

BELIEVE AND LIVE – THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

by Paul G. Apple, February 2004

- ... Study of the seven special **Sign Miracles**
- ... Study of the “**I AM**” claims of Christ to Deity

JESUS’ SPECIAL SIGN MIRACLES POINT US TO FAITH IN HIM AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD – WHO ALONE CAN PROVIDE SPIRITUAL LIFE

“but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:31)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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BACKGROUND OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Gospel of John presents a very unique picture of Jesus Christ – one that can lead an inquiring mind to initial faith as well as one that can deepen the faith and intimacy of the most mature believer. Even the language used partakes of this same paradoxical impact: for both the words and grammatical structure are suitable for a Beginners Greek class, while the depth of thought and complexity of meaning never cease to yield new treasures. The Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) had already been penned before “*the disciple whom Jesus loved*” (21:20, 24) gathered together these important events and discourses to make the strongest case possible for driving home the claims of Christ.

For those who would like to disparage faith as “a leap in the dark” there is a preponderance of evidence presented in this gospel that at times takes on a courtroom type atmosphere. For those who would claim that “Jesus never claimed to be God and to be equal with God the Father” ... it is hard to imagine that they have ever seriously studied this document.

The evidence cries out for a decision on the part of every heart. There can be no neutrality when all is said and done. It is significant that the Jews of Christ’s day were either driven to receive Him as the promised Messiah or respond in anger against one whom they charged with blasphemy. There could be no middle ground back then and there can be no middle ground today. It is just not an option to try to straddle the fence and pass Jesus off as “a good man and a significant prophet.”

In the famous words of C. S. Lewis in his classic *Mere Christianity*:

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us."

Liar, Lunatic or Lord – there really is no other alternative.

For answers to basic questions about the life of Christ or what Christianity is all about, check out:

<http://www.whoisjesus-really.com/main.htm>

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Stedman, Ray:

That is the twofold purpose of this book. First, John is setting out to give evidence why any man in any age or in any place can fully and wholeheartedly believe that Jesus is the Christ -- or to use the Hebrew form, Messiah, the Anointed One, the promised one. The second purpose is to show that he is the Son of God.

A great deal is made of this term, "Son of God" today, as though there were a distinction to be made between God and the Son of God, but no Hebrew would ever understand it that way. To the Hebrews, to call someone a "son" of something was to say he is identified with, identical with, that thing or person. Barnabas was named the "Son of Consolation." That is the meaning of the name Barnabas. Why? Because he was that kind of man -- an encouraging, consoling kind of fellow. His nickname meant that he was the very epitome of consolation. He was the expression of it.

To the Hebrews, the use of this term, the Son of God, meant, "This one is God." That is why invariably, when our Lord used that term of himself, he was challenged by the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees, saying, "who are you? What do you make yourself out to be? Why, you make yourself to be equal with God." Of course he did. That is what the title means. . .

What is the meaning of Messiah? the Anointed One? "The Spirit of the Lord has come upon me," he says,

"... because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. {Luke 4:18b RSV}
... to proclaim release to the captives,
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." {Luke 4:18c-19 RSV}

He stopped in the middle of a sentence, closed the book and sat down. Then he said to everyone there, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" {Luke 4:21b RSV}, that is, "I am this One."

Take those marks of the Messiah and lay them beside the seven signs that John chooses from the ministry of our Lord and you will see that he selects those particular ones because they are the signs that prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. Let me show them to you in the order in which they appear in John's Gospel.

The first miracle of our Lord is the changing of water into wine, {John 2:1-11}. That miracle was a parable. Our Lord was performing a symbolic act at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. He took that which belonged to the realm of inanimate being, water, and changed it into a living substance, wine.

He took that which belonged to the realm of death and changed it into that which is forever an expression of joy and life. By this he is declaring in symbol what he came to do: "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" {Luke 4:19}. He did not come to

declare the day of vengeance; he stopped before that passage in Isaiah. But he came to declare the day of grace, when God's purpose would be to take man in his brokenness, his emptiness and his lifelessness, and give to him life -- to proclaim the acceptable time of the Lord.

The next sign is the healing of the nobleman's son, {John 4:46-54}. The central figure in that story is not the son, who lies sick at the door of death, but the nobleman, who comes to the Lord with a heart crushed with grief. In the agony of his heart he cries out to Christ, and says, "Will you come down and heal my son?" The Lord not only heals the son at a distance, with a word, but he heals the broken heart of a father. As he said, he was anointed to heal the brokenhearted.

The third sign is the healing of the impotent man who lay at the pool of Bethesda, {John 5:1-9}. Remember, that man had lain there for thirty-eight years. He had been a captive of this paralyzing disease, so that he was unable to get into the pool. He had been brought to that pool, hoping to be healed, hoping to be set free and our Lord singled him out of the great crowd of impotent folk and healed him, saying to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk," {John 5:8b RSV}. Now, why? Here he was demonstrating his ability to set at liberty those who are oppressed. For thirty-eight years a man had been bound, and he set him free instantly.

The next miracle is the feeding of the five thousand, {John 6:1-14}. This miracle appears in all four of the Gospels. Linked with it is the miracle of the walking on the water. What is the meaning of these signs? Well, you cannot read the story of the feeding of the five thousand without seeing that it is a marvelous demonstration of the desire of the Lord to meet the deepest need of the human heart, the hunger of man of God. He uses the symbol of bread. He himself had said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," (Matt 4:4). Then he demonstrated what kind of bread he meant. "I," he said, "am the bread of life," {John 6:35 RSV}. Taking the bread, he broke it, and with it fed the five thousand, symbolizing how fully he can meet the need of human life.

Then, sending his disciples out into the storm, he came walking across the waves to them in the midst of the tempest. The waves are high, and the ship is about to be overwhelmed, and their hearts are anguished with fear. He quiets them and says, "It is I; do not be afraid," {John 6:20 RSV}. In the double miracle of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on water, there is a symbolic representation of our Lord's ability to satisfy the need of human hearts and deliver them from their greatest enemy, fear. This is good news, is it not? This is one of the signs of the Messiah: he came to proclaim good news to the poor. Can you think of any greater news to tell anyone than that there is a way in which he can find all the clamant cry of his soul satisfied and all the fear of his life removed? That is to proclaim good news to the poor.

The next miracle is the healing of the blind man, {John 9:1-12}. This hardly needs comment. Our Lord said he came "to give recovery of sight to the blind," {cf, Luke

4:19}. He chose a man who was blind from birth, just as man is spiritually blind from birth, and he healed him.

The last miracle is the raising of Lazarus from the dead {see John 11:1-44}, symbolizing the delivering of those who all their lives had been held under the bondage of Satan through fear of death. Thus these seven signs prove beyond question that Jesus is the Messiah. He is the expected One.

But John goes deeper than that. He says that he is not only the Christ, but he is the Son of God. When you see him in his delivering power, you are indeed seeing the promised Deliverer, the Messiah. Ah, yes, John says, but that is not the greatest secret about him. When you see that he is the one able to do all these mighty things, meeting the deepest need of men's lives, look further and you will see there is glory yet.

You discover that when you stand in the presence of his humanity, see his lovely eyes. feel the beating of his human heart, sense the compassion of his life poured out in service. you are also standing in the presence of God, you are seeing what God is like. "This One," he says, "is the Son of God."

He declares that for us in the opening chapter of his Gospel:

No one has ever seen God [That is a statement of fact. Man hungers after God, and he is always searching for God; but John goes on]; the only Son, [the margin says that many manuscripts read "God" in this, "the only God"] who is in the bosom of the Father, made him known. {John 1:18 RSV}

Literally, he has exegeted God. He has unfolded what God is like. Then, in his Gospel, John picks up seven great words of our Lord that prove that statement.

He bases it all on the great name of God which was revealed to Moses at the burning bush. When Moses saw the bush burning and turned aside to learn its secret, God spoke to him from the bush and said, "I AM WHO I AM" {Exod 3:14 RSV}. That is God's nature. That is, "I am exactly what I am. I am nothing more. I am nothing less. I am the eternal I AM." Seven times in his Gospel John picks this word up and uses it about our Lord. In fact, seven times these words came from our Lord's own lips. These constitute the proof that he is Deity.

Does that amaze you? Have you thought that it was his miracles that proved he was God? No, no. They proved he was the Messiah, the Promised One. It is his words that prove he is God. Listen to them: "I am the bread of life," {John 6:35b RSV}. That is, I am the sustainer of life, the One who satisfies life.

"I am the light of the world," {John 8:12b RSV}, the illuminator of life. I am one [to borrow a phrase from Paul] "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" {Col 2:3 RSV}, the explainer of things, the one who casts light upon all mysteries and enigmas and solves them.

"I am the door" {John 10:7b RSV}, Jesus said; that is, the opportunity into life, the open way. Whenever you are confronted with a sense of lack, some hungering after something more, these are the words you need to hear.

"I am the good shepherd" {John 10:11a RSV}; that is, the guide of life, the only one properly equipped to take an individual and safely steer him through all the problems and chasms that yawn on every side, to lead him safely through life. ("The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," {Psa 23:1}.)

Then, "I am the resurrection and the life," {John 11:25b RSV}; that is, the power of life. Do you realize that resurrection power is the only kind that works when nothing else will? It works in the midst of death. Resurrection power is the only kind that needs no outside props, no process of learning. It does not need anything to initiate it, shore it up, or bolster it in any way. When nothing else can be done, then it comes in and begins to act. "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus says.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," {John 14:6 RSV}; that is, I am ultimate reality. I am the real substance behind all things.

"I am the vine" {John 15:5a RSV}, "apart from me, you can do nothing," {John 15:5c RSV}. I am the producer of fruitfulness, the source of fellowship and of identity and communion.

Thus our Lord takes the great, revealing name of God and, linking it with these simple symbols, enables us to understand God. "The Word," John says, "became flesh and dwelt among us," {John 1:14a RSV}. He pitched his tent among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of God become man. That is the tremendous theme of this book. There is not a greater theme in all the universe than the fact that when we stand in the presence of the humanity of Jesus we suddenly discover that, for the first time, we also stand in the presence of God. This is what God is like. This one who heals, loves, serves, waits, blesses, dies and rises again -- this is God. That is what John reveals.

The one word that he leaves with us, then, is that believing that he is the Messiah and that he is God, we may have life in his name. He is the key to life. Who does not want to live? Isn't that what we all want, young and old alike? What we are really seeking is the key to life. We want to be fulfilled. We want to see fulfilled all the possibilities and potential of our being which we sense lie deep inside. We want those deep yearnings satisfied. We want to be able to express ourselves. We want to be what we were designed and intended to be. Then listen! John says:

These [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. {John 20:31 RSV}

Bob Ramey: Analysis of “I AM” statements of Christ in Gospel of John

- One key thing in common: they begin with simple words: “I am” = reference to His essential being as a timeless and transcendent God (He cannot be bound by the matrix of time and space)

- Second thing in common: figures of speech relating to His practical relationship to His people in time of need; imminence and timelessness

1) “*I am the bread of life*” (John 6) – Lord’s Word of Regeneration

I am able to give you life initially and every day; Lord’s Supper given one year later for commemorative purposes only (don’t get confused here like Catholics do)

2) “*I am the light of the world*” (John 9:5) – Word of Revelation

He brings moral light into realm of moral darkness; healing of the blind provides a nice picture since Jesus connects the light-giving quality of His presence with morality; His opponents get the point: “Are you trying to say that we are blind also?”

3) “*I am the door of the sheep*” (John 10) – Word of Refreshment

Combine #3 and #4 – you go in for safety and sleep and go out for pasture and exercise

4) “*I am the Good Shepherd*” (John 10) – Word of Responsibility

He stays with His sheep despite the danger; takes 100% responsibility for them

5) “*I am the resurrection and the life*” (John 11:25) – Word of Resurrection

- the resurrection is for the body

- the life is for the spirit

6) “*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*” (John 14:6) – Word of Requirement

Exclusivity of Jesus being the way, etc.; You need Me; a word of encouragement to the disciples

- I am the Truth Way – I am faithful to My Word; you won’t fail half way there

- I am the Life Way – provides abundant life and takes us to the right destination by His power

7) “I am the True Vine” (John 15:1) – Word of Reality

Other vines have been a disappointment

Ryrie:

This is the most theological of the four Gospels. It deals with the nature and person of Christ and the meaning of faith in Him. John’s presentation of Christ as the divine Son of God is seen in the titles given Him in the book: “the Word was God” (1:1), “the Lamb of God” (1:29), “the Messiah” (1:41), “the Son of God” and “the King of Israel”(1:49), the “Savior of the world” (4:42), “Lord and . . . God” (20:28). His deity is also asserted in the series of “I am . . .” claims . . . These are the strongest claims to deity that Jesus could have made.

The structure and style of the Gospel are different from those of the synoptics. It contains no parables, only seven miracles (five of which are not recorded elsewhere), and many personal interviews. The author emphasizes the physical actuality of Jesus’ hunger, thirst, weariness, pain, and death, as a defense against the Gnostic denial of Jesus’ true human nature. . .

The writer of the Gospel is identified in the book only as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:20, 24). He obviously was a Palestinian Jew who was an eyewitness of the events of Christ’s life, for he displays knowledge of Jewish customs (7:37-39; 18:28)

and of the land of Palestine (1:44, 46; 5:2) and he includes details of an eyewitness (2:6; 13:26; 21:8, 11). Eliminating the other disciples that belonged to the “inner circle” (because James had been martyred before this time, Acts 12:1-5, and because Peter is named in close association with the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23-24; 20:2-10), one concludes that John was the author.

Malick, David:

MESSAGE STATEMENT:

JESUS IS DEMONSTRATED TO BE "THE CHRIST" IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT BELIEVE IN HIM AND THEREBY OBTAIN THE BLESSINGS OF ETRNAL LIFE

- I. THE PROLOGUE: (Jesus is the God-Man among men for men): The Word, which is eternal, related to and is God the Creator Himself, graciously overcame the darkness of sin in men by giving life to those who trust in Him when He became the God-Man, Jesus, the Messiah 1:1-18
 - A. The Word, which is eternal in relationship with God, and is God Himself in essence, is the Creator of all things which exist 1:1-3
 1. The Word which is eternal and in relationship with God is described as being God in essence itself 1:1
 2. Already being in existence with God, the Word is the creator of all things which exist 1:2-3
 - B. While it may appear that the Word which gives life by shining upon men in their darkness is overcome, there is proof to the opposite through life given to believers 1:4-13
 1. The Word, being life which gives light to men while shining in darkness is not overcome by darkness 1:4-5
 2. While it appears that the darkness of men overcame the enlightening of the Word, it did not because life was given to those who trusted in Him 1:6-13
 - C. The gracious giving of life came through Jesus the Messiah who being God became man to give grace as is witnessed by John and many others 1:14-18
 1. The Word became human and dwelt among men demonstrating its greatness as being from the Father in its immense grace and truth 1:14
 2. John gave witness to the God-Man by proclaiming his exalted position and pre-existence as God 1:15
 3. Many received the fullness of Grace in abundance not through Moses who gave the Law but through

Jesus--the Christ who alone completely explains
God 1:16-18

II. MANIFESTATION TO THE NATION AND REJECTION THROUGH CONFLICTS:

Jesus manifests Himself as Messiah to the nation whereupon many respond in belief, but the nation's leaders respond by rejecting Him (1:19--12:50)

A. Jesus reveals Himself to be Messiah through a series of events (John the Baptist and the calling of disciples, the wedding in Cana, the cleansing of the temple, the discussion with Nicodemus, the discussion of John the Baptist, the discussion with the Samaritan woman, and the official of Capernaum) whereupon many respond in belief 1:19--4:54

1. John the Baptist testifies that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus' disciples believe as there is a movement away from John the Baptist toward Jesus--Messiah 1:19--51
2. Wedding in Cana: On the third day after Nathaniel was chosen, Jesus performed His first miracle by turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana in order to demonstrate that He was the One bringing in the Kingdom through a transforming ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), and His disciples believed in Him 2:1-11
3. The Cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem: After the wedding in Cana, Jesus went up from Capernaum to Jerusalem at the Passover, cleansed the temple as the zealous Davidite for pure worship, was challenged by the Jews, offered His future death and resurrection as proof of His authority, and was believed upon by many, but did not entrust Himself to them 2:12-25
4. Nicodemus: When Nicodemus came to Jesus to learn from Him as a teacher from God, Jesus explained that one must have a Spirit cleansing through belief in Him who will be lifted up in order to enter into the Kingdom of God, where upon John explained that Jesus was God's son sent out of love to save those in the world who will believe in Him, while those who will not will be judged for hiding their evil in the darkness 3:1-21
5. John the Baptizer: When Jesus went into the Jordan region with His disciples to baptize, John proclaimed to his disciples that Jesus' ministry

was to increase over his because He is greater than John having been sent from God with the truth about God so that those who believe in Him will have eternal life, while those who do not believe in Him will remain in their state of judgment 3:22-36

6. The Samaritan Woman: When Jesus left Judea because of the concern of the Pharisees, He met a woman in Samaria, led her to an understanding that he was the Prophet of Moses--Messiah, taught His disciples that now is the time to reap people in God's harvest, and, thus, brought many Samaritans into a believing relationship with Him because of the testimony of the woman, and Himself to them 4:1-42
 7. The Official at Capernaum: As Jesus returned to Galilee after leaving Samaria and unbelieving Jerusalem, He was received by the people for His signs, and gave life from far off to the royal official's son because he believed in His word, yielding even more belief 4:43-54
- B. Rejection through Conflicts: Jesus' later ministry unveils (through six conflicts) His rejection as Messiah by the nation even though many do believe in Him 5:1--12:50
2. Conflict two: While in Galilee, Jesus teaches the miraculously-fed multitude that He is the "Bread of Life" of whom they must partake, whereupon many withdraw while the twelve remain because Christ has the words of eternal life 6:1-71
 3. Conflict three: When Jesus returns to Jerusalem there is a resumption of hostility towards Him 7:1-10:21
 4. Conflict four: At the feast of Dedication Jesus claims to be One with God in nature and the Jews attempt to stone Him even though others believed 10:22-42
 5. Conflict five: At the conflict in Bethany Jesus revealed Himself to be God by raising Lazarus from the dead, whereupon many Jews believed while the leaders rejected Christ and wanted to kill both Him and Lazarus 11:1--12:11
 6. Conflict six: In Jerusalem Jesus exhorts the people to believe in Him but they will not, thus the nation enters into unbelief as the Gentiles come to believe in Him 12:20-50

III. PREPARATION OF DISCIPLES: Jesus prepares His disciples for their continuation of ministry in His absence 13:1--17:26

- A. While Jesus teaches the disciples to follow His example of spiritually cleansing one another, Judas decides not to follow Jesus, and enters the darkness without Him 13:1-30
 - 1. In a context of commitment to His disciples, Jesus taught them to be involved in limited spiritual cleansing with one another encouraging them of their future effectiveness for Him while identifying one of them as a betrayer still in sin 13:1-20
 - 2. When Jesus identified Judas as the disciple who would betray Him, he chose to betray Christ, and was empowered by Satan, and walked out of the light into the darkness 13:21-30
- B. Jesus teaches about His coming departure from the disciples to the Father who is heaven 13:31--14:31
 - 1. When Judas had gone out, Jesus began to teach His disciples about His future glorification by the Father through which He would depart from them, and insisted that they could not follow Him, but needed to demonstrate to all men that they were His disciples through their love for one another, and that even Peter, in his zeal to follow Him, would deny Him three times before the cock crowed 13:31-38
 - 2. Jesus encouraged His disciples to faithfulness in light of His upcoming departure from them and their fears 14:1-31
- C. Jesus teaches about the necessity for His followers to remain in fellowship with Him by loving others in order to bear fruit for Him 15:1-17
 - 1. Jesus proclaims himself to be the true obedient son of God (cf. "vine" in Isa. 5:1ff) whose followers are disciplined at the hand of the Father in order to also produce fruit 15:1-2
 - 2. Jesus identifies his audience to be those who are already cleansed by the word which he had spoken to them 15:3 (cf. 13:10)
 - 3. Jesus exhorts his believing disciples to remain in fellowship (abide) with him in order to be able to bare fruit 15:4-5
 - 4. Jesus explains the negative and positive consequences their relationship with Him 15:6-8

