup>

e. The Jews, referring to the authorities in Judea, were on the lookout for him, asking "Where is he?" He was a hot topic among the people, with some saying he was a good man and others labeling him a deceiver. But because the Jewish authorities were so hostile toward him, the people were afraid to say anything good about him in public.

## 16. Conflict at the Feast (7:14-52)

### *a. Jesus teaches and many believe (7:14-31)*

**<sup>14</sup> About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. <sup>15</sup> The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" <sup>16</sup> So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. <sup>17</sup> If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. <sup>18</sup> The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is**

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<sup>232</sup> NET note states:

Most MSS (ϕ<sup>66</sup>, 75 B L T W Θ Ψ 070 0105 0250 *f*<sup>1</sup>, 13 39 sa), including most of the better witnesses, have "not yet" (οὐπω, οὐρο) here. Those with the reading οὐκ are not as impressive (8 D K 1241 *al lat*), but οὐκ is the more difficult reading here, especially because it stands in tension with v. 10. On the one hand, it is possible that οὐκ arose because of homoiarcton: A copyist who saw οὐπω wrote οὐκ. However, it is more likely that οὐπω was introduced early on to harmonize with what is said two verses later.

<sup>233</sup> Carson (1991), 308-309; see also, Kruse, 183.

<sup>234</sup> Carson (1991), 309.

no falsehood. <sup>19</sup> Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" <sup>20</sup> The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" <sup>21</sup> Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. <sup>22</sup> Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. <sup>23</sup> If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? <sup>24</sup> Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." <sup>25</sup> Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? <sup>26</sup> And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? <sup>27</sup> But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." <sup>28</sup> So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. <sup>29</sup> I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me." <sup>30</sup> So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. <sup>31</sup> Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

(1) About the middle of the Feast, Jesus began teaching in the temple courts. The Jewish people were amazed at how his teaching reflected such deep learning when it was understood that he had not trained under any of the rabbis. Jesus tells them that his lack of formal training does not mean his teaching is his own, that he is making it up on his own authority. On the contrary, his teaching is that of the one who sent him, namely the Father. He adds that if anyone truly desires to do God's will, if he is a humble truth seeker rather than a resistor and suppressor, he will find out who Jesus is and thus that his teaching is from God, that he is not blazing his own trail independently from the Father.

(2) The one who speaks on his own authority, who speaks contrary to the will of God, is seeking his own glory. He wants to be praised as the originator of the teaching rather than as a transmitter of the teaching of another. But the one who seeks the honor of the one who sent him by transmitting faithfully the will of that sender is true to the relationship and his role. There is no falsehood in him, meaning there is no duplicity or hidden agenda working against the desire and purpose of the sender.

(3) That his opponents are not interested in doing God's will, a key to realizing who he is, is evident in the fact they are seeking to kill him contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Mosaic law they purport to revere. Carson states, "The law of Moses says, 'you shall not murder' (Ex. 20:13), but since their attempts to execute him are the attempts to execute an innocent man, it is nothing less than attempted murder, an effort to break this law."<sup>235</sup>

(4) This strikes people in the crowd, who do not know what the Lord knows, as delusional, which they express with the charge "You have a demon!" and a question registering their disbelief of his accusation, "Who is seeking to kill you?" Essentially, they are saying that his view of reality is so perverse that demon possession is the only possible explanation.

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<sup>235</sup> Carson (1991), 314.

(5) Jesus reminds them of the hostility he faced the last time he was in Jerusalem because he healed an invalid on the Sabbath. As Carson points out, when he says they all "were astonished" by the deed, it was "not the astonishment that leads to praise, but the astonishment that someone would actually tell another to carry his mat on the Sabbath day, openly flouting the accepted norms for Sabbath conduct."<sup>236</sup> He then highlights the error of their reaction to his alleged Sabbath breaking by pointing out that they understand the Sabbath regulation was not intended to prohibit circumcising male children on the Sabbath, an act that "makes right" one part of the body. And yet, they fail to apply that same reasoning to Jesus' healing, his "making right," a person's entire body. Borchert notes:

[S]uch logic was in fact later used by the rabbis themselves when they argued that if in circumcision one member of a person's two hundred and forty-eight parts could be acted upon on Sabbath to assure wholeness, then why not the whole body? Moreover, the argument that limited healing to cases of imminent death also was later removed by the rabbis themselves (cf. *t. Šabb.* 5.16; *Yoma* 85; *Mek.* 31.13; *Str-B* 2.487).<sup>237</sup>

(6) That is why Jesus tells them, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." To judge by appearance is to judge superficially, by how things seem (or are made to seem) on the surface. It is contrasted to righteous or right judgment in texts like Isa. 11:3-4. Michaels comments, "Jesus asks nothing more or less than that they judge with simple fairness, without partiality or favoritism, as he himself judges (see 5:30)."<sup>238</sup>

(7) Some of the people had at least heard that the leaders intended to kill Jesus, so when they saw Jesus teaching publicly without opposition, they began to wonder if the leaders had come to think he really is the Christ. But they dismissed the idea because they thought they knew where Jesus came from (Nazareth and Capernaum, being ignorant of his Bethlehem birth and true heavenly origin), whereas the strand of messianic expectation to which they subscribed held that when the Messiah was manifested, he would be someone with whom they were not familiar. It would turn out, of course, that he had been born in Bethlehem according to Scripture, but the belief was that this would only be known after he was revealed.<sup>239</sup>

(8) Jesus responds by declaring in the temple that though they know where he comes from in one sense, that he grew up with his family in Nazareth (1:45), they do not know his ultimate origin. They do not know that he was sent from heaven by the Father, the true God whom they do not know. This prompted them to seek to arrest him, but John says, "no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come." Carson remarks, "How Jesus escaped from them is unclear; the reason why he was able to escape was *because his time . . . had not yet come*, the 'hour' when he would be seized and crucified according to the Father's will had not arrived."<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Carson (1991), 314.

<sup>237</sup> Borchert, 285.

<sup>238</sup> Michaels (2010), 448.

<sup>239</sup> Carson (1991), 317-318; Kruse, 188

<sup>240</sup> Carson (1991), 319.

(9) Despite the negative reaction of some, many of the people believed in him because of the miracles they accepted he had done. They could not imagine that the Christ would do more miracles than Jesus had done, so they put some level of trust in him as the Messiah.

*b. The Pharisees seek to arrest Jesus (7:32-52)*

**<sup>32</sup> The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. <sup>33</sup> Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. <sup>34</sup> You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." <sup>35</sup> The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? <sup>36</sup> What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?" <sup>37</sup> On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, [rivers of living water will flow from within him]." <sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. <sup>40</sup> When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." <sup>41</sup> Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup> Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" <sup>43</sup> So there was a division among the people over him. <sup>44</sup> Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. <sup>45</sup> The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" <sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" <sup>47</sup> The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? <sup>48</sup> Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup> But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." <sup>50</sup> Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, <sup>51</sup> "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" <sup>52</sup> They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."**

(1) When the Pharisees hear this talk from some in the crowd, they and the chief priests send the temple guards to arrest Jesus. In response to their approach, Jesus tells them that before long he was going to return to the Father who sent him. At Passover the next spring he will be handed over to be crucified, and after his resurrection he will ascend back to heaven. In that dimension or realm, he will be absent from this world and thus unable to be found in a traditional sense, and they will not be able to go to where he is. The Jews, referring to his opponents, are baffled. They are wondering if he is going to go to foreign lands.

(2) On the last day of the feast, Jesus calls for all with spiritual thirst to come to him for satisfaction. Whoever does so, whoever believes in him, will later receive the Holy Spirit, which experience he describes as rivers of living water flowing from within them [lit. from his belly]. This symbolizes how abundantly and constantly the Spirit he will give will satisfy the spiritual thirst. Michaels comments:

To say of the believer that "From his insides will flow streams of living water" is yet another way of promising that he will "never ever thirst." As he told the Samaritan woman, the "living water" he offers is a never-failing, self-replenishing stream. The point is not, as is often thought, that the believer will necessarily become a channel of "living water" to others, but that the believer's own well will never run dry.<sup>241</sup>

(3) The notion that those who believe in the Messiah will by the Spirit have their spiritual thirst satisfied is "as the Scripture has said," not as spelled out in a single text but as the conclusion from a variety of texts. For example, "Ezekiel promised that in the age to come God would by his Spirit enable people to obey God from the heart (Ezek 36:26-27). Isaiah foretold a day when God would pour out his Spirit in order to create a new community and a new people of God (Isa. 32:14-18; 44:3-5)."<sup>242</sup> And Joel foretold that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-29), which Jesus goes on to do. Isaiah 58:11 says, "And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."

(4) John notes in v. 39 that Jesus was referring to the Spirit whom those who believed would later receive. They would receive the Spirit later because Jesus would not "pour out the Spirit," would not make the Spirit universally available to indwell all the people of God, until after he was glorified, meaning until after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. This pouring out of the Spirit by the ascended Christ was done on the Day of Pentecost, as reported in Acts 2. This began an era in which the Spirit is given to all of God's people rather than being given only to a few for special enablement.

(5) Upon hearing this, some people are convinced Jesus is "the Prophet" promised by Moses in Deut. 18:15. As I said before, that is true; he is the prophet promised by Moses. This is certain from the fact Peter applied Deut. 18:15, 18 to Jesus in Acts 3:22-23 when speaking to the people in the temple. Stephen implied that same connection in Acts 7:37 where he quoted Deut. 18:15 when defending his faith in Christ. But as Jesus is the Messiah, the idea circulating in Judaism that the "the Prophet" was distinct from the Messiah was mistaken. Others said, "This is the Christ," which is also true.

(6) Some, however, objected to the claim he is the Christ because they mistakenly believed he had been born in Galilee rather than in Bethlehem (Mat. 2:1, Lk. 2:4-7, 2:15), which is where Scripture said the Christ would be born (Mic. 5:2). This is different from the prior objection that no one would know who the Messiah was before the surprise reveal. So the people were divided over him. Some wanted to arrest him, but again, no one did so. He does not state a reason, but the implication is that it was because his hour still had not yet come.

(7) When the temple guards returned to the chief priests and Pharisees, they demanded to know why the guards had not arrested Jesus. The guards said, "No

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<sup>241</sup> Michaels (2010), 465.

<sup>242</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 368.

one ever spoke like this man!" These religious men were so impressed by Jesus' words that they were unwilling to arrest him. They were sufficiently concerned that he was the Prophet and/or the Messiah that they feared arresting him more than they feared disobeying the orders to do so. That is why the leaders accuse them by way of a rhetorical question of having been deceived. They cite the fact neither the authorities nor the Pharisees believe Jesus is the Christ as proof that he is not, and they dismiss the fact the crowd thinks otherwise by accusing them of being ignorant of the law and deserving of a curse.

(8) Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Jewish ruling council (3:1), cautioned his colleagues about jumping to conclusions, reminding them of the legal constraints under which judges of Israel operate in reaching a judgment. Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 17:2-5, and 19:15-19 require a thorough investigation and that charges be entertained only if supported by two or three witnesses. They resent his calling them out and question his sympathy for Jesus by asking sarcastically if he is also a Galilean.

(9) They tell him to search (the Scriptures) and see that a prophet does not arise from Galilee, by which they probably mean "the Prophet" referred to by the people in v. 40, whom at least some of them equate with the Messiah.<sup>243</sup> In other words, I think they are saying the Scripture reveals that the Messiah/Prophet comes from Bethlehem and not Galilee, repeating the objection of vv. 41-42. They are ignorant of the fact Jesus was from Bethlehem and ultimately from heaven. Some early manuscripts read "*the* Prophet" instead of "*a* prophet," and Brown accepts that reading as original.<sup>244</sup> If they were claiming that no prophet comes from Galilee, they were wrong, as Jonah was from Gath-hepher in Galilee (2 Ki. 14:25).

#### 17. Woman caught in adultery (7:53 – 8:11)

a. It is widely recognized that this section was not an original part of the Gospel According to John. The famous textual critic Bruce Metzger states, "The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming."<sup>245</sup> The NET note states: "This entire section, 7:53–8:11, traditionally known as the *pericope adulterae*, is not contained in the earliest and best MSS and was almost certainly not an original part of the Gospel of John. Among modern commentators and textual critics, it is a foregone conclusion that the section is not original but represents a later addition to the text of the Gospel." Comfort states:

The pericope about the adulteress (7:53 – 8:11) is not included in any of the earliest manuscripts (second-fourth century), including the two earliest,  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$  and  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , as well  $\mathfrak{P}^{39vid}$  of the early third century. The other witnesses to the exclusion of this passage are equally impressive, including all the fourth-century codices ( $\aleph$  A B C T), Diatessaron, the early versions, and most of the early church fathers. Its

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<sup>243</sup> There appears to have been different ideas as to how this prophet-like-Moses would relate to the Messiah. Walter Kaiser says in *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 60, that "many Jews in the first century expected the Messiah to be that great 'prophet' who would come." See, Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 217-218.

<sup>244</sup> Brown, 325.

<sup>245</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 187.

first appearance in a Greek manuscript is in D (ca. 400), but it is not contained in other Greek manuscripts until the ninth century. . . . When the story is inserted in later manuscripts, it appears in different places (after Luke 21:38; 24:53, John 7:35, 52, and at the end of John); and when it does appear it is often marked off by obeli or asterisks to signal its probable spuriousness.<sup>246</sup>

b. This is why in the standard Greek New Testament texts it is in brackets (NA<sup>28</sup> and UBS<sup>5</sup>) or relegated to a footnote (Tyndale House GNT) and in modern English versions is typically marked off and/or noted as not being in the earliest manuscripts. Comfort laments that the section continues to be printed as part of the Greek text in NA and UBS. He writes:

Having said all this, it is very disappointing to realize that the pericope of the adulterous woman is included in the NU [i.e., NA and UBS] text, even though it is set in double brackets to signify the editors' serious doubts about its place in the text. There can be little doubt that John never wrote it and that it has no place whatsoever being in the text. Of course, it is very difficult to rid the Bible of spurious texts once they have gained a place in what people consider to be Holy Scripture.<sup>247</sup>

c. The section gained a place in early English versions of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries because those translations were rooted in the Greek New Testament edited by Desiderius Erasmus. He relied on only three manuscripts that contained the Gospels: one dating to the 11-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, which formed the basis of his text of the Gospels; one dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> century that he used for emending the former text; and one dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century that he consulted but rarely agreed with.<sup>248</sup> They included the story of the woman caught in adultery, so he printed it in his text. As Comfort notes, once it became entrenched as part of Scripture, any attempt to remove it was resisted as tampering with the word of God instead of being seen as an attempt to identify accurately the word of God.

d. Because I am convinced the story is not part of the original text and thus not Scripture, however much it may resonate with Scripture, I am not going to comment on it. This will allow us to follow the narrative as John wrote it.

#### 18. Jesus, the light of the world (8:12-20)

**12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." 14 Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. 15 You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true,**

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<sup>246</sup> Comfort, 286.

<sup>247</sup> Comfort, 288.

<sup>248</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, "Erasmus and the Book That Changed the World Five Hundred Years Ago," *Unio Cum Christo* (Oct. 2016), 42.

**for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. <sup>17</sup> In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. <sup>18</sup> I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." <sup>19</sup> They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." <sup>20</sup> These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.**

a. Jesus tells the people that he is the light of the world and that whoever follows him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. He probably is alluding to Isaiah where the Servant of the Lord serves as the light to the nations (Isa. 42:6, 49:6, 50:10). Kruse states:

Those who followed him by accepting his teaching would no longer walk in the darkness of ignorance under the power of the evil one (cf. 1 Jn. 5:19). As the apostle Paul said, 'he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves' (Co. 1:13). As life in the darkness culminates in death, life in the light of Christ culminates in eternal life; it is 'the light of *life*'. In the Prologue the evangelist said of the Logos, 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men' (1:4). To come to Christ means coming to the one in whom is found the life of God, and that life is the light of men, the light of life.<sup>249</sup>

b. The Pharisees object that he is bearing witness about himself, which was deemed unreliable because of self-interest, and assert that his claim to be the light of the world is false. Though the Father speaks with and through Jesus, he says that even if that were not the case, even if he alone was making the claim, that would not change the fact it is true. Indeed, that statement and everything he says is true because the fact of the matter, which he knows with certainty, is that he has come from heaven and will be returning there. They, on the other hand, do not know that about him and therefore wrongly believe that he speaks falsely.

c. Jesus tells them that they judge according to the flesh, meaning by the malformed standards of fallen humanity, which leads them to wrong judgments. He, on the other hand, judges no one by *himself*.<sup>250</sup> Rather, even when he expresses a judgment that judgment is true because it is an expression of the judgment of the Father who sent him.<sup>251</sup> As he said in 5:30, "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me."

d. Having declared his unity with the Father in terms of judgment, Jesus now appeals to that unity regarding testifying (see 5:24, 31-32). He reminds them that the Mosaic law which they accept requires the testimony of two *men* to establish truth, and then

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<sup>249</sup> Kruse, 202.

<sup>250</sup> Michaels states (2010, 481), "The likely point is that 'I' means 'I by myself' (as in 5:30; 7:17)."

<sup>251</sup> Taking *de* as "rather" (BDAG, 213) and *ean* as "when" (BDAG, 268; Osborne, 128), I understand vv. 15-16 as, "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one [by myself]. Rather, even when I express judgment that judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge but I and the Father who sent me."

suggests that he far exceeds that because he has not only his own testimony as one sent from the Father but also the joint testimony of the heavenly Father!<sup>252</sup>

e. In keeping with their judging according to the flesh, they miss that Jesus is speaking of the heavenly Father and assume he is speaking of his human father ("father" on their lips in v. 19 should not be capitalized). They ask where he is, and Jesus tells them, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." To know Jesus is to know the Father because he the Word incarnate, a bodily expression of God's nature and being, or as put in Heb. 1:3, "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." As he will say in Jn. 14:9, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." To not know Jesus is to not know the Father.

f. John notes that Jesus spoke these words while teaching in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put. Despite the boldness of his claims and how disturbing they were to the leaders, no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come. The implication is that God is orchestrating the timing.

#### 19. Jesus warns the unbelievers (8:21-30)

**21 So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." 22 So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come?'" 23 He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." 25 So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 26 I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." 27 They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. 29 And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." 30 As he was saying these things, many believed in him.**

a. Jesus says he is going away (see 7:33, 8:14) to a place they cannot come, referring to his return to the Father after his death and resurrection, and adds, "you will seek me, and you will die in your sin." He probably does not mean his opponents would seek him personally after his disappearance from earth. They will be glad to have him gone. Rather, as Carson explains:

What is meant, rather, is that they will go on looking for Messiah (which is why Jesus says *you will look for me*). If they do, they cannot possibly find him; they are chasing an ephemeral wisp, for they have rejected the only Messiah there is. They will die in their sin: the singular sin refers to the particular sin of unbelief, of rejecting Jesus and the revelation he is and brings (*cf.* 9:41). *Where I go*, Jesus

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<sup>252</sup> See Michaels (2010), 483.

says, *you cannot come*. How could it be otherwise? To reject the Son is to reject the Father (5:23); how then shall they enter the Father's presence on the last day? When Jesus tells his own disciples that they cannot go where he is, their prospect is entirely different to that of the Jews: they will follow him later (13:33, 36).<sup>253</sup>

b. They misunderstand Jesus to be saying he is going to the inaccessible (to the living) realm of the dead, rather than returning to heaven as a resurrected person, so they question if he intends to kill himself. This failure to understand prompts Jesus to comment on their completely different perspectives; they are from opposing realms. They are from below, meaning they are part of the fallen world that is in rebellion to God, whereas he is from heaven, having been sent by the Father. Jesus says he told them they would die in their sins (plural) because in telling them they would die in their sin (singular) of unbelief (v. 21), in their refusal to believe that "I am he" (i.e., the one he claimed to be, the Messiah), he encompassed the fact their sins would therefore be unforgiven.

c. His opponents challenge him, saying, "Who are you?" in the sense of "Who do you think you are?" And Jesus tells them he is what he has said from the beginning. "He had publicly declared who he was: the Son of Man (5:27), the one sent by God (5:23-30, 36-38; 7:16, 28-29, 33), and the Son of God (5:25-26), but his opponents rejected these claims."<sup>254</sup>

d. He tells them he has much to say about them and much to judge, in the sense that what he says about them will be in judgment of them, but he will not be speaking on his own. "[F]or all that Jesus tells to the world he has heard from the one who sent him (cf. 3:34; 5:19-30; 8:15-16), and that one is true."<sup>255</sup>

e. The Jews did not understand he was referring to God the Father, so Jesus tells them that when *they have* "lifted up the Son of Man" they will then know that he is indeed who he claimed to be, the one who acts solely on the Father's authority and who says just what the Father intends him to say.

(1) There is a double meaning in the verb "lifting up." It refers to the physical lifting up of Jesus on the cross but also to the "lifting up," the glorious exaltation with the Father, that is associated with and realized through the cross. Osborne comments: "[T]he double meaning is powerful: When Jesus is 'lifted up' on the cross, he will be 'lifted up' in glory. The cross is his throne, his time of exaltation. In this sense, the Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension become one event in salvation history. Therefore, it is at that time that the Jews finally 'will understand that I AM he.'"<sup>256</sup>

(2) In this complex of glorification centered on the cross, the truth of Jesus will be manifested supremely. That does not mean all the Jews will receive that truth; it means it will be sufficiently evident to require extraordinary suppression to deny.

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<sup>253</sup> Carson (1991), 341-342; see also, Kruse, 205-206.

<sup>254</sup> Kruse, 207.

<sup>255</sup> Carson (1991), 344.

<sup>256</sup> Osborne, 131.

f. Jesus adds, "And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." Kruse comments, "Because Jesus always did what pleased the Father, the Father never abandoned him. He protected him throughout his ministry, and no attempts to bring it to a premature end succeeded (see 7:30; 8:20)."<sup>257</sup> John notes that as he was saying these things, many believed in him.

## 20. The children of Abraham and the children of the devil (8:31-59)

<sup>31</sup> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,<sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."<sup>33</sup> They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free?'"<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.<sup>35</sup> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.<sup>36</sup> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.<sup>37</sup> I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.<sup>38</sup> I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."<sup>39</sup> They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,<sup>40</sup> but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.<sup>41</sup> You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father-- even God."<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.<sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.<sup>45</sup> But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.<sup>46</sup> Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?<sup>47</sup> Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."<sup>48</sup> The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"<sup>49</sup> Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.<sup>50</sup> Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.<sup>51</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."<sup>52</sup> The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'<sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"<sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'<sup>55</sup> But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."<sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."<sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

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<sup>257</sup> Kruse, 208.

a. Jesus says to the Jews who had believed him, those mentioned by John in v. 30,<sup>258</sup> "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Discipleship is not merely a matter of believing intellectually that certain things are true. Discipleship that is more than appearance involves a commitment to following his word, to living in accordance with his teaching. It is a matter of devotion or allegiance to him not just thinking some things about him. Osborne says, "The idea here is a complete commitment and an abiding faithfulness to Jesus' teaching."<sup>259</sup> Mounce says of the phrase "abide in my word":

Here it denotes a determined resolve to live out in daily life the full scope of Jesus' teaching. It is only those in whom the words of Jesus become incarnate who are in fact his disciples. Nowhere in the Gospels will you find the demands of faith watered down, so as to leave the feeling that Jesus' major concern for his followers is that they become pleasant people. The radical demands of the NT have as their goal the spiritual transformation of sinful people into the image of Jesus Christ – a demanding challenge that cannot countenance anything less than full commitment. "Live in my word," says Jesus in effect. "Let what I say control your every action, and you will show that you really are my disciples."<sup>260</sup>

b. It is in abiding in Jesus' word, having a disciples' devotion to his teaching, that one will know the truth because Jesus' word is truth. He says to the Father in Jn. 17:17, "your word is truth" and says in many places that the word he delivers is the word of the Father (12:49-50; 14:10, 24; 17:8, 14). In committing to his teaching, in accepting him as the authoritative voice, one opens the door to knowing the truth. And the truth one will come to know will set one free from the devil's propaganda, from the competing and hobbling lies about reality that are promoted by the devil.

c. The Jews latch onto his statement "the truth will set you free," with its implication that they currently are held captive, and object that as descendants of Abraham they have never been enslaved to anyone. They were not making the patently absurd literal claim that as Jews they had never been enslaved. They and everyone else knew, as Michaels states, "that their ancestors had been slaves in Egypt . . . and effectively so in Babylon as well, and in their own country at the hands of the Persians, the Greeks, and now the Romans. They are simply expressing a kind of national pride as those who (in Schnackenburg's words) are 'free sons of Abraham, who have never inwardly bowed to foreign rule.'"<sup>261</sup> Kruse similarly notes, "Although

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<sup>258</sup> Michaels states (2010, 504, fn. 11), "Despite the different grammatical constructions (to 'believe in' Jesus, using πιστεύειν εἰς, and to 'believe him,' using πιστεύειν with the dative αὐτῷ), there can be no doubt that the same group is in view (for the latter construction used to mean essentially the same as the former; see 5:24, 38, 46; 6:30; 8:45; 10:37, 38; 14:11)." Morris similarly comments (p. 404, fn. 62), "John does not appear to make much of a distinction between the two, and in any case it appears to be the same persons who are spoken of. Nor should we overlook the fact that εἰς + accusative may apparently be used of a defective faith (cf. 2:23-24; 12:42)." See also, Carson (1991), 346-347; Borchert (1996), 301 (fn. 182); George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 132.

<sup>259</sup> Osborne, 134.

<sup>260</sup> Mounce, 479.

<sup>261</sup> Michaels (2010), 506.

the Jewish people were in bondage, languishing under Roman occupation, the Pharisees believed they were spiritually free despite the occupation, and these 'believers' thought the same."<sup>262</sup>

d. Jesus tells them that, however they may have inwardly resisted bowing to a foreign *nation*, everyone who *practices* sin, who habitually or continually sins,<sup>263</sup> has bowed to a foreign *power*; he is a slave of sin. And he will experience the death that accompanies sin. NET note states: "Although the statement is true at the general level (the person who continually practices a lifestyle of sin is enslaved to sin) the particular sin of the Jewish authorities, repeatedly emphasized in the Fourth Gospel, is the sin of unbelief. The present tense in this instance looks at the continuing refusal on the part of the Jewish leaders to acknowledge who Jesus is, in spite of mounting evidence."

e. Speaking of slaves, he points out the stark difference between the slave and the son in terms of status in the household. Whereas the slave can be put out or sold to another household, the son is a permanent member of the household by birthright. Bruce writes:

The son in a free household, when once he comes of age, can act with authority because of his status in that household: the Son of God acts with supreme authority because 'the Father loves the Son and has given everything into his hand' (John 13:35). If, acting by the authority with which the Father has invested him, the Son emancipates a slave, that slave henceforth is 'really free'.<sup>264</sup>

f. Picking up on their pride in being Abraham's descendants, a pride reflected in their claim never to have bowed inwardly to a foreign nation, he says he knows they are Abraham's descendants, but their practicing of sin, and therefore their slavery to it, is evident in their rejection of him. They are seeking to kill him, one who is speaking the truth of the Father, because they will not accept what he is telling them. In doing so, they are doing what they have heard from *their* father; they are acting in accordance with the devil's lies rather than God's truth.

g. They object to the implication of the distinction Jesus drew between "my Father" and "your father," They tell him, "Abraham is our father," and Jesus explains to them that there is a sense in which even that is not true. He tells them that if they were genuine children of Abraham, not merely biological descendants but descendants who emulated the faith and life of Abraham, they would not be seeking to kill him, a man who delivered to them the truth of God. Abraham would not do such a thing; "he was renowned for his humble acceptance of the word of God."<sup>265</sup> In seeking to kill him, they are doing the work of their father, by which he means the devil.

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<sup>262</sup> Kruse, 210; see also, Carson (1991), 349; Burge, 260; Borchert (1996), 303-304; Lincoln, 270; Mounce, 480.

<sup>263</sup> NET and ESV render the relevant phrase "practices sin." NET note states: "This could simply be translated, 'everyone who sins,' but the Greek is more emphatic, using the participle ποιῶν (*poiōn*) in a construction with πᾶς (*pas*), a typical Johannine construction. Here repeated, continuous action is in view. The one whose lifestyle is characterized by repeated, continuous sin is a slave to sin. That one is not free; sin has enslaved him."

<sup>264</sup> Bruce, 198.