5. Jesus explains that abiding in him means to obey his commandment to love just as the Father has loved him and He has loved them 15:9-17
- D. Jesus teaches his disciples about how the world will hate them because it already hates Him in order to prepare them for this in His absence 15:18--16:4
1. Jesus explains to His disciples that the world will respond by rejecting them, even in their love, because they are of Christ and the world has rejected Him--Christ is our example 15:18-21
 2. The world is guilty because of its rejection of Jesus, who demonstrated Himself to it 15:22-25
 3. The disciples, through the Spirit, will also be a testimony to Christ 15:26-27
 4. Jesus has a preparatory design in telling His disciples of their upcoming persecutions 16:1-4
- E. Jesus teaches his disciples about the coming work of the Spirit in their lives 16:5-15
1. Even though the disciples are only focusing upon the absence of Christ in his upcoming departure, He explains the reason for His departure: it will be to their advantage--to send the Helper to them 16:5-7
 2. Jesus amplifies His reason for going by discussing the work of the Holy Spirit with the World and with the Disciples 16:8-15
- F. Jesus teaches his disciples about what will occur in their lives when he leaves them 16:16-33
1. In view of Christ's departure and coming, He tells His disciples of their future relationship with God the Father and Him 16:16-28
 2. The disciples respond to Jesus by pretending to understand all that He is saying now 16:27-30
 3. Jesus questions their assurances to Him in view of their future defection, but tells them of this so that later they may have confidence in Him amidst the tribulation 16:31-33
- G. Jesus intercedes in prayer for Himself, His disciples and the world 17:1-26
1. Jesus prays for Himself that God would restore to Him the glory which He had with the Father, and thus that He might glorify the Father 17:1-5
 2. Jesus prays for the disciples and other believers 17:6-24
 3. Christ proclaims that his obedience is the basis for His prayer: He has made the Father known and

will do so that they might know and make known
God's love 17:25-26

IV. PASSION AND RESURRECTION: Through the Passion and

Resurrection of Jesus, He is demonstrated to be God's satisfaction for the sin of mankind as the Passover lamb who is the Davidite, who has been vindicated by the Lord and is to be believed upon 18--20

- A. Jesus, knowing what was coming, presented Himself to the soldiers, protected His disciples and stopped any rebellion by His disciples as the soldiers came to arrest Him 18:1-11
 1. Setting: Jesus led His disciples across the Kidron valley to the garden, and Judas also led the Roman cohort, and temple officers to the garden to capture Jesus 18:1-3
 2. The Arrest: When the soldiers came to capture Jesus, He, with full understanding of the will of the Father as the obedient Son, took the initiative to identify himself, protect His disciples, and stop any counter rebellion through His disciples 18:4-11
- B. Jesus is tried by the religious leaders and is demonstrated to be innocent of insurrection; He is also tried by the civil leaders and is demonstrated to be innocent, but handed over to be crucified out of the disloyalty of the Jews to Rome 18:12--19:16
 1. The Religious trial: In an inquisition before Annas, Jesus is demonstrated to not be guilty of insurrection by his words, the abusive nature of the Jews toward Him, and the denial of Peter of even knowing Him in the court of Annas 18:12-27
 2. The Civil Trial: Pilate, though convinced of Jesus' innocence, is forced by the Jews in their rejection of Jesus and their loyalty to Rome to hand Jesus over to them for crucifixion 18:28--19:16
- C. The Crucifixion: As Jesus is crucified, He is demonstrated to be the true Passover Lamb who is the Davidite who provides for the sin of the world as their substitute 19:17-42
 1. Jesus bore His own cross to Golgotha, was crucified with two other men and with the inscription "Jesus The Nazarene, the King of the Jews" on the cross in Hebrew, Latin and Greek 19:17-20

2. The Jews asked that Pilate change the inscription, but He would not 19:21-22
 3. The acts in the crucifixion of Jesus demonstrated the function and work which He was performing on the Cross 19:23-37
- D. The Burial: In the burial of Jesus, two men of Israel demonstrate faith in Him by preparing His body for burial and placing him in a new tomb (probably Joseph's) 19:28-42
1. Joseph of Arimathea, being a secret disciple of Jesus because of the Jews, received Jesus' body from Pilate and took it away 19:38
 2. Nicodemus, who earlier came to Jesus by night, brought the spices for Jesus' burial and together with Joseph prepared His body for burial 19:39-40
 3. Jesus was buried in a new tomb in which no one had been laid in a garden near the place where He was crucified because the Jewish day of preparation 19:41-42
- E. Jesus is resurrected and appears to many bringing about belief in His followers 19:31--20:29
1. Mary, John and Peter come to realize that the tomb is empty 20:1-9
 2. Jesus appears to many 20:11-29
- F. John expresses belief as the effective design of this book 20:30-31
- V. THE EPILOGUE: Jesus restores His followers to active service for Him in Galilee 21:1-25
- A. Jesus appears by the Lake to love the disciples 21:1-14
 - B. Jesus reinstates Peter into the ministry 21:15-23
 - C. John provides information about the Gospel's composition 21:24-25

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RESOURCES:

Some of these should be helpful; I cannot vouch for the doctrinal position of each of these, but they should provide some background information.

Dr. W. Hall Harris, Prof NT Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

Website: <http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/joh/harris/gjohn-02.htm>

Dr. Peter Pett: Background comments and commentary

Website: <http://www.geocities.com/johncommentary/index.html>

Richard Martin, Christian Brothers High School

Good Basic Quiz to check out your understanding of the Gospel of John:

Website: http://www.cbhs.org/rmartin/quizzes/r2q_john_background.htm

Roger Hahn, The Christian Resource Institute

Website: <http://www.cresourcei.org/biblestudy/bbjohn1.html>

Witness Lee, Outline of the Gospel

Website: <http://www.bibleoutlines.org/outlines/Johnhtml.html>

Ted Wade, Bible Explained – An Interactive Commentary

Website: <http://www.bibleexplained.com/Gospels/John/john.htm>

Pastor Drew Worthen, Calvary Chapel, Port Charlotte

Website: <http://www.calvarychapel.com/portcharlotte/John.htm>

BibleClassics.com, an assortment of classical commentators

Website: <http://www.gospelcom.net/eword/comments/john/four/john1.htm>

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF JOHN

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we make the transition from the 3 Synoptic Gospels to the very unique Gospel of John. There really is only **one gospel** = the Good News about Jesus Christ. Four perspectives – *kata* -- “*according to*” ... A very large proportion of John’s content is not found in the Synoptics.

So what are some of the characteristics of John’s Gospel?

- Written for a **different audience**
 - o Matthew – for the **Jews** – presenting Jesus as the Messiah-King
 - o Mark – for the Gentile **Romans** – presenting Jesus as the Son of God who came as the Suffering Servant
 - o Luke – for the Gentile **Greeks** – presenting Jesus as the Son of God who came as the Son of Man – identifying with humanity in his universal mission of redemption
 - o John – for all audiences – for all the **world** – emphasizing the Deity of Christ – His claim to be the unique Son of God – not created, not subordinate but of the same essence of the Father – truly God in every sense

Look at His emphasis to the **whole world**:

 - Famous **Prologue** – opening verses – links Jesus to the creation of the whole world; Concept of the Logos = Word – unique title
 - 1:7** testimony of John the Baptist was so that **ALL** might believe
 - 1:9ff** talks about the Light coming into the **world**
 - 3:16** – God so loved the **world** – not just the Jews
 - Word “*world*” appears 78 times in the gospel
- The most **theological** of all the gospels – cf. the theological Prologue; contains some long discourses such as The Upper Room Discourse in **chaps. 13-17** – not found in the Synoptics

Everett Harrison: John’s Gospel is structured quite differently to the Synoptics. It is less documentary and more **meditative**, though it does contain a lot of narrative material. John intermingles themes, ‘signs’ and discourses, so that his Gospel develops in much the same way that a fugue does: themes are stated, then combined, first with one theme, then with another, then put aside for a while and taken up again in yet another combination, and all interwoven with signs and discourses. You can only get the best out of John’s Gospel by mulling it over at leisure – and even so, you will never get right to the end of it.

- Written in a **style** that is both **simple** in language and yet **profound** in theology
Beginning Greek students like to start with the Gospel of John
“simple enough for a child to wade in, but deep enough for a philosopher to drown”
Presents very clear contrasts (like we see in **1 John**) – light vs. darkness; life vs. death

- John's Gospel is arranged in **topical** fashion – remember Luke said he was trying to write in very precise chronological order
- Focuses on the **Judean ministry** of Jesus – both in His early years and then at the end; while the Synoptics focused more on the **Galilean ministry** – So you could say that John writing after the other 3 accounts, recorded a supplemental gospel
- Omits any mention of **parables** – although you do see some allegories – Jesus says:
 - o I am the Door / I am the Good Shepherd, etc.
- Distinctive teaching on the Holy Spirit – Paraclete – Helper (Farewell Discourse in Chaps. 14-16); He will be with the disciples in much the same way Jesus was
- Distinction between what the disciples understood of Jesus' teaching during His earthly ministry vs. their expanded understanding after His death and resurrection

What do we know about the Apostle John, the acknowledged author?

- He was the son of Zebedee and Salome (the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus) – so he was a **cousin of Jesus**
- We know from **1:14** that the book was written by an **eyewitness**
- Not just any eyewitness but a **close associate** -- He calls himself "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*" – included in the **inner circle** along with his brother James and Peter; it was a simple process of elimination to identify John as the author (James died too early to have written the book); author was present at the Last Supper – had to be one of the 12; could not be another John like John the Elder; humility shown by not referring to himself by name in the book
- External evidence from the **church fathers** corroborates the authorship of John – Polycarp was discipled by John, Irenaeus was his disciple and wrote that John had written the Gospel in his later years from Ephesus – in addition soon after he wrote 3 epistles and the book of Revelation
- He came from the city of **Capernaum** in Galilee and was a follower initially of John the Baptist before being called by Christ
- Jesus gave James and John the nickname of "*sons of thunder*" (**Mark 3:17**) probably because of their strong personalities – they were certainly no wallflowers – Their ambition is seen in **Mark 10:35-37** where they asked for the highest places of honor in Christ's kingdom; their "thunder" ended up being sanctified and put to use in boldly proclaiming the gospel with power and authority
- He became a pillar in the church at Jerusalem along with Peter (**Gal. 2:9**); Mentioned 3 times in the book of Acts – always in close association with **Peter**

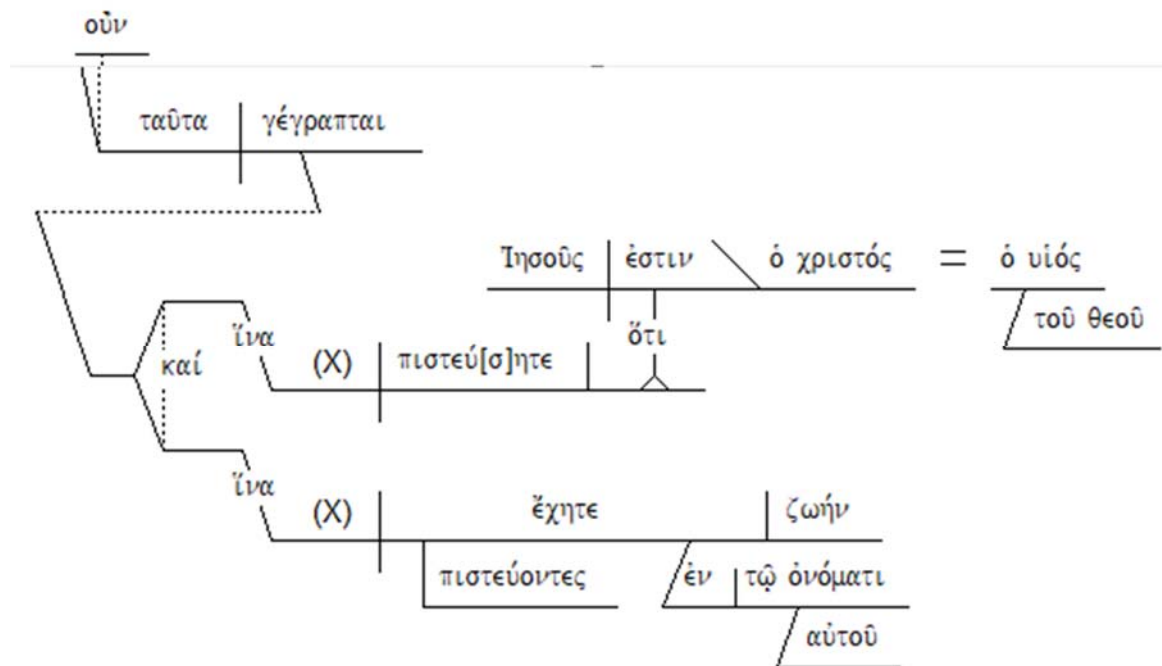
- John became known as the **apostle of love** – tradition gives the example of the elderly and infirm Apostle in his final days in the church at Ephesus (after having been released from exile in the island of Patmos), being carried into the small assembly and delivering the final benediction each service with the characteristic phrase “*My little children, love one another*”

KEY PURPOSE STATEMENT – 20:30-31 (Chap. 21 is an appendix to the book)

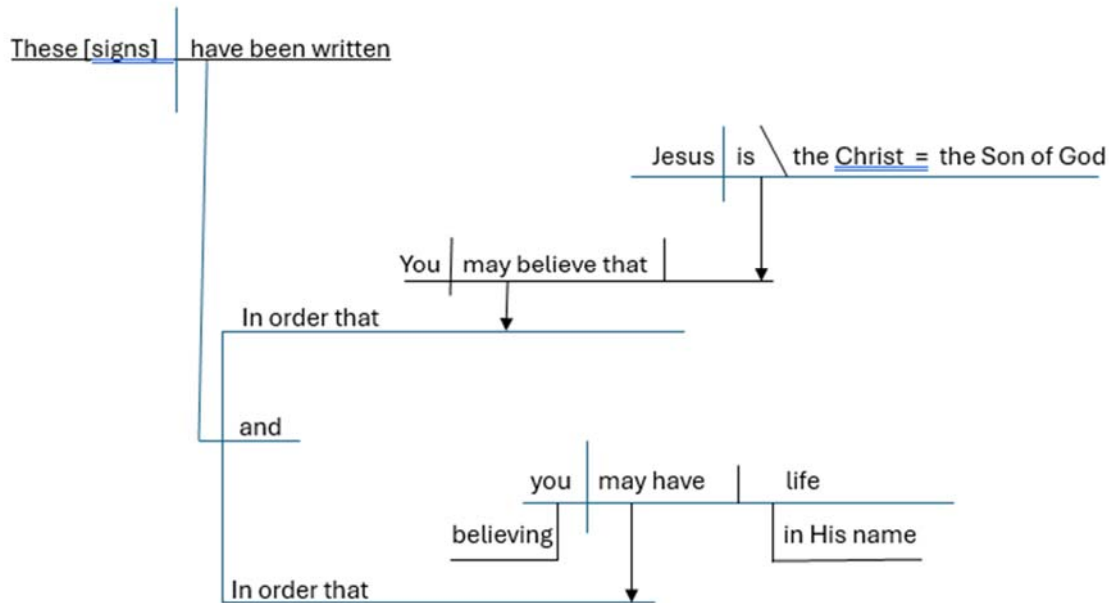
Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

We are going to unpack this purpose statement and use it as the basis for our outline as we cover the Gospel of John. You might remember that John also was very specific at the end of **1 John** about his purpose statement: *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. (5:13)*

DIAGRAMMATIC ANALYSIS [Greek and English]



But



John is concerned throughout his book with the authentication of the identity of Jesus as the unique Son of God = His true deity. His Purpose is to produce saving faith which results in spiritual life.

There are 3 key words in this purpose statement. Each one is the focal point for one of the three main points we shall consider:

1) Signs

- Occurs 17 times in the Gospel – describes a miracle performed by Jesus
- Points to the deity and divine authority of the one performing the miracle
- Designed to teach us some great spiritual truth

2) Believe

- Occurs 98 times in John
- We will look at what this involves
- We will look at the content and focus of this faith in the identity of Jesus

3) Life

- Occurs 15 times
- Not talking about continuous life – everyone will live forever
- Talking about life in fellowship with God and His attributes and blessings

Bill McRae: Notice how the 3 words fit together:

- Signs -- **Revelation** of God Incarnate
- Believe -- **Response** we should have
- Life -- **Result** of that response

3 KEY WORDS

I. SIGNS -- 7 SIGNS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE IDENTITY OF JESUS

A. Sensationalism of the 7 Signs

- 1) These Signs are Special – Selective Account (not comprehensive)
Jesus performed many other miracles
- 2) These Signs Provide an Eyewitness Historical Account
- 3) These Signs Performed by Jesus Constitute a Miraculous Account

B. Significance of the 7 Signs

Symbolize the power of Jesus as the Son of God to nurture spiritual life

1. Water turned into wine – John 2:1-11

Ritual of law being replaced by the reality of Grace; Transition from OT to NT
Satisfying the heart of man with the wine of new covenant life and fullness of joy
Dawning of eschatological age

Response: 2:11 -- *This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. Cf. 1:14 we saw His glory*

2. Healing of the royal official's son – John 4:46-54

Power of spiritual restoration

Even the most powerful must humbly take Jesus at his Word to experience the rewards of faith

Jesus performs this miracle in such a way that only the official knows it is a miracle. As he “testified” of this miracle to his servants, they too become members of the “household of faith.”

Response: 4:48 – addressed to the Galileans who had been impressed by His turning water into wine: *"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe."*

3. Healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda – John 5:1-15

Weakness replaced by strength

Jesus demonstrates His supremacy over legalism and His equality with God the Father

Response: 5:16 – *And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.*

4. Feeding of the 5,000 – John 6:1-14

The creator of the universe can abundantly satisfy any physical need despite the apparent lack of physical resources – shows He can satisfy any spiritual need

Response: 6:14 -- *When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world."*

6:26ff -- *Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.*

John MacArthur: Sadly, these comments [referring to Jesus as *the Prophet who is to come*] coming right after Jesus healed and fed them, indicate that the people desired a Messiah who met their physical, rather than spiritual needs. Apparently, no recognition existed for the need of spiritual repentance and preparation for the kingdom (**Mt 4:17**). They wanted an earthy, political Messiah to meet all their needs and to deliver them from Roman oppression.

5. **Walking on the sea – John 6:16-21**

Power to transform fear to faith

The presence of the master of the universe should calm all fears and accomplish all objectives

Response: **6:21** -- *they were willing to receive Him into the boat*

6. **Healing of the man born blind – John 9:1-41**

Light of the world overcoming darkness; providing spiritual illumination

Opening the eyes of the blind can only be a work of God – a second Sabbath miracle

Response: **9:16-17** -- *Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." But others were saying, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And there was a division among them. ¹⁷ They said therefore to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?" And he said, "He is a prophet."*

Vs. 22 – *If anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue*

Vs. 38 – *And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped Him.*

Shows that the title *Son of Man* (**vs. 35**) was a claim to Deity

7. **Raising of Lazarus from the dead – John 11:1-44**

Resurrection (the ultimate sign miracle) demonstrates both the glory of God and the value Jesus places on faith – deliverance from death to life

Response: **11:27** – *confession of Martha -- "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."*

vs. 43-53 – *Mixed reaction; but religious leaders from then on were plotting how to kill Him.*

So those are the 7 Sign Miracles highlighting the identity of Jesus.

You might include the **Resurrection of Christ** as the **ultimate Sign**

Response: Confession finally of Thomas in **20:28** “*My Lord and my God*”

[There is an 8th sign after the resurrection = the miraculous catch of fish in **Chap. 21**
But it doesn't seem to fit the same pattern]

Second Key Word

II. BELIEVE -- PURPOSE OF THE SIGNS IN PROMOTING FAITH IN JESUS

A. What is the Nature of Saving Faith?

What Saving Faith Is NOT

John carefully contrasts genuine faith with inadequate responses to Jesus.

1) It is not mere fascination with miracles

One of the most important texts is **John 2:23–25**:

“many believed in His name, observing His signs...”

Yet the next verse says:

“Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them...” same Greek word used

This shows that **amazement at miracles is not the same as settled trust in Christ's person.**

The signs are meant to point beyond themselves to who Jesus is.

A person may be impressed by the supernatural and still not come to true faith.

In John, signs are never ends in themselves.

They are **windows into Christ's identity.**

2) It is not mere intellectual agreement with facts

Nicodemus is a key example.

In **John 3:2** he says:

“we know that You have come from God as a teacher”

That is correct theology at one level.

But rather than commending him, Jesus immediately moves to the necessity of the **new birth.**

So saving faith is more than saying:

- Jesus existed
- Jesus was a teacher
- Jesus did miracles
- Jesus came from God

Even demons could affirm facts.

Saving faith goes beyond acknowledgment to **personal reliance.**

3) It is not temporary or superficial enthusiasm

John often shows people responding positively at first and then turning away.

The clearest example is **John 6.**

After the Bread of Life discourse:

“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew” (**John 6:66**)

They were attracted to Jesus for bread, benefits, and spectacle.

But when confronted with His identity and claims, they left.

This shows that **saving faith is not consumer Christianity.**

It is not merely wanting what Jesus gives.

It is wanting **Jesus Himself.**

4) It is not secret admiration without personal commitment

John repeatedly exposes the danger of hidden allegiance.

John 12:42–43 says *many rulers believed, yet would not confess Him openly because they loved human praise.*

This is not saying public confession saves, but it reveals that saving faith cannot remain merely social convenience.

Faith must move from **private curiosity to open personal confession.**

In baptism we publicly express our identification with Christ and faith in Him.

What Saving Faith IS

Now John's positive teaching.

1) Saving faith is believing in the person of Christ

John's favorite expression is:

*“believe **in Him**”*

This means more than believing that Jesus exists.

It means trusting **who He is.**

John 20:31 defines the content:

“that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”

Saving faith has a definite object:

- Jesus as Messiah
- Jesus as Son of God
- Jesus as the only revealer of the Father

In other words: saving faith = trust in the **identity of Christ**

2) Saving faith is personal reliance, not mere assent

John uses rich metaphors to describe faith.

Faith is:

- **coming** to Christ (**John 6:35**)
- **receiving** Christ (**John 1:12**)
- **drinking** living water (**John 4:14**)
- **eating** the bread of life (**John 6:51**)
- **abiding** in Him (**John 15:4**)

These metaphors show that faith is **appropriating Christ personally.**

It is the soul leaning its weight upon Him.

Faith is movement toward Christ.

3) Saving faith is Spirit-produced

John 3 is essential here.

Jesus tells Nicodemus:

“unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”

This teaches that saving faith is inseparable from the work of the Spirit.

1:13 *“who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”*

Faith is not merely a natural human decision.

It is the response of a heart made alive by God.
Thus saving faith includes **spiritual illumination**.

- The blind begin to see.
- The dead begin to live.

4) Saving faith results in life

This is perhaps John's greatest emphasis.

Faith is the instrument by which life is received.

"he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47)

"he who hears My word, and believes ... has eternal life" (John 5:24)

Notice the present tense: **has** / Not merely will have.

Saving faith receives eternal life as a present possession.

This is why John constantly links: believe → life

5) Saving faith continues in Christ's word

John 8:31 is important:

"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine"

This does not teach salvation by works.

Rather, continuance **reveals the reality of faith**.

Saving faith is living and persevering.

It is not sinless perfection, but it is a faith that remains attached to Christ.

A Concise Definition from John:

Saving faith is the Spirit-enabled personal trust in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Son of God, by which one receives eternal life and continues in His word.

Or more simply:

Saving faith is receiving Jesus for who He truly is and totally and exclusively relying on Him for salvation

B. What is the Object of Saving Faith? *"that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God"*

All about the **True Identity of Jesus** –

What are some Inadequate (i.e. False) Views of the Identity of Jesus

False Views by the contemporaries of Jesus as recorded in John's Gospel

1. Jesus as Merely a Miracle Worker (Not the Messiah)

Key Texts: John 2:23–25; 6:26

Many were impressed by His signs but didn't truly believe in Him.

- They followed Him for **what He could do**, not for who He is.
- After feeding the 5,000, the crowd seeks more bread, not truth.

Correction:

Jesus declares Himself the **Bread of Life (John 6:35)**, shifting focus from miracles to identity.

2. Jesus as a Political Deliverer

Key Text: John 6:14–15

After the feeding miracle:

- The crowd tries to make Him king by force.
- They expect a **nationalistic, political Messiah**.

Correction:

Jesus withdraws, showing His kingdom is not earthly (cf. **John 18:36**).

3. Jesus as Merely Joseph's Son (Only Human)

Key Text: John 6:42

- *“Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph?”*
- They reduce Him to **ordinary human origins**.

Correction:

John emphasizes His **pre-existence** (**John 1:1; 8:58**).

4. Jesus as Demon-Possessed or Insane

Key Texts: John 7:20; 8:48; 10:20

- Religious leaders accuse Him of having a demon.
- His claims seem too radical to them.

Correction:

His works and words testify that He is sent from the Father (**John 10:37–38**).

5. Jesus as a Lawbreaker / Sinner

Key Texts: John 5:18; 9:16, 24

- Accused of breaking the Sabbath.
- Labeled a sinner because He heals on the Sabbath.

Correction:

Jesus reveals He is **Lord of the Sabbath** and equal with God (**John 5:17–18**).

6. Jesus as Just a Good Teacher (But Not Divine)

Implied in multiple interactions (e.g., John 3, John 4)

- People approach Him respectfully but incompletely.
- Nicodemus calls Him a teacher from God (**John 3:2**), but doesn't yet grasp His divine nature.

Correction:

Jesus reveals the necessity of **new birth** and heavenly origin.

7. Jesus as Only a Prophet

Key Texts: John 4:19; 6:14; 9:17

- The Samaritan woman and others identify Him as a prophet.
- This is **partially true but incomplete**.

Correction:

He is not just a prophet—He is the **Messiah** (**John 4:26**).

8. Jesus as a Blasphemer (False Claimant to Deity)

Key Texts: John 5:18; 10:33

- Jewish leaders accuse Him of making Himself equal with God.
- They see His claims as **blasphemous**.

Correction:

John presents these claims as **true**, not false—Jesus *is* divine.

9. Jesus as Unworthy of Faith (Rejection Despite Evidence)

Key Text: John 12:37

- Despite many signs, many still did not believe.
- This reflects **willful unbelief**, not lack of evidence.

[False Views by Current Day Philosophers and Theologians and Religious Leaders

Joy Behar on the View just this week stating that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah

Big Categories of Modern False Views

These modern perspectives largely echo the same misunderstandings seen in the Gospel of John:

1. Reductionism (Too Small a Jesus)

- Moral teacher only (Ehrman, Crossan)
- Prophet only (Islamic view)
- Social reformer (liberation theology)

2. Relativism (Not Unique)

- One of many paths (Hick, Chopra)

3. Reality Doubters -- Skepticism (Not Real or Not Reliable)

- Myth theory (Carrier)
- Failed prophet (Schweitzer)

4. Reinterpretation (Symbolic Jesus)

- Psychological or philosophical construct (Žižek, Nietzsche)

Jehovah's Witnesses:

From *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* (published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society):

“Jesus is not Almighty God. He is God’s Son, the first of God’s creations.”

Not God / Not equal with the Father / Denial of the Trinity

Mormons:

Not the same being in essence as the Father / Not eternally God in the same sense as historic Christianity / One of many spirit children of God (though preeminent)

Islam:

Yes:

- A prophet
- The Messiah (in a limited sense)
- Born of a virgin
- A miracle worker

But Not:

God
the Son of God
crucified
the Savior through atonement]

What are the Claims that Jesus Himself made regarding His True Identity?

Jesus is the Fount of All Spiritual Blessing: 7 I AM statements

1. **Spiritual Sustenance** -- *"I am the bread of life."* Cf. manna in wilderness
(John 6:35, 6:48, 6:51) Jesus sent from the Father – the Incarnation
People desire the physical provision of needs but do not prioritize their spiritual need.
2. **Spiritual Illumination** -- *"I am the light of the world."*
(John 8:12; 9:5)
3. **Spiritual Access** -- *"I am the door (or gate) for the sheep."*
(John 10:7, 10:9)
10:10 – *I am come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*
4. **Spiritual Protection / Guidance** -- *"I am the good shepherd."*
(John 10:11, 10:14) – Sacrificial Death – gives His life for the sheep

Response: **10:19-21** -- *There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. ²⁰ And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? ²¹ Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*

5. **Spiritual Life** -- *"I am the resurrection and the life."*
(John 11:25) – Conquers Death
6. **Spiritual Sufficiency** -- *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."*
(John 14:6) – Provides exclusive access to God

14:9-10 -- *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father ' ? ¹⁰ "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 initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.*

7. **Spiritual Fruitfulness** -- *"I am the true vine."*
(John 15:1, 15:5) – Source of power and enablement to live the spiritual life

15:8 – Fruitfulness is the evidence of true discipleship -- *By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.*

Absolute I AM statements with no predicate –

- *Before Abraham was born I AM – 8:58* extended discourse
Response: *Therefore they picked up stones to throw at him.*
- *Whom do you seek? Jesus the Nazarene. I AM --*
Response: *they drew back and fell to the ground 18:4-5*

III. LIFE -- PURPOSE OF THE SIGNS IN PRODUCING SPIRITUAL LIFE

Illustration:

A sign on the highway is not the destination—it points to it.

- You don't stop at the sign and admire it and think that you have arrived
- You follow the sign to where it leads

John's miracles are signposts pointing to Jesus, and **Jesus gives life to those who believe.**

This is the thematic progression in John:

SIGN → REVELATION → BELIEF → LIFE

I. Life Promised in the Prologue (John 1)

John begins the Gospel by introducing life as resident in Christ Himself.

John 1:4

“In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.”

This is foundational.

Life is not merely something Jesus gives.

Life is what Jesus is.

He is the source, reservoir, and origin of all life:

- physical life
- spiritual life
- eternal life

This prepares the reader to see every sign as an outflow of the life that is in Him.

II. Life Through the New Birth (John 3)

The first major discourse after the early signs is about spiritual life.

John 3:3

“unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”

John 3:15–16

“whoever believes will in Him have eternal life”

This is the first major statement connecting:

belief → life

Exactly what **John 20:31** later summarizes.

III. Life as Present Possession (John 4)

In the interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well, John emphasizes life as presently received.

John 4:10

“living water”

John 4:14

“a well of water springing up to eternal life”

Life is pictured as **soul-satisfying water**.

This develops the theme:

- inward renewal
- spiritual satisfaction
- eternal permanence

IV. Life Through the Son’s Authority (John 5)

This chapter is absolutely central.

After the sign at Bethesda, Jesus explains His authority to impart life.

John 5:21

“the Son also gives life to whom He wishes”

John 5:24

“has eternal life, and does not come into judgment”

Notice the present tense:

has eternal life

Not merely future.

Present possession.

John 5:26

“just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself”

This is one of the strongest theological statements in John.

Jesus possesses **self-existent life**.

Great emphasis on **witnessing** – 50 times noun or verb – great variety of witnesses –

In **John 5:30–40**, Jesus responds to accusations by appealing to a series of *witnesses* that validate His divine identity. In Jewish law, truth was established by multiple witnesses (**Deut. 19:15**), and Jesus presents five converging testimonies to His deity.

Here’s a clear breakdown of those five witnesses:

a. The Witness of John the Baptist (vv. 33–35)

- Jesus points to John the Baptist as a human witness who testified about Him.
- John called Jesus:
 - *“the Lamb of God”* (**John 1:29**)
 - *“the Son of God”* (**John 1:34**)
- Jesus affirms that John was a *“burning and shining lamp,”* but only a *preliminary* witness.

Key idea: A respected prophet confirmed Jesus’ identity.

b. The Witness of Jesus’ Works (v. 36)

- Jesus says His miracles (*“works”*) testify about Him.
- These include signs like healing the lame man (**John 5** context) and others throughout the Gospel.

Key idea: His supernatural works demonstrate divine authority and power.

c. The Witness of the Father (v. 37)

- Jesus declares that God the Father Himself has borne witness to Him.
- This likely refers to:
 - His baptism (“*This is My beloved Son...*” – **Matt. 3:17**)
 - Ongoing divine affirmation

Key idea: The ultimate authority—God—testifies to Jesus’ divine Sonship.

d. The Witness of the Scriptures (vv. 38–39)

- Jesus rebukes the Jewish leaders for searching the Scriptures but missing Him.
- The Old Testament points forward to Christ (Luke 24:27 reinforces this idea).

Key idea: The entire biblical revelation anticipates and reveals Jesus.

e. The Witness of Moses (vv. 45–46) (*just beyond v. 40 but part of the same argument*)

- Jesus specifically names Moses, saying:

“*If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.*”

- This includes:
 - **Deuteronomy 18:15** (the Prophet like Moses)
 - Typology in the Law (sacrifices, Passover, etc.)

Key idea: The foundational figure of Jewish faith points directly to Christ.

Summary: Jesus is not asking for blind faith—He presents a courtroom-style case. These witnesses move from:

- Human testimony → John (many others offered in John)
- Empirical evidence → works of Jesus
- Divine testimony → the Father (as well as claims of Jesus Himself)
- Written revelation → Scriptures & Moses

Yet the tragedy (**5:40**):

“*You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.*”

The issue is not lack of evidence—but **unwillingness to believe**.

V. Life as Bread from Heaven (John 6)

After the feeding of the five thousand, John moves from sign to sermon.

This may be the clearest example of the theme.

The sign points beyond itself.

Bread satisfies physically.

Christ gives life spiritually.

John 6:27

“*food which endures to eternal life*”

John 6:33

“*the bread of God ... gives life to the world*”

John 6:35

“*I am the bread of life*”

This is one of the great I AM statements.

John 6:40

“everyone who beholds the Son and believes ... will have eternal life”

John 6:47

“he who believes has eternal life”

John 6:51

“the bread ... is My flesh ... for the life of the world”

John 6:63

“the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life”

This chapter is perhaps the clearest exposition of the purpose statement.

The sign of bread leads to the promise of life.

VI. Life as Light and Sight (John 8–9)

The sign of healing the blind man becomes a living parable of spiritual life.

John 8:12

“the Light of life”

Spiritual life includes:

- illumination
- revelation
- sight

John 9

The physical restoration of sight points to spiritual awakening.

The blind man progressively comes to faith.

This is life dawning in the soul.

VII. Life as the Good Shepherd (John 10)

This section beautifully develops life in relational terms.

John 10:10

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”

This is one of the most important life verses in John.

Not mere existence.

abundant spiritual life

John 10:27–28

“I give eternal life to them”

Life here is inseparable from:

- hearing His voice
 - following Him
 - security in His hand
-

VIII. Life Displayed in Resurrection Power (John 11)

The raising of Lazarus is the climactic sign.

It visibly demonstrates the life-giving purpose of the Gospel.

John 11:25

“I am the resurrection and the life”

This is the summit of the life theme.

Jesus does not merely perform resurrection.

He is resurrection life embodied.

John 11:26

“everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die”

This sign is the clearest historical demonstration of **John 20:31**.

A dead man comes forth alive.

The sign visibly proclaims the spiritual reality John wants readers to receive.

IX. Life Through Christ’s Death (John 12)**John 12:24**

“unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies...”

Life comes through sacrificial death.

This prepares for the cross.

Spiritual life is purchased through His redemptive work.

X. Life in the Farewell Discourse (John 14–17)**John 14:6**

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life”

This is one of John’s clearest Christological declarations.

Life is inseparable from the person of Christ.

John 15:1–5

Vine and branches imagery shows life as abiding union.

Spiritual vitality flows from communion with Christ.

John 17:3

“This is eternal life, that they may know You...”

This may be John’s richest definition.

Eternal life is not merely duration.

It is **relationship with God through Christ**.

J. Sidlow Baxter: Is there anywhere a more exquisite compound of infinite profundity and lingual simplicity? Was there ever a sublimer subject more ingenuously interpreted? But its priceless preciousness, of course, lies in its Divine revealings and spiritual values. Gleaming over its portal is the inscription: “No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”

John’s *raison d’être*, also, flashes like a torch all the way through his Gospel and finds final expression at the end: *“That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name”* (**xx. 31**). The three synoptists simply set forth the facts, and leave them to make their own impression on the reader. Not so John: all is stately selected and directed to the securing of a **verdict**. He is concerned not only with the facts but with the issues.

The Ultimate Closer – The choice is yours: Reception of Christ or Rejection – Choose Life!