<sup>265</sup> Kruse, 212.

h. The Jews realize that, in saying they were not genuine children of Abraham because they were not loyal to God in the manner of Abraham, Jesus was saying they were not acting like faithful children of God but like the unfaithful Israelites whom God in Hos. 2:4 called "children of sexual immorality." They were not his. That is why, after denying they were "born of sexual immorality," they declare, "We have one Father – even God."

i. Jesus rejects their protest by telling them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me." If God were their Father, in the sense they related to him as Abraham did, meaning they loved him and were humbly submissive to his will, then they would love Jesus because he was sent from the Father (implying his preexistence). The fact they reject Jesus puts the lie to the claim God is their Father in the relevant Abrahamic sense. He tells them that they do not perceive the truth of his words because they are closed to them, they are unwilling to accept them. From that heart, his words simply do not compute.

j. Jesus then makes explicit the identity of their father, the one they emulate in seeking to kill him: it is the devil. It is widely understood that the reference to the devil as a murderer from the beginning harks back to the fall in Genesis 3 where he maliciously brought about the death of mankind by inducing Adam and Eve to sin (see Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22).<sup>266</sup> He does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. He is so radically perverted that lying is what he does. He is a liar and the father of lies in that his foundational lie ushered sin into the world, the human realm, through Adam and Eve, and from that invasion of sin has come all the lying that has followed.

k. Jesus says they do not believe him *because* he tells them the truth, meaning they are so captive to the lies and false narratives of the devil that they judge the truth to be a lie. He tries to wake them up by presenting his credibility through a rhetorical question: "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" He has lived a flawless life and as such should have maximum credibility in what he says. He speaks the truth, but they do not believe him because they are not of God; they are not open, humble, and submissive toward him as Abraham was. If they were, they would accept his testimony as the truth that it is.

l. The Jews respond to the charge they are children of the devil instead of children of God with their own strong words. They say, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" They do not mean he is a literal Samaritan but that he shares what the Jews believed was the Samaritans' penchant for heresy and promoting theological nonsense under the influence of demons. Klink states, "By claiming Jesus is *both* a Samaritan and possessed by a demon, the Jews are effectively calling him a heretic, 'accusing him of straying from the one true God.'"<sup>267</sup>

m. Jesus denies he is demon-possessed, and since that was probably the foundational charge, the thing they claimed made him heretical like the Samaritans, he was essentially denying the charge that he was a heretic, someone spouting theological nonsense. On the contrary, the truth is that he honors his Father, and they dishonor him. Having charged them

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<sup>266</sup> See, e.g., Köstenberger, 266.

<sup>267</sup> Klink, 421.

with dishonoring him, he adds that he does not seek his own glory (he seeks the Father's glory). But there is One who does seek Jesus' glory, and that is the Father, the one who is the judge. Kruse comments:

Jesus rejected their defamatory statement, asserting rather that he was intent upon honoring God, his Father, and that 'the Jews' were guilty of dishonoring the one who was honoring God. Jesus insisted, *I am not seeking glory for myself*. As one who was honoring his Father, Jesus did not seek glory for himself. He added, *there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge*. God the Father is judge of all and he seeks glory for the Son. In the OT the righteous committed their cause to the Lord, the righteous judge who vindicated them. Jesus did not have to defend himself or seek his own glory. The Father would vindicate him and glorify him as well (*cf.* 17:4-5).<sup>268</sup>

n. Despite their opposition, Jesus makes an appeal to them. He tells them that any who become his disciples, any who commit to living in accordance with his teaching, will never see death. It is apparent to readers of John's Gospel that Jesus does not mean his disciples will never die physically. Rather, he means they will never experience judgment death, the judgment of eternal condemnation that John will later in Revelation refer to as the "second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). This is evident from the fact the eternal life that in 3:3, 5, 7, 15 is associated with being born from above is contrasted in 3:17-18 not with physical death but with judgment or condemnation. Jesus also spoke earlier of a future time when those who believed in him would be raised from the dead to resurrection life (5:24-29; 6:40, 54). In chapter 11 he clearly uses dying in two different senses when he says in 11:25-26, "Whoever believes in me, *though he die*, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall *never die*."<sup>269</sup> Also, Jesus speaks of Peter's future death in Jn. 21:18-19. And in Jn. 21:23 John corrects the rumor that Jesus had said one of the apostles would never die physically, a correction that makes no sense if Jesus had promised that none of his disciples would die physically.

o. His opponents misunderstand Jesus to be speaking of physical death and take that as an insane claim that proves he is speaking by a demon. After all, the great forefather Abraham and the holy prophets died, so how in the world can Jesus be claiming that his disciples (and presumably he) will never die. They see this as galling chutzpah. They ask him mockingly if he is greater than Abraham or the prophets, all of whom died, and then accuse him of arrogance and delusions of grandeur in asking, in essence, "Who do you think you are?" The truth is that he is indeed greater than Abraham and all the prophets, but these Jews have no room for that possibility. Kruse states, "They were convinced Jesus had an inflated opinion of his own importance, because he claimed the divine prerogative of preserving people from death. They believed he was glorifying himself."<sup>270</sup>

p. Jesus tells them that glorifying himself would be worthless, but the fact of the matter is that it is his Father, the one they claim as their God, who glorifies him. Though they claim his Father as their God, they have not known him; otherwise, they would receive

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<sup>268</sup> Kruse, 215.

<sup>269</sup> Michaels (2010), 526.

<sup>270</sup> Kruse, 216.

Jesus because he was sent from him. Jesus, on the other hand, knows the Father intimately, and for him to deny that, as they want him to do, would be to make him a liar just like they are. The truth is that he knows him and keeps his word – period.

q. Jesus does not retreat an inch. Rather, since they are speaking of Abraham and their great appreciation of him, he says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." Apparently, Jesus, as the Word incarnate, is privy to the fact God at some point allowed Abraham to see Jesus' ministry in advance, and he knows Abraham's reaction was one of joy. There was discussion within Judaism about God granting to Abraham a preview of the future and just what that preview included. The point is that since Abraham was joyful at seeing Jesus' day, whenever or however that seeing took place, then certainly those who hold Abraham in such high regard should likewise rejoice over him.

r. The Jews cast Jesus' statement as a claim to have coexisted on earth with Abraham by mocking it with the charge, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus responds, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." In other words, they err in thinking that the only time he could have seen Abraham was on earth. As the preexistent Word who was sent from the Father, his knowledge of Abraham and of God's dealings with him is not limited to his earthly life. Indeed, in saying "before Abraham was, I *am*" instead of "before Abraham was, I *was*," Jesus was identifying himself with God in a unique sense. His phrase echoes God's self-identification to Moses in Ex. 3:14 and various references in Isaiah (e.g., Isa. 41:4, 43:10-11, 43:25, 45:18-19, 45:22, 48:12, 51:12, 52:6).<sup>271</sup>

s. The Jews understand the implication of his words, and because they reject the truth he is telling them, it struck them as blasphemous. That is why they picked up stones, perhaps from the ongoing construction at the temple, to stone him. Kruse states, "All indications are that Jesus hid himself, not because he was afraid, but because his 'hour had not yet come'. Jesus would return quite openly to the temple again (10:22-23; 12:20-22)."<sup>272</sup>

## 21. Jesus heals a man born blind (9:1-41)

### *a. The healing (9:1-12)*

**As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. <sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the**

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<sup>271</sup> See Michaels (2010), 534-535; Carson (1991), 343-344.

<sup>272</sup> Kruse, 219.

man." <sup>10</sup> So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

(1) As Jesus was passing by a man who was blind from birth, the disciples ask him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" In keeping with a long stream of Jewish misunderstanding, they simply assume the man's blindness was punishment for sin. Carson remarks, "That a specific illness or experience *can* be the direct consequence of a specific sin, few would deny (*e.g.*, Miriam's revolt, Nu. 12; notes on Jn. 5:14; *cf.* 1 Cor. 11:30). That it is invariably so, numerous biblical texts flatly deny (*e.g.*, Job; Gal. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:7)." The disciples' question is whether the blindness was suffered by the man as part of punishment for his *parents' sin* or was punishment for his *own sin*, it being thought by some Jews that children were capable of sinning even in the womb.<sup>273</sup> Jesus informs them that the blindness was not punishment for the sin of either the man or his parents. Rather, it occurred through the general fallenness, the brokenness of creation, that resulted from Adam's sin, which God allowed in this man's case that he might serve as the object of a divine miracle.

(2) Jesus indicates that his time on earth is growing short. It is common sense, if not a proverbial saying,<sup>274</sup> that night is a time when work is no longer possible, and since his absence from the world will be a time when he can no longer work on earth as he presently does, his absence will be analogous to night in that sense. As long as he is in the world, he is the light of the world, meaning it is day when he can do the works he has been doing. Thus, it is urgent that he (and they; he associates the disciples in his work) do the works of the Father who sent him in the time before his departure. Having said that, he proceeds to heal the blind man.

(3) Jesus makes mud from his saliva and dirt and puts it in on the blind man's eyes. No explanation is given as to why the Lord chose this procedure for this miracle. He tells the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, a source of spring water at the south end of Jerusalem.<sup>275</sup> The man obeys and comes back seeing.

(4) Some neighbors and people who had seen him begging, people who were not deeply familiar with him, asked if this now sighted man was the formerly blind man who used to sit and beg. Some said he was, but others said he only resembled that man. The healed man, however, insisted that he was indeed that man. That naturally prompted the question of how he came to see, and he tells them just what happened: "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." They then ask where Jesus is, and he tells them he does not know. As Kruse points out, he was blind when he left Jesus, so he would not have known him if he saw him.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> See, *e.g.*, Borchert, 313; Carson (1991), 362.

<sup>274</sup> Köstenberger, 282.

<sup>275</sup> Burge, 273.

<sup>276</sup> Kruse, 223.

*b. Pharisees and the healed man (9:13-34)*

**<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." <sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." <sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." <sup>26</sup> They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" <sup>28</sup> And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup> The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." <sup>34</sup> They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.**

(1) The people bring the healed man to the Pharisees, perhaps intending to bring to their attention the great miracle that had been done, but the Pharisees are more interested in the means by which Jesus healed because they are hoping to convict him of working on the Sabbath. The man repeats that Jesus put mud on his eyes, he washed, and then was able to see. The Pharisees conclude Jesus had engaged in illegal work on the Sabbath and therefore announce that he is not from God. But others were not convinced. They wondered how a sinner could perform such an amazing miracle.

(2) This resistance to their conclusion prompts the Pharisees to ask the healed man his opinion of Jesus. Based on the miracle Jesus had done for him, he said, "He is a prophet." The Jews think the miracle may have been faked, that the man had not been born blind, so they summoned his parents and asked them to explain how, if their son had been born blind as they allege, he can now see. They are putting pressure on them in the hope they will admit they were lying about him having been born blind. That does not work out for them. The parents declare, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees

we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes." Because they feared the Jews would take action against them if they said something about Jesus that they did not like, they then punted to their son rather than risk further interrogation. They said, "Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

(3) Still convinced they are not getting the real story, the Pharisees recall the healed man and demand that he "give glory to God," which is a way of demanding that he tell the truth about Jesus. For example, "Joshua exhorted Achan to 'give glory to God' by acknowledging the truth he was hiding when his sin was discovered (Jos. 7:19-20)."<sup>277</sup> They declare, "We know this man is a sinner," the implication being that they know there is something shady about this miracle. The healed man says, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know"; he leaves that call to the theologians. But he adds, "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

(4) With growing frustration, the Pharisees say, in essence, "Okay, let's go over your story again." Growing impatient himself, the healed man answers, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" That last remark was a cheeky shot.

(5) In response, the Pharisees hurl insults at the man, accuse him of being a disciple of Jesus, and declare that they are disciples of Moses, meaning they viewed "Moses, through whom God gave the law to Israel, as the paradigmatic teacher (often called 'our teacher' by the rabbinate)."<sup>278</sup> They say, in effect, that Moses' credibility as a man of God is not in doubt, there being no doubt that God spoke to him in the giving of the covenant at Sinai. But Jesus, on the other hand, is an unknown upstart of uncertain origin who is casting himself as a source of new revelation. Their statement "we do not *know* where he comes from" need not mean they were unaware of his Galilean roots (cf., 7:27) but only that they were unsure Galilee was his birthplace or earliest residence. They may have heard rumors of his birth in Bethlehem or maybe even claims he had come from Egypt and used the uncertainty to dismiss him.

(6) The healed man then uses their confession of ignorance about Jesus' origin to contrast them with Jesus. They cannot even work out where Jesus is from, but Jesus gave him the ability to see. He then reminds them of the principle in Scripture that God does not listen to the prayers of the wicked but attends to the prayers of the righteous, which when coupled with the general Jewish belief that miracles were answers to prayer,<sup>279</sup> leads to his conclusion that Jesus would not have been able to do the unprecedented miracle of granting sight to a man born blind if he were not from God. Kruse observes, "Applied to Jesus, the blind man's argument was correct, but applied generally to all miracle workers it could be misleading. False prophets can perform miracles as well (see Mt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22), although there is no evidence of their having healed the congenitally blind."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Kruse, 226.

<sup>278</sup> Köstenberger, 290-291.

<sup>279</sup> Köstenberger, 293.

<sup>280</sup> Kruse, 228.

(7) The Pharisees did not take kindly to being lectured in theology by the uneducated healed man. They then acknowledge implicitly that the man had been born blind by telling him he was born completely in sin, taking his blindness at birth as proof that he or his parents had sinned, the very claim Jesus had rejected. That acknowledgement leaves them without an explanation of how the man born blind had come to see, whereas he insisted he had been healed by Jesus. They ignore that problem and simply cast the man out, which "could mean they thrust him from their presence in anger, or they excommunicated him because he supported Jesus (22)."<sup>281</sup>

*c. Jesus and the healed man (9:35-41)*

**<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup> He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." <sup>38</sup> He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.**

(1) Jesus heard the leaders had mistreated the healed man because of his comments about him, so he sought him out. When he found him at some public place in the city, he asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He is asking if he has put his faith in that person he describes as the Son of Man, a title rooted in the divine and human figure who in the vision of Dan. 7:13-14 is given a kingdom by God the Father. Presumably recognizing from Jesus' voice that he was the one who had healed him, the man answers respectfully and gratefully, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus then reveals that he, the one who healed him, is the Son of Man, at which time the healed man confessed his faith and worshipped him.<sup>282</sup>

(2) Jesus then articulates a truth that was just illustrated in his healing of the blind man. He says that he came into the world for judgment in the sense he came as God's criterion of judgment, as the one who functions as the separator of the saved and the condemned based on whether he is received in faith. A purpose of his coming was that those who are lost, who do not see the truth of God, may come to see it, may gain their spiritual sight, through his revelation of God. And, alternatively, those who claim already to see the truth of

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<sup>281</sup> Kruse, 229.

<sup>282</sup> NET notes states in part regarding vv. 38-39a:

Some early and important witnesses (ⲡ<sup>75</sup> ⲛ\* W b sa<sup>ms</sup> ac<sup>2</sup> mf) lack the words, "He said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him. Jesus said," (vv. 38–39a). This is weighty evidence for the omission of these words. It is difficult to overstate the value of ⲡ<sup>75</sup> here, since it is the only currently available papyrus ms extant for the text of John 9:38–39. Further, ⲛ is an important and early Alexandrian witness for the omission. The versional testimony and codex W also give strong support to the omission. Nearly all other MSS, however, include these words. The omission may have been occasioned by parablepsis (both vv. 37 and 39 begin with "Jesus said to him"), though it is difficult to account for such an error across such a wide variety of witnesses.

God, to have their spiritual sight,<sup>283</sup> may in their pride fail to see the truth he reveals, may be blinded to it. That played out in the differing responses of the blind man and the Pharisees.

(3) Some of the Pharisees near him heard his words and said, "We are not blind too, are we?" They are defensive about any suggestion that they may be spiritually blind, whereas Jesus has just explained that it is those who realize their spiritual blindness who are open to his gift of spiritual sight. Lincoln comments, "The blindness Jesus refers to is the kind of blindness that knows it is blindness – the blindness of the blind man who was ready to obey in order to receive his sight."<sup>284</sup> Those who insist they already see the truth are closed to his gift of spiritual sight. Lincoln says, "What the Pharisees are suffering from is in fact an illusion of sight and this has caused a far deeper darkness than they are aware of, the darkness of refusing to acknowledge one's blindness and therefore of being unable to accept the light when it is offered."<sup>285</sup>

(4) Thus, Jesus tells them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains." In other words, if they were humble people who recognized their blindness and thus their need for the spiritual sight he provides, they would receive him in faith, become his disciples, and be forgiven. But since they insist they already see and thus have no need for the sight he provides, they will not become his disciples and their guilt will remain.

## 22. Jesus the good shepherd (10:1-21)

**"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." <sup>6</sup> This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. <sup>7</sup> So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. <sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life**

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<sup>283</sup> As Carson notes (1991, 378), "those who see" is "Jesus' cryptic and ironic way of saying 'those who think they see.'"

<sup>284</sup> Lincoln, 288.

<sup>285</sup> Lincoln, 288.

that I may take it up again.<sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."<sup>19</sup> There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.<sup>20</sup> Many of them said, "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?"<sup>21</sup> Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

a. Jesus then tells this group of Pharisees (note "them" in v. 6) a parable or figure of speech about a shepherd and his sheep. He contrasts the thief and robber to the shepherd. The thief enters the sheep pen surreptitiously to remove the sheep, whereas the shepherd is welcomed through the door and leads the sheep out by the sound of his voice. The sheep respond to their shepherd's voice and follow him but will not follow a stranger, as the healed blind man has responded to Jesus' words but not to those of the Pharisees. Despite the Jewish leaders' best efforts to delegitimize Jesus and to intimidate people from coming to him, there are those who will recognize Jesus' word as the truth and not be captured by the word of those seeking to mislead and thereby harm them.

b. The Pharisees miss the point, so Jesus presents further teaching in which he utilizes features of the parable, specifically the gate, the shepherd, and the sheep.<sup>286</sup> He first says he is the door or gate of the sheep, meaning he is the true avenue of blessing for them, the way to the nourishment of the pasture and the security of the pen.

c. The statement "All who came before me" can be taken either temporally (preceded him in time) or spatially (came into his presence).<sup>287</sup>

(1) If one infers from the current confrontational circumstance that he means a coming before him with a negative attitude or hostile purpose, the sense of the comment is "All who confronted me" or "All who came before me to deny or challenge my claims." That then points to those like the Pharisees, whom he already suggested were analogous to thieves and robbers (v. 1), a charge he here repeats. They were thieves and robbers in the sense their desire for the sheep would result in the sheep's harm and destruction. But as indicated in the parable, the sheep, those who were humbly and genuinely devoted to God, were not taken in by them. In contrast, anyone who enters by him, who accepts him as the Messiah, will be saved and will experience blessing, expressed in sheep terms as going in and out and finding pasture.

(2) If one takes the statement temporally, then I suspect Jesus is referring to all who came before him with claims to be the Messiah. Carson states:

The ensuing verses suggest that *All who ever came before me* excludes from the indictment such leaders as Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others who heard God's voice in former times, and who served him faithfully in the terms of the covenant to which they had sworn allegiance. . . . It sounds, rather, as if reference is being

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<sup>286</sup> Carson (1991), 384.

<sup>287</sup> See, e.g., Michaels (2010), 582.

made to messianic pretenders who promise the people freedom but who lead them into war, suffering and slavery.<sup>288</sup>

d. Jesus again contrasts himself to the thief in terms of their purposes for the sheep. The thief comes only to harm the sheep, to steal and kill and destroy them, but he came from heaven that the sheep might have life and have it "to the max," meaning that they might have eternal life. Michaels remarks, "This 'abundant life' . . . is simply a way of speaking of 'eternal life' in the classic Johannine sense of a life that is not merely endless in duration, but new life, a qualitatively different relationship with God."<sup>289</sup>

e. Jesus declares that he is the good shepherd, and as such, he lays down his life for the sheep. This is a clear allusion to his coming sacrifice. In contrast, the Jewish leaders opposing him are like a hired hand who does not own the sheep. He is in it for self-interest not because he cares about the sheep, so he is quick to abandon them when danger threatens. This is like the Jewish leaders who were not protecting the people from the devastating effect of Satan's lie that Jesus is not the Messiah. On the contrary, they were instruments of that lie, working to aid the ravenous wolf by turning the people's hearts and minds from the truth, threatening any who would look in the Lord's direction.

f. Jesus repeats that he is the good shepherd and then speaks of the mutual knowing that exists between him and his own, which is analogous to the mutual knowing, the intimate personal relationship, between the Father and him. Jesus knows what is in all people, and those Jews in whom the Father's word was abiding (5:38), who believed Moses (5:46), who had heard and learned from the Father (6:45), who truly had God as their Father (8:42), and who were Abraham's children in a faith sense (8:39-40) recognized and accepted Jesus for who he is. They were "tuned to him" and responded to his word. Through discipleship they related to him with increasing intimacy, all of which is divinely foreknown.

g. Jesus says again that he lays down his life for the sheep and then speaks of "other sheep that are not of this fold" that he also must bring. Kruse states:

The allusion is to Gentile people, those who are not part of Israel. Of these Jesus said, *They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be* (lit. 'they shall become') *one flock and one shepherd*. Jesus was foreshadowing apostolic times, when his gospel would be taken to non-Jews, to Samaritans and Gentiles, something that would take place through the preaching of his disciples. Then all peoples would hear his voice, believe in him and be incorporated into the body of his disciples. Believers from different races would become 'one flock' (a church made up of Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles) led by 'one shepherd' (Jesus himself).<sup>290</sup>

h. The Father loves Jesus because of who he is, the perfectly faithful and obedient Son, as exemplified supremely in his laying down his life and taking it back up, his dying and rising from the dead, in accordance with the Father's will. Barrett explains: "The

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<sup>288</sup> Carson (1991), 384-385.

<sup>289</sup> Michaels (2010), 585 (fn. 71).

<sup>290</sup> Kruse, 237.

relation between the Father and the Son is essential and eternal; John does not mean that the Father loved Christ because the crucifixion took place. But the love of the Father for the Son is a love that is eternally linked with and mutually dependent upon the Son's complete alignment with the Father's will and his obedience even unto death."<sup>291</sup>

i. Jesus speaks of his active role in laying down his life and taking it up again. No one takes his life from him; rather, he allows sinful human beings to put him to death. He has authority to do so, and also authority to take his life back up, by virtue of the command he received from his Father that he do so. So here we see that Jesus, by God's authority, was active in his own resurrection. The texts that speak of him having been raised by God refer to Father's active role in the event and perhaps also to his authorization of Jesus' role.

j. The Jews were again divided because of Jesus' words. Many dismissed his words as the insane ramblings of one who was possessed by a demon. But others recognized that shoe did not fit. Though some things he said were hard to grasp, there was a coherence and profundity in what they could understand that put the lie to that charge. On top of that, they asked, referring to the immediate healing, "Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

### 23. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication (10:22-42)

**At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,<sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.<sup>24</sup> So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,<sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.<sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.<sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.<sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."<sup>31</sup> The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.<sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"<sup>33</sup> The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?<sup>35</sup> If he called them gods to whom the word of God came-- and Scripture cannot be broken--<sup>36</sup> do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?<sup>37</sup> If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;<sup>38</sup> but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."<sup>39</sup> Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.<sup>40</sup> He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained.<sup>41</sup> And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true."<sup>42</sup> And many believed in him there.**

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<sup>291</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 377.

a. At the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, which was observed in November-December, a month or so after the Feast of Tabernacles (September-October), Jesus was walking in the colonnade of Solomon on the east side of the temple precincts. Hanukkah marked the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C., after the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV, which was triggered by the sacrifice of a pig on the temple altar three years earlier.

b. The Jews surround him and insist that he say plainly and directly whether he is the Christ. They no doubt think they can use such an answer against him, but a simple "yes" or "no" could be misleading because of misconceptions that many Jews had about the Messiah. That is why he answers the question in Mat. 26:64 with "You have said so," which serves as an affirmative answer, a "yes," while at the same time carrying a nuance there of "in a sense that is beyond or not exactly what you envision by your question." In other words, it means "Yes, I am the Messiah, but you have some misconceptions about what that means." (The Spirit did not deem that nuance relevant for Mark's initial readers, so he just gave the "take home" point of the answer [Mk. 14:62]: "I am.")

c. Here Jesus answers, "I told you, and you do not believe." He does not mean he had answered their loaded question in the simple and potentially misleading way they wanted but that he had answered it with sufficient clarity for any who humbly desire to know the truth. They do not believe because they are not in that category. They view the evidence of his identity through the prism of their pride and religious agenda and thereby suppress it. That same dynamic also operates in their assessment of the miracles he does in his Father's name, which also bear witness to his identity. They do not believe because they are not among his sheep, meaning they are not part of "true Israel," those Jews who had received rather than resisted the Father's gracious work in their lives, which had produced in them the faith of Abraham, a genuine and humble faith in God that seeks the truth and therefore accepts the revelation of Jesus' identity. They hear his voice and follow him.

d. The Calvinist view is that Jesus is saying these unbelieving Jews do not believe because they are not among those God chose unconditionally from eternity to bring to faith. It is *only* those individuals he chose to bring to faith who are *able* to come to faith, and all those he chose to bring to faith will come to faith because he calls them irresistibly. So they do not believe because God did not choose to give them the ability to believe. They were hopeless from eternity. Though some texts can be viewed that way, none of them must be viewed that way, and other texts and the overall thrust of Scripture convinces me this understanding is incorrect.

(1) As noted above, Jerry Walls offers a good and concise critique of Calvinism.<sup>292</sup> The idea that God chose from eternity that these Jews would have no ability to come to faith and therefore to salvation makes it very difficult to understand Jesus' passionate lament over Jerusalem in Mat. 23:37 and Lk. 13:34, where he says, "How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, *and you were not willing!*" The tragedy is the missed opportunity, not an eternal decree that made belief impossible. In Rom. 10:21, Paul concludes a section on the Jewish rejection of the gospel by

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<sup>292</sup> Jerry Walls, "[What's Wrong with Calvinism](#)" (accessed 1/30/22).

referring to Isa. 65:2, "But concerning Israel he says, 'All the day [long] I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.'" A prolonged appeal to those who are known to lack any possibility of response is hard to fathom.

(2) Leighton Flowers comments on the meaning:

So Jesus is simply saying, "You do not believe in me, the Son, because you have not followed the Father who sent me." Jesus' voice is the same as that of his Father. If you recognize his voice, it is because you have been listening [to] and learning from the Father. From all that we read about Jesus, what we can be sure of is that he did not mean to say: "You cannot believe because I really don't want you. I didn't choose you. I didn't die for you." That's *not* what Jesus means. As Paul wrote to Timothy: "This is good and pleases God our Savior, *who wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth*. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people" [1 Tim. 2:3-6].<sup>293</sup>

e. Jesus gives eternal life to those who follow him, which means they will never "perish" (*apollumi*) in the sense their lives will never be ruined or spoiled in the wretched existence of hell. The same verb that here (in the middle voice) is rendered "perish" is in Mat. 10:28 (in the active voice) rendered "destroy," and it is there used in reference to God's ability to "destroy" (cause to perish) both soul and body in hell, meaning he is able to punish in hell forever the resurrected person in whom soul and body have been reunited.<sup>294</sup>

f. That no power is able to snatch a believer from the Lord's hand, to remove him forcibly from his relationship with the Lord, does not mean the believer cannot choose to renounce his faith. The point is the absolute security of the faithful not whether one can cease to be faithful. If a president said to Americans in Afghanistan, "No one can take you from our embassy," one would not think he meant that no one could choose to leave the embassy voluntarily.

g. And Jesus' power to prevent the faithful from being snatched from his hand is bound up with the fact he and the Father, who is greater than all, are united in such a way that to snatch the faithful from Jesus' hand would be to snatch them from the Father's hand, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. Carson comments:

Like everything that Jesus does, however, even this preserving action is not independent of the Father. All that Jesus says and does is merely the embodiment of the Father's will; this activity is explicitly so (6:37-40). This means that it is the Father himself who ultimately stands behind the preservation of Jesus' sheep. If some think Jesus to be too frail for so lofty an assignment, they must surely recognize that it is the Father's commitment no less than his. . . .

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<sup>293</sup> Leighton Flowers, "[John 10:26 De-Calvinized](#)" (accessed on 1/30/22).

<sup>294</sup> Luke 12:5 confirms that the destruction mentioned equates to being thrown into hell.

Though the focus is on the common commitment of Father and Son to display protective power toward what they commonly own (17:10), John's development of Christology to this point demands that some more essential unity be presupposed, quite in line with the first verse of the Gospel. . . . The Jews had asked for a plain statement that would clarify whether or not he was the Messiah. He gave them far more, and the response was the same as in 5:18, 8:59.<sup>295</sup>

h. Jesus' declaration "I and the Father are one" was understood to be a claim to a unique unity with the Father, which the Jews considered blasphemous. Jesus seeks to wake them up by responding to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" But instead of recognizing his point that his miracles reinforce what he says about his identity, they act like he is actually accusing them of stoning him for his good works. They say, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

i. Jesus says, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?" He is using "Law" in the general sense of all of Scripture, as is clear from the fact the reference is to Ps. 82:6 (LXX). The word "gods" in that text most likely refers to the judges of Israel<sup>296</sup> or to Israel at the time of the giving of the Law.<sup>297</sup>

j. Jesus continues, "If he called them gods to whom the word of God came – and Scripture cannot be broken – do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" His point is that the text establishes conclusively that it is appropriate to refer to the men of Psalm 82 as "gods." As John notes, to deny that would be to break Scripture in the sense of claiming it erred, which cannot be done. If it is not blasphemous to refer to the men of Psalm 82 as "gods" because they had a certain relationship with God, then how can they claim it is blasphemous for him to refer to himself as the Son of God when he has a far more intimate relationship with the Father, having been set apart by him and sent into the world? That would only be the case if he was lying, which he is not.

k. Regarding his claim about his identity, he tells them to consider a significant piece of corroborating evidence. If he is not doing the works of his Father, not performing miracles, then it would be one thing not to believe him. But if he does perform miracles, then even though they initially do not believe his claim, they should believe he has performed the miracles that they may thereby be led to realize that he and the Father are uniquely and intimately associated. Kruse comments:

The miracles of Jesus were the works of God, and Jesus invited his opponents to believe in him on account of the miracles, even if they could not believe what he said. This he said was so *that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father*. Though belief based on miracles is not ideal (4:48), many did believe because of his miracles (7:31). Sadly, there were many who saw the

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<sup>295</sup> Carson (1991), 393, 395.

<sup>296</sup> Morris, 467-468; Klink, 481.

<sup>297</sup> Carson (1991), 397-398; Osborne, 161.

miracles and still refused to believe (12:37). Nevertheless, the evangelist records Jesus' miracles to engender belief in his readers (20:31).<sup>298</sup>

1. The Jewish leaders tried again to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands, no doubt as part of God's timing. Jesus left Jerusalem and crossed the Jordan to the place where John initially was baptizing. He remained there for a time, and as had happened with John, many people came to him. Kruse states: "The people who came to see Jesus testified to John's faithfulness: he never performed a miracle, but all he said about Jesus was true – the ultimate endorsement of a witness. As the people remembered the witness of John, and then encountered the one of whom he spoke, *in that place many believed in Jesus*. Thus John's witness bore its intended fruit."<sup>299</sup> I assume Jesus' disciples were baptizing them in Jesus' name.

24. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)

*a. Lazarus dies (11:1-16)*

**Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. <sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." <sup>11</sup> After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." <sup>13</sup> Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup> So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."**

(1) A man named Lazarus, and his sisters Mary and Martha, lived in the village of Bethany, which was "east of the Mount of Olives, less than two miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jericho."<sup>300</sup> It is different from the Bethany mentioned in 1:28. We are told that this was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. John does not report that event until the next chapter, but he assumes his readers will be familiar with it, whether from oral tradition or the other Gospels (Mk. 14:3-9; Mat. 26:6-13).<sup>301</sup> We are also told that that Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and that Lazarus was ill.

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<sup>298</sup> Kruse, 244-245.

<sup>299</sup> Kruse, 245.

<sup>300</sup> Köstenberger, 325.

<sup>301</sup> The passion-week dinner party in Bethany that is reported in Jn. 12:1-8 is very probably the same event reported in Mk. 14:3-9 and Mat. 26:6-13, despite some variation in details (see comments on 12:1-8).

(2) Mary and Martha sent for the Lord, explaining that Lazarus was ill. When Jesus heard it, he announced that the illness does not end in death (is not "unto death") but rather is for the glory of God. More specifically, it is so that the Son of God may be glorified through it (by raising Lazarus from the dead), which glorification will redound to the glory or praise of God. So Jesus knows how this is going to play out.

(3) John says in v. 6 that it was *because* (*oun* – therefore) Jesus loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus that he stayed put for two days after he heard that Lazarus was ill. Afterward, he calls the disciples to accompany him back to Judea, specifically Bethany, because Lazarus had now died (fallen asleep), and he was going there to raise him (wake him). The signal to go there appears to have been the revelation of Lazarus's death, in which case Jesus waited for Lazarus to die before embarking on the journey. That procedure was motivated by his love for the family in the sense the extraordinary miracle would cause them to forget the pain of their grief, as the joy of bringing a child into the world causes a woman to forget the pains of labor, and serve to strengthen their faith more than would the healing of an illness. If Jesus had wanted to prevent Lazarus from dying, he could have healed him at a distance, as he had done with the royal official's son in 4:47-53.

(4) When Jesus calls the disciples to return to Judea, they are concerned about the danger. They remind him that the Jews there were just seeking to kill him. Jesus says, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He is telling them that they will avoid harm on the journey because, echoing 9:4-5, it was still the light of day, meaning that he, the light of the world (8:12, 9:5), was still with them.

(5) Jesus then tells them that Lazarus had "fallen asleep" but he was going to "awaken him." The disciples think he means Lazarus literally was sleeping, which would be helpful in recovering from his illness, so they question why Jesus would want to wake him up. Jesus tells them plainly that Lazarus has died, which means that in saying he was going to "awaken him" he was saying he was going to raise him from the dead.

(6) He adds that for their sake he was glad he was not there, so that they may believe. The point seems to be that in his absence the better choice was for him to allow Lazarus to die and then to raise him so that the disciples' faith might be strengthened by the great miracle. As Köstenberger notes, "you may believe" "here refers to the strengthening of the disciples' faith (rather than the creation of new faith)."<sup>302</sup> If he had been present during Lazarus's illness, the emotional appeals and expectations for healing (e.g., 11:21, 32, 37) may have been so strong that refusing to do so would be perceived as callous despite subsequently raising him from the dead. In other words, his presence may have changed the spiritual calculus so that it would be better in that circumstance to heal him than to allow him to die and raise him.

(7) Despite having just declared that Lazarus is dead, Jesus, in keeping with his statement he was going to awaken him, says, "But let us go to him." And then

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<sup>302</sup> Köstenberger, 331 (fn. 42).

Thomas, called Didymus (means "the twin" in Greek), having missed the point of Jesus' statement that those who walk in the light of day do not stumble, says to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Jesus was not calling them to a suicide mission; he was calling them to witness the Son's glorification, which will redound to the glory or praise of God (11:4). Kruse observes, "Despite his professed willingness to die with Jesus, when the crunch came Thomas was among those who forsook him and fled (16:32; cf. Mt. 26:56; Mk. 14:50)."<sup>303</sup>

*b. Jesus comes to Bethany (11:17-37)*

**17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." 28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" 37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?"**

(1) When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. And with Bethany being so near to Jerusalem, many Jews had come from the city to console Martha and Mary. When Martha got word that Jesus was approaching, she went out and met him on the outskirts of the village. Michaels comments, "Mary, by contrast, remained 'sitting in the house,' presumably the house shared by the sisters and possibly Lazarus as well. . . . Mary seems to have remained at home not because she was less eager to welcome Jesus, but because she had not yet learned of his arrival (see v. 29, where she too, 'as soon as she heard, got up quickly and was coming to him')."<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Kruse, 250.

<sup>304</sup> Michaels (2010), 629-630.

(2) Martha's statement to Jesus that if he had been there her brother would not have died is probably not a complaint or rebuke but an expression of regret or disappointment flowing from her grief and her confidence in Jesus' love and his power to heal those in his presence. She does not know why he was not there, but she is certain that if he had been he would have prevented the death. She then lets him know that the fact he did not prevent that death, for whatever reason, has not diminished her faith in the uniqueness of his relationship with God. Rather, she continues to trust that God will grant him whatever he asks. Judging by v. 39, in making that general confession of faith, she is not thinking Jesus will request the immediate raising of Lazarus from the dead. That was not on her radar screen, presumably because Jesus raised the dead only rarely as a foreshadowing of what will take place at his return. With few exceptions, he allowed the dead to remain dead; that was his normal *modus operandi*.

(3) Even when Jesus tells her that Lazarus will rise, she thinks he is giving her the customary comfort of reminding her of the end time resurrection, an event in which most Jews believed. Thus, she responds by expressing her faith in that truth, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

(4) Jesus then stresses to Martha the depth and significance of his unique relationship with God by declaring that he is the resurrection and the life. The resurrection life that she and her fellow Jews anticipate, the rising to resurrection life on the last day that she has just confessed, will take place because of his identity and mission. He is the divine agent, the Word incarnate, who through his atoning sacrifice makes possible the redemption of sinners and therefore makes possible eternal fellowship of God and mankind. Whoever believes in him, and thus appropriates the benefit of his death, will experience eternal resurrection life even though he dies physically. And everyone who believes in him will never die ("will never see death" in the words of 8:51) in the sense they will never experience judgment death, the judgment of eternal condemnation that John will later in Revelation refer to as the "second death" (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

(5) Jesus asks Martha if she believes he is who he just told her he is. She says, "Yes, Lord," and then expresses his identity in conventional messianic terminology. He is the Christ, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah (*māšīah*), meaning the Anointed One, whose coming into the world has long been awaited. "The title 'Son of God', though not a common designation for the Messiah among first-century Jews, was nevertheless used in some texts in that way."<sup>305</sup>

(6) After making this confession, Martha went and told Mary that Jesus had arrived and wanted to see her. Mary jumped up and headed out to see him just outside the village. When the Jews who were there consoling Mary saw her rush out, they followed her thinking she was going to the tomb to cry there, so they are present at her meeting with the Lord. Falling at Jesus' feet, Mary expresses the same faith-based regret or disappointment that Martha had expressed, and when Jesus saw her and the others weeping, he was moved deeply at an emotional level.<sup>306</sup> The fact he had allowed Lazarus to die that he might raise him for the

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<sup>305</sup> Kruse, 82.

<sup>306</sup> *Embrimaomai* often has connotations of anger or indignation, and many commentators accept that sense here and wrestle with identifying the source of the anger or indignation. BDAG (p. 322) gives as the meaning for this verse,

strengthening of the disciples' faith, a great miracle that would glorify the Son and the Father (11:4), did not insulate him from the emotional distress of seeing loved ones in the anguish of grief. It broke his heart. He bore that distress for the spiritual blessing the miracle would provide.

(7) Jesus asks the location of Lazarus's tomb, and they (Martha and Mary?) tell him to come and see. John notes that Jesus wept, which the Jews assumed was from sorrow over Lazarus's passing because he loved him so deeply. But given that he was about to raise Lazarus from death, his weeping is better understood as being related to the pain death leaves in its wake, the pain he observed that produced in him the strong emotional response noted in v. 33. Given the mistaken assumption that Jesus was weeping because death had taken his beloved Lazarus, some of the Jews wondered aloud why Jesus, who had the power to restore sight to the blind man, had not used that power to prevent Lazarus's death by healing his illness. They are oblivious to the Lord's larger purpose.

*c. Jesus raises Lazarus (11:38-44)*

**<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup> When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." <sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."**

(1) Jesus, again deeply moved, came to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone laid against the opening. He instructs them to move the stone away, and Martha, not thinking he was going to restore Lazarus to life, points out that the corpse will stink because the death occurred so long ago (four days) that decomposition was well underway. Jesus reminds her what he had told her previously, I think most likely in an unreported conversation,<sup>307</sup> that if she believed she would see the glory of God, suggesting that something was about to occur that would render her concern about odor of no consequence, something that would require faith in Jesus to perceive its true significance, to appreciate fully how it redounded to the glory of God. Morris states, "The crowd would see the miracle, but only believers would perceive its real significance, the glory (cf. Guthrie, 'many saw Lazarus come from the grave but never saw the glory of God')."<sup>308</sup>

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"to feel strongly about something, *be deeply moved*," which is how most English translations take it. See, e.g., Lindars, 398-399; Morris, 493-494; D. Moody Smith, 224-225; Mounce, 519. Klink (p. 508) argues that Jesus was both sharing the grief of his people and outraged at the condition of sin and disbelief.

<sup>307</sup> He possibly is referring to what he said to her, in so many words, in the conversation of 11:23-26, but there is no mention there of the glory of God. See, Morris, 497.

<sup>308</sup> Morris, 497.

(2) With that, they removed the stone, and Jesus lifted his eyes and prayed: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." Jesus thanks God out loud for having "heard," meaning granted, his prior prayer for the raising of Lazarus, the making of which is not reported.<sup>309</sup> He says he knew the Father always hears him, so his hearing him in this instance is not unusual, but in this case he made public his thanksgiving for the benefit of those standing around, that they might realize how thoroughly he depends and relies on the Father and thereby come to believe that the Father has sent him. He is the Word incarnate on a mission from the Father.

(3) Jesus then cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." He shuffled out of the tomb, not wrapped like a mummy but with his hands and feet bound by strips of cloth (*keiria*). There also was a small cloth (*soudarion*) that probably was rolled up and tied around his face to serve as a chin band. Jesus tells them to unbind him and let him go. As amazing as this was, Michaels rightly observes, "Despite the rich symbolism, this is a resuscitation, not a resurrection. . . . For the moment, Lazarus is not being ushered into the age to come, but simply received back into everyday life."<sup>310</sup>

#### 25. The plot to kill Jesus (11:45-57)

**<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, <sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." <sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. <sup>50</sup> Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." <sup>51</sup> He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. <sup>54</sup> Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. <sup>55</sup> Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup> They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" <sup>57</sup> Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.**

a. Many of the Jews who had come with Mary and witnessed the great miracle believed in him. Kruse remarks:

In earlier parts of the Gospel, belief based upon miracles proved to be superficial (2:23-25; 6:14, 66; 8:31-38), but the evangelist gives no hint of that being the case

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<sup>309</sup> Morris, 497-498.

<sup>310</sup> Michaels (2010), 646.

on this occasion. On the contrary, these Jews function as an example of those who see the signs and believe (20:31). Their belief is another reminder that 'the Jews' in the Fourth Gospel are not always opponents of Jesus.<sup>311</sup>

b. But some of those Jews reported the event to the Pharisees, knowing they were opposed to Jesus and would be keen for information about his ministry and popularity. This news prompted a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling body, where they considered what they could do about the "Jesus problem." They feared his miracle working would lead so many to believe in him as the Messiah that the Romans would feel threatened and crackdown, taking away both the Jews' place, probably referring to the temple, and their nation. They fear this movement, which they reject as the work of a false messiah, will lead to destruction and exile.

c. The high priest, Caiaphas, proposes a radical solution: the killing of Jesus. Kruse remarks, "His argument was that it was better for one man, Jesus, to be put to death, than that the whole nation of the Jews should perish because of a Roman crackdown. Caiaphas' solution was rational and ruthless."<sup>312</sup> His solution was accepted, as v. 53 states, "So from that day on they made plans to put him to death."

d. John comments, by inspiration, that Caiaphas did not speak in that instance of his own accord but rather uttered his words as a prophecy, whether he appreciated that fact or not, that Jesus would die for the nation and to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. Some think the latter refers to Jews in the Diaspora, but I think it more likely it is a reference to Gentiles. Kruse states: "Such a gathering of disparate peoples is foreshadowed in 10:16, where Jesus, as the good shepherd, says, 'I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.' The prophet Isaiah also spoke of a day when God would gather the Gentiles into his people (Isa. 56:6-8)."<sup>313</sup>

e. After the conspiracy to kill him was hatched by the Jewish leaders, Jesus and his disciples withdrew from Bethany to a village called Ephraim, which was near the wilderness, about four miles northeast of Bethel.<sup>314</sup> Kruse comments, "Perhaps Jesus withdrew to this village because someone there offered him lodgings. It was far enough away from Jerusalem to avoid 'the Jews' of that city, yet close enough to be able to return for Passover (55; 12:1)."<sup>315</sup>

f. As the time grew near for the annual Feast of Passover, which marked the beginning of the weeklong Feast of Unleavened bread, Jewish pilgrims from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem. Many would come a week early to allow time for any ritual purification that may have been necessary, and they were talking about Jesus and wondering if he was going to attend the Feast. The chief priest and Pharisees, however, had given orders that if anyone knew Jesus' location, they needed to inform them so they might arrest him.

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<sup>311</sup> Kruse, 257.

<sup>312</sup> Kruse, 258.

<sup>313</sup> Kruse, 259.

<sup>314</sup> Kruse, 260.

<sup>315</sup> Kruse, 260.

## 26. Jesus anointed at Bethany (12:1-8)

**Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. <sup>3</sup> Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup> "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup> He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."**

a. Jesus arrived back in Bethany six days before the Passover. Passover was on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month of Nisan, which month corresponds to April/May in our calendar. That year, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was on a Friday, the day before the Sabbath.<sup>316</sup> Jews reckoned a new day to begin at nightfall, so Friday, Passover, was from nightfall on Thursday to nightfall on Friday. The day before (Nisan 14) was from nightfall on Wednesday to nightfall on Thursday. That was the day of preparation for the Passover meal, the day on which the Passover lambs were sacrificed. Given that Friday/Passover began at nightfall on Thursday, it seems Jesus arrived in Bethany on Friday evening, just as the Sabbath (Saturday) began.

b. The dinner party of vv. 2-8 is quite likely the event at the home of "Simon the (presumably former) leper" of Bethany that is reported in Mk. 14:3-9 and Mat. 26:6-13, despite some variation in details. (The anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman in Lk. 7:36-50 is almost certainly a different event.) In that case, Martha is serving because she had been enlisted to help with the festivities. John 12:1 says only that Jesus *arrived* in Bethany six days before the Passover. It does not specify when the meal described in vv. 2-8 was eaten, so the fact the dinner at Simon's home was *two days* before the Passover (Mat. 26:1-6; Mk. 14:1-3) does not require that they be different events.<sup>317</sup> Nor does the fact the unnamed woman in Mk. 14:3 and Mat. 26:7 anointed Jesus' *head*, whereas Mary in Jn. 12:3 anointed his *feet* and wiped them with her hair. She may have poured the perfume on both his head and feet, and the reports in the Gospels are incomplete.

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<sup>316</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann states in *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 281, "As we have already seen, the Passover at Jesus' crucifixion commenced on Thursday evening at sundown and lasted throughout the daytime hours of the following Friday. . . . Only two years between AD 26 and AD 36 had Friday Passovers: Friday, April 7, AD 30 was a Passover, and Friday, April 3, AD 33 was a Passover." Blomberg states in (2009), 225, "As it turns out, a case can be made for Passover having fallen on either Friday or Saturday in AD 30 or 33, although it is more difficult to date the festival in 33 on a Friday."

<sup>317</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel goes the other way in *Jesus in Jerusalem: The Last Days* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 141, claiming the chronological note of "two days before the Passover" in Matthew and Mark are not tied to the account of the anointing. He suggests Matthew and Mark postponed their reports of that incident to make a theological point.

c. Mary's act was one of great devotion, but Judas Iscariot criticizes her by asking, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" John points out that Judas said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he wanted that money to pass through his hands as the keeper of the moneybag so he could help himself to some of it.

d. Jesus tells Judas to leave Mary alone and then answers his question. Whether she realized it or not, Mary did not sell the ointment as Judas claims she should have so that she would have it to honor Jesus by anointing his body in preparation for burial (for the day of his burial). No one would think negatively about such an extravagant act of devotion and honor for a loved one who had died (e.g., 19:39-40), despite the existence of poor people. Showing honor to the dead in that way, paying tribute to their lives, was understood to be fitting and proper. Jesus casts Mary's use of the ointment on him at that time as preparing his body for the day of his burial because he is proceeding to imminent death in Jerusalem.

#### 27. The plot to kill Lazarus (12:9-11)

**<sup>9</sup> When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, <sup>11</sup> because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.**

a. When the crowd of Jews in Jerusalem for the Passover learned that Jesus was in Bethany, many went there to see him but also to see Lazarus. It appears Jesus arrived in Bethany on Friday evening, just as the Sabbath (Saturday) began. The crowd's visit would have been after the Sabbath had ended, so sometime after sunset on Saturday (the beginning of Sunday). We are not told how they learned Jesus was in Bethany. Clearly the news of Lazarus being raised from the dead had spread among them. This miracle was causing many Jews to believe in Jesus, which fed the fear of the Jewish leaders that the Jesus movement would grow to the point of conflict with Rome.

b. They had already planned to kill Jesus. Now, the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well. They judged that his personal testimony of having been raised from the dead, walking proof of the miracle, would be too difficult to deny, so they conspire to commit yet another murder. In their eyes, no doubt, it was for the greater good.

#### 28. Jesus' triumphal entry (12:12-19)

**<sup>12</sup> The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" <sup>14</sup> And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, <sup>15</sup> "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" <sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. <sup>17</sup> The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead**

**continued to bear witness.<sup>18</sup> The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.<sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."**

a. Perhaps the crowd that went to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus did so right when the Sabbath was ending (walking part way as the sun was setting, so as not to walk too far on the Sabbath, and the remainder after it set) and learned during a brief visit that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem the "next day," meaning the next period of daylight (Sunday daytime).<sup>318</sup> They shared that news when they returned to Jerusalem, and it spread rapidly the next morning among the crowd that had come for Passover.

b. The people took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Jesus, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" Regarding the palm branches, Köstenberger states: "[B]y the time of Jesus, palm branches had already become a national (if not nationalistic) Jewish symbol (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.10.4 §245; 13.13.5 §372; cf. Jub. 16:31; see Coakley 1995: 472). . . . In the present event, people's waving of palm branches may signify nationalistic hopes that in Jesus a messianic liberator had arrived (cf. John 6:14-15; see Farmer 1952)."<sup>319</sup>

c. The term "hosanna," which originally was a Hebrew expression meaning "Give salvation now!" "had become a general expression of acclamation or praise."<sup>320</sup> The crowd shouts the words of Ps. 118:26, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Köstenberger remarks, "In its original context, Ps. 118 conferred a blessing on the pilgrim headed for Jerusalem (R. Brown 1966: 457), with possible reference to the Davidic king (Carson 1991:432). Later rabbinic commentary interpreted this psalm messianically (*Midr. Ps.* 118.22 on Ps. 118:24)."<sup>321</sup> The crowd makes its referent express in declaring that he who comes in the name of the Lord is "the King of Israel," however incomplete or defective their understanding of the King's role may have been.

d. In deliberate fulfillment of Zech. 9:9, Jesus comes riding on a young male donkey. We learn elsewhere that the donkey had never before been ridden and was accompanied by a mature donkey, presumably its mother.

(1) Zechariah prophesied in Israel after the return from Babylonian exile in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. "Zechariah 9:1-17 is a prophetic hymn of the Divine warrior, which consists of two prose oracles (vv. 1-8, 11-17) framing a central poetic

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<sup>318</sup> As Gerald L. Borchert notes in *John 12-21*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 40, "If the [crowd's visit] took place on the evening after Sabbath concluded, this event [of 12:12] could be understood to have occurred on Sunday (that would suppose that the next day were to be viewed by Roman time designations as the next morning and not by Jewish calculations as starting after sundown of the following day)." It is also possible "the next day" of v. 12 refers to v. 1 ("Six days before the Passover") and leaves the timing of crowd's visit in v. 9 unaddressed.

<sup>319</sup> Köstenberger, 369.

<sup>320</sup> Köstenberger, 369.

<sup>321</sup> Köstenberger, 370.

oracle (vv. 9-10).<sup>322</sup> Herbert Bateman, Darrell Bock, and Gordon Johnston summarize the chapter this way:

Zechariah 9:1-17 envisions the coming of the King in three successive acts. The Divine Warrior would march out against the traditional enemies of Israel/Judah, starting in the north and moving south, exacting victory along the way (vv. 1-8). Then he would enter Zion as her citizens hail his triumphal entry by proclaiming his kingship and as the sign that their liberation from foreign oppression was at hand (vv. 9-10). The Divine Warrior would then defeat the foreign armies occupying the land, and then inaugurate a new age of universal peace (vv. 11-17).<sup>323</sup>

(2) In the pivotal poetic verses 9-10, the people of Jerusalem celebrate Yahweh entering the city as King mounted on a donkey. (A donkey "was the stereotypical mount of royalty in the ancient Near East.")<sup>324</sup> There is an allusion in this imagery to Gen. 49:11, which connects it to Israel's messianic hope. As Bateman et al. remark, "We need not choose between Yahweh's coming and the coming of King Messiah. They are wrapped up in each other."<sup>325</sup>

(3) Zechariah 9:9-10 depict the eschatological coming of the Divine Warrior to inaugurate his theocratic rule of universal peace. But if God/Christ is this end-time ruler, this eternal King, what of the promised eternal rulership of the Son of David? As salvation history unfolds, it becomes clear that "[t]he future eschatological kingship of Yahweh as well as the kingship of the future eschatological Davidic king will be wrapped up with one another. Yahweh's presence and decisive work will be seen in the reign of the coming Davidic king."<sup>326</sup>

e. At the time, the disciples' understanding of the nature of the kingship alluded to by Zechariah was limited. But after Jesus was glorified – after his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension – they then recalled what had been written about him with the benefit of that knowledge, which allowed them to move past certain misconceptions of the text.

f. The people who had witnessed Lazarus rise from the dead continued telling people about it, as it was mind blowing! Indeed, that is why they went out to meet Jesus as he approached Jerusalem. The Pharisees were frustrated with how things were going. They said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him." From their perspective, things were getting desperate.

## 29. The Greek pilgrims seek Jesus (12:20-26)

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<sup>322</sup> Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 201.

<sup>323</sup> Bateman, 201-202.

<sup>324</sup> Bateman, 203.

<sup>325</sup> Bateman, 204.

<sup>326</sup> Bateman, 205.

**20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.**

a. John notes that some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover feast. Köstenberger states: "As elsewhere in the NT, the term Ἕλληνες refers not necessarily to people literally hailing from Greece but to Gentiles from any part of the Greek-speaking world. . . . The term 'Greek' presumably was used as an umbrella term for Gentiles, owing to the dominance of Greek culture and language in the Greco-Roman world at large."<sup>327</sup> They "were probably 'God-fearers' rather than proselytes in the strict sense. Had they been true proselytes, they would probably not have been referred to as Greeks any longer. Many came to worship at the major Jewish festivals without being proselytes to Judaism."<sup>328</sup>

b. They approached Philip, perhaps because he had a Greek name, and told him they wanted to see Jesus. Philip then told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus. The Gentiles' request to see Jesus prompts him to say, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." As the next verse makes clear, his being glorified involves his dying to bear fruit, dying for the world, but it is unclear why the request of the Gentiles elicited that response. Perhaps Jesus interprets the Gentiles seeking an audience with him as a signal that the time of his death had come because his work – his death, resurrection, and ascension – "sweeps into his covenant community large numbers of Gentiles who had earlier been excluded from the people of the covenant."<sup>329</sup>

c. Jesus announces, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." He is saying that anyone who makes preservation of his life his highest priority, anyone who does not hate his life in this world in the sense of ranking its preservation beneath honoring and being faithful to God, ironically loses his life because he has not given God his ultimate allegiance.

(1) As Robert Kysar notes, "to love one's life is to value it above all else, while to hate one's life is to prefer a higher value than one's own existence."<sup>330</sup> It is only one who chooses God over even this earthly life, as the Lord is about to model, who will keep that life for eternity. The others will face eternal judgment, which is a wretched existence that is a loss of true life.

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<sup>327</sup> Köstenberger, 377.

<sup>328</sup> NET note.

<sup>329</sup> Carson (1991), 437; see also, Kruse, 269.

<sup>330</sup> Robert Kysar, *John ACNT* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 195.

(2) Jesus says much the same in Lk. 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." A consequence of not being his disciple is that one will be lost in one's sin.

d. Jesus then says, "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." Being a disciple, a servant of Jesus, requires one to follow Jesus in the things he does, to emulate his conduct in one's own life. We are to live like our Master. Those who do so, who are genuinely his servants, albeit imperfectly, will be where he is in the sense they will be with him in his glory. As Jesus will be honored by the Father, the Father also will honor Jesus' disciples, those who serve him. Kruse states: "Those who follow Jesus in the path of self-denial in this world will have a place with him in future glory (14:2-3; 17:24). . . . In this life Jesus' disciples may experience disdain from the 'world' as he did, but on the last day they will receive honor from the only one who counts ultimately, God himself."<sup>331</sup>

### 30. Jesus faces the prospect of the cross (12:27-36, ESV modified)

**<sup>27</sup> "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour[.] But for this purpose I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup> The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." <sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. <sup>34</sup> So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" <sup>35</sup> So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.**

a. Having stated that the time of his death had arrived, Jesus expresses a sense of foreboding: "Now is my soul troubled." He is facing not only the horror of execution by crucifixion but also whatever is involved in bearing the divine judgment for the sins of the world. The suffering he is facing is therefore unique.

b. Jesus asks in his distress what he should say in the face of his impending crucifixion. With a number of scholars (Beasley-Murray, Carson, Kysar, Burge, Borchert, Mounce), I think it best to understand the next clause as a statement instead of a question (as in KJV, ERV, ASV, and NEB). The original Greek text had no punctuation to indicate a question. In other words, I think Jesus, after a pause, prays, "Father, save me from this hour," similar to his prayer in the Garden in the Synoptics for God to allow the cup to pass from

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<sup>331</sup> Kruse, 270.

him if that be possible (Mat. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42). He then says, in essence, "not as I will, but as you will" (Mat. 26:39). That is the import of "But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Carson comments:

After the deliberative question *what shall I say?* it seems better to take the next words as a positive prayer. *Father, save me from this hour!* Now Jesus' agony is fully revealed. This prayer is entirely analogous to Gethsemane's 'Take this cup from me' (Mk. 14:36). In both instances the strong adversative follows: *alla*, 'but' - in one case, 'not what I will, but what you will' (Mk. 14:36), and here, *No (alla), it was for this very reason I came to this hour*. Jesus can no sooner pray to be spared this hour, to escape this cup, than he must face again his unswerving commitment to adhere to his Father's will. . . . That is why Jesus is so troubled. 'The horror of death, and the ardor of His obedience, were meeting together' (Bengel, 2.408).<sup>332</sup>

c. The Father answers immediately Jesus' prayer that the Father's name be glorified, that his will be done over any desire of Jesus to be spared. Kruse comments:

[He declared] he had already glorified his name in Jesus' ministry (through Jesus' words and works; see 7:18; 11:4, 40; 17:4) and he would glorify it again through his death. . . . The voice from heaven must have been a booming sound, for some of the bystanders thought it was thunder. Others thought it was a loud voice, and said 'an angel had spoken to him.' Neither opinion was correct. Though the crowd may not have understood what the voice said, nevertheless its very occurrence indicated that God had responded to Jesus' prayer.<sup>333</sup>

d. Jesus tells them the voice they heard, even if they did not understand the words, was for their benefit and not his. This booming sound from heaven in response his prayer was an objective indication of his unique relationship with the Father. Köstenberger says, "they were to construe the sound as a divine attestation to Jesus' messianic mission."<sup>334</sup>

e. Jesus then announces that the arrival of the time for his death is the arrival of the time for the judgment of this world. As Michaels states, "The second sentence explains the first: the world is 'now' judged, in that its ruler is 'now' to be 'driven out.'"<sup>335</sup> The "ruler of this world" is Satan, the devil. He is described this way again in 14:30 and 16:11, and similar expressions are found in 2 Cor. 4:4 and Eph. 2:2, 6:12.