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

BELIEVE AND LIVE

JESUS' SPECIAL SIGN MIRACLES POINT US TO FAITH IN HIM AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD -- WHO ALONE CAN PROVIDE SPIRITUAL LIFE

*“these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;
and that believing you may have life in His name.” 20:31*

(1:1-51) INTRODUCTION OF JESUS AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD

- A. (:1-18) Incarnation of the Word of God / Prologue
- B. (:19-34) Identification of the Lamb of God by John the Baptist
- C. (:35-51) Introduction of the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of Israel, the Son of Man to some key disciples

I. (2:1 – 12:50) PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE JEWS: PERFORMANCE OF 7 SPECIAL SIGN MIRACLES (WITH REACTION / ACCOMPANYING TEACHING) SETTING FORTH THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST – CULMINATING IN REJECTION

A. 2:1-11 SIGN MIRACLE #1 -- JESUS FIRST MANIFESTED HIS GLORY IN SATISFYING THE HEART OF MAN WITH THE WINE OF NEW COVENANT LIFE AND FULLNESS OF JOY

REACTION / ACCOMPANYING TEACHING:

2:12-25 Passion for true spiritual worship leads to intense conflict with materialistic opportunism

3:1-21 Entrance into the kingdom of God is only by the new birth:

- Accomplished by the Holy Spirit
- Appropriated by faith

3:22-36 Christ can legitimately offer men eternal life by virtue of the divine validation of the superiority of His person and ministry (as testified to by John the Baptist)

4:1-26 Opportunistic evangelism offers the free gift of Spirit produced life, awakens a sense of spiritual need and recruits genuine worshipers

4:26 CLAIM OF CHRIST: SUMMARY: I AM (THE MESSIAH)

4:27-42 Opportunistic evangelism pays off

B. (4:43-54) SIGN MIRACLE #2 -- EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL MUST HUMBLY TAKE JESUS AT HIS WORD TO EXPERIENCE THE REWARDS OF FAITH

C. (5:1-18) SIGN MIRACLE #3 -- JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS SUPREMACY OVER LEGALISM AND HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD THE FATHER (THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST -- AS EQUAL WITH THE FATHER -- AND THE MOTIVATION OF MERCY TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER A LEGALISTIC SPIRIT)

REACTION / ACCOMPANYING TEACHING:

5:19-30 Christ manifests equal authority to God the Father in both the realm of life and the realm of judgment

5:31-47 Credible witnesses support Christ's claims before the Jewish religious leaders

D. (6:1-15) SIGN MIRACLE #4 -- THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE CAN ABUNDANTLY SATISFY ANY PHYSICAL NEED DESPITE THE APPARENT LACK OF PHYSICAL RESOURCES

E. (6:16-21) SIGN MIRACLE #5 -- THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE SHOULD CALM ALL FEARS AND ACCOMPLISH ALL OBJECTIVES

REACTION / ACCOMPANYING TEACHING:

6:22-40 Only the Bread of Life can satisfy for all eternity

6:35ff CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

6:41-59 The Bread of Heaven will only be received by hearts prepared by God the Father

6:60-71 Full security for the chosen few but no easy believism for true disciples

7:1-36 The key to spiritual discernment is inward righteousness reflected in our commitment to obedience and in our sensitivity to the will of God

Result = truly seeking the glory of God

7:37-53 The unique and lofty claims of Christ stir up division and bigoted opposition

8:1-11 Jesus will never endorse a spirit of hypocritical condemnation

8:12-20 When it comes to the veracity of the claims of Christ there is no higher court of appeal than the Godhead

8:12 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

8:18, 24, 28 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE TRUE WITNESS

8:21-30 Despite repeated revelation, the identity of Jesus remains an enigma to those blinded by sin

8:31-59 Pretender disciples quickly turn hostile when challenged regarding their bondage to sin and regarding their dishonoring of Christ

8:58 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM GREATER THAN ABRAHAM

F. (9:1-41) SIGN MIRACLE #6 -- OPENING THE EYES OF THE BLIND CAN ONLY BE A WORK OF GOD

REACTION / ACCOMPANYING TEACHING:

10:1-21 Only the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep

10:7, 9 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

10:11-24 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

10:22-42 The good works of Christ substantiate His claim to Deity

G. (11:1-44) SIGN MIRACLE #7 -- RESURRECTION (THE ULTIMATE SIGN MIRACLE) DEMONSTRATES BOTH THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE VALUE JESUS PLACES ON FAITH

11:25 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

REACTION / ACCOMPANYING TEACHING:

11:45-57 The redemptive sacrifice of Christ on behalf of His people is planned out in prophetic irony by His chief enemies

12:1-11 Costly demonstrations of genuine devotion to Christ can take priority over ongoing responsibilities of charitable giving

12:12-19 Welcoming Christ as King can be a shallow lip service spectacle with minimal understanding and zero commitment

12:20-36 Only the sacrificial death of the Son of Man can produce life for all men who believe

12:37-50 The revelation of the Father via the light of His Son cannot be received by eyes that are blinded and hearts that are hardened

II. (13:1 – 17:26) PRIVATE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE DISCIPLES AND INTERCESSION BEFORE THE FATHER

A. (13:1-17) Serving one another: Motivated by love, believers need to humble themselves as servants after the pattern of Christ and do their part to seek the ongoing sanctification of one another

B. (13:18-38) Agape Love is the Christian standard for discipleship loyalty and the revealing benchmark for faithless betrayal

13:19 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE FULFILLMENT OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

C. (14:1-51) Reassurance

1. (14:1-14) Our hearts need the reassurance that our faith in Christ securely connects us to God the Father

14:6 CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE

2. (14:15-31) Despite His imminent departure, Christ promises ongoing revelation / illumination to those who demonstrate their love by obedience

D. (15:1-17) Fruit bearing: Fruit bearing results from abiding in Christ

15:1ff CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM THE TRUE VINE

E. (15:18 – 16:6) Persecution: Remembering the encouraging prophetic words of Christ makes persecution more palatable

F. (16:7-33) Ministry of the Holy Spirit

1. (16:7-15) The Holy Spirit effectively communicates God's truth on a wider scale to both the world and to believers

2. (16:16-33) Seeing Jesus by faith connects us to divine love, joy and peace

G. (17:1-26) Intercession: For the ultimate goal of mutual divine glorification, Jesus petitions the Father for the unity and security of the elect (particularly the apostles) while they carry out their mission in an unfriendly world

17:14ff CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM NOT OF THIS WORLD

III. (18:1 – 20:29) DRAMATIC KEY EVENTS: ARREST, TRIAL, CRUCIFIXION, BURIAL, RESURRECTION, APPEARANCES

A. (18:1-11) Arrest: The great majestic “I AM” voluntarily surrenders to the powerless arresting party guided by traitorous Judas

18:5ff CLAIM OF CHRIST: I AM (USED IN ABSOLUTE SENSE)

B. (18:12 – 19:16) Trial

1. (18:12-27) The frightened disciples hide and deny while Jesus testifies openly
He has nothing to hide

2. (18:28-19:16) Neutrality is not an option when it comes to checking out the claims of Christ and passing judgment

C. (19:17-30) Crucifixion: The crucifixion of Jesus fulfilled every OT prophecy down to the smallest detail and demonstrated the absolute sovereignty of God

D. (19:31-42) Burial: Prophetic fulfillment and dedicated devotion continues as Jesus’ body is prepared for burial

E. (20:1-18) Resurrection: The empty tomb is a powerful witness to the bodily resurrection of Christ – especially when interpreted by the appearance of Christ Himself!

E. (20:19-29) Appearances: The risen Lord offers us the opportunity to believe before we see

(20:30-31) THEME: JESUS' SPECIAL SIGN MIRACLES POINT US TO FAITH IN HIM AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD -- WHO ALONE CAN PROVIDE SPIRITUAL LIFE

(21:1-25) EPILOGUE – 2 KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GREAT COMMISSION: EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

A. (21:1-14) Evangelism: The final appearance of the resurrected Christ reinforces the necessity for total dependence upon the Master for supernatural results

B. (21:15-25) Discipleship: Each undershepherd must passionately and personally follow the Great Shepherd and care for the sheep

TEXT: John 1:1-18

TITLE: THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

THE INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL GOD IN THE PERSON OF THE WORD REVEALS THE ESSENCE OF GOD AND OFFERS SPIRITUAL LIFE THROUGH FAITH AND THE DYNAMIC OF GOD'S SOVEREIGN INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION:

God became Flesh! Why??

How can finite man with all of his limitations ever come to know the eternal God in all of His glory? How can the creation have any type of knowledge of and relationship with its Creator? How is spiritual life formed in man? What is different about God's supreme revelation in His Son as opposed to His revelation in the OT law? What is the role of faith in becoming a child of God?

I. (:1-3) THE WORD CO-EXISTED AS GOD FROM ALL ETERNITY AND CO-PARTICIPATED IN THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS

A. Significance of the Name = "*The Word*"

Ryrie: "Revelation is the keynote idea in the *logos* concept."

Stedman: The first thing John wants us to understand is that Jesus was God. First, he was the Word of God: In the beginning was the Word." The "*Word*" here is the Greek word, *logos*, which means the same as our word, W-O-R-D. What is a word, anyway? A word is an audible or a visual expression of a thought. Thoughts are incommunicable until they are put into words. . . . When Jesus was among us as a man he expressed what was going on in the mind of God. He told us the thoughts of God. He was God's utterance on earth, unveiling to us what Paul calls "*that secret and hidden wisdom of God,*" {cf, 1 Cor 2:7}

B. (:1-2) Co-Existed as God from all Eternity

1. Existence from before Time

"In the beginning was the Word"

Heb. 1:1-2; Rev. 1:8, 17

2. Existence in Conjunction with God

"and the Word was with God"

pros = face to face with God; intimate fellowship

3. Identity of the Word as God
“*and the Word was God*”

Classic text for proving the deity of Christ; a major problem for cults; they try to twist this around

Stedman: Finally, John makes the blunt statement, "*And that Word was God.*" No doubt about it! Jehovah's Witnesses and Unitarians deny this great truth that Jesus was God. But there is no other translation of this statement possible without violating the laws of Greek grammar and the theological statements of other Scriptures. If we say, as the Jehovah's Witnesses want us to say, "Jesus was a God," then we are introducing the whole realm of polytheism, multiple gods. But if there is only one God and Jesus was a God, then he was the God. That is what John affirms right at the beginning of his gospel.

4. Summary / Repetition
“*He was in the beginning with God.*”

C. (:3) Co-Participated in the Creation of All Things – Source of All Life

1. Stated Positively

“*All things came into being through Him,*”

2. Stated Negatively

“*and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being*”

Col. 1:16; cf. the importance of creation as God’s general revelation to all mankind

Morris: “The relation of the first two Persons of the Trinity in the work of creation is of interest. There is a careful differentiation of the parts played by the Father and the Son in 1 Cor. 8:6. Creation was not the solitary act of either. Both were at work (and for that matter, still are; cf. 5:17, 19). The Father created, but He did it ‘*through*’ the Word.”

II. (:4-9) THE LIGHT CAME INTO THE WORLD TO BEAR TESTIMONY TO MEN ABOUT TRUE SPIRITUAL LIFE

A. (:4) Relationship Between Life and Light

“*In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.*”

Ryrie: “These are two words especially associated with John (8:12; 9:5; 11:25; 14:6). ‘*Light*’ in John implies revelation that discloses the ‘*life*’ that is in Christ and brings into judgment those who refuse it (3:19). ‘*Life*’ denotes salvation and deliverance, based on Christ’s atonement.”

Stedman: Light here is a symbol of knowledge, of understanding, of truth

Hendriksen: “the term [life] refers to the fullness of God’s essence, his glorious attributes: holiness, truth (knowledge, wisdom, veracity), love, omnipotence, sovereignty.”

B. (:5) Relationship Between Light and Darkness

1. Active Function of the Light

“The light shines in the darkness”

2. Unresponsiveness of the Darkness -- 3 Possibilities:

a. *“the darkness did not comprehend it”*

Emphasizes lack of understanding of the light ... which is true

b. *“the darkness did not overcome it”*

Emphasizes lack of victory over the light ... which is true

Piper: (Some translations say "have not understood it." But the one other place John uses this Greek word, not counting 8:3,4, is in John 12:35 which says, "*Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you.*") This is what I would call the "invincibility of light". It is not overcome. So you could label verse 5: "Light is triumphant over darkness." ...

The darkness is the world of evil and unbelief and death and judgment...

When you believe in Jesus not only do you leave the darkness and enter the light; you actually join the family of the light — you become children of the light. Paul said, "*Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light*" (Eph. 5:8).

c. Most likely: *“the darkness did not appropriate it”*

Emphasizes lack of responsiveness to the light which seems to be the emphasis in this context.

Stedman: This word means that the darkness cannot get hold of the light, cannot appropriate it, cannot possess it, cannot apprehend it.

C. (:6-8) Witness of John the Baptist to the Light

1. (:6) Sent by God

“There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.”

Piper: It didn't have to be this way. God could have caused the light of Christ to spread in some other way. He could have done it with angels. He could have written the gospel in the sky with big puffy white letters made out of clouds. He could have caused the wind to talk. But instead God chose to call and send human beings to bear witness to the light.

2. (:7) Came on a Mission

“He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might

believe through him.”

3. (:8) Not to be Confused with the Light

“He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.”

D. (:9) Witness of the True Light to the True Life

“There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”

But not all men respond to that light and that opportunity afforded to them.

This phrase could refer to the effectual calling of just the elect (so that “*every man*” would have a limited frame of reference). But more likely it refers to the general light shed by the preaching of the gospel which centers in the person of Christ ... irregardless of how people respond to that light.

III. (:10-13) SPIRITUAL BIRTH DEPENDS ON RECEPTION BY FAITH FACILITATED BY THE DYNAMIC OF GOD’S SOVEREIGN INITIATIVE

A. (:10-11) Spiritual Blindness Obscures the Clear Testimony of Christ

1. The Creation Failed to Acknowledge its Creator

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”

2. The Jews Failed to Receive Their Promised Messiah

“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”

B. (:12) Faith Opens the Door for All to Inclusion in the Family of God

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

Piper: The “*name*” simply emphasizes the full stature and dignity and authority of the person.

C. (:13) Spiritual Birth Depends on the Dynamic of God’s Sovereign Initiative

1. Not on Ethnic or Family Heritage

“who were born, not of blood”

2. Not on the Accomplishments or Merit or even the Will of Man

“nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man”

3. Only on the Sovereign God

“but of God”

We can only choose Him because He has first chosen us in His sovereign grace. The new birth depends ultimately on God. Then we respond in repentance and faith and continue to grow in our faith and our relationship with Him.

IV. (:14-18) THE WORD BECAME FLESH TO FULLY REVEAL GOD (IN BOTH GRACE AND TRUTH – SUBJECTIVELY AS WELL AS OBJECTIVELY)

A. (:14a) The Reality of the Incarnation

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”

tabernacled, pitched His tent among us

B. (:14b) The Revelation of the Incarnation

“and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”

C. (:15-17) The Supremacy of the Revelation

1. Supreme over the Revelation of John the Baptist

“John testified about Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

2. Supreme in its Fullness

“For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace”

Stedman: God has a daily supply of grace for us. Grace is the generosity of love reaching out toward us, giving itself to us. To those who come to Christ, God's promise is that every day we can take a new supply of his love. We can know that we are loved. We know we are cherished, protected, and blessed. We are strengthened, kept, and supported by his love; grace upon grace, day after day, like the manna to the Israelites in the wilderness. So God gives us a daily supply of love. Because we have been loved, when we reach out in love to someone else, when we give as fully and freely as we have received, then we fulfill the Law, for love is the fulfilling of the Law.

3. Supreme over the Revelation of the OT Law

“For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”

Piper: Does that mean that the law of Moses is contrary to grace and truth — that the law is not gracious and not truthful? I don't think so. What verse 17 says is that before the REALITY — the embodiment — of grace and truth came through Jesus, a WITNESS to that reality came through the law of Moses. ... The law was a witness to grace and truth. Jesus was the fulfillment not the contradiction of the law of Moses.

D. (:18) The Uniqueness of the Revelation

“No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained Him.”

- level of accuracy
- level of detail
- personal involvement

Christ solves the fundamental problem: If God is invisible and can't be seen, how can we know Him?

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why didn't John start his gospel with the birth of Christ if he was so interested in explaining the incarnation? How is the emphasis of his gospel different from that of Matthew, Mark and Luke?
- 2) Do we understand our mission in the same sense that John the Baptist understood his mission? Do we view ourselves as sent by God? What kind of testimony do we have to the light? Now that we have the life of Jesus within us, in what sense are we the light of the world?
- 3) If the glory of Christ was veiled in the incarnation (per Philippians 2), in what sense did the disciples "see His glory"?
- 4) How encouraging is it to reflect on the richness of God's grace that is being made available to us on a daily basis? Do we really have a sense of being showered with the *fullness* of God's grace?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: First, the light of life has energy and power because the life of the Son has energy and power. Second, the light of life has purpose and motion. It is not static like a lamppost or a lighthouse on the shore. It plans and moves. It shines now here now there. It is alive with the life of the Son. Third, the light of life grows and expands. That is the way the Life of the Son of God is. His life is a fountain of life (Psalm 36:9). Once the rays start coming out of this light they extend farther and farther and farther. Fourth, the Light of life begets offspring. John 12:36, "*Believe in the light, that you may become sons of the light.*"

Piper:
Receiving Jesus means that when Jesus offers himself to you, you welcome him into your life for what he is.

- If he comes to you as Savior, you welcome his salvation.
- If he comes to you as Leader, you welcome his leadership.

If he comes to you as Provider, you welcome his provision.
If he comes to you as Counselor, you welcome his counsel.
If he comes to you as Protector you welcome his protection.
If he comes to you as Authority, you welcome his authority.
If he comes to you as King, you welcome his rule.

Receiving Jesus means taking Jesus into your life for what he is. It does not mean a kind of peaceful co-existence with a Christ who makes no claims — as though he can stay in the house as long as he doesn't play his music so loud.

Stedman: Here is the first hint in this gospel of the struggle between belief and unbelief in the world. John has said that Jesus is the light of men; i.e., Jesus is the source of understanding of reality. He is the basis of the knowledge of truth. We live in a confused, and confusing, world that has little understanding of reality. John declares that it is only in the light of Jesus that men begin to see things the way they are -- to see life the way God sees it, which is the way life really is.

Stedman:

First, that new birth is "not of blood." That means, not by inheritance, not by human ancestry. You cannot get into the kingdom of God, or be born into the family of God, by being raised in a Christian family. You can be a member of a family, every one of whom is Christian except you, but that does not make you a Christian. You can grow up in a Christian home, attend a Christian school, spend all your life involved in Christian activities, but until you are born again you are not a Christian. You are not saved by Christian parents or Christian grandparents or by being born in a Christian country.

Second, the new birth is "not of the will." It is not by determining to be a Christian that you become a Christian. You cannot make yourself one. You cannot talk yourself into being a Christian. You cannot study Christians, act like them, join their church and sing their hymn and go through all the Christian externals and become a Christian. You cannot do it. It is "not of the will." It is not by positive thinking or possibility thinking that you become a Christian. It is only, as we will see, by a new birth.

Third, the new birth is "not of the will of man." It is not by the efforts of others. Nobody can make you a Christian; no bishop, no archbishop, no priest, no one can make you a Christian. You cannot come by a ceremony, by reading a creed, by standing up or sitting down, by going forward or by kneeling at a bench. That does not make you a Christian.

Hendriksen: "A word serves two distinct purposes: a. it gives expression to the inner thought, the soul of the man, doing this even though no one else is present to hear what is said or to read what is thought; and b. it reveals this thought (hence, the soul of the speaker) to others. Christ is *the Word of God* in both respects; he expresses or reflects the mind of God; also, he reveals God to man (1:18; cf. Matt. 11:27; Heb. 1:3).

Hendriksen: “Our own experience as believers enables us to bear testimony with reference to this plenitude that is in Christ, for out of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace, like the waves that follow one another upon the seashore, one taking the place of another constantly. The law, which was given through Moses, was unable to supply this fullness of grace and truth. Though good in itself, it was unable to save. It made demands, but did not possess the pardoning and enabling grace needed by sinners, who are confronted by these demands. It provided types and shadows (e.g., in its sacrifices) but never the reality (truth). This grace and this truth came through Jesus Christ, who by his redeeming life and death merited the grace and furnished the reality (truth) to which the types and shadows of the Mosaic law had been pointing.”

Wiersbe:

- Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word
- He is also the Creative Word
- Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Word

Cobb: Why did God become flesh?

- to give us an example
- to leave men with no excuse
- to enable us to relate to God; Jesus can understand us fully
- fulfillment of prophecy
- needed to become flesh in order to offer Himself as the Lamb of God

TEXT: John 1:19-34

TITLE: *THE WITNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST:
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ME AND HE*

BIG IDEA:

JOHN THE BAPTIST FULFILLS HIS MISSION OF IDENTIFYING JESUS AS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

INTRODUCTION: (:19a) MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST – GOD’S APPOINTED SPOKESMAN

- Fulfilling his mission as a witness, a forerunner – pointing others to Christ
“And this is the witness of John”
- Attracting the attention of the most significant religious leaders
“when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem”
- Addressing the fundamental question ... of the ages ... of the Gospel of John

Matthew Henry: “proud, self-justiciaries, that thought they needed no repentance, and therefore could not bear one that made it his business to preach repentance.”