(1) Satan will be cast out by Jesus' atoning death (and associated resurrection and ascension) in that punishment for sin, the satisfaction of God's holy justice, will have been meted out so that Satan can make no claim against those who will avail themselves of benefits of Jesus' death. Satan's teeth were pulled at the cross; he was rendered a "paper tiger."

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<sup>332</sup> Carson (1991), 440.

<sup>333</sup> Kruse, 271.

<sup>334</sup> Köstenberger, 383.

<sup>335</sup> Michaels states (2010), 695.

(2) In Rev. 12:7-12, the defeat of Satan that is accomplished by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is symbolized in the expulsion from heaven of Satan and his angels.<sup>336</sup> Satan apparently had some type of access to heaven and continually accused the saints of disobedience (Job 1:9-11; Zech. 3:1). Presumably he was tolerated in that role because his charges had at least an appearance of justice prior to the cross. But with God's justice being satisfied in the atoning death of Christ, Satan's accusations were shown openly and publicly to be invalid. As Paul indicates in Rom. 3:25-26, Jesus' crucifixion demonstrated God's righteous character or integrity in that it eliminated the *appearance* of a "justice debt" created by God having forgiven the sins of the faithful under the old covenant, prior to the Lord's sacrifice.

f. Jesus then declares that when he is "lifted up from the earth," he will draw all people to himself. As the next verse explains, he is speaking of his crucifixion. He means that his death on the cross will be a blood-written declaration to all mankind of his sacrificial love. If the word "draw" (*helkō*) necessarily connotes actual movement rather than a mere pull or appeal, then Jesus' sacrifice moves the spirit of all who hear of it *toward* (*pros*) him, at least turns them in his direction, but they remain free to reverse that movement or to resist any further pull to faith.

g. As Jesus says in Jn. 3:14-15, he must be "lifted up" that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:4, God our Savior "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Since not all people who hear of Christ's sacrifice come to a saving faith in him, being "drawn" toward Jesus is not the same as coming to a saving faith. Only a subset of the drawn, those who do not rebel or resist God's further gracious wooing, proceed to faith. Borchert states, "The lifted up arms of Jesus are extended to everyone indiscriminately. He came to be the 'Savior of the World' (4:42). But the coming of Jesus is an invitation to all, not a commitment to accept all who reject him."<sup>337</sup>

h. The crowd is puzzled because their understanding from "the Law," used broadly for the Jewish scriptures, was that the Christ remains forever. This understanding probably was rooted in texts indicating that God would establish the throne of the Son of David (the Messiah) forever (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:13; Ps. 89:3-4, 35-37). Michaels paraphrases their question: "Scripture tells us that the Messiah will remain forever, but you are telling us that the Son of man – by which we assume you mean the Messiah – will not remain forever, but die by crucifixion."<sup>338</sup> So they ask what they are missing regarding the Son of Man. As Carson says, in asking, Who is this 'Son of Man'? "they do not seek simple identification, but demand to know what kind of Son of Man/Messiah Jesus has in mind, of whom it can be said he will die."<sup>339</sup>

i. Instead of answering their question, Jesus tells them to take advantage of the limited time in which he, the light, will be among them. They need to walk, proceed to the destination, while the time for walking is good, while the light is present. The danger of not

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<sup>336</sup> The actual expulsion appears to be carried out by Michael and his angels, but the interpretive hymn of vv. 10-12 makes clear that this victory was won by the blood of Christ (see also, 5:9). Christ appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8). Michael is merely executing the victory won by Christ at Calvary.

<sup>337</sup> Borchert (2002), 60. Kysar says (p. 199), "All humans will be lured by the power of the cross."

<sup>338</sup> Michaels (2010), 702.

<sup>339</sup> Carson (1991), 446.

doing so is that the darkness of his physical absence will overtake them and impede their walking, as one who walks in the darkness cannot see where he is going. He seems to be suggesting that seeing and interacting with him in person can aid coming to faith. One gets the same sense from Jn. 20:29, where Jesus says to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus urges them to believe in him while he is present on earth with them, that they may become his disciples, sons of light.

j. When Jesus said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Morris states, "The previous narrative has made it plain that he will certainly die. But he will die when he wills. He will not be seized before the right time for his death."<sup>340</sup>

### 31. The unbelief of the people (12:37-43)

**<sup>37</sup> Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, <sup>38</sup> so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" <sup>39</sup> Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, <sup>40</sup> "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." <sup>41</sup> Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. <sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup> for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.**

a. Despite the many miracles Jesus had performed before them, the Jews generally did not believe in him. This was not a surprise to God but rather fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of their unbelief. And because they refused to believe (taking "Therefore" of v. 39 as referring to v. 38), as God foresaw, he gave them over to their blindness and hardness, withdrew his enabling grace, which left them unable to believe, as also prophesied by Isaiah. This hardening explains the ongoing Jewish resistance with which John's readers were familiar.

#### (1) Burge states:

In John's Gospel, God's sovereignty and human responsibility are held together consistently. Jesus calls for people to believe (12:36), and we learn that many do indeed make this choice (12:42). Throughout the Gospel of John never compromises the demand Jesus makes for decision and faith.

However, John is describing what we might call a "judicial" hardening that settles on a people who are already guilty. When revelation comes, we must believe. But if we refuse to believe, the light disappears (12:35-36); and when God's light departs from the world, the darkness (which is the default state of the world) closes over unbelieving hearts. . . . Paul makes a similar argument in Romans 1. The consequence of the world's sin and unbelief is God's judgment, in which he "gives them over" to their sinful instincts (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Morris, 535.

<sup>341</sup> Burge, 348.

(2) Donald Mills similarly comments:

That the multitude did not believe is a fulfillment of Scripture (12:38); that they could not believe is God's judicial blinding and hardening (12:40), a principle that was operative in Isaiah's time. This does not mean that God is in the business of preventing belief, or that somehow the human race is free from responsibility, for note Jesus' call for the multitude to trust in the light (12:36) and the explanation for His coming into the world in the first place (12:46, 47, 50; 3:16–17). But when they absolutely refused to believe the evidence, God ratified that decision and gave them over to their unbelief.<sup>342</sup>

(b) That the judicial hardening of the unbelieving Jews at that time was not total is evident from the fact that, despite the hardening, "many even of the authorities believed in him" (v. 42). But though they were able to believe, those he has in mind forfeited the blessing of that faith, the praise that comes from God, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. That is, they refused to confess Jesus openly because they feared the Pharisees would see that they were put out of the synagogue.

32. A final call to believe (12:44-50)

**<sup>44</sup> And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. <sup>45</sup> And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. <sup>46</sup> I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. <sup>47</sup> If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. <sup>49</sup> For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment-- what to say and what to speak. <sup>50</sup> And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."**

a. Jesus makes an appeal to the Jews to believe that he either comes out of hiding to make or made just prior to his withdrawal that is mentioned in 12:36. He again stresses his unity with the Father, declaring that believing in him is believing in the one who sent him (i.e., the Father) and that seeing him is seeing one who sent him. And he declares that he came into the world as light, as the revelation of truth, so that whoever believes in him, believes that he is who he says he is, may move from ignorance (darkness) into the truth of God (light).

b. Jesus makes clear that if they reject him by not accepting his words, his testimony about who he is, they will be condemned (be judged) on the last day, at the final judgment. But he says the judge will be the word he spoke because that word was the word of the Father. In rejecting that word, which word he was commanded to deliver as an offer of eternal life, they were rejecting the Father.

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<sup>342</sup> Donald W. Mills, "The Use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the New Testament with Special Attention to the Gospel of John," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 4:1 (Fall 2000), 37.

c. As I previously stated, the identity of "the Judge" in the Gospel of John is complex and confusing but ultimately coherent. The solution lies in the different aspects of Christ's two comings and in his relationship with the Father. Jesus' first coming was not the final judgment but rather was a rescue mission. The purpose and intent were not to condemn but to save. Yet, inherent in that rescue mission is the condemnation of all who reject the way of salvation, all who refuse to trust in Jesus as he is revealed in the gospel. Jesus is the criterion of salvation and conversely the criterion of God's judgment. God will judge the world *by Christ Jesus* (e.g., Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). Jesus is the separator; people are saved or condemned based on their response to him. In executing the judgment of the Father at his second coming, based on the criterion of faith in him, there is a sense in which Jesus is judging (Jn. 5:22; Acts 10:42) – he is carrying out the judgment – but there is also a sense in which the judging is not his but the Father's because it is pursuant to the Father's will (Jn. 5:30). So Paul says in Rom. 14:10 that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God and in 2 Cor. 5:10 that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Here Jesus has the word of the Father, which he delivers, being the judge on the last day because it stands for the Father.

### III. Book of Glory (13:1-20:31): Jesus' Return to the Father

#### A. The Last Supper and Farewell Discourse (13:1-17:26)

##### 1. Jesus washes his disciples' feet (13:1-17)

**Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup> During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, <sup>3</sup> Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, <sup>4</sup> rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. <sup>5</sup> Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." <sup>8</sup> Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup> Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." <sup>11</sup> For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." <sup>12</sup> When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup> You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.**

a. As I previously stated, in A.D. 30 (and 33), Passover (15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan), the day on which the Passover meal was eaten, fell on a Friday, the day before the Sabbath. Jews reckoned a new day to begin at nightfall, so Friday, Passover, was from sunset on Thursday to sunset on Friday. John notes that before the Passover meal, either late afternoon on Thursday (the end of Nisan 14) or after sunset on Thursday (the beginning of Nisan 15) but before the meal itself, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come to depart from this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end. That is, knowing it was now time to face the horror of crucifixion, the emotional anguish of which becomes clear in the Garden, he determined to drink the cup dry because of his love. In Blomberg's words, "Verses 1-2 . . . describe the depth of the love Jesus already had for his disciples before the Passover. Such love led him to see his mission through to the end, culminating in the Last Supper, with all the rich symbolism he invests in it."<sup>343</sup>

b. John notes that during the "supper," the Passover meal referred to in v. 1,<sup>344</sup> Judas Iscariot had already determined, under the devil's influence, to betray Jesus, and that Jesus knew the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God. With his betrayer present (which he knew – 6:70-71, 13:11) and knowing who he was, the Word incarnate who would be exalted to the greatest authority (Phil. 2:9-11), he stooped to washing his disciples' feet. The humility of this act is even more amazing when one understands that the washing of feet was considered so demeaning that not even students, disciples, were expected to perform that task for their teacher, their master. Indeed, it was considered beneath even Jewish *slaves* to wash feet, and therefore that task typically was assigned to *non-Jewish* slaves.<sup>345</sup>

c. Peter initially refuses to allow Jesus to wash his feet because he felt it was unfitting, unbecoming one of Jesus' great status, to stoop to such a lowly task. He said, in essence, "I will not accept from you service that you must demean yourself, humiliate yourself, to provide." When Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me," he was telling Peter that he must be willing to accept demeaning, humiliating service from him or else he would be separated from him. The Lord was referring to the service he would provide for all mankind through his crucifixion. That's why he told Peter that he *later* would understand what he was doing in washing their feet.

(1) Crucifixion was the cruelest and most humiliating form of execution in the ancient world. The Roman orator Cicero called it "the most cruel and disgusting penalty." The Jewish historian Josephus, who witnessed crucifixions during Titus's siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, called it "the most wretched of deaths." It was reserved for the lower classes, slaves, and the worst of criminals. In 63 B.C. Rabirius, a Roman nobleman and senator, was threatened with the penalty of crucifixion. In defending him, Cicero said:

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<sup>343</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 223.

<sup>344</sup> Burge states (p. 366), "In 13:1 'before the Passover Feast' probably describes when Jesus knew his hour had come, and the meal mentioned in 13:2 refers to the Passover itself described in 13:1."

<sup>345</sup> Köstenberger, 405.

How grievous a thing it is to be disgraced by a public court; how grievous to suffer a fine, how grievous to suffer banishment; and yet in the midst of any such disaster we retain some degree of liberty. Even if we are threatened with death, we may die free men. But . . . *the very word "cross"* should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not the actual occurrence of these things but *the very mention of them*, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.<sup>346</sup>

(2) It is this shame and humiliation of crucifixion that is in mind in Heb. 12:2, where the writer says Jesus "endured the cross, scorning its shame," and in 13:3 where he speaks of "the disgrace [Jesus] bore." The Son of God who stooped so low as to wash dirt from his disciples' feet, stooped far lower, stooped to death on a cross, to wash sin from their lives and ours. We must accept that lowly service *from* him, or we will have no part *with* him.

d. Peter does not want to be cut off from Jesus, so even though he will not understand Jesus' real point until later, he immediately ceases his resistance to the Lord washing his feet. Indeed, he declares, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

e. His humiliating service of being crucified, represented by his washing the disciples' feet, meets a true need, the cleansing of sin. It is not a show, a superfluous act, as would be washing other body parts of one who had already bathed; only that person's feet would need cleansing. He then says that they, the apostles, are clean in a spiritual sense, meaning they are forgiven through their relationship with him (based on his coming crucifixion), but one of them, Judas, is not clean because he has no relationship with him, as evident in the fact he was prepared to betray him.

f. After washing their feet, Jesus tells them that as their Teacher and Lord he has set an example for them to follow. As he is willing to serve in humility without regard to status or rank, as exemplified in washing their dirty feet (which in his case symbolized a greater future act of humble service), they are to do likewise. Washing feet was meeting a genuine need not merely a symbolic act of humility. As such, it illustrates the need to render beneficial service to one another even contrary to social hierarchy, not to stand on position as a restriction on service. Since they are his servants and messengers, they cannot claim a superior greatness that exempts them from his example.

g. Jesus says that now that they know these things,<sup>347</sup> they will be blessed if they do them. Kruse remarks, "In the matter of rendering service to others, as in all matters of Christian living, it is one thing to know what we should do; it is another thing to do it. The blessing comes, not with the knowing, but with the doing."<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Gerald G. O'Collins, "Crucifixion" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1208.

<sup>347</sup> Michaels says (2010, 728, fn. 31), "Gr. εἰ ταῦτα οἴδατε, a first-class conditional clause, implying that they do know." See, e.g., NIV and NJB.

<sup>348</sup> Kruse, 285.

## 2. Jesus predicts his betrayal (13:18-30)

**18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'** **19 I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.** **20 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."** **21 After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."** **22 The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.** **23 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,** **24 so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.** **25 So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?"** **26 Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it."** **So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.** **27 Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."** **28 Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.** **29 Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.** **30 So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.**

a. Jesus says that in speaking of them as his servants and messengers, he is not including all of them. He knows whom he chose as apostles and thus knows the truth about Judas, who will fulfill what is written in Ps. 41:9, "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." In other words, Judas, a close associate, was going to betray him. He announces the fact in advance, without identifying Judas, so that when he is betrayed as predicted it might help to fortify their conviction that he is the Messiah in the midst of the fear, sorrow, and turmoil surrounding his execution.

b. But "they," the others, are not like the one betrayer; they are indeed his servants and messengers. And as such, he encourages them with the fact whoever receives them, whoever accepts the message they convey on his behalf, receives him. They are conduits to others for a relationship with Jesus. And in bringing others into a relationship with him, they are bringing them into a relationship with God because in accepting Jesus they are accepting the Father who sent him. What a grand and noble work to be a part of.

c. Jesus is troubled by the prospect of his coming betrayal and says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples look at each other, wondering to whom he is referring. At Peter's prodding, a disciple who was positioned next to Jesus, probably John, described as one "whom Jesus loved," leaned back and asked Jesus who it was. Jesus says it is the one to whom he will give the morsel (presumably of bread) after he dips it, and then he dips it and hands it to Judas. Satan "entered into" Judas at that time in the sense he strengthened Judas's resolve to do the evil the devil had already put in his heart (13:2). Luke 22:3 refers to this earlier satanic influence as Satan having entered into him. Knowing Judas's intention, Jesus tells him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Jesus is willingly submitting to what is coming; he is not "a mere victim of events beyond his control."<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Köstenberger, 417.

d. Though at least John would have known Judas had been revealed to be the predicted betrayer, neither he nor the others realized that Jesus' words to Judas related to the betrayal. Perhaps John misread Jesus' calmness and inaction as an indication the betrayal was not imminent, which led him to assume Jesus was willing to continue using Judas in the interim.<sup>350</sup> Some assumed Jesus was telling Judas to purchase what they needed for the upcoming Feast of Unleavened Bread or to make an emergency distribution of funds to persons in need. In any event, Judas went out into the night.

3. The farewell discourse (13:31 – 17:26)

*a. The first discourse (13:31 – 14:31)*

(1) Glorification and a new command (13:31-35)

**<sup>31</sup> When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup> If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup> Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

(a) When Judas left to bring the Jewish authorities, Jesus announced it was the time of his glorification, meaning the fuse to his crucifixion had been lit. Kruse comments:

In the Fourth Gospel the glorifying of the Son of Man involves suffering and death as well as sovereign power – Jesus enters his glory via the cross. That is why Judas' departure to betray Jesus elicited the statement, 'Now is the Son of Man glorified'. However, the death of Jesus was not just his passage to glory. In death itself Jesus was glorified. In giving his life for sinful humans the glory of his gracious character was most clearly seen. And it did not stop there, for Jesus said that when the Son of Man was glorified, God also would be glorified in him. In Jesus' self-sacrificing love for human beings the glory of God was revealed, for the Father loves the world, and this led him to give his one and only Son so that those who believe might have eternal life (3:16). In the giving of his Son, the glory of God's own self-giving love was revealed.<sup>351</sup>

(b) If, as is the case, God is glorified in Jesus' death, God will in turn glorify Jesus in himself, meaning he will glorify Jesus by what he does on his behalf,

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<sup>350</sup> Raymond E. Brown says in *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 575, "In light of vs. 26 perhaps the Beloved Disciple and Peter are to be excepted [from "none of those]." Michaels (2010, 754) suggests John is excepted because "he is speaking as an eyewitness observer of all the *other* disciples gathered around the table."

<sup>351</sup> Kruse, 291-292.

and he will do so without delay. He is speaking of the glory of his resurrection and subsequent exaltation. This brings to mind Paul's famous words in Phil. 2:5-11:

<sup>5</sup> Think this [way] among you, which also [was] in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider being equal with God as something to be used for his own advantage, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself by taking [the] form of a slave, by being born in [the] likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup> **Therefore** also God highly exalted him and graciously gave to him the name that is above every name <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, [that] of [the] heavenly ones and [the] earthly ones and [the] ones under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to [the] glory of God the Father.

(c) Jesus tells them his death is at hand, which will lead to his absence from them by his return to heavenly glory. When he is arrested, taken from them, they will seek him (though covertly), but as he told the Jews, where he is ultimately going, back to heavenly glory, they cannot come, at least not now. But later, after they too are raised from death with imperishable, glorious, powerful, and immortal bodies that are able to inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:35-58; cf. Rom. 6:9), they will, as full persons, enter into the Father's presence (13:36). Of course, the disembodied spirits of deceased saints go to be with the Lord awaiting the resurrection (2 Cor. 5:6; Phil. 1:21-23; Acts 7:56-59; Rev. 6:9), but Jesus seems to mean more than "you cannot come *as long as you are alive*."

(d) In light of his impending departure, Jesus gives his disciples, the community of faith, a new commandment. They are to love each other as he has loved them. Israel was commanded in Lev. 19:18, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," and Jesus made clear in the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37) that "neighbor" includes anyone within one's reach, within one's ability to help. Here he commands that his disciples exhibit a qualitatively new kind of love for each other, a love that rested on the example of God's supreme love in Jesus himself.

[1] Köstenberger says: "What was new was Jesus' command for his disciples to love one another *as he has loved them* – laying down their lives. This rule of self-sacrificial, self-giving, selfless love, a unique quality of love inspired by Jesus' own love for the disciples, will serve as the foundational ethic for the new messianic community."<sup>352</sup>

[2] This does not mean love for those outside the community of faith is to be neglected. Carson comments:

[T]heir love for each other ought to be a reflection of their new status and experience as the children of God, reflecting the mutual love of the Father and the Son and imitating the love that has been shown them; their love for the world is the love of compassion, forbearance, evangelism, empathy – since all true

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<sup>352</sup> Köstenberger, 423-424.

Christians recognize they can never be more than mere beggars telling others where there is bread. The New Testament as a whole concentrates sometimes on this focus of love, sometimes on that; it refuses to measure one against the other.<sup>353</sup>

(e) The presence within the community of the love that Jesus here commands will identify them as his disciples. Their obedience to this countercultural command of radical love between those without family or even class ties will testify to their commitment to Jesus as their Teacher, Master, and Lord. They live this way because he called for and modeled it. Morris writes:

Tertullian tells us that in his time [late 2<sup>nd</sup> – early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries] the heathen commented on the Christians: "See, they say, how they love one another . . . how they are ready even to die for one another" (*Apol.* 39; ANF, III, p. 46). Chrysostom, however, explains that in his day [late 4<sup>th</sup> – early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries] Christians show all too little love: "even now, there is nothing else that causes the heathen to stumble, except that there is no love. . . . Their own doctrines they have long condemned, and in like manner they admire ours, but they are hindered by our mode of life" (72.5; pp. 266, 267).<sup>354</sup>

## (2) Peter's denial predicted (13:36-38)

**<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." <sup>37</sup> Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." <sup>38</sup> Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.**

(a) In response to Jesus' statement that he is going somewhere they cannot come (13:33), Peter asks where he is going. The Lord simply says it is somewhere to which he now cannot follow him, and then he adds that Peter will follow there later. It seems Peter took Jesus to be saying "that he did not have the commitment necessary to follow him as he faced what lay ahead."<sup>355</sup> That is why he insists that he will lay down his life for him.

(b) Morris comments:

Jesus' reply queries his follower's confident assumption. Peter's readiness to die for Jesus is not quite what he thinks it is. His use of the sword in the garden shows that he was ready in certain circumstances to face death boldly. There was truth as well as error in his words. But he was not ready to stand for Jesus when all seemed lost. That demanded a different brand of courage and devotion.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Carson (1991), 485.

<sup>354</sup> Morris, 563 (fn. 79).

<sup>355</sup> Kruse, 294.

<sup>356</sup> Morris, 564.

(c) Jesus tells Peter solemnly that he will deny him three times before the rooster crows. This prediction is reported in all four Gospels (Mat. 26:34; Mk. 14:30; Lk. 22:34).<sup>357</sup> These denials are reported in 18:17, 25, 26-27.

(3) Jesus, the way to the Father (14:1-14, ESV modified)

**"Let not your hearts be troubled. [You] believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to where I am going."** <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> [If you have known me, you will know my Father too.] From now on you do know him and have seen him." <sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

(a) Jesus urges them not to let their hearts be roiled by the forthcoming events and change of circumstances. They believe in God (taking verb as an indicative rather than an imperative, e.g., KJV, ERV, NAB, NJB, NKJV, NIV, NET), so he tells them to believe also in him through whatever challenges lie ahead, the link being the fact he and the Father are one (10:30; 17:11, 22).

(b) Jesus assures them that there is room for all ("many rooms") in the glorious presence of the Father (his "house"). If that were not the case, if the door was closed to them, he would not have told them that he "goes to prepare a place for [them]," to provide for their dwelling with God. Kruse notes, "The text speaks of the Father and the Son making their 'home' with believers, i.e., making themselves present with them."<sup>358</sup> He does that, provides for their being with God, by returning to heaven by way of his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Kruse comments:

When Jesus said, 'I am going to prepare a place for you,' we should not think of him returning to heaven, and having arrived there, setting about the construction

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<sup>357</sup> Mark's account, rooted in Peter's experience, reports the Lord's warning more specifically: the three denials would come before the rooster crows "twice." The other Gospels refer only to the final cockcrow. As Carson puts it (1991, 487), "The idea of *two* cock-crowings, preserved in some MSS of Mark 14:30, 68, 72, if original, is the difference between saying 'before the bell rings for dinner' and 'before the second bell rings for dinner.'"

<sup>358</sup> Kruse, 296.

of 'rooms' for his disciples to occupy – a task he has now been occupied with for some two thousand years! Rather, we should recognize that it was by his very going, by his betrayal, crucifixion and exaltation, that he made it possible for us to dwell in the presence of God. The imminent departure of Jesus, which so troubled the hearts of his disciples, was in fact for their benefit.<sup>359</sup>

(c) Having traveled this route back to heaven, back to the Father's distinctive presence, he will come again and take them *to himself*, so that where he is they may be also. As Jesus said in 12:26, "where I am, there will my servant be also." He does not say that after he returns and takes them to himself that he will take them to the heavenly realm from which he came; he says simply that they will be with him. This implies they will join him in God's distinctive presence, but it does not address whether that presence will be reconfigured in conjunction with his return. In other words, he does not say whether the Father's distinctive presence will at that time be experienced in a "heavenized" creation that occurs in conjunction with his return.<sup>360</sup> As alluded to in Rom. 8:19-23 and pictured in Rev. 21:1-4, his return marks the merger of heaven and earth.

(d) Jesus declares that they know *the way* to where he is going, but Thomas protests that they do not know *where* he is going, so they cannot possibly know the way there. Jesus tells him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." In other words, he is going "to the Father," into the Father's distinctive presence, and he is the exclusive way by which others may come to the Father. It is only through identification with Jesus through faith, being his disciple, that one may live in intimacy with God because only his death atoned for humanity's sins, the cleansing from which is necessary for fellowship with God. This exclusivity is echoed by Peter in Acts 4:11-12: This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.<sup>12</sup> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." And the early church referred to their movement as "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22).

(e) Associated with his being the way to the Father is the fact he is the truth and the life. In all the confusions and falsehoods sown in this world that pull people away from God, he is *the* truth, the ultimate revelation and true beacon of the Father. And in this fallen creation ravaged by sin and death, he is the cure, the means of eternal life. This is breathtaking stuff.

(f) There is a difficult textual issue regarding 14:7a.<sup>361</sup> Accepting as original the text as given in Nestle-Aland 28<sup>th</sup> Revised Edition, it reads, as rendered in NET: "If you have known me, you will know my Father too." This reinforces the fact that having a relationship with Jesus will result in their experiencing in the future the intimacy of being in the Father's distinctive presence. He then adds, "And from now on you do know him and have seen him." His point is that, though their ultimate knowing of God remains in the future,

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<sup>359</sup> Kruse, 296.

<sup>360</sup> See, e.g., J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 217.

<sup>361</sup> See NET note for a brief discussion of the questions and options.

there is a sense in which they as his disciples already know and have seen the Father because he and the Father are one. That becomes clear in the following exchange with Philip.

(g) Jesus' statement about their having seen the Father prompts Philip to say to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." This indicates that Philip did not appreciate the extent to which Jesus represents and models the Father. In the words of Heb. 1:3, the Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his nature (or essence or being). You can sense the Lord's disappointment when he says, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" He then stresses his unity with the Father, saying (vv. 10-11), "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."

(h) Having indicated that the works he does confirm his claim to a uniquely intimate relationship with the Father – that he is in the Father and the Father is in him – so that Philip should realize that in seeing him he has seen the Father, he then declares (v. 12) that those who believe in him will also do the works that he does, and will do even greater things, because he is going to the Father. As Morris remarks, the significance of Jesus' going to the Father "is probably to be explained in terms of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who will not come until the Son goes away (16:7; cf. 7:39)."<sup>362</sup> The Spirit he will send after he returns to the Father (Lk. 24:49; Acts 2:33) will empower the disciples not only to do miracles that will bear witness to their relationship with God (Heb. 2:3-4), but he will also empower them to do even greater things than confirming miracles. He will empower them to spread throughout the world, in the face of demonic raging, news of the kingdom's inauguration in Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension and a message of salvation that is able to purify even one's conscience from sin that one might serve God in a greater state of intimacy (Heb. 9:9-10, 13-14; 10:1-4, 22).

(i) The mission of the church alluded to in the reference to "greater things" leads to the importance of prayer. Kruse states, "The success of the disciples' mission was to be intimately connected with prayer in Jesus' name."<sup>363</sup> Jesus tells them, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." Jesus tells them that whatever they ask of him "in his name," meaning whatever they ask of him that recognizes or is in accord with his nature,<sup>364</sup> which is here specified as something that will bring glory to the Father through the Son, he will do it. As Borchert explains:

But the invitation to pray for "anything" (14:14) in this context is not, in fact, to be understood as "anything" in the absolute sense because the guiding principle of the believer's prayer must be the same principle that Jesus followed throughout his life. That principle was the glorification of the Father in and through

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<sup>362</sup> Morris, 573-574.

<sup>363</sup> Kruse, 301.

<sup>364</sup> See Borchert (2002), 119.

everything done by the Son (14:13). To read this promise of Jesus concerning asking in any other way would be a complete misunderstanding of the promise.<sup>365</sup>

#### (4) The coming Paraclete, the Holy Spirit (14:15-31)

**15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. 25 "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. 28 You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, 31 but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.**

(a) Jesus explains that love for him necessarily involves the keeping of his commandments (see 14:21, 23; 15:10). As John will later write (1 Jn. 2:4), "The one who says, 'I have come to know him' and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and in this one the truth is not." The church's charge in Mat. 28:19-20a is: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*" Commands are all over the NT, and yet because some misunderstand what it means that Christians are not under the law, they confuse people by stigmatizing commands as legalism and telling them, usually inconsistently, that they are obligated to obey only the ill-defined desires and promptings of the Spirit.

(b) For his part, Jesus tells them that he will ask the Father to give them another "*Paráklētos*" to be with them forever. NET note states, "Finding an appropriate English translation for *παράκλητος* is a very difficult task. No single English word has exactly the same range of meaning as the Greek word." Thus, it is variously translated as

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<sup>365</sup> Borchert (2002), 118-119.

Helper or Comforter or Counselor or Advocate, but as vv. 17 and 26 make clear, Jesus is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Borchert comments:

It is, however, crucial to recognize that the gift of the Paraclete is not to be understood as some kind of *quid pro quo* between Jesus and his followers, as though the market exchange for the Holy Spirit was our obedience. We do not earn the Holy Spirit anymore than we can earn our salvation. But in the process of responding to the Son of God we discover that Jesus has provided a divine agent to us for living in this world.<sup>366</sup>

(c) The Spirit was "poured out" by Jesus (Acts 2:33) – given by the Father at Jesus' request and in Jesus' name – on the Day of Pentecost, after Jesus ascended to heaven. That is the day on which the Spirit became available for the indwelling of all Christians.

(d) Jesus says the world, those opposed to him, cannot receive or accept the Spirit because they do not see the Spirit, meaning they do not perceive his presence in the life and ministry of Jesus.<sup>367</sup> And the world does not know the Spirit because it does not know Jesus, the one who possesses the Spirit in a full and unrestricted way (3:34). The disciples, on the other hand, know the Spirit because he dwells *with them* in the person of Jesus. When the Spirit is sent after Jesus' ascension, he will dwell *in them*. That is why Jesus says he will not leave them as orphans; *he* will come to them, in the sense the Spirit who fills and animates his life (3:34; Lk. 4:1, 14, 18) will come to them.<sup>368</sup>

(e) Regarding the even more immediate future, he tells them that in a little while the world will see him no more, but they will see him. He means that he will soon be executed, and the world will not see him after that. Carson notes, "Even after the resurrection, Jesus never manifests himself to other than his disciples (or to those who, because of Jesus' self-disclosure to them, become his disciples)."<sup>369</sup> His disciples, however, will see him again literally and physically after he is raised from the dead (see, e.g., Acts 10:39-41). Lincoln comments:

The earlier reference to Jesus' coming in 14:3 had in view the parousia, but this return, unlike the public parousia at the end of history, is one not visible to the world, and the events described will take place 'in a little while' and so are associated with Jesus' immediate departure (cf. 13:33). The most natural reference, therefore, is to Jesus' manifestation of himself to his disciples after the

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<sup>366</sup> Borchert (2002), 122.

<sup>367</sup> Morris (p. 577) states, "'Sees' is equivalent to 'perceives.'"

<sup>368</sup> See, e.g., Kruse, 307; Michaels (2010), 785; Kysar, 229; Mounce, 567. Many commentators believe the statement "I will come to you" in v. 18 refers to the post-resurrection appearances indicated in vv. 19-20, but I think there is merit in Brown's critique (1970), 645-646: "Yet it is obvious that Jesus is speaking of a more continued presence than was possible in the brief period of post-resurrectional appearances – not only the words 'I shall not leave you orphans' but the whole tone of his remarks imply permanency." Kruse similarly says of the post-resurrection appearances (p. 307), "these appearances were spasmodic, and afterwards the resurrected Jesus did leave them."

<sup>369</sup> Carson (1991), 502. He notes, "Thus allowance is made for Saul who became Paul, and who certainly not a believer when the Lord appeared to him." This could similarly account for the Lord's brother James.

resurrection, the event which demonstrates that he lives and whose consequence for believing followers is that they will live (cf. 11:25-26).<sup>370</sup>

(f) In saying, "Because I live, you also will live," Jesus is saying that his resurrection is a guarantee of their resurrection, "that they will not be overcome by death."<sup>371</sup> As Paul would later express it, he is the "firstfruits" of those who have died (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Stephen Wellum states, "Just as the firstfruits of the harvest are a foretaste of the full harvest (Lev. 23:9-14), so Christ's resurrection anticipates and ensures the believer's resurrection. It is God's 'down payment' (*arrabōn*), a pledge that the final eschatological end is surely coming."<sup>372</sup>

(g) The resurrection appearance had a profound impact on the disciples. It cemented for them the truth of Jesus' identity and thus the fact of his unique intimacy with the Father. With that heightened conviction of who Jesus is, they also will gain a new appreciation of the intimacy of their own relationship with him. They will know at a new level that they are part of something divine or "otherworldly" that allows an intimacy that transcends normal human relationships.

(h) The nature of the intimate relationship between Jesus and his disciples is elaborated in terms of what he said in v. 15. The one who has his commandments, in the sense of internalizing them,<sup>373</sup> and keeps them, he is the one who loves him. We might say that is Jesus' "love language." Smith states, "Any thought of love for Jesus as an emotion or attitude that is not strictly and closely tied to keeping Jesus' commandments is excluded. Love then is not so much a way of feeling as of doing."<sup>374</sup>

(i) The one who loves Jesus is loved by his Father, again testifying to the unity of Jesus and the Father. Borchert comments:

Because love is a mark of the relationship of the Father to the Son (3:35, etc.), it also means that a loving relationship of the believer to the Son implies a loving relationship of the believer with the Father. Similarly, as the Son served and obeyed the father (5:19; 8:28-29, etc.), the disciple's life is expected to be one of service and obedience to the Son, whose commands in turn are from the Father.<sup>375</sup>

(j) The one who loves Jesus in having and keeping his commandments will, of course, be loved by him as well as by the Father. Moreover, Jesus promises that he will, in a way he does not define, show or manifest himself to the one who loves

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<sup>370</sup> Lincoln, 395. Those understanding vv. 19-20 to refer to resurrection appearances include Carson (1991), 502; Morris, 579; Burge, 397; Borchert (2002), 126; Osborne, 215-216.

<sup>371</sup> Morris, 579.

<sup>372</sup> Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 228.

<sup>373</sup> Morris, 579; see also, Carson (1991), 503.

<sup>374</sup> D. Moody Smith, 275.

<sup>375</sup> Borchert (2002), 128.

him. Judas (not Iscariot)<sup>376</sup> apparently assumes Jesus is saying he will *never* manifest himself to the world, and that does not fit with the common Jewish understanding "that the kingdom must arrive in undeniable and irresistible splendor. If Jesus is the messianic king, then he *must* startle the world with apocalyptic self-disclosure."<sup>377</sup> So he asks Jesus how it is that he is going to show himself only to the disciples and not to the world. Kruse states, "Like many of their fellow Jews the disciples longed for the manifestation of the Messiah to the world. Jesus' promise to show himself to his disciples was not enough for Judas, so he asked why he was not going to show himself to the world as well."<sup>378</sup> Morris remarks, "The way [Judas] puts it seems to imply that he now thinks that something has happened to disrupt Jesus' planned program."<sup>379</sup>

(k) Jesus does not deny that he as the Messiah will be manifested to the world in glory at the end, the time of the general resurrection (5:28-29; 6:39-40) when he will take all the disciples to himself (14:3), but the interim manifestation of which he is speaking is limited to the disciples, those who love him. Speaking the words of the Father, he says that he and the Father will come and make their home with his disciples, those who love and therefore obey him. Those who are not his disciples, those who do not love him and keep his words, are outside the promise.

(l) Having indicated in 14:18 that *he* will come to them, in the sense the Spirit who fills and animates his life (3:34; Lk. 4:1, 14, 18) will come to them, he now describes that future experience of the indwelling Spirit as he *and the Father* coming and making their home with them. Kruse states, "According to Jewish expectation, God will dwell among his people in the age to come (Ezk. 37:26-27; cf. Rev. 21:3). Jesus promised that what was expected at the end time would be experienced (in part) in the present time. It would occur through the coming of the Spirit, whereby the Father and the Son would make their home with the believers."<sup>380</sup> Carson states:

Presumably this manifestation of the Father and the Son in the life of the believer is through the Spirit, although the text does not explicitly say so. Other New Testament passages testify to the dwelling of the Son in the Christian (*e.g.*, Eph. 3:17); this is the only place where the Father and the Son are linked in this task. . . . However conceived, this is an anticipation, an inauguration, of the final, consummating experience of God after the Parousia, when the words of the Apocalypse will be fulfilled: 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God . . . I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple' (Rev. 21:3, 22; cf. 1 Ki. 8:27; Ezk. 37:26-27; Zc. 2:10).<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Morris says of this Judas (p. 580), "He is mentioned once in Luke and once in Acts, from which we learn that he was the son (or perhaps brother) of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). He may be the same person as Thaddeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). Very little is known about him."

<sup>377</sup> Carson (1991), 504.

<sup>378</sup> Kruse, 309.

<sup>379</sup> Morris, 581.

<sup>380</sup> Kruse, 309.

<sup>381</sup> Carson (1991), 501.

(m) Jesus implies his impending departure in saying, "These things I have spoken to you *while I am still with you.*" But the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in Jesus' name,<sup>382</sup> will teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all things that Jesus has said to them. Carson comments:

In John's Gospel the disciples are shown to fail, throughout Jesus' ministry, in their understanding of Jesus. One of the Spirit's principal tasks, after Jesus is glorified, is to remind the disciples of Jesus' teaching and thus, in the new situation after the resurrection, to help them grasp its significance and thus to teach them what it meant. Indeed, the Evangelist himself draws attention to some things that were remembered and understood only after the resurrection (2:19-22; 12:16; *cf.* 20:9). Granted the prominence of this theme, the promise of v. 26 has in view the Spirit's role to the first generation of disciples, not to all subsequent Christians. John's purpose in including this theme and this verse is not to explain how readers at the end of the first century may be taught by the Spirit, but to explain to readers at the end of the first century how the first witnesses, the first disciples, came to an accurate and full understanding of the truth of Jesus Christ. The Spirit's ministry in this respect was not to bring qualitatively new revelation, but to complete, to fill out, the revelation brought by Jesus himself.<sup>383</sup>

(n) Jesus tells them that in his departing he is going to give them, leave with them, the gift of his peace. It is the peace that comes only from knowing that one is right with God and thus is bound for eternal and glorious resurrection life. Osborne remarks, "In the Old Testament, peace was associated with God's gift of salvation (Ps 29:11; Isa 57:19) and was a major messianic promise for the last days (Isa 9:6; 52:7; Ezek 37:26; Zech 9:10)."<sup>384</sup> The peace is *his* peace because his atoning death is the means of reconciliation with God, his resurrection is the firstfruits, which vitalizes the peace-producing conviction of their future resurrection, and the Spirit whom the Father will send in his name produces peace in their lives (Gal. 5:22).

(o) Jesus gives his gift unlike the world gives, meaning he does so from purely altruistic motives. He seeks only to bless, not to gain, to manipulate, or to exploit. The ultimate or transcendent nature of the peace that he provides underwrites the command not to let their hearts be troubled or fearful in the turmoil and hostility that lie ahead. Jesus was never fearful or cowardly, and when he was troubled in his spirit it was not because of human threats but because of compassion for Mary (11:33), his betrayal by Judas (13:21), and the prospect of bearing God's judgment for humanity's sin (12:27).

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<sup>382</sup> Kruse comments (p. 310):

On this occasion Jesus said the father would send the Counsellor (also implied in 14:16). On other occasions he said he himself would send the Counsellor (15:26; 16:7). We should not make too much of these variations, because Jesus stressed repeatedly that in his incarnate state he did only what the father commanded him to do, and that the Father carried out his work through him. We can safely assume the same unity of actions and purpose between Father and Son in the sending of the Counsellor after the return of the Son to the Father.

<sup>383</sup> Carson (1991), 505.

<sup>384</sup> Osborne, 217.

(p) Jesus notes that he just told them he was going away (14:3-4; to the Father – 14:12) and would come to them (14:18 – in the person of the Spirit). He then says that if they loved him in the way they should the news that he was going to the Father would have elicited rejoicing rather than consternation *because the Father is greater than he is*. This clause has been a favorite of heretics throughout the ages who deny that Jesus is God, but Jesus is not here denying his deity, that he is one with the Father in nature, essence, and being. He does not mean the Father is greater in the sense he is a higher type of being (ontological sense), as his oneness with the Father has been declared (1:1, 10:30, 14:9). Rather, he means the Father is greater in a positional sense in that the Father is in the undiminished glory of heaven in contrast to his incarnate state on earth. Jesus' departure to the Father was a departure to the glory he had with the Father before the world began (Jn. 17:5), so if the disciples had loved Jesus more fully, they would have rejoiced over his gain at returning to the "greater" sphere or state rather than thinking about their own loss.<sup>385</sup>

(q) Similar to 13:19, Jesus says that his telling them in advance about his departure is to help convert that potentially faith-disturbing situation into something that can strengthen their faith. The very fact he called it in advance will reinforce his identity by exhibiting his foreknowledge.

(r) Jesus indicates that his time with the disciples is growing short, as Satan, through his influence over Judas (13:2, 27), is about to engineer his crucifixion. This was, of course, according to the plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23, 13:27; Isa. 53:10), meaning that, unbeknownst to Satan, God incorporated into his plan of redemption what Satan intended for evil. Jesus declares that Satan has no claim on him, no just accusation against him, because he is sinless (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22). Rather, his surrender to death is in obedience to the will of the Father in fulfillment of the plan of salvation. It is thus, among other things, a breathtaking testimony of his love for the Father.

(s) Jesus instructs them to move to another location. This seems to correspond with the move from the site of the Passover meal in Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives mentioned in Mat. 26:30 and Mk. 14:26. On the journey, while still in Jerusalem, Jesus delivers the second part of the farewell discourse (15:1 – 16:33) and utters his prayer (17:1-26), and then he goes out of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives (Jn. 18:1).<sup>386</sup>

#### *b. The second discourse (15:1 – 16:33)*

##### *(1) The true vine and its branches (15:1-17)*

**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever**

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<sup>385</sup> Carson (1991), 508; Mounce, 570

<sup>386</sup> Kruse, 313-314.

abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.<sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.<sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.<sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.<sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.<sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.<sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.<sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you.<sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.<sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

(a) Israel is often portrayed in the OT as a vine (Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-8; Jer. 2:21, 6:8-9; Ezek. 17:5-10, 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1-2). The nation was planted by the Lord, and yet it failed to produce for him good grapes, the fruit he desired. As declared in Isa. 5:7: "For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!"<sup>387</sup> Jesus says that he is the "true vine," meaning "he produced what the nation of Israel failed to produce: fruit for which the gardener (the Father) was looking. . . . By depicting the Father as the gardener/vinedresser, Jesus indicated that the Father was in control of both his ministry (as the vine) and that of his disciples (as the branches)."<sup>388</sup>

(b) He says that every branch in him, every disciple, that does not remain or abide in him (vv. 4-6), and therefore bears no fruit, God takes away. That branch is thrown away to be burned in the end (v. 6). In this setting, Exhibit "A" is no doubt Judas, who has chosen, under the influence of Satan, to betray the Lord. As Jesus observes in 17:12, "not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." But every branch/disciple that remains or abides in Christ, and therefore bears fruit, God prunes that it may bear more fruit. Kruse states, "This is an allusion to the spring pruning of the vines during the flowering stage so that fruit-bearing is maximized."<sup>389</sup>

(c) The verb used for "prune" in v. 2 (*kathairō*) also means to cleanse or purify, to make clean (*katharos*). Jesus tells the disciples in v. 3 that they already are "clean," meaning they already have been "pruned," because of the word that he has spoken to them. In other words, the Father has, through Jesus' teaching, prepared them for fruit bearing by removing from their lives attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs that retard fruit bearing. Kruse remarks, "It is as we hear and respond to the teaching of Jesus that we become more fruitful."<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Kruse, 314-315.

<sup>388</sup> Kruse, 316.

<sup>389</sup> Kruse, 316.

<sup>390</sup> Kruse, 317.

If you think you can have what God desires in your life in isolation from Jesus' teaching, you are mistaken. Listening to his teaching is part of abiding in him.

(d) Jesus calls them to continue in an intimate relationship with him, to abide in him, and he in them through the Spirit. As a branch that detaches from the vine cannot bear fruit, so his disciples can only bear fruit, can only give God what he desires, if they remain in Jesus. And those who continue in that intimate relationship will bear much fruit. Their lives will be transformed into the image of Jesus. Kruse states: "The context, which stresses that 'fruit' is produced as the disciples maintain their fellowship with Jesus by keeping his word and when Jesus continues to fellowship with them by the Spirit, suggests that 'fruit' refers to the entire life and ministry of those who follow Jesus' teaching and experience his presence in their lives through the Spirit."<sup>391</sup> If they do not remain in him, they will be thrown away and ultimately burned.

(e) Those who abide in him, who maintain a genuine and vibrant relationship with him, have the promise of answered prayer. As I noted in relation to the promise in 14:14, the "whatever you wish" carries the understood limitation that the request be "in his name," meaning that it recognizes or is in accord with his nature.<sup>392</sup> It refers to that which will bring glory to the Father through the Son.

(f) By bearing much fruit, by showing themselves to be Jesus' disciples in imitating his life, God is glorified. When his nature and character are represented before people by those identified with him, he is glorified as people are given a glimpse of his magnificence.

(g) Jesus analogizes his love for his disciples to the Father's love for him, which he uses as the basis for his exhortation, "Remain in my love." One gets the definite sense that effort is called for to ward off the appeals of the Enemy to abandon his love. He repeats the fact that remaining in his love is bound up with keeping his commandments. Obedience is a key aspect of love for Jesus, as it is of his love for the Father.

(h) He emphasizes the link between loving him and obeying him that they may experience his joy, the joy he has in obeying the Father, that they may be fully joyful. Mounce comments: "Satan wants to make us think of obedience as restrictive and palpably unfair (cf. Ge 3:1-5); in actuality, obedience frees us to become everything that someday we will rejoice to be. In the meantime we will find that the enjoyment of each day is determined by our willingness to allow our lives to be directed by the express will of God."<sup>393</sup>

(i) Jesus commands them to love one another in the way he has loved them. And the way he has loved them is about to be expressed supremely in his laying down his life for them (and all others). Thus, he says, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." As his disciples, we are called to have a self-sacrificing love for one another; it is to be that deep, that real.

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<sup>391</sup> Kruse, 318.

<sup>392</sup> See Borchert (2002), 119.

<sup>393</sup> Mounce, 576.

(j) The disciples are his "friends," assuming they love him as reflected in their obedience to his commands. He no longer calls them servants/slaves because a master does not share information and confidences with his servants; he simply tells them what to do. Jesus, on the other hand, has revealed to his disciples all that he heard from the Father. He has taken them into his confidence and shared with them freely, bringing them into the work of God.

(k) Jesus reminds them that they did not choose him. Rather, he chose them in calling them to be apostles and appointed them to *go* and bear fruit, suggesting that the fruit here relates to missionary endeavors, the making of new converts. One is reminded of Mat. 28:19a: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Their appointment was to go and bear fruit that would remain, disciples that would remain in an intimate relationship with Jesus. A result of their being chosen to go to make lasting disciples is that they may have whatever they ask of the Father in prayer, understanding again that "whatever" is in the context of the mission and God's glory.

(l) He ends this section by saying, "These things (plural) I command you, that you will love one another." It seems the commands to remain in him so as to bear much fruit and to love one another are aimed at producing a community of love. That will glorify God by exhibiting his loving character and by helping to attract the lost to the community of faith, which conversions will further glorify God by testifying to his mercy and his power to save and transform lives.

#### (2) The world's hatred of Jesus and his followers (15:18 – 16:4)

**18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. 16:1 "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. 3 And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.**

(a) Jesus lets the disciples know that however faithfully they live out their discipleship, it will not prevent their being hated by the "world," those in the grip of the devil. After all, the world hated him before it hated them, so their being hated is neither surprising nor an indication that they somehow deserve the hatred. The hatred of them flows from the simple fact they are no longer of the world; rather, they came out of the world when, in response to his choosing them, they became his disciples.

(b) In having told them, "A servant is not greater than his master" (13:16), he was telling them that, as his servants, they would be treated by the world the same way he was treated. If the world persecuted him, which it did, it will also persecute them. If the world obeyed his teaching, which it did not, it will also obey their teaching.<sup>394</sup> Michaels comments: "It is of course true that some 'kept Jesus' word' during the course of his ministry – the disciples themselves are living proof of that – and some will keep theirs as well (see 17:20), but Jesus is not looking here at 'some' in contrast to 'others.' He is looking rather at 'the world' as a unified entity arrayed in opposition to him and his Father, and to the disciples."<sup>395</sup>

(c) Jesus reiterates that all the negative treatment the world will give them is on account of his name, because they as his disciples are his representatives. This rejection of him is a reflection of the fact they do not know God, the one who sent him. In resisting God's grace in their lives, they had darkened their hearts so that they do not recognize his Son.

(d) Jesus says that if he had not come and spoken to them, they "would not have sin." This is obscure. He certainly does not mean that they were sinless prior to his coming and would have remained so had he not come. Scripture is clear that all humans have sinned from Adam onward (e.g., Rom. 3:23, 5:12), and John elsewhere refers to the world's sinfulness (1:5, 29; 3:19; 8:12). Rather, I think he means that had he not come they would have retained an arguable basis for claiming they loved God and therefore were beneficiaries of his mercy regarding their sin, which presumed forgiveness they had turned into an excuse for sin. With his coming, God appeared to them in the flesh, speaking to them and doing undeniable works, but they abused and killed him. This was proof of their hatred of God – "Whoever hates me hates my Father also" – and thus proof that they lacked forgiveness, the foundation of the excuse they had concocted for their sin.

(e) This hatred of Jesus was predicted in the Law, here used broadly of the OT, including Ps. 35:19 and 69:4. The unfair persecution experienced by the psalmist foreshadowed the treatment of the Lord. As Kruse observes, "It is a sad fact, not limited to the followers of Jesus, that good people who struggle for truth and righteousness often attract the anger of those who feel threatened by their godness."<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Michaels (2010), 820. Brown (1970), 687, paraphrases the meaning: "they will keep your word to the extent they have kept mine (and they have not kept mine)." Osborne (p. 230) says, "In the same way that the people of this world had rejected Jesus' message, they would reject the preaching of the disciples." It is possible Jesus means that those who kept his word, those who during his time on earth came out of the world by obeying his teaching, will also obey the apostles' teaching. In other words, the existing community of faith will recognize and accept the apostles' authority.

<sup>395</sup> Michaels (2010), 820-821.

<sup>396</sup> Kruse, 325.

(f) In the face of the world's hostility, Jesus tells them that when he sends the Holy Spirit to them from the Father, he (the Spirit) will bear witness about him. The fact he will be sent *to them* suggests his testifying will be done in association with them. The statement that they *also* will bear witness does not mean their testimony is to be independent of that of the Spirit but that they have an active role to play in conjunction with the Spirit, a role rooted in the fact they had been with him from the beginning of his ministry. They were privy to his words and deeds and will need to tell what they heard and saw that those beyond their circle and future generations may hear the truth. There will be a kind of joint effort in which the disciples, *in the power, courage, and conviction given by the Spirit*, will tell the world the truth about Jesus in the face of opposition and false claims. Acts 5:27-32 is instructive in this regard.

<sup>27</sup> And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And *we are witnesses* [noun form of verb used in Jn. 15:26] *to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit*, whom God has given to those who obey him."

(g) Jesus says he is alerting them in advance to the hostility they will face in the world when he is gone so they will be braced for it and not be shaken from the faith. He then elaborates on the kinds of things his followers will face. They will be expelled from the synagogues and killed by people who think they are doing God's will. But the reality is that those acting this way have not known the Father or him. He is warning them in some detail so that when this persecution falls on them, they will remember that he told them it would be so and will have their faith reinforced. He did not share such warnings with them earlier in his ministry because he was with them. Kruse comments: "While he remained with them he was the 'lightning rod' that attracted the flashes of persecution. But after he returned to the Father, his disciples would experience it themselves. That was why Jesus did not tell them at first, and why as he prepared them for his departure he told them now."<sup>397</sup>

### (3) The work of the Holy Spirit (16:5-15)

**<sup>5</sup> But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'**  
**<sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup> "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When**

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<sup>397</sup> Kruse, 328.

**the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**

(a) Though Peter had earlier asked Jesus where he was going (13:36) and the question was implicit in Thomas's statement (14:5), Jesus here is asking why they now have fallen silent, a silence represented by their not asking what they previously had been asking. Michaels explains:

As we have seen, the disciples have been silent for a long time (all the way back to 14:22), and it would not be at all odd for Jesus to comment on their silence, and the reason for it. He could have said, "I am going to the One who sent me, and none of you says anything," but instead he builds on what they had been saying earlier: thus, "none of you asks me – as you repeatedly did before – 'Where are you going?'" The announcement, "Where I am going you cannot come" (13:33), had prompted a string of questions. Now the announcement that "I am going to the One who sent me" draws no response at all. The accent is not on their failure to ask a *particular* question, but on their failure to say anything at all. Why the long silence after so many questions? What has happened in the meantime?<sup>398</sup>

(b) In the next verse, Jesus supplies the answer to his implied question: "But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart." The warnings he delivered in 15:18 – 16:3 about the hatred and persecution they would face, including excommunication and martyrdom, added a new dimension to their sorrow over his departure, which rendered them speechless. We might say things "got real" with that news.

(c) Jesus tells them, in the face of their sorrow, that his departure, the prospect of which has caused the sorrow, is for their advantage because his going away is necessary for the sending of the Holy Spirit to them. This is the Spirit he has said will testify with them to the world, the one who will fill them with power, courage, and conviction for their service in God's great cause. He then spells out more of what the Spirit will do when he is sent. He says the Spirit will *convict* the world regarding three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment. In other words, the Spirit will expose the world's guilt concerning those three things. In vv. 9-11 he elaborates on that work of the Spirit by explaining why the Spirit will do that, by giving the reasons the Spirit will show or prove the world guilty regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Michaels (2010), 831.

<sup>399</sup> Carson states (1991, 536-537), "In common with other New Testament usages, *elenchō* means 'to convict [the world]' in the personal sense, *i.e.*, not arguing the case for the world's objective guilt before God at the final Great Assize, but shaming the world and convincing it of its own guilt, thus calling it to repentance. The preposition *peri* then introduces what the world is guilty of: its sin, its righteousness, and its judgment. The *hoti* clauses in vv. 9-11 are causal, each clause providing a reason why the Paraclete is engaged in his convicting work."

(d) He says in v. 9 that the Spirit will lay bare the world's guilt regarding *sin* because they – those of the world – do not believe in him. Those who do not believe in him must be shown they remain guilty of sin because they have rejected the only path of forgiveness. In 8:23-24, Jesus says, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.<sup>24</sup> I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." Here he says the Spirit comes to testify to that truth, to expose that the rejecters, the unbelievers, remain under the guilt of their sin. The message is not only the truth but is also redemptive. It is truth that can pierce the deception that one is right with God despite one's unbelief and lead to repentance and God's gift of everlasting life. We are disloyal and resist the work of the Spirit when we deny that truth, whether to get along in a multicultural society or for any other reason, and we become accomplices in the world's delusion and deception.

(e) Jesus says in v. 10 that the Spirit will lay bare the world's guilt regarding *righteousness* because he goes to the Father, and they will see him no longer. The world is guilty regarding righteousness because it pushes the lie there is a righteousness apart from the mercy that is available only in his Son. The Spirit is sent to do this convicting work because Jesus is no longer here to do it; he has ascended back to heaven. And again, this message is not only truth but is also redemptive. As Jesus said in Jn. 14:6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

(f) He says in v. 11 that the Spirit will lay bare the world's guilt regarding *judgment* because the ruler of this world is judged. The world is guilty regarding judgment in that it promotes and perpetuates all manner of false criteria for God's judgment. The Jews insisted that Jesus was not who he claimed to be and denied that belief in him was essential to be received by God at the Judgment. Most in our culture accept that claim and would add, against the ancient Jews, that all roads lead to God or even deny the very fact of a judgment. The Spirit is sent to do this convicting work because by the time Jesus ascends, Satan will have been finally and utterly defeated through Christ's atoning death, resurrection, and ascension. The victory will have been won, and since that time creation, this reality, exists on the edge of Christ's return and the consummation of the kingdom. With Satan's defeat, with his condemnation a fait accompli, proclaiming the truth of God's judgment is ever urgent because the Lord may return at any time.

(g) In 14:30 Jesus said he would not talk with them much longer. Here we see the reason is not because he has nothing more to say, or even because he is about to leave, but because the disciples were not presently able to bear what else he could say, and therefore the Father did not tell him to say it.<sup>400</sup> Michaels remarks, "There is much that the disciples will face in the course of their mission for which they are not prepared, and for which it would be premature to try to prepare them."<sup>401</sup>

(h) When the Holy Spirit comes, he will guide them in all the truth, meaning he will guide their exploration of the truth that was revealed in and through Jesus (cf. Heb. 1:1-2). This involves deepening their understanding of that truth, granting insight

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<sup>400</sup> Michaels (2010), 835.