Matthew Henry: Their motivation for this inquiry of John:

1. To satisfy their curiosity ...
2. It was to show their authority. They thought that they looked great when they called him to account, whom all men counted as a prophet, and arraigned him at their bar . . .
3. It was with a design to suppress him and silence him . . .

Matthew 11:11 *“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”*

Don’t overlook the greatness of John the Baptist

I. (:19b-27) WHO ARE YOU?

“I AM NOT THE CHRIST”

A. Defining Your Identity

1. Defined Negatively – Who John is not: *“and he confessed and did not deny”*
 - a. Not the Christ

Did not put on any false airs; there were other false Messiahs who were out to deceive and gain honor for themselves

Boice: “The Jews were a people living under the dominion of Rome and they were looking with great expectation for their deliverer, as any captive people do.”

b. Not Elijah – Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 16:13-14

c. Not the Prophet – Deut 18

2. Pressed for a more definitive answer

*“Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us?
What do you say about yourself?”*

3. Defined Positively = Fulfillment of Isaiah’s Prophecy

“a voice of one” – significant that *“the Word”* would be testified to by *“a voice”*

- *“crying in the wilderness”* – a very isolated, peculiar, striking testimony; earnestness; intensity

- *“making straight the way for the Lord”* – calling sinners to repentance; highlighting the gap between sinners and a holy Lord

Morris: “The imagery is that of preparing a roadway by clearing away the obstacles. This was an important process in ancient times, especially for roads in the wilderness country.”

and especially in preparation for the arrival of the king

B. Defining Your Role / Function / Ministry

1. Facing Confrontation / Opposition / Persecution from the beginning

“Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him, ‘Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?’”

- evidently John was an effective communicator ... they had gotten the message

- evidently baptizing implied authority in their minds

- gives us a glimpse into their eschatological expectations

- what do we learn immediately about the Pharisees?

2. Significance of Baptizing Only in Water – *“I baptize in water”*

Huge distinction from the Ministry of Christ

Symbolism of Water Baptism – points to the Holy Spirit – cf. John 3; spiritual purification from the defilement of sin and power of new life of righteousness

Westcott: “The obvious symbolism of the rite – already adopted, as it seems, at the reception of proselytes – as marking spiritual defilement in the chosen people, would make it distasteful to legalists. It was however connected with the work of Messiah, Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Isai. lii. 15; Zech. xiii. 1. Comp. Heb. x. 22.”

3. Significance of the Familiar as Opposed to the Inscrutable
“among you stands One whom you do not know”

C. Defining Your Relationship to Christ = Subservient / Humble

“It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

TRANSITION (:28)

- Location: *“These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan”*
- Ministry Activity: *“where John was baptizing”*

Westcott: Bethany may mean “the house of the boat” as Bethabara “the house of the passage,” both equally marking the site of a ferry or ford across the Jordan.”

Matthew Henry: “some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel-state by Jesus Christ.”

Hendriksen: “about thirteen miles below the Sea of Galilee and about twenty miles south-east of Nazareth” (He rejects the southern location view just north of the Dead Sea)

II. (:29-34) WHO IS JESUS?

HE IS THE CHRIST!

A. Defining His Identity

1. The Lamb of God – *“Behold the Lamb of God”*
collective reference to OT sacrificial system; cf. Hebrews
2. The Son of God – key theme in the book
3. Supreme in Rank – *“After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I”*
4. Eternally Existent – *“for He existed before me”*

B. Defining His Role / Function / Ministry

1. Redeemer – *“who takes away the sin of the world”*
something that John the Baptist could not do for anybody
2. Messiah – *“in order that He might be manifested to Israel”*
(as the promised Messiah)
Crucial role of John the Baptist in making Christ manifest in this way through his testimony
3. Baptizing in the Holy Spirit (as opposed to *“baptizing in water”*)
crucial ministry distinction

C. Defining His Relationship to the Triune God

1. Sent by God the Father and Marked with His Approval –
“I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him”

Symbolism of dove: purity, gentleness, graciousness; a theophany of the Spirit

“Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased”

2. Not Recognized by Men – “*and I did not recognize Him*”

(repeated vs. 31, 33)

3. Marked out as Authentic and Powerful by the Spirit of God

“*He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What do we learn about the nature of the Pharisees from this passage? How do they approach Christ? What are their motivations and intentions?

2) How important is our testimony to the Lord? How can we point others back to the Lamb of God just as John the Baptist pointed them forward? What can we learn about our mission to be a witness from this passage?

3) What is the significance of us having been baptized by Christ in the Holy Spirit?

4) Why was John the Baptist unable to recognize who Jesus was on his own?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Boice: “You cannot see a voice. You can only hear it. No one looks much at the workman who is only preparing the road for the coming of the king. Yet, this was what John the Baptist declared himself to be: a voice and a workman. The last thing in the world that he wanted was for men to look at him. ...

we must go on from this point to see that our recognizing that we are not the Light is not in itself witnessing. That is only the first and preliminary principle. The second great principle for witnessing is that we must bear witness to the Light, and this means that we must witness verbally. Our witness must move out of the area of life and into the area of words... A verbal witness is a true witness. Thus, throughout the Gospel of John, the stories of those who are reached by Jesus Christ almost without exception end with a spoken profession of their belief.”

Tasker: “It was a voice both stern and comforting. It cried out in the wilderness of the world’s need and pointed men to Him who alone can satisfy it; but it also called upon them to prepare the way for His coming by removing all that was crooked in their

conduct and narrow in their outlook, like men turning a winding, narrow track in the desert into a royal highway, broad and straight.”

Paul Decker: John challenges us to hear the word of a prophet.

One thing for sure.

John was not offering “Gospel Lite.”

He was not interested in presenting a message that “tasted great” and was “less filling.”

He was a prophet—a prophet Old Testament-style.

He was a prophet that didn’t mince words when people’s destiny was at stake.

They needed to hear.

They needed to hear the word of a prophet,

They needed to hear the Word of God.

And so do we...

We need to hear the same message he gave then.

He was a voice with something to say—one thing to say. . .

Jesus was going to introduce the Holy Spirit to the world.

The Holy Spirit gives us life.

The Holy Spirit cleanses us from the filthiness of our sin.

The Holy Spirit creates a wholeness within us, because He comes into us as our possession.

Not only that, He claims us as His possession.

The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside and writes God’s law on our heart.

And when He does that, He directs us, so that we might know the will of God in our lives.

Edward Frey: After all, lambs are helpless creatures. They’re born virtually defenseless. Lambs also tend to be awkward and clumsy. They seem to have a knack for getting into trouble. Why in the world would John refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God? Could it be that he was implying that Jesus was weak or unimpressive? No. The opposite is true. This was actually a prestigious title, which John the Baptist had given. To appreciate the significance means we must understand how the Jewish people perceived a lamb. God had given the lamb a special place in the mind of all Israelites. For the Jews the lamb carried religious connotations. The lamb was one of the animals used to symbolize the forgiveness of sins; that God would make atonement with all people, setting the world “at-one” with him.

Already, in the Old Testament, the lamb carried this special meaning. Lambs played an important part in the Passover meal, commemorating how God delivered Israel from Egypt and from death. In fact, the word “lamb” became synonymous with the Savior. Isaiah uses the word in his prophecy concerning the Messiah: “He was led like a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7).

God promised he would send one who would come to be our Savior, to carry our sins for us. And one day while on the bank of the Jordan River, John saw that one who was revealed to him by God. He saw Jesus, and he gave him the title, “Lamb of God.” John knew that this was God’s Lamb; this was his sacrifice for us. That’s a prestigious title no one else could dare hold.

In a culture that sacrificed lambs twice a day in the temple, John's words were a kiss of death. "Here is the Lamb of God" also means, "Look, everyone, here's the one that is going to be sacrificed." Suddenly, the title might not seem all that prestigious. Yet, as we understand the work of the Lamb of God, we see that this name is prestigious it is honorable. John says that this lamb, Jesus, is the one who takes away the sins of the world. Do you understand the all-important work this Lamb accomplishes? He takes away the sins of the whole world! Literally, he rips us off. He actually steals away our collective and individual sins, prying them from us.

Jeremy Houck: Often we turn to scriptures to prove without a doubt the essentiality of Baptism, and in the very same scriptures we see words about the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and just glaze over them. In fact when you think about God's promises that we encounter at Baptism it seems that there are two primary works going on: cleansing and empowerment.

We understand because of the tie to the cross and the resurrection that we can be buried and resurrected with Him. Then we start a brand new life, and we are cleansed and our sins are washed away. But we also need to grasp the idea that at Baptism I am empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life that I could not live on my own.

The Holy Spirit is not optional equipment. It's not like when you are picking out a car and you say, "I think that I would like to add a sunroof, and a CD player on this car so that it will be a little nicer." It comes standard, on all Christians. Paul says if you don't have the Holy Spirit you don't have Christ in your life. So we must restore a clear teaching of what happens at our Baptism and the power that is available to us when we come to the Lord.

Looking at 6 things that the Spirit does for us as believers:

- 1) The Holy Spirit Sanctifies us -- 1 Peter 1:2
- 2) The Holy Spirit Strengthens us -- Ephesians 3:16
- 3) The Holy Spirit Empowers Us To Overcome Sin -- Romans 8:13
- 4) The Holy Spirit Helps Us In Our Prayers. -- Romans 8:26
- 5) The Holy Spirit Produces Fruit -- Galatians 5:22-23
- 6) The Holy Spirit Guarantees us Heaven -- Ephesians 1: 14

TEXT: John 1:35-51

TITLE: JOY OF DISCOVERY

BIG IDEA:

THE JOY OF DISCOVERY RENEWS THE CYCLE OF TESTIMONY --

WITNESS REGARDING CHRIST LEADS OTHERS TO THE JOY OF DISCOVERY (WHILE RENEWING OUR JOY) AND PROMPTS NEW WITNESSING (ON THE PART OF EVERYONE)

INTRODUCTION:

Think about your greatest find in life – your best story of something special that you found or a discovery that you made; describe your emotions, your response, what did you do?

What must it be like to be a prospector who finds gold or hits oil?

Prov. 3:13-18 – talks about the joy of those who find wisdom

(substitute “Jesus” for “wisdom” and reread this passage)

We know that the Lord Jesus Christ is wisdom personified. Think about our joy in discovering Jesus initially and in discovering new insight and growing day-by-day.

Remember the bumper sticker used for evangelism a long time ago = “I found it!”

Examine the Cycle of Testimony:

Godet: “One lighted torch serves to light another”

(At the same time trace a separate theme = Christ calling His special disciples; His insight into the nature of men; the different types He chose; How He dealt with each man in a unique way)

I. (:35-36) THE INITIAL WITNESS REGARDING CHRIST BY JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. Witnessing was a regular activity for John the Baptist

"was standing" -- (force of imperfect) -- probably some particular spot where he customarily preached and called people to repent of their sins and be baptized (**Ryle**)

B. John's Goal in Witnessing was to Produce Long-term, Permanent Commitment -- Changed Lives -- Not just temporary emotional response

"with two of his disciples"

C. As the God-Appointed Forerunner of the Messiah, His focus was always on Christ and how he could point others to faith in Him
He wanted others to check Christ out for themselves--encouraged active investigation

"and he looked upon Jesus as He walked and said, "Behold ..."

he was not seeking a following for himself; he was happiest when Christ was increasing and he was decreasing; no spirit of rivalry or jealousy here; faithful in fulfilling His God appointed role

D. His Witness Was Sourced in God's Revelation to Him *"the lamb of God"*

this is an abbreviated summary of his testimony in 1:19-34
John the Baptist was a channel for communicating God's revelation;
not an originator of speculative theories

Significance of this designation

One reason why we don't witness as we should = lack of joy --
we perpetuate this cycle of testimony in reverse

II. (:3-40) THE JOY OF DISCOVERY -- JOHN AND ANDREW -- WHAT A PRIVILEGE

A. The Privilege of Seeking

1. Requires Action in response to God's Revelation (thru John the B.)
they were attentive and responded with decisive faith action

"heard him speak and they followed Jesus"

Note that the huge movement that is known today as Christianity
had its beginnings with just a few disciples

2. Requires Awareness on the part of Christ regarding genuine seekers

3. Requires Acknowledgment of One's Need & of the Sufficiency
of Christ

"what are you seeking"

not "Whom are you seeking" because they were already focused in
on Christ

but "What do you want me to do for you?"

the removal of their sin by this Lamb of God
the perfect teacher and master

Stedman: I have always been fascinated by the questions God asks of man. These four words go right to the heart of life. In them Jesus asks the most profound question in anyone's life: "What are you looking for?" Did you ever ask yourself, "Why am I here? What do I really want out of life?" That is the most penetrating question you can ask yourself.

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
for they shall be filled"*

B. The Privilege of Access (:38b-39)

probably they desired some private time for extended inquiry;
really asking What is the secret of your spiritual life and power
(Harrison)

Stedman: Jesus' response shows how well he understood Andrew. He said to him, "*Come and see.*" That is an invitation to investigate. "Come and find out. Take your time; ask what you want; make up your own mind." What a tremendous response to the kind of men that John and Andrew are! They are men who need time, men who do not move quickly; they need to investigate. Our Lord is instantly responsive to that need. I know men like that today. You cannot push them, or drive them; they need time to make up their minds. All they need is an invitation to investigate.

cf. the Book of Hebrews; we don't realize the privilege we have

we need to make the most of our opportunity of access

sometimes we come to Christ with wrong expectations or seeking
the wrong thing

where did they think Jesus was staying? in some fancy, royal
palace? (certainly they were accustomed to humble surroundings
with John the Baptist -- their concern was sincerity and reality)

C. The Privilege of Fellowship -- The Joy of Discovery

"they stayed with Him that day" -- imagine how their hearts must
have burned within them like the 2 disciples on the road to
Emmaus (Lk. 24:32)

Note how testimony must be accompanied by the testimony of Christ
(in our case the internal witness of the Holy Spirit -- no man can come
to the Father unless Christ draws him to Himself)

III. (:40-41) THE PROMPTING OF NEW WITNESSING BY ANDREW TO HIS BROTHER

those who have been found and have experienced the Joy of Discovering Christ should naturally and enthusiastically seek out others to introduce to Christ

cf. the enthusiasm of little children when they share some new discovery

"we have found the Messiah"- tone of unexpected, joyful discovery

IV. (:42) THE JOY OF DISCOVERY "You are ... You shall be"

Simon Peter receives the hope and vision of what God's grace will accomplish in his character and role in life

A new cycle starts on the next day

V. (:43-44) THE INITIAL WITNESS OF CHRIST TO PHILIP

very simple, clear, concise, authoritative *"Follow Me"*

we are really the ones found by Christ. It is His initiative.
"We love Him because He first loved us."

"of the city of Andrew and Peter" -- their testimony had prepared him to respond to Christ

VI. (:44-45) THE JOY OF DISCOVERY

Jesus, still at Bethany beyond the Jordan, decided to cross over to the western shores of the Jordan and to proceed from there to Galilee.

word order of the Greek -- very first word is a reference to the Messiah; last word is *"Nazareth"* -- these two concepts were self-contradictory to Nathaniel; inconsequential character of the place (Wyclif)

VII. (:45-46) THE PROMPTING OF NEW WITNESSING BY PHILIP TO NATHANAEL

Explanation of Nathaniel's almost scornful response:

- 1) caused by cross-town rivalry
- 2) what prophecy is there that relates the Messiah to Nazareth?

VIII. (:47-51) THE JOY OF DISCOVERY (DESPITE INITIAL SKEPTICISM)

Christ had in mind the cunning of Jacob -- Gen. 27:35 Isaac says to Esau, "*Thy brother came with guile, and has taken away thy blessing*"

this use of trickery for selfish advantage had become so charac. of the Jews that Jesus expressed his amazement at meeting a really honest and sincere Israelite

both in this instance and in the case of the woman at the well in John 4, the Lord's perfect knowledge of the secret things of the individual was the turning point (**Ryle**)

what are these "*greater things*" ? (**Hendriksen**)

the recognition that Jesus is not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man; hence the Ladder between God and man, and that he would use all his attributes for the purpose of saving the elect from every nation, to the glory of God

there must be a future fulfillment as well when Christ returns to reign; cf. Mat. 26:64 (refs. to the Book of Daniel)

Stedman: This is a reference to the dream that Jacob had centuries earlier. Jacob left his home, fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, and headed for his uncle's home in far-off Aram. At the site of the little city of Bethel (now in Israel), he had a dream. Lonely and frightened, Jacob put his head on a stone for a pillow, fell asleep, and dreamed that he saw a ladder reaching up to heaven, and on it saw the angels of God ascending and descending. Jesus said to Nathanael, "You are going to understand that dream when you learn of me. You will learn that I am the way to God for man, and the way for God to reach man. I am the link, the mediator, who spans the gulf between God and man." Our Lord intended this to be understood by all his disciples. When you come to know Jesus you have found God.

ASIDE:

This whole section demonstrates Christ's ability to lead men

- 1) with Andrew and John -- the perfect, sinless Lamb of God makes Himself accessible so that people can check Him out; welcomes scrutiny of His life

- 2) with Simon Peter -- the Messiah (the anointed one)
gives people new vision and new character and capability to fulfill that vision
- 3) with Philip -- Jesus of Nazareth, the one spoken of in the OT
challenges men to follow His lead; speaks with authority
- 4) with Nathaniel -- the Son of God, the King of Israel
able to perceive and satisfy man's deepest needs

Christ refers to Himself simply as the Son of Man (:51)
(roots in Dan. 7:13 supernatural one from heaven)
preferable than "Messiah" which conjured up many false political
expectations on the part of the Jews

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we encouraging others to depend directly on the Lord or do we make disciples of ourselves and allow them to depend on too much on our personal presence and leadership? cf. the example of John the Baptist who very freely encouraged his disciples to switch their allegiance over to the Lord Jesus
- 2) How is Jesus able to provide the deepest answers to the questions of men's hearts?
"What do you seek ... Come and you will see"
- 3) Why did each individual have a slightly different testimony as to the nature and function (cf. titles used) of the person of Jesus?
- 4) Why did Jesus choose for Himself the name *"the Son of man"*?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: "Kings and the great men of the earth hedge themselves about with servants and ceremony, so that it is difficult to reach them and get speech with them; one must arrange an interview on advance to secure audience at all. Nothing is easier than to get an audience from the King of kings at once."

Lenski: "Modern criticism attacks the historical character of John's account regarding the call of these first disciples by making them contradictory to Matt. 4:18, etc., and the parallels. But these two calls are essentially different. John describes the first attachment of these six men to Jesus when he gathers them as believers; Matthew

describes a later event, the prerequisite of which John furnishes us. When these men left house, home, and their old calling in life, they already knew Jesus. John describes how they were first drawn to him.”

Westcott: “The whole section consists of a series of examples of spiritual insight. Christ reveals His power by showing His knowledge of men’s thoughts (vv. 42, 48); and the disciples recognize their Master by their experience of what He is (vv. 39, 41, 49). The incidents are a commentary on the words ‘*Come and see*’ (vv. 46, 39), and the promise with which the section closes opens the prospect of a more perfect divine vision (v. 51). The very mixture of Hebrew (Simon, Nathanael) and Greek (Andrew, Philip) names seems to indicate the representative character of this first group of disciples; and there is a progress in the confessions which they make.”