<sup>401</sup> Michaels (2010), 835-836.

into its implications, and revealing its application in new circumstances. That this role is anchored to what was revealed in and through Jesus is suggested by the fact the Spirit does not speak on his own but only what he hears. Morris comments, "He is not originating something radically new, but leading people in accordance with the teaching already given from the Father and the Son."<sup>402</sup> This includes revealing things that are to come, as in the Book of Revelation, but even those things are related to or flow out of Jesus' life, ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation.

(i) We know from elsewhere in Scripture that the Spirit works differently in individual Christians (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28-30; Heb. 2:4) and that the apostles are uniquely gifted (2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 2:42-43, 4:33, 5:12), so one cannot assume that all the Spirit-enabled exploration of truth of which the Lord is speaking applies to all Christians. The NET note states:

Since in the context of the Farewell Discourse Jesus is preparing the twelve to carry on his ministry after his departure, it is probably best to take these statements as specifically related only to the twelve. Some of this the Holy Spirit does directly for all believers today; other parts of this statement are fulfilled through the apostles (e.g., in giving the Book of Revelation the Spirit speaks through the apostles to the church today of things to come). One of the implications of this is that a doctrine does not have to be traced back to an explicit teaching of Jesus to be authentic; all that is required is apostolic authority.<sup>403</sup>

(j) The Spirit will glorify Jesus, he will exalt him, in that he will take Jesus' role in the divine plan of redemption and reveal, reinforce, and expound on it. Because of the unity of the Father and the Son, the fact all that the Father has is the Son's, he said the Spirit will expound on his role. In setting forth the things of Christ, the Spirit is also setting forth the things of the Father. There is no division in the Godhead. Carson comments:

All that belongs to the Father is mine (v. 15). That is why Jesus has cast the Spirit's ministry in terms of the unfolding of what belongs to the Son: this is not a slighting of God, or undue elevation of the Son, since what belongs to the Father belongs to the Son. It is therefore entirely appropriate that the Spirit's ministry be designed to bring glory to the Son (v. 14). The Father himself has declared that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father (5:23). And the Son, for this part, is no less concerned to bring glory to the Father (14:13; 17:1, 4).<sup>404</sup>

#### (4) The disciples' grief will turn to joy (16:16-24)

**16 "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." 17 So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" 18 So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'?"**

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<sup>402</sup> Morris, 621.

<sup>403</sup> See also, Carson (1991), 541.

<sup>404</sup> Carson (1991), 541.

**We do not know what he is talking about." <sup>19</sup> Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? <sup>20</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. <sup>21</sup> When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. <sup>22</sup> So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. <sup>23</sup> In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. <sup>24</sup> Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.**

(a) Jesus tells them, "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." On this side of the events, it is clear he means that in a little while he is going to be arrested, and when that happens, they will not see him. He will be crucified, and then, a little while after that, they will see him in his resurrection. But the disciples do not understand what he is saying. They air their confusion among themselves, so knowing they wanted to ask him, Jesus says to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?"

(b) He elaborates his meaning by telling them they will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. As they mourn his death, the world will celebrate what it mistakenly thinks is its triumph. The sorrow they as disciples will experience will turn to joy, referring to his resurrection. Their experience will be analogous to that of a woman giving birth. The time of labor is dreadful, but when the baby is born, the great joy of having brought a new person into the world causes her to forget the anguish of her labor. In the same way, they will have sorrow in the dreadful events of his execution, but he will see them again in his resurrection, and then they will rejoice. Indeed, that event will be so profound and meaningful that the joy it produces will be so deep that it cannot be taken.

(c) In the time "after Jesus has risen and ascended and the Holy Spirit has been sent,"<sup>405</sup> they will not ask him any questions,<sup>406</sup> as they had done throughout his earthly ministry (e.g., 13:6, 25, 36-37; 14:5, 22), because he will no longer be with them personally, and the Spirit will be providing guidance in the truth. But, despite his absence, they can take to the bank that whatever requests they make of the Father *in his name*, requests that conform to his nature and will, the Father will give to them.

(d) During his earthly ministry, they did not ask the Father in his name because his work was not yet finished, and he had not yet been exalted to the new God-appointed role of Israel's ultimate king, the supremely powerful Lord of lords (Phil. 2:8-11). But after his resurrection and ascension, they will do so. Lincoln remarks: "As Jesus' authorized representatives who pray in accord with what he himself represents, they will find their requests

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<sup>405</sup> Carson (1991), 545.

<sup>406</sup> Michaels says (2010, 847), "Here the meaning is, 'you will ask me no questions.'" See also, Brown (1970), 722-723; Ridderbos, 539; Carson (1991), 545; ASV, NAS, NASU, NAB, NJB.

answered by the Father, who has given to Jesus and will continue to give to them. Such praying is both a way to and part of the joy they have been promised – so that your joy may be complete (cf. also 15:11)."<sup>407</sup>

(5) Jesus promises to speak plainly to his disciples (16:25-33)

**<sup>25</sup> "I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father. <sup>26</sup> In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; <sup>27</sup> for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. <sup>28</sup> I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father." <sup>29</sup> His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly and not using figurative speech! <sup>30</sup> Now we know that you know all things and do not need anyone to question you; this is why we believe that you came from God." <sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? <sup>32</sup> Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup> I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."**

(a) Jesus says he has spoken to them in veiled or figurative language, referring most immediately to his cryptic statement of v. 16 ("A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me") and the explanatory analogy in v. 21 about a woman giving birth. He then says the time is coming when he will no longer speak figuratively but will tell them plainly about the Father, but the time to which he is referring is not clear.

[1] It seems this time of "plain speaking" will be the time when they will ask the Father in his name, which vv. 23-24 suggest is after his ascension back to heaven. Michaels states, "'In that day' confirms the impression that he is speaking of a future time after his departure (as in v. 23 and 14:20), a 'day' indistinguishable from that coming 'hour' when he will speak 'plainly' and not in parables (v. 25)."<sup>408</sup> In that case, Jesus is saying that he will speak plainly to them about the Father through the Spirit whom he will send after he returns to heaven.

[2] Recall that he has already referred to the Spirit's coming to them as his own coming (14:16-18) and declared that the Spirit will not speak on his own authority but will speak what he hears (16:13-14). Michaels notes that the setting "seems to presuppose Jesus' departure to the Father and his return in the person of the Advocate."<sup>409</sup> Lincoln similarly concludes, "The primary force of Jesus' words, then, is that the plain speaking

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<sup>407</sup> Lincoln, 425.

<sup>408</sup> Michaels (2010), 849.

<sup>409</sup> Michaels (2010), 849.

will occur when the Spirit interprets for the disciples the significance of the events of Jesus' hour."<sup>410</sup> Burge states:

The "hour" (16:25; NIV, "time") that is coming, however, is not the time immediately following, but the "hour of glorification," that passage of Jesus out of this world when he returns to the Father and sends to them the Holy Spirit (2:4; 7:39). . . . This will be a new era, when revelation of Jesus will be spoken "plainly" (Gk. *parresia*). No doubt we should again look to the work of the Spirit, through whose efforts the Father's words given through the Son are brought to the disciples (14:10; 15:15), and through whose presence the Father and the Son indwell the disciples (14:23).<sup>411</sup>

(b) Jesus repeats the point from vv. 23-24 that after his departure they will ask the Father in his name, and then explains that he is not saying he will ask the Father on their behalf. Rather, his atoning death reconciles them with the Father and is therefore an intercession of continuing effectiveness. Having already been interceded for in the cross, they have direct access to the Father, so there is no need for Jesus to act as the go-between for their prayers. Morris states:

There is no contradiction with passages that speak of his perpetual intercession for his people (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25), nor with that in which John calls him "an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2:1, *NRSV*). In all four passages, there is one basic underlying thought, namely that our approach to the Father rests firmly on Christ's priestly work for us. That work is itself a perpetual intercession.<sup>412</sup>

(c) Their direct access to the Father is rooted in the fact he himself loves them, meaning in a way distinct from his love for the world. And that special relationship with the Father derives from their relationship with Jesus, the Son. Because they have loved Jesus and believed the truth about his identity, because they are his disciples, they are God's children.

(d) Jesus encapsulates his identity and work, the details of which are clear to us with hindsight. He declares that he came from the Father, meaning he was sent from heaven on a mission from the Father. He came into the world, becoming the God-man Jesus, and in this world, he is carrying out the divine mission that involves his humiliating death on a cross. But death will not hold him. He is going to be raised from the dead and will ascend back to the Father.

(e) The disciples apparently believe that Jesus is now speaking to them plainly in fulfillment of his promise in v. 25. His words lack details of his

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<sup>410</sup> Lincoln, 426. D. Moody Smith states (p. 303), "The plain speaking to which Jesus refers must be his speaking through the Spirit, telling them what he has told them, but now with their understanding." Klink (p. 698) states, "[T]he 'hour' [when Jesus will speak to the disciples plainly] is the new order of Christian existence under the ministerial office of the Paraclete, who will guide the Christian 'in all truth' (16:13)."

<sup>411</sup> Burge, 442.

<sup>412</sup> Morris, 629-630.

mission and work, but they are indeed plain. Nevertheless, he told them that "the hour is coming" when he would speak to them plainly about the Father. That refers to a future time not to the present conversation. As Lincoln notes, "'an hour is coming' is not the way one refers to something that will occur in a few moments."<sup>413</sup> So the disciples have misunderstood the promise in thinking it is already fulfilled.

(f) Based on their mistaken notion that what Jesus just told them was the plain revelation he had promised, they ascribe a special weightiness to those words. They declare that they produced in them a new level of faith. Now they know that he knows all things and is beyond needing to prove himself by answering questions. And being convinced that he knows all things, they believe in a new way that he came from God.

(g) Whatever effect Jesus' words may have had on their faith, he lets them know that it is still underdeveloped. He questions their confident assertion, asking essentially, "Do you *really* believe now?" He then tells them the sad reality that the time is imminent when they will scatter, alluding to Zech. 13:7, and abandon him.<sup>414</sup> Burge states:

The disciples have not at last discovered faith. . . . Jesus is asking a question (RSV/NRSV: "Do you now believe?"), placing some doubt on their achievement. They do not believe with the rigor or insight that they think. *Now* they think they've got it? At the "hour," in fact, they will be scattered in their fear (16:32; cf. Matt. 26:56). If they had understood, if they had believed fully, they would have the strength to cross this obstacle, but they do not.<sup>415</sup>

(h) But despite their desertion, he is not alone because the Father is with him. This is not inconsistent with the traditional understanding of the cry of dereliction, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mat. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). Kruse comments, "We recognize that God was with Jesus through all his sufferings: the betrayal, Jewish and Roman trials, and crucifixion. It was only as he bore the sins of the world in the darkness that covered the land that he was abandoned by the Father."<sup>416</sup>

(i) Jesus tells them that he predicted their failure of faith, their abandonment of him, so that they may have peace in their relationship with him by knowing that he loved them despite being aware of their weakness. Morris states, "When in the future they looked back on their desertion they could reflect that Jesus had predicted it. And, in the full knowledge that they would act in this way, he had promised them peace."<sup>417</sup> He then says that in the world they will face tribulation, but they are to take courage in the fact he has overcome the world. In reconciling us to God, he has trumped anything the world can throw at us.

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<sup>413</sup> Lincoln, 425.

<sup>414</sup> As Carson explains (1991, 549), Jesus' prediction that they would scatter, "each to his own [place]," is not inconsistent with his being followed by Peter and John (18:15). He writes, "The point is that all of Jesus' disciples did flee, and not even the beloved disciple, who loitered near the cross (as did, after all, some who taunted the Master), so identified himself with Jesus as to be arrested and share his suffering."

<sup>415</sup> Burge, 443.

<sup>416</sup> Kruse, 337.

<sup>417</sup> Morris, 633.

c. *The farewell prayer of Jesus (17:1-26)*

(1) Jesus prays for himself (17:1-5)

**When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**

(a) With his crucifixion at hand, Jesus asks the Father to glorify him that he may glorify the Father. As suggested in v. 5, he is asking the Father to return him to the glorious state he enjoyed with the Father before the world existed, i.e., from eternity. And as this return to glory is by way of the cross, it glorifies the Father because it is the means by which Jesus provides eternal life to those the Father has given him, meaning those Jews who, because they had received rather than resisted the Father's gracious work in their lives, had the faith of Abraham, a genuine and humble faith in God that seeks the truth and therefore accepts the revelation of Jesus' identity (see comments on 6:37). In providing this eternal life, Jesus glorifies the Father by implementing and revealing his loving and forgiving nature.

(b) The eternal life of which he is speaking is not merely eternal existence. After all, the damned will exist eternally. Rather, it is a life lived eternally in a *relationship with* ("knowing") the Father and with the Son, who accomplished the Father's reconciling work. That relationship is what brings the blessedness to the eternal existence of the redeemed. All the joy, satisfaction, love, peace, and wellbeing that will characterize that existence flow from that fellowship with God.

(c) From the beginning of the Gospel, John has made clear that Jesus is God, that he is divine, as Thomas will confess in 20:28. So Jesus' reference to the Father as "the only true God" is not intended to distinguish the Father from the Son and the Spirit in terms of deity, as though the Father is the only true God and the Son and the Spirit are not God. Rather, it is intended to distinguish the only true God, whose triune nature is not under discussion, from all false gods. Because the one God is a three-person being – he exists eternally as three coequal persons, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit – each of the divine persons can be referred to as the only true God. Indeed, John in 1 Jn. 5:20 probably speaks of Jesus as "the true God." Jesus, God the Son incarnate, refers to the Father and "the only true God" in keeping with his heart and mission to glorify the Father.

(d) Jesus declares that he glorified the Father on earth, having accomplished the work he gave him to do. He is the perfectly faithful Son, who did and said just what the Father wanted him to do and say, which glorified the Father by revealing his nature. And that faithfulness was about to culminate in his crucifixion, which Jesus probably includes among the works of the Father that he *has accomplished*. Köstenberger comments,

"When Jesus utters his final prayer, the cross still lies ahead, but by faith, he anticipates the successful completion of his mission (cf. 19:30; see Carson, 1991: 557; Barrett 1978: 504)."<sup>418</sup>

(e) He ends this portion of the prayer asking the Father to return him to the glorious state he enjoyed with the Father before the world existed. Kruse comments, "In the Prologue Jesus is introduced as the Word who 'was with God in the beginning' (1:2), and he prayed now to be restored to that place and the glory attaching to it, a prayer that would most certainly be answered."<sup>419</sup>

## (2) Jesus prays for his disciples (17:6-19)

**6 "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.**

(a) The Jews to whom Jesus revealed the Father's name, revealed who the Father is, included the subset of those who belonged to the Father, those who, because they had received rather than resisted the Father's gracious work in their lives, had the faith of Abraham. As "true Israelites," they belonged to the Father and, having been prepared by him to accept the revelation of Jesus' identity, they were given by him to Jesus. They were the ones who received and kept the Father's word delivered by Jesus, who came to know the truth and to believe that the Father had sent him. They knew that Jesus' life was an expression of what he had been given by the Father. Burge says, "Jesus' disciples can be described as followers who belonged to God – a remnant, whom God delivered to Jesus."<sup>420</sup>

(b) Jesus says he is praying for his disciples, those the Father has given him, those in whom he is glorified, but he is not praying for the world. Burge comments:

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<sup>418</sup> Köstenberger, 489.

<sup>419</sup> Kruse, 340.

<sup>420</sup> Burge, 464-465.

The thought of this remnant, this flock, that has recognized Jesus' voice and believed leads Jesus to pray for them specifically (17:9). They are precious because they belong to the Father and are now Jesus' responsibility (17:10). Jesus is not praying for the world (the arena of unbelief), though this does not mean that the world is outside God's love or that Jesus neglects the world. Nothing could be further from the truth. The failure to read these verses in the wider context of John's theology has led many to misrepresent them. God loves the world (3:16) and entered humanity in his Son for the sake of the world, to save it (1:29; 3:17; 4:42), offer it life (6:33, 51; 12:35), and bring it light (8:12; 9:5; 11:9; 12:46). Now Jesus' work in the world is near completion, and he is praying exclusively for his immediate followers who will be left behind as he departs. Like a shepherd about to lay down his life for this sheep (10:17), he prays for his flock whom he has led and who now must persevere in the wilderness.<sup>421</sup>

(c) As his disciples will remain in the world, "the environment not just of unbelief and cynicism, but of abject hostility (15:18-27),"<sup>422</sup> Jesus asks the Father to "keep them in your name," which probably means to keep them loyal to the Father, as Jesus had done during his earthly ministry. This does not imply the elimination of free will but protection against an irresistible pull into apostasy. Judas's apostasy was not from a failure to protect him but from a choice that was culpable (Mat. 26:24; Mk. 14:21) and foreknown in Scripture (e.g., Ps. 41:9). The Father had given Jesus his (the Father's) name in the sense he "entrusted [him] with the revelation of God as he is."<sup>423</sup>

(d) The goal of protecting the disciples against apostasy is that they may continue as one, as individuals united in a common faith, having a unity analogous to that of the Father and the Son. Without that protection, they would be ravaged by demonic forces and pulled completely apart. With that protection, Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:13b: "But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able [to bear], but with the testing, he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure."

(e) Jesus says he prays "these things"<sup>424</sup> that his disciples may share in his joy. He prays for their continuing divine protection that they may have every opportunity to abide in him and in the Father, and in the obedience that is part of that abiding, they may be filled with his joy. Recall that in 15:10-11 he emphasized the link between loving him and obeying him that they may experience his joy, the joy he has in obeying the Father.

(f) Jesus gave the Father's word to the disciples, and because they received it and thereby came out of the world in a figurative sense, as Jesus is not of the world in that sense, the world has hated them. Jesus does not ask the Father to take his disciples out of the world in a literal sense. They are to remain in the world as his witnesses in

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<sup>421</sup> Burge, 465.

<sup>422</sup> Burge, 466.

<sup>423</sup> Morris, 644 (fn. 39).

<sup>424</sup> Some (e.g., Carson [1991], 564) think it is more likely that Jesus is referring to his farewell discourse rather than to his prayer.

the power of the Spirit (15:26-27). Rather, he asks him to protect them from Satan while they are in the world. They are not of the world, as he is not of the world, in that their allegiance is to God rather than to things of the world.

(g) Jesus asks the Father to sanctify the disciples in the truth that is the Father's word. He wants them to be set apart, distinguished from the world, by their acceptance of and commitment to the truth of God's word. That is crucial because, as the Father had sent him into the world, so now he has sent them into the world. If they are not sanctified in the truth, distinctively wed to divine revelation, they will have nothing to bring to the world. Carson states:

Jesus' followers will be 'set apart' from the world, reserved for God's service, insofar as they think and live in conformity with the truth, the 'word' of revelation (v. 6) supremely mediated through Christ (himself the truth, 14:6, and the Word incarnate, 1:1, 14) – the revelation now embodied in the pages of this book. In practical terms, no-one can be 'sanctified' or set apart for the Lord's use without learning to think God's thoughts after him, without learning to live in conformity with the 'word' he has graciously given.<sup>425</sup>

(h) Jesus says he sanctifies himself, sets himself apart for sacrificial service to God, *for their sake*, that they may be cleansed and reconciled to God, and that they also, as redeemed people, may be sanctified in truth. They are to be lovers and tellers of the truth of God that his revelation may continue piercing the darkness.

### (3) Jesus prays for other believers (17:20-26)

**<sup>20</sup> "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."**

(a) Jesus prays not only for those who currently are disciples but also for those who will come to believe in him through the preaching of the gospel, the spread of the disciples' message. He is praying that all the believers may be one, having a unity analogous to that of the Father and the Son, praying that those who are not yet disciples also may come to be in the Father and the Son. An effect of this wide unity, a unity that embraces the diversity of individuals to whom the gospel will spread, is a unity that will help

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<sup>425</sup> Carson (1991), 566.

convince the world about the truth of Jesus' identity, the fact that the Father sent him. He is the one Lord forging one body out of the myriad of divisions and dislocations in this fallen world.

(b) Jesus mediated to his disciples, and through them to all future disciples, the glory of the Father, the truth of his nature and working, that they may be forged into a body of believers sharing a unity analogous to that of the Father and the Son and having an intimate relationship with God. The purpose, as in v. 21, is that the world may know the Father sent him, to which he adds that the world may know the Father loved the disciples as he loved the Son. Carson comments:

The thought is breathtakingly extravagant. The unity of the disciples, as it approaches the perfection that is its goal (*teteleiōmenoi*; cf. the use of this verb in 4:34; 5:36; 17:4), serves not only to convince many in the world that Christ is indeed the supreme locus of divine revelation as Christians claim (*that you sent me*), but that Christians themselves have been caught up into the love of the Father for the Son, secure and content and fulfilled because loved by the Almighty himself (Eph. 3:17b-19), with the very same love he reserves for his Son. It is hard to imagine a more compelling evangelistic appeal.<sup>426</sup>

(c) Jesus expresses his desire that his disciples may be where he is that they may see the glory the Father has given him because the Father loved him from eternity, before the foundation of the world. Though the world does not know the Father, denies and lies about him, Jesus knows him, and his disciples know that the Father sent Jesus and therefore know the truth about Jesus' identity and all that he reveals of the Father. He made the Father known to them, and he will continue in that revelatory work "either through the very events of the passion itself, or the coming of the Spirit after his exaltation, or both."<sup>427</sup> The revelatory work he did and continues to do is so that he may instill in the disciples the love the Father has for him, that is, that they may know they are loved by the Father with the love he has for the Son (v. 23), and that he may dwell in them (in the person of the Spirit).

## B. The arrest, trial, and passion of Jesus (18:1-19:42)

### 1. The arrest of Jesus (18:1-11)

**When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. <sup>2</sup> Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. <sup>3</sup> So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. <sup>4</sup> Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, "Whom do you seek?" <sup>5</sup> They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup> So he asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus**

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<sup>426</sup> Carson (1991), 569.

<sup>427</sup> Kruse, 348.

of Nazareth." <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go." <sup>9</sup> This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: "Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one." <sup>10</sup> Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) <sup>11</sup> So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

a. It is Thursday night, Friday by Jewish reckoning, in which the new day begins at sunset. Jesus and his disciples cross the Kidron Valley and enter a garden, which in Mat. 26:36 and Mk. 14:32 is identified as Gethsemane. Judas was familiar with the location because Jesus often met there with his disciples. The owner of the property had apparently placed it at Jesus' disposal for some time. Judas comes accompanied by a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priest and the Pharisees, who are equipped with lanterns and torches and weapons. Judas apparently had assured the Jewish leaders that he could help them take Jesus covertly under cover of darkness.

(1) The other Gospels do not mention the Romans, but John seems to be saying that both Roman soldiers and Jewish temple police were involved in the arrest. The involvement of Roman soldiers is suggested by John's statement that Judas brought "the *speiran*" and officers/servants of the chief priest and Pharisees (v. 3) and his statement in v. 12 that "the *speira* and the *chiliarchos*" and the officers/servants of the Jews took Jesus. *Speira* is a technical term for a part of a Roman legion. It has that meaning in each of its other NT occurrences: Mat. 27:27, Mk. 15:16, Acts 10:1, 21:31, 27:1. When the term was applied (rarely) to Jews in other literature it was, as Lincoln states, "with reference to the troops of a local sovereign or a leader of a revolt and never has in view the retinue at the disposal of the Sanhedrin or chief priests, from which it is in any case clearly distinguished here (cf. also v. 12)."<sup>428</sup>

(2) The presence of Roman troops is reinforced by his use of *chiliarchos* in conjunction with *speira*, as a *chiliarchos* was a Roman commander of a *speira*. Morris states:

A cohort was the tenth part of a legion and thus normally comprised [sic] 600 men (though in practice the number varied a good deal). It was commanded by a *χλῆραρχος* (cf. v. 12). John will not, of course, mean that 600 or so soldiers took part in the arrest but that the "cohort" performed the task; in other words, a detachment was sent. Some point out that *σπεῖρα* was used on occasion of a maniple, which was one third of a cohort, that is, 200 men. But even this is rather large. John is surely not saying that the whole *σπεῖρα* was present, but rather using a form of speech like our "the police came to arrest the man." Yet we must bear in mind that the Romans could use surprisingly large numbers of soldiers where one prisoner was in question (Acts 23:23), and that here they may well have feared a riot.<sup>429</sup>

(3) Morris also says:

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<sup>428</sup> Lincoln, 443.

<sup>429</sup> Morris, 656 (fn. 5).

Some commentators hold that there could not have been Romans in the posse, but Newbigin finds it "not very surprising in view of the evidence of good relations between Caiaphas and Pilate . . . and in view of constant Roman anxiety about outbreaks of violence at the great festivals." It is likely that the Jewish authorities would have brought in the Romans as soon as possible in view of their ultimate aim (and, we might add, in view of the fact that on a previous occasion the Temple guards had failed to arrest Jesus, 7:44ff.). With passions running high at the festival period, the Romans would be unlikely to refuse a request for help from the high priest. They would always have to reckon with the possibility that Jesus and the eleven would resist arrest and that a host of excited Galileans might join them.<sup>430</sup>

(4) He adds:

Robinson points out that all the Synopsists say that Jesus asked "Do you take me for a bandit (ληστής) . . .?" and proceeds, "Now if we ask whom we should expect to arrest such a terrorist or freedom fighter, there can only be one answer," and he proceeds to ask who arrested Barabbas whom John calls a ληστής (Priority, p. 241). It is no marvel that the Jews were able to enlist the aid of the Romans in arresting Jesus.<sup>431</sup>

b. Jesus, knowing all that was in store for him, stepped forward and asked, "Whom do you seek?" With Judas standing among them, they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." When Jesus said to them, "I am [he]," they drew back and fell to the ground. There apparently was some trepidation among the temple police about forcibly arresting Jesus. After all, he had performed wonders in Jerusalem, taught with authority, and was believed by some to be the Messiah. Temple guards who previously were sent to arrest him failed to do so because they were so impressed by his words (7:45-46). They told the chief priests and Pharisees who demanded to know why they did not arrest him, "No one ever spoke like this man!" So their being taken aback when brought face to face with Jesus in those circumstances is understandable. Carson states:

If they have been awed by Jesus before, if they have been dumbfounded by his teaching, his authority, his directness in the full light of day in the precincts of the temple where they most feel at home, it is not hard to believe that they are staggered by his open self-disclosure on a sloping mountainside in the middle of the night – the more so if some of them hear [in his statement "I am (he)"] the overtones of God's self-disclosure in the prophecy of Isaiah. It may take them a few seconds to pull themselves together and regroup; in the Evangelist's eyes, their physical ineptitude was another instance of people responding better than they knew.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Morris, 656-657. Keener (2:1078-1080) denies that Roman soldiers were involved in the arrest.

<sup>431</sup> Morris, 657 (fn. 7).

<sup>432</sup> Carson (1991), 578.

c. The scene repeats with the temple police having regained their composure, and after Jesus identifies himself again, he says, "So, if you seek me, let these men go." He is protecting his disciples thus fulfilling what he had said in 17:12, that he did not lose any of his disciples, the exception of Judas having already been noted is not repeated. His protection of them physically here fulfills the protection of them spiritually to which he referred in 17:12 as a symbol and illustration of that protection.<sup>433</sup>

d. Peter draws his sword and cuts off the right ear of the high priest's servant named Malchus. This event is reported in all the Synoptics (Mat. 26:51-52; Mk. 14:47; Lk. 22:49-51). Luke and John specify that it was the servant's *right* ear, but only John gives the name of the servant. Only Luke reports (22:51) that Jesus immediately healed the servant's ear, which may explain how the disciples were allowed to escape rather than be attacked immediately by the armed soldiers. Kruse suggests that Peter was defending the Master's honor against the shame of arrest,<sup>434</sup> but Jesus tells him to put the sword back into its sheath. He is committed to drinking the cup the Father has given him, to bear the sin of the world on the cross.

## 2. Jesus' trial before Annas and Peter's denials (18:12-27)

**12 So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him. 13 First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. 14 It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. 15 Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16 but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. 17 The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." 18 Now the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. 19 The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. 20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. 21 Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." 22 When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" 23 Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" 24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. 25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You also are not one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." 26 One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" 27 Peter again denied it, and at once a rooster crowed.**

a. Jesus is bound and first taken to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Mark 14:50 notes that all the disciples fled, but as John soon explains, Peter and

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<sup>433</sup> Carson (1991), 579.