Morris: “In this chapter Jesus has been accorded several titles: the *Logos* (1), God (1), the light of men (4), the true light (9), the only begotten from the Father (14), a greater than John the Baptist (15, 26f., 30), Jesus Christ (17), the only begotten God (or Son, 18), the Lord (23), the Lamb of God (29, 36), he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit (33), probably God’s Chosen One (34), the Son of God (49), Rabbi (38, 49), the Messiah (41), he of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (45), the King of Israel (49). We may fairly comment that by recording all these John makes a beginning on the picture of the Lord that he is to paint throughout the Gospel. He wants to show Him as the Christ, and this is how he begins to do it. But one more comment is fitting. All these titles have been used by others. Jesus calls Himself simply, ‘*the Son of man*’.”

Deffinbaugh: I am inclined to think that Nathanael had been reading and meditating about Jacob, and this text in Genesis in particular, under the fig tree (not unlike the way the Ethiopian eunuch had been reading in Isaiah, just before Philip drew near to him—Acts 8:26-40). Jacob was a man in whom there was much deceit. Most of his life he schemed and manipulated to get ahead at the expense of others. Jacob was also the first “Israelite,” in that God would soon rename him “Israel” (Genesis 32:28). He was the first “Israelite, in whom there was much guile.”

Spurgeon: Do not get worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose, and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit, and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when he bids you. They are perfectly consistent. Some persons have asked me at times to reconcile these two things; and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them. . . ." There is no quarrel between them, and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come you to Christ; and if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you. If you find the Saviour, it will be because the Saviour first found you. Perhaps, in heaven, you may see some difficulties, and get them explained; down here, you need not see them, and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's grace, from first to last; yet is it true that the grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning,—to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

TEXT: John 2:1-11

TITLE: *MANIFESTATION OF GLORY – CHANGING WATER INTO WINE*

BIG IDEA:

JESUS FIRST MANIFESTED HIS GLORY IN SATISFYING THE HEART OF MAN WITH THE WINE OF NEW COVENANT LIFE AND FULLNESS OF JOY

INTRODUCTION:

What really satisfies the heart of man? cf. all of the Jewish OT expectations – looking forward to that promised Messiah who would usher in the New Covenant of new spiritual life and joy and righteousness and peace ...
cf. all of the types and shadows in the OT pointing to the reality that would come in Christ

Does water truly satisfy?? my wife would say so ... certainly enough to quench thirst; to sustain life ... but not the ultimate drink in my opinion

I. (:1-2) THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST SIGN MIRACLE = SON OF MAN AT WEDDING FEAST OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

A. Significance of the Setting = a Wedding

1. What it was not:

- Not a classroom setting – Jesus taught His most important lessons through the tapestry of experience and relationship through the good works which He performed
- Not a funeral or even a serious, somber occasion (I was just at a funeral of a dear sister last evening – a time of remembrance and of many important lessons)
- Not an achievement-oriented, task-oriented occasion

2. What it was:

- an occasion of joy; cf. eschatological wedding feast
- a celebration of life – the intimate and precious union of husband and wife into a new family unit that holds the promise of fruit and blessing
- a demonstration of the humanity of Jesus

Jesus was not an ascetic -- He came eating and drinking; God not some sourpuss out to rob men of joy and fullness of life

He was not scared of contact with the world, but welcomed opportunities to manifest God to those around Him; did not live in a shell, but a lighthouse

B. Significance of the Participants

1. Mother of Jesus

Transition stage where Jesus enters into His earthly ministry and is about the work of doing His Father's business; we see Mary submitting to Jesus here

2. Disciples of Jesus

Galvanizing of their support; impressing upon them the magnitude of His person and mission; first mention of the important concept of personal faith

Were they also invited ...or came along with Jesus unexpectedly??

II. (:3-5) THE EXPECTATION = JESUS CAN SOLVE ANY PROBLEM

A. (:3) Supplication for a Successful Solution –

Bringing the Problem to the Problem Solver

“When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’”

- very embarrassing situation; more guests than expected??
- failure to plan ahead, or failure of resources, or lack of generosity ...
- a hindrance to the joy of the feast

What was Mary's expectation in bringing to Jesus' attention the need of the moment = *"They have no wine"*

Jesus had been laboring faithfully in obscurity for 30 years; now His mother felt the time was ripe for Him to demonstrate His powers and resourcefulness in an open show of glory; Jesus chose to make this a much more private miracle – intended primarily for His disciples

B. (:4) Sensitivity to the Lord's Program and Timing

“And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.’”

What do different translations read here?? Not a rude slap in the face as it appears in the KJV:

"Our point of view and interests are wholly diverse; Why do you mingle them?"

Stedman: What I do will not accomplish what you are hoping. It will not persuade the nation that I am the Messiah. Miracles were indeed part of the plan of God. They would be performed, but they would not convince the nation.

Is Jesus being disrespectful to address Mary as *"woman"*?

Why not *"mother"*?

Shift from relating to Mary primarily as His mother and authority figure to carrying out the divine agenda -- even when His mother did not understand all of the details or timing

"My hour has not yet come" -- Possibilities

7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1 -- it seems like all of these must be tied together with the switch coming in 13:1 where it is noted that the hour had now come; hostility reached its height immediately

The Son is glorified thru the total experience of death, resurrection, ascension, and coronation -- all viewed as a totality

C. (:5) Submission to the Lord's Instructions

"His mother said to the servants, 'Whatsoever He says to you, do it.'"

Was Mary discouraged by this response?

Not at all; still had confidence that Christ would meet the need in His own way and timing (even if her expectations had been different)

III. (:6-10) THE SIGN MIRACLE – CHANGING THE WATER OF OT JEWISH PURIFICATION INTO THE WINE OF NEW COVENANT LIFE AND JOY

A. (:6-7) Fulfillment of OT Types and Shadows

"Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

Jesus said to them 'Fill the waterpots with water.' So they filled them up to the brim."

The simple obedience of the servants -- crucial to the miracle

Stone was believed to preserve the purity and coolness of water

So no room was left to add anything else (no Kool Aid packages)
topping off what already remained in the jugs

Significance of "purification"

B. (:8-10) Surpassing Value of the Wine Provided Miraculously by Jesus

"you have kept the good wine until now"

He who could make matter out of nothing could easily change one form to another

Why did Jesus make wine that was not just the same as the previous wine, but superior?

symbolic statement regarding the superiority of the New Covenant

other symbolism of wine

the Lord's Supper

IV. (:11) CONCLUSION – SUMMARY

- A. The miracles Jesus performed were intended to be Sign Miracles
“This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee”
- B. The miracles Jesus performed were intended to manifest His glory = grace and truth
“and manifested His glory”
- C. The miracles Jesus performed were intended to stimulate faith
“and His disciples believed in Him”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If the wine of Jesus’ day (although admittedly much weaker than most alcoholic drinks of today) could make the over-indulgent drunk, how can Christians legislate abstinence when Jesus chose the provision of such wine as His first sign miracle? Likewise, what can we say about the prohibition of marriage for priests in the Catholic Church??
- 2) What type of miracles do we expect Christ to do for us today? Where do we have wrong expectations? Yet how does He still meet our need in His own way? When are we at cross purposes with Christ -- What types of miracles do we request that are just not in God's sovereign plan? Does that mean Jesus does not care for our needs?
- 3) Was this the first time His disciples *“believed in Him”*? Was their faith different from what we see in 2:23-25? How does this relate to saving faith?
- 4) In what sense did Jesus *“manifest His glory”*? How is this consistent with the kenosis passage of Philippians 2 where Jesus emptied Himself of the visible manifestation of His glory?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Calvin: “Christ supplied them, therefore, with a great abundance of wine, as much as would be sufficient for a banquet to a hundred and fifty men. Besides, both the number and the size of the water-pots serve to prove the truth of the miracle. If there had been only two or three jars, many might have suspected that they had been brought from some other place. If in one vessel only the water had been changed into wine, the certainty of the miracle would not have been so obvious, or so well ascertained. It is

not, therefore, without a good reason that the Evangelist mentions the number of the water-pots, and states how much they contained.”

Arthur W. Pink: So blind were the religious leaders of Israel, that they neither knew the Christ of God stood in their midst, nor recognized His forerunner to whom the Old Testament Scriptures bore explicit witness.

Judaism was but a dead husk, the heart and life of it were gone. Only one thing remained, and that was the setting of it aside, and the bringing in "of a better hope." Accordingly, we read in Galatians 4:4, 'But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.' Yes, the fullness of God's time had come. The hour was ripe for Christ to be manifested. The need of Him had been fully demonstrated. Judaism must be set aside. A typical picture of this was before us in John 1. The Baptist wound up the Old Testament system ("The law and the prophets were until John"—Luke 16:16), and in John 1:35-37 we are shown two (the number of competent testimony) of His disciples leaving John, and following the Lord Jesus.

The same principle is illustrated again in the chapter now before us. A marriage-feast is presented to our view, and the central thing about it is that the wine had given out. The figure is not difficult to interpret: "Wine" in Scripture is the emblem of joy, as the following passage will show: "And wine that maketh glad the heart of man" (Ps. 104:15); "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?" (Judg. 9:13). How striking, then, is what we have here in John 2! How accurate the picture. Judaism still existed as a religious system, but it ministered no comfort to the heart. It had degenerated into a cold, mechanical routine, utterly destitute of joy in God. Israel had lost the joy of their espousals.

"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews" (verse 6). What a portrayal of Judaism was this! Six is the number of man, for it was on the sixth day man was made, and of the Superman it is written, "Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore six" (Rev. 13:18). Yes, there were six waterpots standing there, not seven, the perfect number. All that was left of Judaism was of the flesh; God was not in it. As we read later on in this Gospel, the "feasts of the Lord" (Lev. 23:2) were now only "the feast of the Jews" (John 2:13, etc.).

Observe, too, that these six waterpots were of "stone," not silver which speaks of redemption, nor of gold which tells of Divine glory. As we read in Isaiah 1:22, "Thy silver is become dross," and again in Lamentations 4:1, "How is the gold become dim?" Profoundly significant, then, were these waterpots of "stone." And what is the more noticeable, they were empty. Again, we say, what a vivid portrayal have we here of Israel's condition at that time! No wonder the wine had given out! To supply that Christ was needed. Therefore, our chapter at once directs attention to Him as the One who alone can provide that which speaks of joy in God. Thus does John 2 give us another representation of the failure of Judaism, and the turning away from it to the Savior. Hence, it opens with the word "and," as denoting the continuation of the same subject which had been brought out in the previous chapter.

George Whitfield: Our Lord's turning the water, which was poured out so plentifully, into wine, is a sign of the plentiful pouring out of his Spirit into the hearts of believers.

The holy Spirit is in scripture compared unto wine; and therefore the prophet calls us to buy wine as well as milk, that is, the spirit of love, which fills and gladdens the soul as it were with new wine. The apostle alludes to this, when he bids the Ephesians "not to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." And our Lord shows us thus much by choosing wine; to show forth the strength and refreshment of his blood, in the blessed sacrament.

Charles Spurgeon: And now, dear brethren and sisters, what shall I say about the LESSON WE ARE TO LEARN FROM THIS FACT of Christ keeping the best wine until now? Going home the other night I noticed the difference between the horse's pace in coming here and going home, and I thought to myself, "Ah! the horse goes well, because he is going home;" and the thought struck me, "How well a Christian ought to go, cause he is going home." You know, if we were going from home, every rough stone in the road might check us, and we might need a good deal of whip to make us go. But it is going home. Bless God, every step we take is going home. It may be knee-deep in trouble, but it is all on the road; we may be ankle-deep in fear, but it is going home; I may stumble, but I always stumble homewards. All my afflictions and griefs, when they cast me down, but cast me onwards towards heaven. The mariner does not mind the waves, if every wave sends him nearer his haven, and he does not care how loudly howl the winds, if they only blow him nearer port. That is the Christian's happy lot: he is going homeward. Let that cheer thee, Christian, and make thee travel on joyfully, not needing the whip to urge thee to duty, but always going on with alacrity through duty and through trial, because thou art going homeward.

Stedman: This mention of the third day is a reference to what is clearly evident elsewhere in the Scriptures: it is a reference to the fact of the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus had not yet taken place, of course, but even in the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament there is a reference to the third day as being the day in which Israel would be spiritually healed and returned to her Lord (Hosea 6:2). Here, then, is the first hint in this account of the significance of this miracle of changing water into wine: it was a miracle of transformation, of bringing life out of death. We are given here a hint of what this miracle symbolizes

Stedman: But the account makes rather clear that Mary did expect Jesus to help. She comes to him with a problem and expects him to do something about it. Personally, I believe she did expect him to do something startling and supernatural. We must understand that at this time Mary's expectations had been greatly awakened. Undoubtedly she had been told the accounts of what happened in Judea; how Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, how the heavens opened and a dove lighted on Jesus' head, and a voice uttered those remarkable words, "This is my beloved Son," {Matt 3:17}. She remembered the promises when he was born that he would be the Messiah. Undoubtedly she expected him to act. Along with all the other Jews of that day she doubtless expected him, as the Messiah, to claim the throne of David; to somehow drive out the Romans and to fulfill all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. (These included, by the way, miracles of healing, of even dealing with nature -- the desert would blossom like the rose, the lion would lie down with the lamb, etc.) Now that

Jesus has taken the initiative and has called his own disciples, she has a right to expect that he is beginning to fulfill his destiny.

Stedman: quoting **C. S. Lewis:** In his very helpful book *Miracles*, C. S. Lewis has pointed out that every miracle of Jesus is simply a kind of short-circuiting of a natural process; a doing instantly something which in general takes a longer period of time. Lewis says, "Each miracle writes for us in small letters something that God has already written, or will write, in letters almost too large to be noticed, across the whole canvas of nature." That is what Jesus is doing: he is overleaping the elements of time, of growth, gathering, crushing and fermenting. He takes water -- an inorganic, non-living, commonplace substance -- and without a word, without a gesture, without any laying on of hands, in utter simplicity, the water becomes wine, an organic liquid, a product of fermentation, belonging to the realm of life. Thus he demonstrated his marvelous ability to master the processes of nature.

Stedman: Here in this event we will see both his grace and truth. His grace is manifested in the fact that he brought with him five (including himself, six) unexpected guests to the wedding. They had no gifts to bring, so he seizes on the fact that there are six stone jars waiting. That is why he has them filled to the brim with water and then changes the water into wine, thereby giving the most generous gift anybody gave at the wedding. He gives this newly married couple a gift of the best wine in the whole countryside, one jar for each of the unexpected guests. What a gracious touch that is! That is our Lord's grace.

But with it comes truth: the glory of Jesus is the fullness of grace and truth. In that event there was manifested truth about himself, that he was the Lord of nature. As I have already pointed out, he was merely carrying out a natural process in a short period of time.

Deffinbaugh: Jesus uses this same expression to ask Mary just what has caused her to think the problem she has identified is His problem as well as hers. As His mother, she might think she has some parental authority over Him. As her sovereign God, she has no authority over Him at all! This is what Jesus conveys with these words. It is almost as though Mary has said, "Jesus, they are out of wine. We really need to do something," to which Jesus responds, "Ma'am, what do you mean 'we'?"

This response reminds me of the shop-worn joke about the Lone Ranger and his faithful Indian companion, Tonto. The Lone Ranger and Tonto are surrounded by a tribe of Indians and greatly outnumbered. Turning to his companion, the Lone Ranger says, "Tonto, I think we're in trouble." Tonto looks back at the Lone Ranger and responds, "What do you mean, 'we,' White man?"

Deffinbaugh: Those of you who are campers have probably stayed in a remote campsite where the water comes from a well, but is not pure enough to drink. You look for signs there that clearly differentiate "potable" water from that which is not. You would not think of drinking water that is not entirely pure. You may wash your hands with it, but you would certainly not drink it. This ceremonial cleansing "water" may not have been

considered suitable for drinking. Wine is to be drunk at such times. I doubt that any devout Jew would have considered drinking water from one of those six stone pots.

Deffinbaugh: *while this miracle **appears** to be an exercise of supernatural power that our Lord is reluctant to perform, but which He does because of His mother's persistence, it is not.* I believe it is correct to observe that, in the Gospels, our Lord is often not as eager to perform miracles as others are to have Him do so. He knows the limitation of such displays of power, as we shall see at the end of this chapter. Jesus' reluctance is not a resistance to helping this couple in need, but a concern that His mother understand that their relationship has changed forever, and that therefore His calling is not to do her bidding, as though she has an inside track with God. He also is concerned that He fulfill His Father's plan at the divinely appointed time, rather than in His mother's time-frame. He knows it is not yet time for Him to make a public display of His power, by which He publicly presents Himself as the promised Messiah. Those today who are overly eager to see God perform miracles (some almost insist upon them) should consider this fact carefully. Jesus is not as eager to perform miracles as others are to see Him do so.

TEXT: John 2:12-25

TITLE: CLEANING HOUSE – PASSION FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

PASSION FOR TRUE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP LEADS TO INTENSE CONFLICT WITH MATERIALISTIC OPPORTUNISM

(:12) INTRODUCTION – THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM:

“After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brothers, and His disciples; and there they stayed a few days.”

What is the connection between the story of the wedding and the temple purging?

Both point to the deficiencies of the existing Jewish religion (here, its sacrificial system)

We are going to see growing opposition and a number of important conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders

Capernaum = home of John and James, the sons of Zebedee and Salome
Galilean headquarters for ministry of Jesus

Deffinbaugh: Several things catch my attention in these two verses. The first is that this Messianic Psalm speaks of the alienation of the Messiah from his “mother’s children.” Could this be part of the reason for John’s mention of the brief family gathering in Capernaum (John 2:12)? Our Lord’s mother is not mentioned again until the cross, and the reference to our Lord’s “brothers” in John 7:3-5 reveals their skepticism about Jesus and His ministry. Has Jesus already begun to feel alienated from His own brothers?

Deffinbaugh: If one accepts the accounts of the Gospels at face value, there are obviously two temple cleansings. The first occurred at the outset of our Lord’s earthly ministry and is described by John. The second takes place at the end of our Lord’s public ministry, and it is the incident which appears to precipitate His death by crucifixion.

Stedman: A close look at the other gospel accounts reveals that there is a considerable difference in these events. A different Scripture is referred to; there is no mention of a whip; and our Lord makes a different claim for himself in that cleansing of the temple at the end of his ministry. On that final occasion our Lord made a great and final pronouncement in regard to the nation of Israel. Standing in the temple, having for the second time driven out the merchants and the money-changers, he spoke these dramatic words: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. You shall not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,'" {Matt 23:38-39, Luke 13:34-35}. Then he went out to the mount of Olives, and from there to the upper room, to the betrayal and the crucifixion the next day. Here in John's gospel, however, is an account of violent action and of evident anger on the part of Jesus at the beginning.

Tasker: His zeal for purity of worship was one of the necessary reasons for His death. His zeal for God's house was bound to lead to His own destruction."

I. (:13-17) PASSION FOR TRUE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP SPARKS INDIGNANT REBUKE OF MATERIALISTIC OPPORTUNISM

A. (:13) Expectation of True Spiritual Worship = Occasion of the Passover

"And the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

Probably speaking of the entire one week festival (Num 28:16-25 animals offered in sacrifice)

Jesus probably kept the Passover during his early years as well; but now that He was entering upon His public ministry, He took a higher level of responsibility. (**Matthew Henry**)

B. (:14) Discovery of Blatant Materialistic Opportunism

"And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated."

What type of merchandising takes place in Christianity?

TV evangelism

music ministries

Matthew Henry: "Great corruptions in the church owe their rise to the love of money, 1 Tim. 6:5, 10."

Hendriksen: "The money-changers would charge a certain fee for every exchange-transaction. Here, too, there were abundant opportunities for deception and abuse. And in view of these conditions the Holy Temple, intended as a house of prayer for all people, had become a den of robbers (cf. Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11; Mark 11:17)."

C. (:15-16) Response of Righteous Indignation = Indignant Rebuke

1. (:15a) Cracking the Whip to Cleanse from Defilement = Affront to God's Holiness

"And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen" (cf. Mal.3:1-3)

Why was Jesus so indignant over this merchandising -- Wasn't it a convenience for sacrificial animals to be available for the travelers?

Not an impulsive act by Christ since He took time to make the scourge of cords

Pretty violent display by Christ; why didn't anyone stop Him?

very powerful figure; no wimp

2. (:15b) Attacking the Money = Affront to God's
"and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables"

document the type of exploitation and greed --
cf. the moneychangers setting the exchange rate for giving the half shekel needed for the temple tax

Matthew Henry: "In pouring out the money, he showed his contempt of it; he threw it to the ground, to the earth as it was. In overthrowing the tables, he showed his displeasure against those that make religion a matter of worldly gain."

3. (:16) Verbal Rebuke = Affront to Spiritual Ministry
"and to those who were selling the doves He said, 'Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise'"

note compassion of Christ and His regard for private property in that He did not drive away the doves as He did the other animals since He did not want to deprive the owners of their property

strong statement of Deity -- "My Father's House" -- not "Our's" or "Your's"

D. (:17) Reminder from OT Prophecy = Psalm 69
"His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Thy house will consume me.'"

II. (:18-22) THE SIGN OF THE RESURRECTION VALIDATES THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS (AS MESSIAH) TO REBUKE MATERIALISM AND REGULATE THE SPIRITUAL WORSHIP OF GOD

A. (:18) Challenge of Jesus' Authority
"The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?'"

Think of other similar occasions (Mat.12) when the Jews asked for a sign -- note how they always took Christ too literally

Hendriksen: "The majestic manner in which Jesus performed this task, so that none, seeing him, even dared to resist, was proof sufficient that the Messiah had entered the temple and was purging it, as had been predicted. What additional sign could one ask for?"

Morris: "In the temple cleansing the Jews discerned a messianic claim ... and they demanded accordingly that He authenticate Himself by a sign."

Smokescreen – deflecting attention away from their guilt for covetousness and greed and exploitation

B. (:19) Cryptic Sign of the Resurrection

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’”

Hendriksen: We have here another mashel; that is, a paradoxical saying, a veiled and pointed remark, often in the form of a riddle.

C. (:20) Confusion of the Jews (who could not see past the physical temple structure)

“The Jews therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’”

Incredulous question ... How can you say that?

D. (21) Clarification

“But He was speaking of the temple of His body.”

E. (:22) Confirmation

“When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.”

disciples had good knowledge of OT prophecy -- even though they did not fully understand about death and resurrection until after the events

"the Scripture" is here equated with *"the word which Jesus had spoken"*

(:23-25) CONCLUSION / TRANSITION – INADEQUACY OF SUPERFICIAL FAITH -- NOT ALL VERBAL PROFESSION OF FAITH IS HEARTFELT SAVING FAITH

Tasker: “It is clear, however, from the sequel that to these believers the miracles were not signs indicative of the true nature of Jesus. He did not therefore ‘trust himself to them’. With His unique insight into human nature, emphasized by the evangelist, we may surmise that He regarded all belief in Him as superficial which does not have as its most essential elements the consciousness of the need for forgiveness and the conviction that He alone is the Mediator of that forgiveness.”

Morris: “He looked for genuine conversion, not enthusiasm for the spectacular.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If these 7 signs selected by John revealed various aspects of the person or work of Christ, what was being emphasized here?
- 2) How jealous are we for the holiness of God? What are the moneychangers and temple exploiters in our life? Where are we worshipping God with our lips (going through the right motions) while our hearts are far from God?
- 3) Why didn't Christ make the effort to explain things more simply and with less mystery instead of firing off such enigmatic statements that He knew would result in confusion and misinterpretation? Why did it take the disciples so long to catch on and understand themselves?
- 4) How long might it be before our testimony bears fruit in others?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: The Jewish Passover celebration commemorates the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, when the death angel passed over every home where the first Passover was observed and the blood of the paschal lamb was placed on the two door posts and the lintel (see Exodus 12 and 13). The celebration of the Passover also commenced the Feast of Unleavened bread, so that the entire Passover celebration took a week. Attendance for adult Israelite males was compulsory. . .

Psalm 69 is a psalm of David. It is a prayer for his deliverance, due to his piety. The psalm speaks of David's imminent danger due to the enemies of God who hate him for his fervent devotion to God, and thus who seek his death. Later portions of this psalm depict events that occur at the crucifixion of our Lord (see Ps. 69:21). It seems clear in this psalm that there is a prophecy of our Lord's sacrificial death, due to His zeal for pure worship.

Jesus acts out of zeal for His Father's house, laying claim to the temple and cleansing it in His Father's name. In so doing, He fulfills a prophecy that our Lord's zeal for His Father's house will bring about His death. It is the second cleansing of the temple (Matthew 21:10-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-46) that actually sets into motion the events which lead to our Lord's crucifixion. . .

Let me press beyond the church walls for a moment, and give a word of warning about the commercialization of Christianity. Much of the ministry which was once viewed as the ministry of the church and by the church is now being handed over to "professionals" in Christian ministry. Some of this may be biblically defensible and even good, but some may not. I fear we have turned some Christian ministries into industries, "Christian industries," where some Christians begin to view the needs of others as an opportunity to make a profit, rather than an occasion to sacrificially

minister to others. I am most distressed when such "Christian ministries" are willing to minister only to those who have the means to pay, and who purposely reject or pass over those who are poor, and perhaps in the greatest need. Let us be on guard about commercializing the ministry.

Pink: Now the center of Israel's ceremonial purity was the temple, the Father's House. Israel gloried in the temple, for it was one of the chief things which marked them off from all other nations, as the favored people of God. What other race of people could speak of Jehovah dwelling in their midst? And now Jehovah Himself was there, incarnate. And what a sight met His eye! The House of prayer had become a house of merchandise; the holy place of worship was now "a den of thieves." Behold here the light shining in the darkness and exposing the real nature of things. No doubt the custodians of the temple would have stood ready to excuse this reproach upon God's honor. They would have argued that these money changers and cattle dealers, in the temple courts, were there as a convenience to those who came to the temple to worship. But Christ lays bare their real motive. "Den of thieves" tells us that the love of money, covetousness, lay at the bottom of it all.

Bill Martin

Got Life?

Home Improvement - John 2:12-25

Pastor Bill Martin

January 26, 2003

* If Jesus looked at your life, home or church, would he build a whip or would he praise God for what is happening there?

* When Jesus showed up at the Temple during Passover he found:

1. Convenience
2. Carelessness
3. Contentment
4. Commercialism
5. Corruption

"He found the Temple teeming with people selling cattle and sheep and doves.

The loan sharks were also there in full strength. Jesus put together a whip out of strips of leather and chased them out of the Temple, stampeding the sheep and cattle, upending the tables of the loan sharks, spilling coins left and right. He told the dove merchants, 'Get your things out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a shopping mall!'"

- John 2:14-16 (The Message)

* What Jesus should have found at the Temple was:

1. The awesome presence of God

2. A conviction of sinfulness
3. Confession, cleansing of sin and release from guilt
4. Inspiration to give God one's best

* 1 Corinthians 3:16

* 2 Corinthians 6:16

Don Hutto: Each of us has a great passion in our life. For some it is family; for others it is recreation; still others, their work. The consuming passion of Jesus was the Lord's House . . .

But Christ discovered:

1. Opportunity had become indifference.
2. Ministry had become merchandising.

Jim Luthy: Jesus was motivated with a jealous love. He was jealous for the Father's dwelling place—the temple—to be a place for the Father, not a place for profiteers and swindlers. David prophesied that this jealousy would consume the Messiah. That means the jealousy of Jesus for his Father's house ate at him. It never stopped filling his mind and capturing his attention. It wasn't a zeal that came and went. It was his never-ending passion to see the Father's house to be a place of worship and a place of reverence and purity in which the Father could dwell.

TEXT: John 3:1-21

TITLE: *BORN OF THE SPIRIT*

(*BORN AGAIN; BORN ANEW; BORN FROM ABOVE*)

BIG IDEA:

ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS ONLY BY THE NEW BIRTH:

- ACCOMPLISHED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
- APPROPRIATED BY FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

One preacher titled his sermon: Nic@Nite

This chapter contains the proper definition of the baptism of the Holy Spirit referred to in Chap. 1; that is why it is so important to study passages in the context of the entire book

Birth is a dramatic, climactic experience. No mistaking it.

I. (:1-3) EVEN THE MOST RELIGIOUS NEED TO BE BORN AGAIN

A. (:1-2) The Sincere Approach of Nicodemus

1. Impressive Inquirer

- Expert in the Law -- *“a man of the Pharisees”*
- Privileged in terms of heritage -- *“named Nicodemus”*
- Respected in the Community -- *“a ruler of the Jews”*

Sometimes the people we think have no chance of responding to the gospel are the ones that surprise us; we just can't make those determinations. You would have thought that Nicodemus would have been part of the opposition party.

Example of head knowledge vs heart knowledge

2. Stealthy Seeker – not taking any unnecessary chances; hedging his bets

“this man came to Him by night”

cf. what Jesus has to say later in the chapter about light and darkness

Driven by curiosity; no declaration of spiritual need at this point

3. Complimentary Commencement

- Granting Professional Respect -- *“Rabbi”*
- Appreciating Authoritative Doctrine -- *“we know that You have come from God as a teacher”*
- Recognizing Divine Power -- *“for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him”*

Sincerity will not get you into the kingdom! Jesus was never about titles. What would He think about the title of “Reverend”? On the other hand, He was always a strong, authoritative leader.

B. (:3) The Absolute Imperative of the New Birth

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

1. The change required is more radical than you think

“unless one is born again”

Social gospel of just trying to meet people’s physical needs just won’t cut it.

2. You are not as close to the kingdom as you think

“he cannot see the kingdom of God”

Jesus never sugarcoated things. He wanted people to face up to the harsh realities.

II. (:4-8) OUR NATURAL PHYSICAL ORIENTATION MUST BE RADICALLY REPLACED BY A SPIRIT-PRODUCED NEW LIFE

A. (:4) The Question of a Confused Naturalist

1. Questioning the Concept

“How can a man be born when he is old?”

2. Questioning the Process

“He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?”

B. (:5) The Key to the Kingdom = New Birth by the Holy Spirit

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Possibilities for *“born of water”*:

- natural birth – unlikely that this phrase was used that way
- Word of God and its cleansing power (Eph. 5:26) – doesn’t fit the context
- water as symbolic of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Ezek 36:25-27; Titus 3:5)
- Preferable: reference to water baptism being practiced by John the Baptist
 - had connotation of repentance from sins
 - had connotation of cleansing
 - had connection with death and resurrection
 - had symbolic connection with ministry of the Holy Spirit

Stedman: It is clear from the context that Jesus is talking about baptism. John's baptism was the sensation of the nation at this time. Everyone was talking about it. The Pharisees had sent a delegation to John to ask him why he was baptizing. The meaning of John's baptism was the central theological question of the day in which our Lord speaks. What Jesus means, then, is what baptism signifies. It is not the water that changes anybody. Many people superstitiously think that if they baptize their babies

that will assure the children entrance into the kingdom of heaven; or if they themselves were to be baptized as adults that would guarantee them admittance into heaven. That is rank superstition. Water does not change anybody that way. It may make you a little cleaner, you might even smell better, but it does not make you any different in God's eyes. What the baptism stands for is what is important. Do not, like the many in John's gospel, miss the real meaning because of the symbol! The symbol behind baptism is repentance, an honest admission of need.

I have been preaching and teaching the Scriptures for almost fifty years, and I want to tell you that the one thing that keeps most people from being born again is that they do not want to admit their need. They do not want to admit that there is something basically wrong with them; they still cling to the idea that there is some good thing about them that God ought to accept, and if they do more good than bad he ought to let them into glory. I do not think anything has been more destructive in the whole realm of theology than that idea. No, repentance is necessary, an awareness that despite your best efforts you are not fulfilling God's law. You are not able to do so. You desperately need a Savior. That is what baptism acknowledges.

C. (:6-8) The Explanation of Why the New Birth Depends on the Spirit

1. (:6) Simple Definition-- Like Begets Like

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

2. (:7) Not Naturally Discerned -- Don't act so surprised

“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

3. (:8) Illustration from Nature -- Powerful operation of the natural force of the wind

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

III. (:9-13) SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE NOT NECESSARILY OVERCOME BY REVELATION FROM HEAVEN

A. (:9) Missing the Point – he just doesn't get it

“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’”

B. (:10) Putting the Cart Ahead of the Horse – Religion does not equate to Spirituality

“Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?”

Understanding should precede teaching

C. (:11-13) Rejecting the Supreme Testimony of the Son of Man

1. (:11) Rejection Despite Expert Testimony

“Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness.”

2. (:12) Rejection of the Physical Implies Rejection of the Spiritual
“If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”
3. (:13) Rejection of the Uniquely Supreme Witness
“And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man.”

IV. (:14-18) FAITH IN THE SON OF MAN IS THE ONLY REQUIREMENT

A. (:14-15) Simple OT Illustration of Faith

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up”

Stedman: That is a reference to the cross. When the people of Israel were being bitten by hundreds of poisonous snakes which suddenly appeared in the camp in the wilderness, and were dying by the scores, Moses was told to take a pole and put on it a brass serpent. That serpent would itself do nothing whatsoever for the people -- it was merely a symbol -- but they were told if they would look at it (and thus make a personal application of its meaning to their own lives), they would find themselves healed from the serpents bite. Jesus says, "That is a picture of me. I will be made sin (that is what a serpent always stands for, sin), lifted up to die. When that happens, if you will look at me and believe that I am dying for you, in your place, God will forgive your sins and you will receive the life of God."

B. (:16-17) Heart of the Gospel = Faith

1. (:16) Universal Opportunity for Salvation

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Piper:

- The danger we all face: perishing under the wrath of God because of our sin (3:36).
 - The design of God to rescue us from this danger: his love which sends the Son to lay down his life (10:18; 15:13), and take away the sin of the world (1:29).
 - The duty of man in response: believing on the Son of God.
 - The destiny promised to all who believe: eternal life.
2. (:17) Divine Priority of Salvation over Judgment
“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”

C. (:18) Watershed of Eternal Destiny = Faith

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been

judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Stedman: Verse 18 says that condemnation does not wait until the end of life. It is already going on. The Bible takes the position that mankind is living under the wrath of God all the time. Psalm 90:9 states it plainly. The wrath of God is the anger, the anguish and the agony we feel as a result of trying to do our own thing. We do not have to wait for wrath. If we do not choose to leave it we remain in it; we are "already condemned," that is the point. If you are traveling on a wrong road and every so often you see a signpost that points the way to the right road, but you persist and go by all those signposts, refusing to take the way back to the right road, then you remain wrong. That is God's view of life.

V. (:19-21) RESPONSE TO THE LIGHT (INTIMACY WITH JESUS) = BAROMETER OF SPIRITUAL CONDITION

(:19a) Judgment Centers Around Our Response to the Light

“And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world . . . ”

A. Spiritual Condition of Condemnation

1. Response of Loving Darkness

“and men loved the darkness rather than the light”

2. Reason: Practicing Evil

“for their deeds were evil”

B. Spiritual Condition of Eternal Life

1. Response of Coming to the Light

“comes to the light”

2. Reason: Practicing Righteousness

“But he who practices the truth ... that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why didn't Jesus encourage this seeker by affirming his sincerity and complimenting him on his efforts to seek out truth and responding positively to the respect that he was showing? How do you think Nicodemus expected to be treated by Christ?

2) What is the nature of this *“kingdom of God”* to which Christ refers? How would a Jewish leader view this concept?

3) Does the phrase “*born again*” still have the same connotation in today’s Christendom as it did back in John 3?

4) What can we learn about the OT incident referred to in vs.14 (from Numbers 21)? Try to create your own modern day illustration based on the model of this OT incident to show the different ways that people today try to save themselves from the poison of sin (good works, baptism, confirmation, denial, etc.) while avoiding God’s exclusive prescription of looking in faith to the serpent hung on the pole.

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: The teaching that I want to try to persuade you is Biblical and therefore true and precious is that the new birth is the result of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit preceding and enabling our first act of saving faith. We do not cause our new birth by an act of faith. Just the reverse: the cry of faith is the first sound that a newborn babe in Christ makes. Regeneration, as we sometimes call it, is all of God. We do not get God to do it by trusting Christ; we trust Christ because He has done it to us already. The theological catch phrases which are sometimes used to designate this beautiful doctrine are "prevenient grace" (grace which precedes and enables our faith) or "irresistible grace" (grace which overcomes the resistance of man's perverted will by transforming his nature) or "effectual calling" (a divine call which not only offers but effects transformation). . .

The connection then between verses 5 and 6 of John 3 is this: We have to be born of the Spirit, because until we are, we are unfit for the Kingdom of heaven. We are mere natural persons who do not welcome the things of God. Before a person is born of the Spirit he has no inclination to trust Christ for salvation and therefore he cannot enter God's kingdom. Faith is the most beautiful, God-honoring and humble act that a human can perform, and therefore we must not imagine that it can be performed by a "natural man" who "does not welcome the things of the Spirit of God." Before a person can perform the best of all acts, he must become a new person. Thorn bushes don't produce figs, apple trees don't produce olives, and a "natural man" does not produce faith. He cannot . . .

What is this verse (v.8) trying to teach? I believe Jesus was trying to drive home the freedom and sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the act of regeneration. "The wind, that is, the Spirit, blows wherever it wills." The will of man is impotent at this point. We cannot start the wind blowing and we cannot change the direction of the wind and make it blow when we want it to. The Spirit blows where He wills and therefore, everyone born of the Spirit has been acted upon by the free Spirit and has been born anew, as John 1:13 says, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God." The new birth is not a result of our decision or our act of will. It precedes and enables the heart's decision to trust Christ.

Stedman: A new birth is absolutely essential to enter the kingdom. John uses a very interesting word here that is translated "anew," or "again." It is the Greek word, *anōthen*, which has three meanings: It means again to do it a second time; it also means to begin radically, completely, a new beginning; and it also means from above, and it is used in that sense in other places in Scripture. It signifies God must do this. The Christian understanding of this word includes all three of those meanings. It is speaking of something radical, a new beginning. It is a second birth, but it comes from above. It is God that does it, not man; and it results in a new creation, a new beginning.

Holwick: Re "*kingdom of God*":

- 1) We think in terms of going to heaven.
- 2) Jesus emphasized the Kingdom.
 - a) The Kingdom is a place - where God is.
 - b) The Kingdom is a mindset - where God rules. [Here!]
- 3) To be saved is to be in the Kingdom.
 - a) We enter it the moment we believe.
 - b) God is in charge of our life.

Jason Duncan:

Nicodemus provides us with a great example of the inadequacy of head knowledge or intellectual accent. (vv. 2-3)

1. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. Being convinced by His miracles that Jesus was a teacher "come from God," he sought an interview with Him; but fear of the Jews and a regard for his reputation, no doubt, influenced him to make the visit by night. He opened the conversation by an announcement of his belief in Christ's divine mission and was answered by a declaration of the wonderful doctrine of the new birth (John 3:1-10).