<sup>434</sup> Kruse, 351.

another disciple, probably John, circled back at some point and followed the arresting group (cf. Mat. 26:58; Mk. 14:54; Lk. 22:54). Carson comments: "That the Jewish officials were the primary arresting officers is clear from the fact that [Jesus] is brought to Annas, and then to Caiaphas; the Roman auxiliaries, their role of preventing trouble complete, doubtless returned to their barracks in the Fortress of Antonio."<sup>435</sup>

b. Annas served as high priest from AD 6-15, but Caiaphas was the high priest when Jesus was arrested, holding that office from AD 18-36. Annas continued to be influential as the patriarch of a high priestly family, and he still could be spoken of as the high priest in an honorary or *de facto* sense (Lk. 3:2; Acts 4:6), but John nowhere identifies him that way. On the other hand, he twice specified previously that Caiaphas was the high priest that year (11:49, 51) and does so two more times in this immediate context (18:13, 24). He refers to Annas as "the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year." Robert Gundry comments:

And it's important to note that though Annas had been the high priest earlier, and even though ex-high priests continued to be called high priests, John hasn't called Annas a high priest. He has called only Caiaphas the high priest and stressed Caiaphas's being high priest "that year," almost as if to rule out a continuing designation of Annas as high priest or at least our thinking of him as such. So the courtyard is that of the high priest Caiaphas, not of Annas; and the high priest in the following verses continues to be Caiaphas.<sup>436</sup>

c. It seems, therefore, that Annas promptly sent Jesus on to Caiaphas, as belatedly noted in 18:24 (KJV), and that the events of vv. 15-27 relate to Jesus' appearance before Caiaphas rather than Annas. Gundry states: "In 18:13-14 John identified Annas as the father-in-law of Caiaphas. That mention of Caiaphas then led John to fast forward to Caiaphas's interrogation of Jesus, during which Peter denied Jesus for the first time (18:15-23)."<sup>437</sup> Zarley states:

If Annas was the high priest to whom belonged the courtyard in v. 15, and Annas was Jesus' interrogator in vv. 19-23 as well, it is incredible that John would mention an interrogation of Jesus by Annas but none by Caiaphas, when all three Synoptists mention the interrogation by Caiaphas and Peter's three denials there in his courtyard but do not mention Annas. It is therefore safer to regard John as the only Evangelist who records Annas' preliminary custody of Jesus in v. 13 (according to this view, there is no indication that Annas even questioned Jesus), before the beginning of the Sanhedrin's investigation led by Caiaphas in vv. 19-23.<sup>438</sup>

d. Under this view, 18:24 is "a belated *clarification*, to the effect that of course Annas, to whom Jesus had 'first' been taken (v. 12b), had by this time sent the prisoner

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<sup>435</sup> Carson (1991), 580.

<sup>436</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), Kindle location 5228-5229.

<sup>437</sup> Gundry, Kindle location 5273.

<sup>438</sup> Zarley, 356.

along to the real Chief Priest, his son-in-law Caiaphas."<sup>439</sup> It involves "the reading of the aorist ('So Annas sent him') as if it were a pluperfect ('So Annas had sent him')," as in KJV, which Michaels says "is quite legitimate" and Carson acknowledges is a "possible" reading.<sup>440</sup>

(1) Regarding the conjunction *oun*, Michaels explains:

The difficulty is that the connective "so" [*oun*] normally carries the narrative forward (in the sense of "therefore," or "then"), rather than looking back at something that has already happened. Yet if the notice is taken as parenthetical, that is, as one of this Gospel's characteristic "narrative asides," a retrospective reference is not out of the question. As we have seen, the writer has a way of introducing some of his narrative asides belatedly. . . . If verse 24 is read as a belated notice that Jesus, having been sent "first" to Annas (v. 12b), has by now been sent on to Caiaphas, it may simply be an example of that same tendency.<sup>441</sup>

(2) Gundry takes *oun* to mean "therefore" but sees it as supporting the reading of the aorist (*apesteilen*) as a pluperfect. He states: "Now John remembers that he didn't tell about Jesus' transfer from Annas to Caiaphas. So the present verse makes up for that omission; and 'Therefore' means, 'You readers can conclude from Caiaphas the high priest's interrogation of Jesus that Annas had sent him to Caiaphas.'"<sup>442</sup>

e. As for why John would even mention the visit to Annas without relating anything that happened there, Gundry opines:

But why did John even mention the taking of Jesus to Annas first? We're told nothing about what happened there. An insignificant historical detail? Or perhaps John implies that Annas didn't know what to do with Jesus, had no authority over him, and therefore sent him to Caiaphas, who likewise – though he was the high priest that year – couldn't manage any better than an interrogation that backfired when Jesus took charge.<sup>443</sup>

f. In 1990 an ornate ossuary (burial bone box) was discovered in Peace Forest south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem by workers who were building a water park. It dates to the first century and has two inscriptions, one in Aramaic and one in Hebrew, which may be translated "Caiaphas" and "Joseph, son of Caiaphas."

(1) Josephus gives Caiaphas's full name as "Joseph, who is called Caiaphas of the high priesthood." Inside the ossuary were the bones of six people, including one 60-year-old man, which was about Caiaphas's age when he died.

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<sup>439</sup> Michaels (2010), 908. Wilbur N. Pickering writes in *Identification of the New Testament Text III* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 201: "John saw that his readers could get the idea that Jesus was still with Annas, so he wrote verse 24 to avert that misunderstanding. Verse 24 should be translated in parentheses: (Annas had sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest)."

<sup>440</sup> Michaels (2010), 908; Carson (1991), 585. But precious few commentators adopt this understanding.

<sup>441</sup> Michaels (2010), 908-909.

<sup>442</sup> Gundry, Kindle location 5273.

<sup>443</sup> Gundry, Kindle location 5273.

(2) Many scholars are convinced this is indeed the ossuary of Caiaphas the high priest. For example, Jonathan Reed and John Dominic Crossan declared in 2001, "There should be no doubt that the chamber was the resting place of the family of the high priest Caiaphas named in the gospels for his role in the crucifixion, and it's very likely that the elderly man's bones were those of Caiaphas himself."<sup>444</sup> Some were not convinced that "Caiaphas" is the correct translation of the inscriptions, but the case now seems pretty much closed. As Craig Evans wrote in his 2015:

Several archaeologists have identified the Yehoseph bar Qaipa of the ossuary with Joseph called Caiaphas of the narratives of Josephus and the New Testament Gospels. . . . Although some scholars have expressed reservations, wondering if, instead of Qayapha (or Qaipa), the name should be vocalized Qopha, Qupha, or even Qepha, the discovery of the ossuary [of 'Miriam daughter of Yeshua son of Caiaphas'] bearing an inscription that refers to קיפא [Qaipa] as a priest has, in my view, settled the matter in favor of the Caiaphas identification.<sup>445</sup>

g. John reminds his readers that Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people (11:49-51). Morris observes, "Here was no idealist ready to see that justice was done, but a cynical politician who had already spoken in favor of Jesus' death."<sup>446</sup>

h. The other disciple was known to Caiaphas and therefore allowed into the courtyard of his house. Peter stood outside at the door. The other disciple spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, a "he's with me" type thing, and brought Peter in. At some point,<sup>447</sup> the servant girl said to Peter, "You too are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" and he said he was not. Morris states: "He may well have been nerving himself to face some stiff opposition. But instead he was asked a simple question by a little slave girl. . . . The question suggested a line of escape and Peter gratefully took it up. Almost certainly he did not reflect where it would lead him. Once committed, he must have found it hard to go back on his denial."<sup>448</sup>

i. The high priest's slaves and the temple guards had made a fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it warming themselves. Peter, no doubt being cold and not wanting to be conspicuous by staying away from the fire, joined them. This is when Caiaphas questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

j. Jesus does not mention the disciples, not wanting to put negative attention on them. Regarding his teaching, he told Caiaphas that he had taught openly in synagogues and in the temple, so one could learn what he taught simply by asking those who heard him. As Morris suggests, Jesus may have been making the legal point that Jewish law

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<sup>444</sup> John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 241.

<sup>445</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 53-54.

<sup>446</sup> Morris, 664.

<sup>447</sup> The Synoptics indicate it was when Peter was warming himself by the fire (Mk. 14:66; Lk. 22:55).

<sup>448</sup> Morris, 667.

required the accuser to bring forth witnesses to corroborate any charges. It was not the accused's responsibility to prove his innocence. In that light, Jesus was saying that witnesses to what he taught were readily available.<sup>449</sup> Jesus was not claiming that he never taught his disciples privately but that "he did not have two kinds of teaching, a harmless one for the general public and a very different one for the secret revolutionaries."<sup>450</sup>

k. One of the guards standing near Jesus judged his response to be insufficiently contrite and slapped him in the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus calmly told him to point out what was wrong with what he said, and if he could not do so, then there was no justification for having struck him. Jesus was speaking truth and thereby exposing the corruption of the proceeding.

l. Back at the fire where Peter and the others were warming themselves, Peter was again invited to deny that he was a disciple of Jesus ("You also are not one of his disciples, are you?"), which he did, declaring, "I am not." And then one of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, raised the suspicion level, asking, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" But Peter again denied it,<sup>451</sup> and the rooster crowed at that moment, as foretold by the Lord (13:36).<sup>452</sup>

### 3. Jesus' trial before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)

#### *a. Jesus presented to and examined by Pilate (18:28-38a)*

**<sup>28</sup> Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" <sup>30</sup> They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." <sup>31</sup> Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." <sup>32</sup> This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. <sup>33</sup> So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." <sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I**

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<sup>449</sup> Morris, 668-669.

<sup>450</sup> Morris, 669.

<sup>451</sup> For how the details of the denials in the different Gospels may fit together, see, e.g., Zarley, 232-235, 354-364.

<sup>452</sup> As reported in Mk. 14:30, Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times before the rooster crowed twice, referring to the second crowing that would occur around 2:30 a.m., about an hour after the first crowing. The third crowing would be about an hour after the second. William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 543. The other Gospels simply report the prediction more generally, without the specification of the second crowing.

**was born and for this purpose I have come into the world-- to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"**

(1) In the early morning, Jesus is led from Caiaphas's house, where the Synoptics inform us that a kangaroo trial of the Sanhedrin had convicted him, to the headquarters (and residence) of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The Jews bringing him did not enter the governor's headquarters to avoid ritual defilement that would prevent them from eating "the Passover."<sup>453</sup> They were not referring to the Passover proper, the meal eaten on the evening of Nissan 15 (falling on a Friday that year). That meal had been eaten some ten hours earlier, as it had been by Jesus and his disciples. Rather, John is using "eat the Passover" in the general sense of "celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread."<sup>454</sup> Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread often were identified together in the first century as "Passover." For example, Lk. 22:1 says, "Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover."

(2) Pilate asks for a statement of the charge they are bringing against Jesus, and the Jews, in essence, ask him to trust them. They say that if he were not a criminal, a perpetrator of evil, they would not have brought him. Pilate therefore assumes that their complaint against Jesus is not a violation of Roman law, so he tells them to handle the matter themselves, to judge him by their own law, regarding which they were given considerable latitude in administering. They then reveal that their goal is nothing less than execution, and they are not allowed formally to administer the death penalty.<sup>455</sup> This fulfilled Jesus' words indicating that he would be crucified (3:14, 8:28, 12:32-33) because only the Romans would employ that form of execution.

(3) Hearing the Jews' intention and recognizing the importance they attached to the matter, Pilate went back into his quarters and asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" This suggests that, though unreported by John, the Jews "had brought the charge of treason against Jesus, *i.e.* they represented him as a rival to Caesar."<sup>456</sup> Implicit in Pilate's question is whether Jesus poses a political threat. In asking whose idea it was that he was that kind of king, Jesus invites Pilate to consider that he is being coopted by Jesus' accusers to do their bidding.

(4) Jesus' veiled balking at the characterization of his kingship reinforces the suspicion that the accusation against him by the Jewish leaders is rooted in a religious disagreement about the nature of that kingship. Pilate thus makes clear that he does not care about Jewish disagreements that are purely religious, declaring, "Am I a Jew?" The fact is that Jesus' own people have handed him over, and Pilate wants to know the nature of any criminal charges, thus he asks, "What have you done?"

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<sup>453</sup> Köstenberger (p. 524) says, "Jews who entered Gentile homes were considered to contract uncleanness." See also, Morris, 675; Burge 498.

<sup>454</sup> See, e.g., Köstenberger, 524; Carson (1991), 589-590. Burge (p.499) says, "They were concerned not with the Passover meal the night before, but with the many meals and celebrations that week in the Passover season, which continued till Nisan 21."

<sup>455</sup> Keener states (2:1109), "Most scholars thus currently recognize that the Sanhedrin lacked the legal authority to execute prisoners in this period (Josephus *Ant.* 20.200)."

<sup>456</sup> Kruse, 359.

(5) Since the essence of the attack by his accusers is that he is a political threat, Jesus explains that is not the case. His kingdom is "not of this world," not meaning that it has nothing to do with the physical world but that it does not originate or derive from this world. As Kruse notes, he was saying that "[h]is kingdom is given by God, not established by human struggle. His kingdom is active in this world, and will one day come with power, but its power is not of this world, it is of God."<sup>457</sup> It is not a nation, state, or movement that imposes its will by force, as indicated by the fact his servants did not fight to prevent his arrest. Therefore, it does not threaten the Empire in any conventional sense.

(6) Pilate picks up on Jesus' references to "my kingdom," and says to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus says, "You say that I am a king," meaning that is correct when understood properly. He was born and came into the world for the purpose of testifying to the truth, the truth of God's work in this world and his role in that work. He says that everyone who is "of the truth," everyone who values and desires the truth, listens to his voice, in effect asking Pilate if he is of the truth, if he will listen to his voice. Pilate reveals that he is not of the truth, does not listen to Jesus, by his cynical response, "What is truth?" He implies it is beyond knowing and thereby consigns himself to its rejection.

*b. Pilate seeks to release Jesus (18:38b-19:12)*

**After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" <sup>40</sup> They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. <sup>2</sup> And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup> They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. <sup>4</sup> Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him." <sup>5</sup> So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" <sup>6</sup> When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." <sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." <sup>8</sup> When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. <sup>9</sup> He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin." <sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."**

(1) Michaels remarks, "Nothing Jesus has said about his kingship has convinced Pilate to regard him as a criminal or in any way a threat to the empire."<sup>458</sup> Pilate goes out and tells the Jews that he finds no "cause," no grounds for proceeding against Jesus. But

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<sup>457</sup> Kruse, 359.

<sup>458</sup> Michaels (2010), 926.

hoping to mitigate his responsibility for not delivering what the Jewish leaders wanted, he appeals to the crowd and mentions the custom under which he releases one prisoner at the Passover.<sup>459</sup> He asks if they want him to release the King of the Jews, which would put the responsibility on them. But the crowd, persuaded by the chief priests and the elders (Mat. 27:20; Mk. 15:11), asks him to release a robber or insurrectionist named Barabbas, about whom nothing is known beyond what is reported in the Gospels.

(2) Pilate had Jesus flogged, which I think here refers to the relatively mild flogging meted out for minor offenses, what the Romans called *fustigatio*, as distinct from the terrible scourging associated with crucifixion known as *verberatio*.<sup>460</sup> The beatings of the *verberatio* were so savage that the victim sometimes died. Pilate has not yet sentenced Jesus to be crucified; that does not come until v. 16. He is still declaring that he finds no cause against him (vv. 4, 6). As Carson notes, "it is hard to imagine any Roman prefect administering the *verberatio* before sentencing."<sup>461</sup> Pilate's conduct here is in line with his intention as stated in Lk. 23:22, "I will therefore punish and release him."

(3) As part of the attempt to placate the accusers' rage, Jesus is humiliated for having claimed to be the king of the Jews. A crown of thorns is put on his head, he is draped in a purple robe, mocked as the "king of the Jews," and slapped.<sup>462</sup> Pilate displays the battered and dressed up Jesus before his accusers telling them to look at him. He hopes they will accept this humiliation as sufficient vindication of their charge that Jesus is not the king of the Jews and let the matter drop, but they shout "Crucify him! Crucify him!"<sup>463</sup>

(4) Pilate's response (v. 6b) is best understood along the lines: "If you're so bent on crucifying him, you do it. Oh wait, you can't (18:31). Well then, it's up to me, and I find no cause for crucifixion." NET note states:

Although a few scholars have suggested that the situation was at this point so far out of Pilate's control that he really was telling the high priests they could go ahead and crucify a man he had found to be innocent, this seems unlikely. It is far more likely that Pilate's statement should be understood as one of frustration and perhaps sarcasm. This seems to be supported by the context, for the Jewish

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<sup>459</sup> Carson states (1991, 596), "Although Mk. 15:8 pictures the crowd asking for the release of a prisoner according to custom, while John has Pilate bringing the matter up, the custom itself is assumed. It is not unlikely that some request was made to Pilate before the public offer, just as there must have been some formal charge laid against Jesus before Pilate began his interrogation. In both instances John omits the details as irrelevant to his purposes."

<sup>460</sup> Carson (1991), 597; Burge, 502-503. There was also an intermediate flogging, called *flagellatio*, which was administered for crimes more serious than those receiving the *fustigatio*.

<sup>461</sup> Carson (1991), 597. Burge (p. 503) states, "In the present scene Pilate chooses to employ *fustigatio*, a beating (19:1), not only to teach Jesus to be more prudent in the future, but to satisfy the crowds who are demanding his death."

<sup>462</sup> If the flogging was outside the view of Jesus' accusers, then the soldiers' mocking him as the "king of the Jews" and striking him was not for the accusers' benefit. It reflected their personal hostility toward the Jews.

<sup>463</sup> The same form of humiliation is repeated, complete with the crown, robe, mocking, and physical abuse after the severe flogging in association with his crucifixion, but at that time Jesus is not displayed before his accusers (Mat. 27:27-30; Mk. 15:16-19). It seems the mocking that was initially done to pacify the accusers became a theme among the soldiers and shaped their later conduct.

authorities make no attempt at this point to seize Jesus and crucify him. Rather they continue to pester Pilate to order the crucifixion.

(5) The Jews let on why they are so insistent that Jesus be put to death. They say that their law demands his execution because he claimed to be the Son of God. Morris comments, "'Law' clearly refers to the law of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16). By this law, they say, Jesus ought to die because he has made himself Son of God (cf. 5:18; 8:53; 10:33 for this accusation)."<sup>464</sup> That Jesus claimed to be divine frightened Pilate. As Morris states:

Pilate was evidently superstitious. He can scarcely be called a religious man, but the news that his prisoner had made divine claims scared the governor (his fear cannot be fear of the Jews; it must be fear connected with Jesus in some way). He had possibly been affected by a message from his wife about a dream she had had (Matt. 27:19). And every Roman knew of stories of the gods or their offspring appearing in human guise. "Divine men" were part of the first-century understanding of life. Pilate had plainly been impressed by Jesus as he talked with him. Now that he hears of the possibility of the supernatural he is profoundly affected.<sup>465</sup>

(6) Pilate goes back to Jesus and asks where he is from. For whatever reason, whether Pilate's preconceptions would have prevented him from understanding the answer or whether the answer had already in effect been given (18:37),<sup>466</sup> Jesus does not respond. Pilate tells him, in so many words, that his life is in his hands, so it would behoove him to cooperate. And Jesus tells him that his, Pilate's, authority over him ultimately comes from God, the implication being that it is not as he imagines. He can do to Jesus only what the Father allows. Burge remarks, "No one can take the Son's life away from him (10:18). *No one!* God has permitted Pilate to have this power over Jesus because it is a necessary aspect of what will happen in 'the hour.' Jesus must die."<sup>467</sup>

(7) The logic of v. 11b is not clear, but I think it is along the following lines. Because God is the source of all human authority, as exemplified in Pilate's authority, all humans are answerable to God for their conduct in positions of authority. In terms of their stewardship of the authority given to them, the one who delivered Jesus over to Pilate, presumably Caiaphas,<sup>468</sup> was guilty of greater sin than Pilate "because [Pilate] was not acting against Jesus out of deliberate hatred or calculated malice, like [Caiaphas]."<sup>469</sup>

(8) Pilate wants to release Jesus, but he lacks the determination to do so without the acquiescence of the Jews. The Jews tell Pilate that if he releases Jesus, he is not

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<sup>464</sup> Morris, 703.

<sup>465</sup> Morris, 704.

<sup>466</sup> Morris, 704.

<sup>467</sup> Burge, 505.

<sup>468</sup> Carson (1991, 601) states, "On the whole, it seems best to fasten on Caiaphas [rather than Judas], since he not only took an active if not determinative part in the plot against Jesus (11:49-53) and, as high priest presiding over the Sanhedrin, he took a leading part in formulating the charges against Jesus (cf. Mk. 14:61-64), charges of which John demonstrates his thorough awareness."

<sup>469</sup> NET note.

a friend of Caesar. They make clear that their position before the authorities is going to be that Jesus claimed to be a king and therefore set himself in opposition to Caesar. In other words, they are going to paint him as a political revolutionary.

*c. Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified (19:13-16)*

**13 So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." 16 So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.**

(1) Pilate judged that Jesus' life was not worth the trouble the Jews could cause him with such a claim, so he brought Jesus out to the location at which official judgments were rendered. "The day of preparation of the Passover" (cf. 19:31, 42) refers not to Thursday, the day on which the Passover lamb was sacrificed, but to Friday, the day of preparation *for the Sabbath* of Passover week. The day before the Sabbath was called the day of preparation (e.g., Mk. 15:42).<sup>470</sup>

(2) John says (v. 14b), "It was about the sixth hour," whereas Mk. 15:25 says, "it was the third hour when they crucified him." I think the most likely way of harmonizing this seeming disagreement is that the time references are broad approximations of the sun's position in the sky, the boundaries of which are imprecise. First-century Jews were not nearly as time conscious as people in the modern Western world, and sundials were not in common use. The time from sunrise to sunset was divided into 12 hours (Jn. 11:9), but that span had three main reference points: the third hour, the sixth hour, and the ninth hour (Mat. 20:1-9). These were general references to midmorning, midday, and midafternoon. If Jesus was crucified near the transition between midmorning and midday (say 10:30), it fairly could be described both as midmorning (the third hour) and *about* midday (about the sixth hour). John may have opted for the latter to highlight the length of the proceedings.<sup>471</sup>

(3) Pilate, now irritated with the Jews' maneuvering, tells them, "Behold your King!" They insist that he be crucified, and Pilate jabs them again, saying, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests tell Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar," because they want to keep the pressure on that Jesus is opposed to Caesar and therefore someone Pilate must execute. But in that they make a damning confession: they have rejected God as the true king of Israel, a truth reflected in their rejection of his Son, the Messiah. As John wrote in 1:11, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him." So Pilate delivered him over to be crucified.

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<sup>470</sup> Köstenberger, 537-538; Carson (1991), 603-604.

<sup>471</sup> See, e.g., Carson (1991), 604-605; Morris, 708-709; Burge, 507-508; Blomberg (2007), 228-229; Justin Taylor, "[You Asked: What Time Did Jesus Die?](#)" (accessed on 1/30/22). For other possibilities, see James Davis, "[The Time of Jesus' Death and Inerrancy: Is Harmonization Plausible?](#)" (accessed on 1/30/22).

#### 4. The crucifixion of Jesus (19:16b-37)

So they took Jesus,<sup>17</sup> and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.<sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.<sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."<sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.<sup>21</sup> So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"<sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom,<sup>24</sup> so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things,<sup>25</sup> but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"<sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.<sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.<sup>31</sup> Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.<sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.<sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.<sup>34</sup> But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.<sup>35</sup> He who saw it has borne witness-- his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth – that you also may believe.<sup>36</sup> For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken."<sup>37</sup> And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

a. The soldiers who were assigned to crucify Jesus took custody of him. Crucifixion was the cruelest and most humiliating form of execution in the ancient world. The Romans would fasten the victim to the cross with ropes or nails – in Jesus' case we know they used nails – and death would result from bleeding, trauma, and asphyxiation. The Roman orator Cicero called crucifixion "the most cruel and disgusting penalty." The Jewish historian Josephus, who witnessed crucifixions during Titus's siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, called it "the most wretched of deaths." It was reserved for the lower classes, slaves, and the worst of criminals. In 63 B.C. Rabirius, a Roman nobleman and senator, was threatened with the penalty of crucifixion. In defending him, Cicero said:

How grievous a thing it is to be disgraced by a public court; how grievous to suffer a fine, how grievous to suffer banishment; and yet in the midst of any such disaster we retain some degree of liberty. Even if we are threatened with death,

we may die free men. But . . . *the very word "cross"* should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not the actual occurrence of these things but *the very mention of them*, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.<sup>472</sup>

b. In connection with his crucifixion, Jesus received the severe scourging, the *verberatio*, as reported in Mat. 27:26 and Mk. 15:15. Victims of crucifixion commonly were required to carry the crossbeam (called the *patibulum* in Latin) to the crucifixion site where it was then connected to the upright beam that remained at the site.<sup>473</sup> The crossbeam would have weighed 30 to 40 pounds. Jesus headed out for the crucifixion site bearing his own cross, but Mk. 15:21 tells us that at some point the soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry it. Jesus presumably collapsed on the way, and then Simon was conscripted to complete the job.

c. The site of the crucifixion was called "The Place of the Skull," which John explains was called Golgotha in Aramaic.<sup>474</sup> We do not know why it was called that. It may have been because that is where people were put to death, "skull" functioning as a representation of death. It was outside the city walls, and probably near major roads, as the Romans liked to send a message to the populace with their crucifixions. Golgotha almost certainly was located within what is known today as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. There Jesus was crucified between two others, whom the Synoptics inform us were two robbers or insurrectionists (Mat. 27:38; Mk. 15:27; Lk. 23:32), criminals who were being justly executed for their deeds (Lk. 23:39-41).

d. Continuing his jabbing of the Jews, Pilate attached to the cross a notice declaring in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek – so nobody could miss it – "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." John notes that many Jews read it because Jesus was crucified just outside the city where people would pass by and see it. The chief priests objected to Pilate's notice and urged him to change it to say that Jesus *claimed* to be the King of the Jews. Kruse states: "Having been forced to back down and hand Jesus over for crucifixion under the implied threat from the chief priests that they would report him to Caesar, Pilate was in no mood to listen to their protest. *Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.'* He was determined to let the affront stand."<sup>475</sup>

e. The four soldiers conducting Jesus' crucifixion divided his garments or wearing apparel into four parts, which may have involved them in tearing the cloak, the outer garment, apart at the seams. The most valuable item was his tunic, a tight-fitting shirt worn next to the body, which was seamless. They decided to cast lots to see who got that item (also Mat. 27:35 and Lk. 23:34), which John notes was in fulfillment of Scripture, referring to Ps. 22:18.

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<sup>472</sup> Gerald G. O'Collins, "Crucifixion" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1208.

<sup>473</sup> Schnabel (2018), 308.

<sup>474</sup> The term "Calvary" used in Lk. 23:33 in the KJV came from *calvariae locus*, the Latin rendering in the Vulgate of "place of the skull."

<sup>475</sup> Kruse, 366-367.

f. John mentions four women were standing by the cross: Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.<sup>476</sup> Presumably the three women were supporting the Lord's mother in the gruesome ordeal. John (the disciple Jesus loved) also is present, and Jesus entrusts his mother to John's care, making him her de facto son. Presumably he did not entrust her to one of his brothers because they at that time were not believers (7:5) and were not present. John faithfully assumed that duty.

g. Knowing that he was at the end of his mission to pour out his life for the sins of the world, Jesus said, "I thirst." John says this was to fulfill Scripture, probably referring to Ps. 22:15a, a verse from the Psalm to which he just referred (vv. 23-24): "my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws" [NIV – roof of my mouth]. Kruse remarks, "By drawing attention to the way Scripture was being fulfilled in what took place during Jesus' crucifixion, the evangelist shows again that all was being accomplished in accordance with the divine plan."<sup>477</sup>

h. Someone fills a sponge with sour wine, a cheap vinegar-wine diluted heavily with water, puts it on a reed to be able to reach Jesus on the cross, and gives it to him to drink.

(1) Unless the prolonged darkness (not mentioned by John) had awakened some of them, this is probably not an act of compassion but further mocking (Mat. 27:39-44; Mk. 15:29-32), which the fuller picture from the Synoptics suggests was along the following lines: Jesus declares his thirst in conjunction with his cry, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani*" (Mk. 15:34; Mat. 27:46), which cry people mistakenly interpreted as him calling for rescue by Elijah (Mk. 15:35-36; Mat. 27:47). They laughingly offer him sour wine in the sense of "Let's see if Elijah might rescue him if we prolong his life a wee bit by satisfying his thirst."

(2) If this act is one of mockery, it raises the question of why Jesus accepted this drink but refused to participate in the prior act of mockery when the soldiers offered him wine mixed with myrrh (Mk. 15:23; Mat. 27:34).<sup>478</sup> Perhaps Jesus accepted this drink, immediately before his death, to symbolize his taking on himself in his death all the sin, rejection, hatred, and hostility of mankind toward God. He was dying for the forgiveness of mankind's abuse of God, expressed toward him to the bitter end. After accepting the sour wine, Jesus declared, "It is finished,"<sup>479</sup> and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Kruse comments:

He had finished the work he came to do. He had given his flesh for the life of the world (6:51), as the good shepherd he had laid down his life for the sheep (10:11,

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<sup>476</sup> Matthew and Mark identify three of the women who were watching the crucifixion *at a distance* (Mat. 27:55-56; Mk. 15:40). Perhaps the women John reports being near the cross moved back to observe the Lord's suffering at a distance after Jesus committed his mother to John's care (who may then have taken her away from the scene and then returned).

<sup>477</sup> Kruse, 369. Others think Ps. 69:21b is in view: "for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink."

<sup>478</sup> Strauss (p. 690) says "[myrrh] was used as flavoring for fine wines," and he agrees with Evans that this was a continuation of the soldiers' mocking of Jesus. They were saying, in effect, "only the finest for you O king."

<sup>479</sup> According to Lk. 23:46, his final cry included, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."

14), he became the one man who died for the nation (11:50), he was the seed that had fallen into the ground, and would now produce many seeds (12:24), and he had shown the love greater than any other – he had laid down his life for his friends (15:13).<sup>480</sup>

i. Since it was Friday, the day of preparation for the Sabbath, and a special Sabbath at that (the Sabbath in Passover week), the Jews wanted to make sure the bodies would not be on the crosses past sundown, the start of the Sabbath. So they asked Pilate to break the legs of the crucified men to expedite their deaths and thus their removal from their crosses. For whatever reason, Pilate agreed, and the soldiers proceeded to break the legs of the two robbers who had been crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they discovered that he was already dead, so it was not necessary to break his legs.

j. But to leave no doubt that Jesus was dead, given that he had died relatively quickly, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear. Regarding the expulsion of blood and water from the wound, Kruse states:

Medical experts have suggested a couple of explanations for this phenomenon. One is that the spear penetrated Jesus' heart and the flow was made up of fluid (like water) from the pericardial sac and blood from the heart itself. Another explanation is that severe injury to the chest can result in haemorrhagic fluid gathering between the rib cage and the lung. This can separate into clear serum and red fluid, both of which flow out when the chest cavity is pierced.<sup>481</sup>

k. John here declares that he saw what he is reporting. His testimony is true, and he knows it is true because he personally observed it. His reason for saying what he is saying is that his readers may believe the truth about Jesus. Indeed, the truth of his testimony is corroborated by the fact the things he reported are in accordance with Scriptures that said, "Not one of his bones will be broken" and "They will look on him whom they have pierced." "The first quotation is from Ps. 34:20, with possible allusions to the Passover lamb, whose bones were not to be broken (Ex. 12:46; Nu. 9:12)."<sup>482</sup> The second is from Zech. 12:10. Kruse states, "For the evangelist, the fact that Jesus' sufferings were foreshadowed in the Scriptures shows that all this took place in accordance with the divine plan; it was not simply a terrible miscarriage of justice."<sup>483</sup>

##### 5. The burial of Jesus (19:38-42)

**<sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is**

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<sup>480</sup> Kruse, 370-371.

<sup>481</sup> Kruse, 371-372.

<sup>482</sup> Kruse, 372.

<sup>483</sup> Kruse, 372-373.

**the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.**

a. Joseph from Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus who up to that point had kept his allegiance to Jesus under wraps for fear he would be put out of the synagogue. Carson observes, "Normally this would condemn him in John's eyes (12:42-43), but Joseph exculpates himself by the courageous action he now undertakes."<sup>484</sup> He asked Pilate for permission to take Jesus' body for burial, which revealed his sympathies not only to the Jews but also to the Romans as well, some of whom might wonder if Joseph was a subversive.<sup>485</sup> Carson remarks that it was "[a]lmost as if his previous faintheartedness was shamed by the crisis of the cross."<sup>486</sup>

b. Pilate granted the request probably because, as indicated in the Synoptics, Joseph was a wealthy and influential member of the Sanhedrin (Mat. 27:57; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50), someone with whom Pilate would find it politically useful to maintain good relations. In addition, Pilate was not convinced Jesus deserved crucifixion. Rather, he simply lacked the courage and decency to value Jesus' life over the political trouble he feared the Jews could cause him.

c. Nicodemus, the Pharisee who had earlier come to see Jesus at night (3:1-2), brought about 75 pounds of dry spices (myrrh and aloes), some quantity of which they placed inside the linen shroud with which they wrapped the body in accordance with Jewish burial custom. Schnabel notes, "Neither John nor the other evangelists report that Jesus was anointed before his burial; this is what the three women followers intended to do on Sunday morning (Mark 16:1, Luke 24:1)."<sup>487</sup> The statement that they bound Jesus' body "in linen cloths" (*othoniois*) is probably a collective term that encompasses the shroud (*sindōn*; Mat. 27:59-60; Mk. 15:46; Lk. 23:53) and whatever other cloth or cloths were used to secure it.

d. John explains that there was a garden in the place where Jesus was crucified in which there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. As it was close at hand, and the Sabbath was rapidly approaching, they used that tomb for Jesus. We learn in Mat. 27:59-60 that this tomb belonged to Joseph.

### C. The resurrection of Jesus (20:1-31)

#### 1. The morning of the first day of the week (20:1-18)

**Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. <sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." <sup>3</sup> So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both of**

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<sup>484</sup> Carson (1991), 629.

<sup>485</sup> Schnabel (2018), 341.

<sup>486</sup> Carson (1991), 629.

<sup>487</sup> Schnabel (2018), 343.

them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup> and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup> for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to their homes. <sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. <sup>13</sup> They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." <sup>14</sup> Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"-- and that he had said these things to her.

a. Jesus was put in the tomb late Friday afternoon. Saturday, the Sabbath, began shortly thereafter at sunset. Sunday, the first day of the week, began 24 hours later, at sunset on Saturday. John reports that some ten or eleven hours after Sunday began, early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb.<sup>488</sup> "Mary from Magdala is described by Luke as belonging to the group of women disciples who accompanied Jesus and the Twelve: she was the woman 'from whom seven demons had gone out' (Luke 8:2), surely healed by Jesus."<sup>489</sup>

b. It was still dark when she started out, but there was enough light for her to navigate and to see that the stone had been rolled away. Note that John has said nothing about the stone covering the tomb, but he takes that knowledge for granted, presumably from Christian familiarity with the Synoptics. Though Jesus was in the tomb for no more than 36 hours – being put in the tomb around 5:30 p.m. on Friday and being gone by 5:30 a.m. on Sunday – he said in Mat. 12:40 that he would be "three days and three nights" in the heart of the earth and said in Mat. 16:21 and 17:23 that he would be raised "on the third day" (see also, Acts 10:40 and 1 Cor. 15:4). That is because, as Köstenberger explains, "in Semitic idiom any portion of a 24-hour period of time could be called 'a day and a night' (i.e., 'a day and a night' = 1 day)."<sup>490</sup> Jesus was in the tomb part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday.

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<sup>488</sup> The Synoptics inform us that she was with other women, all of whom were coming to anoint the Lord's body, but John's focus is Mary Magdalene. The presence of the other women is implied in 20:2, where Mary says to Peter and John: "we do not know where they have laid him." For possible ways of harmonizing the resurrection accounts in the Gospels, see, e.g., John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Do the Resurrection Accounts Contradict One Another?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 76-109; Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 68-71; Schnabel (2018), 350-370; Zarley, 247-258, 381-404.

<sup>489</sup> Schnabel (2018), 53.

<sup>490</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, "[Did Jesus Rise on the Third Day?](#)" (accessed on 2/2/22).

c. Mary sees that the stone had been rolled away from the tomb and takes that breach to mean someone, whether grave robbers or enemies, had taken the body. She runs in a panic to Peter and John and says, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Peter and John rush to the tomb, and John arrives a bit ahead of Peter, perhaps because he was younger.<sup>491</sup> John peers into the dark tomb and sees the linen cloths lying there, but for whatever reason, he does not go in. Peter arrives and enters the tomb first. He sees the linen cloths, and he also sees, folded or rolled up and lying by itself, the *soudarion*, the small cloth, that at some point had been on or around Jesus' head. Then John enters, and he writes, "he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead."

(1) John does not specify what he saw that led to his belief, nor does he specify what he believed in response to that seeing. From the flow of the narrative, it seems that what he saw was the folded or rolled up *soudarion*, which apparently was only visible after entering the tomb (there is no mention of John seeing it from outside the tomb). It is possible the *soudarion* had been rolled up and tied around Jesus' face to serve as a chin-band to hold his mouth closed in death. That is how many understand the *soudarion* in 11:44. Though 20:7 speaks of the *soudarion* having been *on Jesus' head* rather than *tied around his face* as described in 11:44, a chin-band probably could be described both ways.

(2) Perhaps seeing the separated and folded or rolled up *soudarion* in the empty tomb containing the other grave clothes, the linen cloths, led John to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The orderliness of the scene and the leaving of valuable clothing may have been a sufficient sign that Jesus' absence was not the work of robbers or enemies. His belief in the resurrection from these data would be less certain than when it is confirmed by Jesus' physical appearance. We are not told about Peter's state of mind. The note in v. 9 explains their confusion or caution; they had not yet understood that the Scripture predicted his rising from the dead.

d. Peter and John depart to their respective places, but Mary stands weeping outside the tomb. When she looks into the tomb, she sees two angels in white, sitting where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and one at the feet. They ask her why she is crying, and she tells them "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She was denied a final opportunity to honor Jesus (by anointing him, as the Synoptics indicate was her and the others' intent) and to express her grief.

e. Mary then turned around and saw Jesus but did not recognize him. Perhaps her tears, grief, distress, and certainty he had been killed blinded her to the reality before her. Jesus asked her why she was crying and whom she was seeking. Assuming he was the gardener, Mary said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary," presumably in a way he had called her

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<sup>491</sup> Carson comments (1991, 636): "Luke 24:12 mentions only Peter at the tomb. For that reason many see the mention of the beloved disciple as either inventive special pleading or a creation full of symbolism. Yet Luke 24:24 reports that Clopas and his companion on the Emmaus road said that '*some* of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said': the plural should be given its natural force, and taken as confirmation of the witness of the Fourth Gospel."

name before, and with that she recognized him and called out to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

f. Jesus tells Mary not to "cling to" or "hold onto" him, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father." He seems to be saying his promised physical absence is still looming; it had not already come and gone in his death and resurrection. Rather, he will be ascending to the Father post resurrection, and so she must not react to his current physical presence as something of which she is unwilling to let go. On the contrary, she must now go to his brothers, his disciples, and tell them of his coming ascent to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. "By salvation-historical necessity, Jesus must move on; the Spirit will take his place (14:16-17)."<sup>492</sup>

g. Mary went and announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord. And she told them what he had said to her about his ascending. Lincoln comments:

The climax of this story is not the resurrection itself or the appearances but the return of Jesus to the Father. His resurrection becomes part of the overall theological point the evangelist makes about Jesus – he is the unique revelation of God and is going to God (cf. e.g. 16.28). In this way the resurrection is not an addendum but an integral part of the story of the Logos. Just as Jesus' origin is as the Logos who was with God, so his destiny is to return to the same God.<sup>493</sup>

## 2. The evening of the first day of the week (20:19-23)

**<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."**

a. As the first day of the week was drawing to a close,<sup>494</sup> the disciples were gathered at a location, the doors of which probably were locked out of fear of the Jews.<sup>495</sup> Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." We are not told here or in Lk. 24:31b, 36 how he entered the room. Many assume he passed through the door or walls, but Morris remarks, "since Scripture says nothing of the mode of Jesus' entry into the room, we do

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<sup>492</sup> Köstenberger, 570.

<sup>493</sup> Lincoln, 496.

<sup>494</sup> *Opsias* refers to the period between late afternoon and darkness. BDAG (p. 746) states, "The context oft. makes it easier to decide just what time is meant, whether before or after sundown." Here it is emphasized that it is the day of the events reported in chapter 20, so the sun has not yet set, as that would be the beginning of the next day. Schnabel states, (2018, 369), "Then suddenly Jesus appeared (Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-23), apparently just before sunset – John says that it was still the first day of the week."

<sup>495</sup> BDAG, 546-547 indicates *kleiō* can mean closed or locked. The note about the fear of the Jews points toward the latter.

well not to attempt to describe it closely."<sup>496</sup> Indeed, the jail doors in Acts 5:19-23 were opened for the apostles to exit and then closed and locked without any of that being perceived by the guards. All they knew was that the apostles were in the locked cell and then were not in the locked cell. Here they knew only that Jesus was not in the closed room and then was in the closed room. Of course, if God chose to bring the physical Jesus through the door miraculously, he could do it. But that would be a special miracle not a statement about the general nature of Christ's resurrection body.

b. "Peace be with you" was a common Jewish greeting, but in this context, more is probably intended. Morris states, "It is likely, however, that on this occasion we should see more in the words than a conventional greeting. After their forsaking Jesus at the time of the arrest the disciples may well have expected rebuke or blame. Instead Jesus pronounces peace on them."<sup>497</sup> He shows them his hands and side to remove any question that he is in fact who he appeared to be, their crucified Master. With his greeting and the reassurance of his identity, the disciples' sorrow was turned to joy, as he had told them would happen (16:20-22).

c. Jesus repeats his greeting, "Peace be with you," and then tells his little band, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." As indicated in 17:18, he was sending them "into the world," on a mission "to 'harvest' men and women for the kingdom by their witness to Jesus by word and deed, alongside the ongoing witness of the Spirit."<sup>498</sup>

d. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." I think the most likely explanation is that Jesus' action was a symbolic foreshadowing the bestowal of the Spirit that was to take place on the Day of Pentecost. It is a kind of acted out promise. Köstenberger explains it this way:

The present reference represents a symbolic promise of the soon-to-be-given gift of the Spirit, not the actual giving of it fifty days later at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2; see Carson 1991:649-55; cf. Witherington 1995: 340-341). Otherwise, it is hard to see how John would not be found to stand in actual conflict with Luke's Pentecost narrative in Acts 2, not to mention his own disclaimers earlier in the narrative that the Spirit would be given only subsequent to Jesus' glorification, which entailed his return to the Father [see 7:39; 14:12, 16-18, 25-26; 16:12-15; cf. 20:17]. The disciples' behavior subsequent to the present incident would also be rather puzzling had they already received the Spirit.<sup>499</sup>

e. Jesus then tells them, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." He does not mean that they have the authority to forgive sins according to their personal judgment. As Kruse notes, "The non-forgiveness of sins is always related to refusal to believe in Jesus, suggesting that forgiveness of sins comes through belief in him." He continues:

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<sup>496</sup> Morris, 745.

<sup>497</sup> Morris, 745.

<sup>498</sup> Kruse, 381. See also, Carson (1991), 649-655; Kruse, 382-383.

<sup>499</sup> Köstenberger, 574-575.

It is noteworthy that Jesus' statement, 'If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven' is intimately connected with the (symbolic) bestowal of the Spirit (22-23), which is in turn related to the disciples' being sent into the world as his witnesses (21-22; *cf.* 15:26-27). This supports the view that the way in which the disciples forgive sins and retain sins is by preaching the good news and declaring the effects of believing it (forgiveness) and rejecting it (no forgiveness). It is important to notice the passive voice used in the statements in this verse regarding the forgiveness and non-forgiveness of sins. They function as divine passives reminding us that God alone forgives sin (*cf.* Mk. 2:3-12; Lk. 5:17-26) and Jesus' disciples declare what God does.<sup>500</sup>

### 3. The following Sunday (20:24-29)

**<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." <sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

a. Thomas, called Didymus (Greek for "the twin"), who was one of the twelve, was not present during Jesus' appearance in the room on the day of his resurrection. The disciples who were there told him they had seen the Lord, but Thomas, being a twin, knew well that one person can be confused for another. His conviction that the dead stay dead was so strong, he declares that he is not going to believe Jesus came back to life unless he sees on him the marks of crucifixion and is able to touch the wound marks to be certain they were genuine. He is hyper skeptical.

b. John says "after eight days" the disciples were again gathered behind closed or locked doors, by which he means a week later, the following Sunday. As Bruner explains, "The ancient phrase 'eight days later' (as in our Greek text) means the modern 'seven days later' or 'one week later' since the ancients counted the present day as the first day."<sup>501</sup> That is why the NEB, REB, NAB, NIV, and CSB render it "A week later." Sunday is the day John later identifies in Rev. 1:10 as "the Lord's Day."

c. Jesus again appears mysteriously in their midst, and after greeting them with "Peace be with you," he addresses Thomas directly. He invites Thomas to feel his wound marks to satisfy his extreme skepticism, and tells him "Do not disbelieve, but believe." Kruse

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<sup>500</sup> Kruse, 383.

<sup>501</sup> Bruner, 1185. See also, Barrett, 572; Beasley-Murray, 385; Carson (1991), 657; Morris, 752; Köstenberger, 578; Borchert, 313; Burge, 562; Mounce, 651; Klink, 877.

remarks, "the one 'who knew what was in a person' met Thomas where he was, inviting him to touch the nail prints in his hands and the spear wound in his side."<sup>502</sup> Thomas then answers, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus says, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." In other words, it would have been better for Thomas (or anyone else) not to have set his burden of proof so high, to have accepted the eyewitness testimony from multiple trusted companions, but Jesus accommodated his skepticism to make a point and to equip him for his future role as an apostle. There are sufficient grounds to trust that Jesus is who the apostles and Gospel writers reveal him to be without seeing or feeling him personally. All who do so have the Lord's promise of blessing.

d. Note that Thomas confesses that Jesus is God. Harris states:

Just as Israel had honored Yahweh as κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν (e.g., Ps. 98:8 LXX [Engl. 99:8]) and Christians honored the Father as ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν (Rev. 4:11), so now people were to "honor the Son, even as they honor the Father" (John 5:23), by addressing him with the words ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. In uttering this confessional cry Thomas recognized the lordship of Jesus in the physical and spiritual realms as well as over his own life (ὁ κύριός μου) and the essential oneness of Jesus with the Father which made his worship of Jesus legitimate (ὁ θεός μου). As used in this verse, κύριος and θεός are titles, not proper names, the first implying and the second explicitly affirming the substantial deity of the risen Jesus.<sup>503</sup>

#### 4. Concluding statement of purpose (20:30-31)

**<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

a. John declares that the many miracles done by Jesus that he reported in his Gospel were just a sampling of a far greater number of miracles he performed in the presence of the disciples. He has been deliberately selective, so it is no surprise that some miraculous works reported in the Synoptics are not reported in John.

b. But the miraculous works he did report were told "so that you may believe" Jesus is who he is revealed to be in the Gospel, that is, the Christ, the Son of God. As I indicated in the introduction, I think John means "so that you may continue to believe" *and* "so that you may come to belief." I share Osborne's understanding of the statement:

Some (Morris and especially Carson) believe John wrote primarily to evangelize Jews; others (Brown, Kysar, Michaels, Ridderbos) think he wrote mainly for believers. This is certainly a false dichotomy. I am not convinced by either extreme. Rather, John wrote both to awaken faith in the lost and to quicken faith

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<sup>502</sup> Kruse, 385.

<sup>503</sup> Harris (1992), 129.

in the followers of Jesus (so Bruce, Beasley-Murray, Whitacre, Burge). . . . John wanted to win the lost as well as strengthen the believers.<sup>504</sup>

c. This dual purpose would have been pursued by directing the Gospel to the church. According to Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, "it seems that John's purpose encompassed both aspects, evangelism of unbelievers and edification of believers, and that John pursued an indirect evangelistic purpose, aiming to reach an unbelieving audience through the Christian readers of his Gospel."<sup>505</sup> The testimony that circulated within the church would become a basis for outreach to others.

d. As John has stressed throughout his work, it is through faith in Jesus that one receives the gift of eternal life. Though a distorted focus on miracles can yield a superficial and flawed faith, miracles have a proper role to play in the development and strengthening of faith. To repeat a quote from Kruse:

The miracles of Jesus were the works of God, and Jesus invited his opponents to believe in him on account of the miracles, even if they could not believe what he said. This he said was so *that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father*. Though belief based on miracles is not ideal (4:48), many did believe because of his miracles (7:31). Sadly, there were many who saw the miracles and still refused to believe (12:37). Nevertheless, the evangelist records Jesus' miracles to engender belief in his readers (20:31).<sup>506</sup>

## IV. Epilogue (21:1-25): Jesus' Appearance in Galilee

### A. Jesus appears to seven disciples (21:1-14)

**After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. <sup>4</sup> Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. <sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. <sup>8</sup> The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. <sup>9</sup> When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some**

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<sup>504</sup> Osborne, 6-7.

<sup>505</sup> Köstenberger, et al., 304.

<sup>506</sup> Kruse, 244-245.

of the fish that you have just caught." <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

1. Matthew and Mark reveal that Jesus intended to meet with the disciples in Galilee after his resurrection (Mat. 26:32, 28:7; Mk. 14:28, 16:7). The resurrection appearances in Jerusalem that are reported in Luke 24 and John 20 are not inconsistent with that intention. Rather, as Burge explains, "The disciples have simply been instructed to return to what had been their 'base' throughout Jesus' ministry and there receive further instructions."<sup>507</sup> In John 21, seven of the disciples are fishing on the Sea of Galilee (also called the Sea of Tiberius).

2. The seven disciples – Peter, Thomas (the Twin), Nathanael, James and John (sons of Zebedee), and two unnamed disciples – fished during the night but caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize him. That presumably was because the boat was about 100 yards from shore and the light right at daybreak was dim. Jesus calls out to them, asking if they had any fish, and they answer "No." He then tells them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, which they do, perhaps thinking there was enough chance that this stranger had some novel insight about the location of fish on that occasion to make it worth a try, especially given their total lack of success to that point.<sup>508</sup>

3. When they followed Jesus' advice, they caught so many fish they could not haul the net into the boat. Perhaps recalling the event of Lk. 5:1-9, the "penny dropped" for John and he exclaimed to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Peter heard that, he knew it was true, so he did something with a garment and jumped into the water to swim to shore. The ESV note states:

Peter's behavior here has been puzzling to many interpreters. It is usually understood that the Greek word γυμνός (*gumnos*, usually translated "naked") does not refer to complete nudity (as it could), since this would have been offensive to Jewish sensibilities in this historical context. It is thus commonly understood to mean "stripped for work" here (cf. NASB, NLT), that is, with one's outer clothing removed, and Peter was wearing either a loincloth or a loose-fitting tunic (a long shirt-like garment worn under a cloak, cf. NAB, "for he was lightly clad"). Believing himself inadequately dressed to greet the Lord, Peter threw his *outer garment* around himself and dived into the sea. . . . R. E. Brown's suggestion (*John* [AB], 2:1072) seems much more probable here: The Greek verb used (διαζώννυμι, *diazōnnumi*) does not necessarily mean putting clothing on, but rather tying the clothing around oneself (the same verb is used in 13:4–5 of Jesus tying the towel around himself). The statement that Peter was "naked" could just as well mean that he was naked underneath the *outer garment*, and thus could not

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<sup>507</sup> Burge, 582.

<sup>508</sup> Carson remarks (1991, 671), "it is hard to see how Jesus' exhortation to throw the net on the starboard side greatly differs from advice contemporary sports fisherman have to endure (and occasionally appreciate): 'Try casting over there. You often catch them over there!'"

take it off before jumping into the water. But he did pause to tuck it up and tie it with the girdle before jumping in, to allow himself more freedom of movement. Thus the clause that states Peter was naked is explanatory (note the use of *for*), explaining why Peter girded up his outer garment rather than taking it off - he had nothing on underneath it and so could not remove it.

4. The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish behind them. When they landed, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus tells them to bring some of the fish they just caught, as more will be needed to feed the group of hungry fishermen. Peter then went out<sup>509</sup> and dragged ashore the net full of 153 large fish, a haul large enough that one would expect it to have torn the net, which in this case it did not. Jesus then invites them to come and have breakfast, where he gives them bread and fish.

5. John states that the disciples "knew it was the Lord," and yet he says that none of them *dared* to ask him, "Who are you?" They know he is Jesus, but they wonder who he is in terms of how the resurrection may have altered the Jesus who died. In other words, I think they are curious about details of resurrection continuity, questions that may have arisen as they reflected on the fact of his resurrection, but they do not want to broach the subject for fear it will seem they are doubting that continuity, doubting that it is indeed Jesus.

6. John notes, "This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead." By this he means this was Jesus' third appearance to a group of his apostles, the first two being in 20:19-23 and 20:26-29.

#### B. Jesus, Peter, and John (21:15-24)

**15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me." 20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" 23 So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that**

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<sup>509</sup> Michaels remarks (2010, 1036), "'Went up' could mean that he got back into the boat, but more likely he came up to the boat in order to bring the loaded net, still lying in shallow water, onto the land."

**he remain until I come, what is that to you?"<sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.**

1. After they finished breakfast, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" The referent of "these" is unspecified. Theoretically, he could be asking if Peter loves him more than Peter loves the other disciples, but that makes little sense given how Jesus has urged them to love one another (13:34-35; 15:12, 17). He also could be asking if Peter loved him more than he loved his boat and nets, but as Michaels notes, "no such 'love' for material things has played any part in the story."<sup>510</sup> What Jesus is almost certainly asking Peter is whether he loves him more than the other present disciples love him.

2. This probably is rooted in Peter's earlier suggestion of his superior devotion that is recounted in Mk. 14:29 and Mat. 26:33: "Even though they all fall away, I will not." Having been humbled by his denial, Jesus has him indicate before (some of) his fellow apostles that he is beyond that sense of superiority, which may have increased their love for him and thus aided his future role in the group. He will not say that he loves Jesus more than the other disciples, or that he does not. All he will say is that he loves him and that the Lord in his insight into the human heart knows that he loves him.

3. Given Peter's love for Jesus, Jesus tells him to feed his lambs. Peter is to care for the Lord's flock, meaning his disciples. The Lord asks him the same question two more times. Despite what you may have heard, the shifting between different Greek verbs for "love" (*agapaō* and *phileō*) in this exchange is not significant. As Klink states: "Contemporary scholarship has almost unanimously concluded that there is no intended difference in meaning by the verbal alteration; it is simply a stylistic preference for using different but synonymous words (rather than repeating the same word)."<sup>511</sup> Each time Peter answers the same way, except the third time he specifies, "Lord, you know everything."

4. Peter was grieved that Jesus asked him the question a third time, probably because in confessing his love three times Peter recalled vividly his denying the Lord three times. This presumably was done to assure Peter and the others of Peter's complete acceptance or reinstatement, a symbolic "undoing" of his three denials.

5. Jesus first tells Peter to "feed his lambs." After Peter's response to the second question, Jesus tells him to "shepherd his sheep," and after Peter's response to the third question, he tells him to "feed his sheep." These are just stylistically different ways of expressing the command to care for Jesus' disciples. In that light, it is interesting to consider Peter's words in 1 Pet. 5:1-4:

Therefore, I urge [the] elders among you, [I] who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a sharer in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God that is with you, [exercising oversight], not under compulsion but willingly, according to God, not with greed for material

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<sup>510</sup> Michaels (2010), 1042-1043.

<sup>511</sup> Klink, 913.

gain but eagerly, <sup>3</sup>not as being lords over the allotted ones but being examples for the flock; <sup>4</sup>and when the Chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

6. Peter will need all the devotion to the Lord he has just confessed in carrying out the Lord's command that he care for his sheep because, as a good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, Peter's leadership in the church will lead to his execution. Jesus tells him that, in contrast to his younger days, when he is old, he will be in a situation in which he lacks personal autonomy. Rather than "girding" (*zōnnumi*) himself, binding up his own clothes in preparation for some action, and going where he chooses to go, someone else will stretch out his hands, bind up his clothes for their purpose, and take him where he does not want to go. It is possible that the stretching out of his hands refers merely to extending his hands to be bound as he is led to his execution<sup>512</sup> or to a gesture of supplication and helplessness preliminary to arrest and execution,<sup>513</sup> but many are persuaded it was an understood reference to stretching out one's hands to be affixed to the crossbeam (*patibulum*) in a crucifixion.<sup>514</sup> There is good evidence that Peter died by crucifixion in Rome in the persecution by Emperor Nero.<sup>515</sup>

7. John comments that Jesus was showing by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. After indicating to Peter the kind of death he would face, Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Carson comments, "[Jesus' words] tie this step of discipleship to Jesus' initial call (1:43), challenge Peter to consistent discipleship until the martyrdom he now faces comes due, and implicitly invite every waverer, every reader, to the same steadfast pursuit of the risen Lord."<sup>516</sup>

8. Peter turned and saw John, and asked Jesus, "What about this man?" If his life is marked for martyrdom, he wants to know what is in store for John. And Jesus tells him, in essence, that that is not his concern. If he should choose to keep John alive until he returns, that is not relevant to Peter's responsibility as a disciple. Each disciple is to follow the Lord in his own life, situation, and calling. Faithful Christians need not have similar circumstances in this life. But because Jesus had said hypothetically, "*If it is my will that he remain until I come,*" it was rumored that John would not die. So John squelches that rumor, explaining that that is not what Jesus said.

9. John says the subject of that rumor is the one who has written this Gospel. As Morris notes, "It is much more probable that 'these things' refers to the whole book."<sup>517</sup> And then John adds, "and *we* know that his testimony is true." The "we" may refer to the community of faith, the church that accepts the revelation of the Spirit through the apostle, or be what Bauckham calls "the 'we' of authoritative testimony."<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> Lincoln, 518; Keener, 2:1237.

<sup>513</sup> Michaels (2010), 1047-1048; Keener, 2:1237.

<sup>514</sup> Carson (1991), 679; Burge, 589; Kruse, 392-393; Köstenberger, 598; Klink, 916.

<sup>515</sup> Bryan Litfin, *After Acts: Exploring the Lives and Legends of the Apostles* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2015), 148-160.

<sup>516</sup> Carson (1991), 680.

<sup>517</sup> Morris, 776-777.

<sup>518</sup> Bauckham, 379-380 (see fn. 1).

C. Closing caution (21:25)

**Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.**

1. John again acknowledges the selectivity of his writing. He knows there are true reports of other things Jesus did, so his failure to mention those things should not be taken as a strike against their having occurred. Though selective, what he has written is faith sustaining and faith creating (20:30-31).

2. John supposes that, if everything Jesus did was written down, the world could not hold the books. This is hyperbole designed to suggest the unparalleled greatness of Jesus. No one ever did what he did with the frequency he did it. He is indeed the unique Son of God!