2. Although Nicodemus had been thus won to believe in the divine nature of Christ's mission, his faith was yet very incomplete in that he believed Him to be inspired only after the fashion of the Old Testament prophets. To this faint-hearted faith corresponded his timidity of action, which displayed itself in his coming "by night," lest he should offend his colleagues in the Sanhedrin and the other hostile Jews (verse 2). In answer to the veiled question which the words of Nicodemus implied, and to convince him of the inadequacy of mere intellectual belief, Christ proclaimed to him the necessity for a spiritual regeneration: "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (verse 3).

Andrew Chan:

The message of John 3 is just that! You may have all sorts Christian activity like Wesley, grew up right and go the right university much like Nic, having all the trappings of faith. You may even have concern for the lost and even signed up for missionary service, even teach religious stuff perhaps in Sunday School or Junior Church. Or perhaps even served in ruling councils such as church boards, like Nic. Founded holy clubs and done excellent work in church clubs. Perhaps even figured out a method of spirituality like Wesley and Nic, got a routine even of Bible reading and

praying but that is not enough to give you true eternal life that is born from above and felt deeply in the heart. Jesus comes and brings a disturbing message. You must be born again! Or you won't taste the kingdom of God at all! . . .

Jesus is a disturbing presence. He confronts us with our religiosity. And he says it is not enough to be religious to gain heaven, or true happiness, that will last forever. What becomes clear with every encounter with him is that He is utterly and completely from God. His presence radically alters every presupposition and every action you have ever had or will ever take. If there is clutter in the temple of our lives, Jesus will purge it out. Even if you like the clutter. Yet when he is done the cleansing, there will be nothing to say by way of rebuke for him, because it will be found that he was completely correct to do it. This was how it was with Nicodemus. Jesus was from God and Jesus was disturbing!

Edward Morgan: 3:14-15 "*Lifted Up*" – Picture of the Brazen serpent

1. The Necessity of Christ's Death – "*so must the Son of Man*" (Matt. 16:21; Num. 21:5-9); the people were dying
 - a. moral condition of mankind today; rebellious against God (Rom. 8:7)
 - b. under the judgment of God (Rom. 3:19; John 3:18)
 - c. they were dying (John 3:15-16; 2 Cor. 4:4)
 - d. they were helpless – couldn't help themselves; had to be saved by God
2. The Nature of Christ's Death
brass = judgment; God condemning sin (Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13)
3. The Motive behind Christ's Death – "*for God so loved the world*" John 3:16
Ephes. 3:18
 - breadth: reaching out to whosoever
 - length: from eternity past to eternity future
 - depth: to reach down to vilest sinner
 - height: to take us to height of God
4. The Purpose of Christ's Death – John 3:15
 - Positively: to give life – God's life shared freely by grace
 - Negatively: should not perish
5. The Application of Christ's Death
How is the benefit transferred to me? Faith that lays hold of God's provision; must trust in God's remedy; no other; only those who looked in faith were healed

Ryle: It is almost impossible for us to conceive how strange Jesus' predictions of His death appeared to His disciples. Like most Jews, they could form no idea of a suffering Messiah. Yet again and again He told them that He had not come to reign, to be ministered to, but to shed His blood as a sacrifice, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

TEXT: John 3:22-36

TITLE: THE REAL DEAL -- DIVINE VALIDATION OF THE SUPERIORITY OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

**CHRIST CAN LEGITIMATELY OFFER MEN ETERNAL LIFE BY VIRTUE OF THE DIVINE VALIDATION OF THE SUPERIORITY OF HIS PERSON AND MINISTRY
(AS TESTIFIED TO BY JOHN THE BAPTIST)**

INTRODUCTION:

Look at the relationship between the ministry of John the Baptist and that of Jesus.

Possibility for Seeds of Ministry Envy – Respond in Joy or Jealousy??

Stedman: A sense of jealousy, envy, rivalry and competition is clearly evident there. John's disciples were upset that Jesus, whom John had introduced, was now setting up a rival camp just a mile or two down the river and winning more people than John was.

Competition is one of the most dangerous things to enter the family and people of God. A sense of rivalry between ministries is one of the devil's most effective tools to impede the progress of the gospel. Here it was a competitive baptism. The crowds that once came flocking to hear John are now going to hear Jesus and following after him. They were involved in the old numbers game, which is still prominent today. Who gets more? Who is the most popular? Whom do the crowds go to hear and follow?

**I. (:22-26) SEEDS OF MINISTRY ENVY –
CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE
MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE MINISTRY OF JESUS OF
NAZARETH**

A. (:22-24) Similar Methodology – both came Baptizing

- some turf competition
- desire to be proven right
- resentment towards those who have come afterwards
- Ultimately on the same team; same objectives
- both willing to suffer and pay the price – “*John had not yet been thrown into prison*”

Aside: Plug for baptism by immersion: “*there was much water there*” – you don’t need much water for sprinkling

B. (:25) Controversial Issue – Purification

“There arose therefore a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification.”

Some type of comparison between the baptism performed by John the Baptist and the baptism performed by Jesus.

C. (:26) Root Problem = Insecurity on the part of disciples loyal to John the Baptist
“behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him”

II. (:27-30) SECRETS OF MINISTRY CONTENTMENT

A. (:27) Dependence on the Sovereignty of God – Ministry fruit ultimately depends on the Gift of God

“A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven.”

This is true for success in every area of life. God is behind it all and God should get all of the credit.

B. (:28-30) Christ-Centered Focus

1. (:28) Fulfilling your own Shape (Purpose Driven Life – Rick Warren)
“I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent before Him.”

2. (:29) Joy in presence of Christ and in the spread of the Word of Christ
“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full.”

Stedman: What a great word this is! John says, in effect, "When I see crowds of people leaving me and going to Jesus I delight in that because Jesus can do for them what I could never do. For their sakes I rejoice. Jesus is the bridegroom come to claim his bride. He is receiving those who believe in him; that is his bride. I am the friend of the bridegroom; I am the best man at the wedding. I have a certain role to fulfill, but I rejoice when the bridegroom claims his bride." I have never understood why we call that man the best man; why the bride, out of two choices, always chooses the one that is not the best man! Perhaps it is to make up for a secondary role in the wedding. But John is delighted with it. He says, "It fills my heart with joy to see them leaving me and going to Jesus."

3. (:30) Humility – not seeking personal accolades
“He must increase, but I must decrease”

III. (:31-35) SEAL OF DIVINE APPROVAL ON THE SUPERIORITY OF THE PERSON AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST

A. (:31) Came from Heaven – Intimately familiar with invisible, spiritual realm

“He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.”

B. (:32) Speaks From Personal Knowledge and Experience

“What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness.”

C. (:33) Sealed by the Holy Spirit

“He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true.”

D. (:34a) Sent by God to Speak the Words of God

“For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God”

E. (:34b) Empowered by the Holy Spirit

“for He gives the Spirit without measure”

F. (:35a) Supremely Loved by the Father

“The Father loves the Son”

G. (:35b) Delegated Authority as Ultimate Judge

“has given all things into His hand”

(:36) APPLICATION -- Faith in Christ = Key to Eternal Life of Divine Wrath

(Not faith in John the Baptist being the key)

A. Faith / Eternal Life

He who believes in the Son has eternal life”

B. Disobedience / Wrath of God

“but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How was the baptizing conducted by John the Baptist and by Jesus similar to and or different from the baptizing commanded by Christ in the Great Commission and practiced throughout the Church Age?

2) How do we respond to the ministry of others in a way that reveals roots of jealousy or envy? What steps can we take to maintain a Christ-centered focus? How do we make sure that God gets the glory for our ministry?

3) In what sense is the wrath of God already abiding on unbelievers?

4) Why is belief in vs. 36 set in contrast to disobedience instead of to unbelief?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh:

Our text divides into four sections:

- (1) Jesus baptizes, too (vss. 22-24)
- (2) John's disciples are jealous (vss. 25-26)
- (3) John's joy (vss. 27-30)
- (4) the superiority of the Savior (vss. 31-36)

These are the final words of John the Baptist¹⁷⁰ in the Gospel of John. They are a fitting and honorable tribute to this man, and they are also his final testimony concerning Jesus as the Christ.

Arthur Pink:

The passage now before us contains the final testimony of the Baptist to the Lord Jesus Christ. In it the Savior and His servant are sharply contrasted. In witnessing to the manifold glories of his Master, John the Baptist draws a seven-fold contrast. First, John was one who could receive nothing, except it were given him from heaven (verse 27); where as Christ was the One to whom the Father "hath given all things" (verse 35). Second, Jesus was the Christ, whereas John was only one "sent before Him" (verse 28). Third, Christ was the "bridegroom," whereas John was but the "friend" of the Bridegroom (verse 29). Fourth, Christ must "increase," whereas John himself must "decrease" (verse 30). Fifth, John was "of the earth," whereas the Lord Jesus had come "from above," and "is above all" (verse 31). Sixth, John had only a measure of the Spirit, but of Christ it is witnessed, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (verse 34). Seventh, John was but a servant, whereas the Savior was none less than the Son of the Father (verse 35). What a blessed and complete testimony was this to the immeasurable superiority of the Lord of Glory!

Boice: "To recognize that all spiritual insight and advance comes from God is to be freed from jealous efforts at comparison. It is to recognize that all Christ-centered and totally committed service, whatever the results, ranks equally with God. Any task done for God is necessarily a great work."

Boice: Regarding Jesus Christ as the Perfect Witness:

What is it that makes a person a good witness? We know something of the answer to this question because of our knowledge of the procedures in courts of law. The first thing that is required if a man is to be a good witness is that he must have firsthand information. He must have seen or hear that about which he is testifying. for this reason, no judge in the land will accept hearsay evidence.

Second, a good witness must be willing to testify. He must be willing to speak up, to get involved.

Third, the witness must be reliable. That is, his witness must be substantial and possess enough self-consistency to be believed. These three requirements make for a perfect witness. By this standard – and this is John’s point – Jesus Christ is the perfect witness concerning God. Thus, in verse 31 John stresses the fact that Jesus has firsthand information concerning God because of his origins. In verse 32 he points out that Jesus did bear witness to this knowledge. Finally, in verse 34 he shows that the witness is reliable “for God gives the Spirit without limit.”

Morris: “If a man continues in unbelief and disobedience he can look for nothing other than the persisting wrath of God. This is basic to our understanding of the gospel. Unless we are saved from real peril there is no meaning in salvation.”

Holwick: Summary of Ministry of John the Baptist:
Committed to Old Testament law and holy living.

- 1) Heart religion, not empty rituals.
 - a) Baptism of repentance.
 - b) Religion must be shown in actions.
 - c) Down on hypocrisy of leaders.
- 2) All people need to be cleansed, not just Gentiles.
 - a) Religious people are not excused.
 - b) Each person must make a personal decision of faith.
- 3) Messiah and Judgment are coming.
 - a) People need to be ready. They are in danger.
 - b) John is preparing the way for him.

Matthew Henry:

Here is John's answer to this complaint which his disciples made, v. 27, &c. His disciples expected that he would have resented this matter as they did; but Christ's manifestation to Israel was no surprise to John, but what he looked for; it was not disturbance to him, but what he wished for. He therefore checked the complaint, as Moses, Enviest thou for my sake? and took this occasion to confirm the testimonies he had formerly borne to Christ as superior to him, cheerfully consigning and turning over to him all the interest he had in Israel. In this discourse here, the first minister of the gospel (for so John was) is an excellent pattern to all ministers to humble themselves and to exalt the Lord Jesus.

TEXT: John 4:1-26

TITLE: THIRST QUENCHER

BIG IDEA:

OPPORTUNISTIC EVANGELISM OFFERS THE FREE GIFT OF SPIRIT PRODUCED LIFE, AWAKENS A SENSE OF SPIRITUAL NEED AND RECRUITS GENUINE WORSHIPERS

(:1-8) BACKGROUND: AVOIDING CONTROVERSY WITH THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PHARISEES WHILE INITIATING CONTACT WITH A LOST SINNER

A. (:1-3) Avoiding Controversy with the Self-Righteous Pharisees

Jesus knew that His growing popularity (*“making and baptizing more disciples than John”*) would cause premature conflict with the Pharisees.

Not that conflict bothered him, but He didn’t want to be distracted from his mission.

“He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee”

Stedman: First, the reason Jesus left Judea was to avoid a growing controversy. The Pharisees were distressed and aroused over the apparent rivalry between the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of John. They could not understand it. They were choosing up sides, and a rift threatened.

B. (:4-8) Initiating Contact with a Lost Sinner

1. (:4) Sense of Divine Appointment

“And He had to pass through Samaria”

Stedman: This direct route from Judea to Galilee was about 70 miles, or two and a half days' walk. But many of the Jews chose not to go through Samaria. They traveled the hot desert road from Jerusalem to Jericho, and up the Jordan valley. Thus, because of the terrible prejudice that prevailed against the Samaritan people, they journeyed almost twice the distance on a much hotter and more uncomfortable road. But our Lord cut right through that ignorant, narrow-minded prejudice and went through Samaria.

Deffinbaugh: D. A. Carson, citing Josephus, maintains that Jews much more commonly passed through Samaria. It would therefore seem that only a few strict Jews refused to do so.

2. (:5-6) Scene of Jewish/Samaritan Hostility

a. Place of Historical Significance

“So He came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and Jacob’s well was there”

cf. Gen. 12:6; 34:2; Josh. 8:33; 20:7,8; 24:1, 32; Acts 7:16

b. Place of Human Weariness

“Jesus, therefore, being wearied from his journey”

Piper: The Samaritans were the remnant of the northern Jewish Kingdom who had intermarried with foreigners after the chiefs and nobles had been carried into exile in 729 B.C. They had once built a separate worship place on their own Mt. Gerizim and they rejected all of the Old Testament except their version of the first five books of Moses. The animosity toward Jews was centuries old.

Stedman: According to this account, it was "the sixth hour" when Jesus stopped at the well. By Jewish reckoning that would be noon. But according to Roman time, which I think John uses throughout his gospel, it was six o'clock in the evening. So it was no surprise that Jesus was weary. He had been walking in the hot sun all day. He was thirsty, so he sat beside the well to rest while the disciples went into the city to find something to eat. Thus we have here a very beautiful picture of our Lord's humanity.

Deffinbaugh: Why the emphasis on Jacob, and on this well which once belonged to him? It seems as though this woman (and perhaps the Samaritans more generally) took pride in claiming Jacob as their forefather. This is especially strange in the light of the way this patriarch is portrayed in the Book of Genesis. I don't remember any self-respecting Jew boasting about being a descendant of Jacob, but only of being Abraham's offspring (see Matthew 3:9).

Matthew Henry: Shechem yielded the first proselyte that ever came into the church of Israel (Gen. xxxiv. 24), and now it is the first place where the gospel is preached out of the commonwealth of Israel; so Dr. Lightfoot observes.

3. (:7) Simple but Surprising Request – Getting her Attention

“Give Me a drink”

Surprising that a Jewish man like Jesus would initiate interaction with her because:

- she was a woman
- she was a Samaritan
- she was of poor moral character

Tasker: The Samaritan woman is a timeless figure – not only a typical Samaritan but a typical human being. As she converses with Jesus, it becomes clear that like most men and women she is almost exclusively concerned with the provision of what will satisfy her physical needs, particularly thirst-quenching water which can often be obtained only by the expenditure of much time and energy.

4. (:8) Seclusion from Distractions

“For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.”

Provided Jesus some private time for interaction with the Samaritan woman.

Many different types of evangelism: Friendship, Confrontational, Visitation Programs, Crusades, Literature Distribution, etc.

But how would you categorize Christ's dealing with the Samaritan woman at the well and her townspeople?

Coin a phrase: "Opportunistic Evangelism"

- being alert to seize every opportunity for evangelism (for both sowing and reaping)
- being creative to turn the occasion towards spiritual things without forcing things
- following the leading of the Holy Spirit

Def. of "opportunistic" is usually negative: the practice of taking advantage of opportunities or circumstances (fine so far -- we will stop with this) esp. with little regard for principles or consequences

We minister with the highest possible regard for principles and consequences -- but we minister aggressively because our confidence is in the God who can change people's hearts

THE THREE OBJECTIVES OF OPPORTUNISTIC EVANGELISM:

I. (:9-15) OFFERS THE FREE GIFT OF SPIRIT PRODUCED LIFE = LIVING WATER

A. (:9) Contact Initiated Without Prejudice

"How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)"

B. (:10) Curiosity Stirred – Reference to Living Water – Analogy from Physical to Spiritual Realm

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

C. (:11-12) Confusion Surfaces

1. Confusion Regarding Physical vs. Spiritual

"Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"

2. Confusion Regarding Person of Christ

"You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

Deffinbaugh: Jesus does not answer the question about being greater than Jacob quite yet. He momentarily sets aside this question and answers it indirectly by showing that His "water" is better "water" than that provided by Jacob's well. Jacob's well "water"

temporarily quenches thirst, but only for a time, and then more water is required. This woman recognizes the “inferiority” of this “water” because day after day she must return to the well for more. The “water” of which our Lord speaks is vastly better. This “water” permanently quenches one’s thirst. The one who drinks His “water” will never thirst again—and this “living water” produces eternal life.

D. (:13-14) Contrast Defined (between physical water and living water)

1. Limitation of physical well water – Quenches thirst only temporarily
“Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again”
2. Longevity of spiritual living water – Quenches thirst permanently
“but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst”
3. Multiplying factor – Potential to quench thirst in others also as it is shared
“but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

Note the evangelistic thrust here in keeping with this context as the Samaritan woman shares Jesus with the rest of the townspeople.

John 7:37-39 – defines the Holy Spirit in connection to this living water

Stedman: How do we keep from thirsting? We have water piped in, available to us all the time, so that when we feel even a little thirsty we take a drink of it. This is what Jesus means here. The water he would give would be available constantly so that when one was thirsty one could drink immediately and so would never get terribly thirsty.

E. (:15) Conversation Extended

“Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty, nor come all the way here to draw.”

Now there is some give and take to the conversation; some opportunity to further explain the key issues ...

II. (:16-19) AWAKENS A SENSE OF SPIRITUAL NEED -- INSIGHT INTO HER GUILTY CONSCIENCE

A. (:16) Probing Command

“Go, call your husband, and come here.”

Piper: If people are spiritually asleep you have to shock them, startle them, scandalize them, if you want them to hear what you say. Jesus was especially good at this. When he wants to teach us something about worship he uses a whore. "Go call your husband!" "I don't have a husband." "That's right. But you've had five, and the man you sleep with now is not your husband." She was shocked. We're shocked. But Jesus simply sits there on the edge of the well with his hands folded, looking at the woman with razors in his eyes ready to teach us about worship. . .

So now he touches the most sensitive, vulnerable spot in her life -- "Go call your husband." The quickest way to the heart is through a wound.

Carr: This may seem cruel of the Lord, but nobody will ever come to Jesus for salvation until they are first awakened to their own personal need. Until the sinner knows he is lost, he will never desire to be found. Thus, conviction is of vital importance. Without it, nobody can ever be saved - John 6:44, 65; Eph. 2:1. Please note that God is not as nearly afraid of revealing your sins as you are of having them revealed! He will do whatever He has to do to bring you to repentance.

B. (:17a) Personal Concealment (or Personal Confession??)
"The woman answered and said, 'I have no husband.'"

Answers question ... but does not become transparent and open up with any type of confession.

Deffinbaugh: The "woman at the well" is a woman whose sins are apparent, but she has not sinned alone. In those days, husbands divorced their wives, but wives did not divorce their husbands. If this woman was married and divorced five times, then five men divorced her.¹⁹⁴ This woman was "put away" five times. Think of how she must feel about herself. And the man she is now living with is not her husband. She isn't even married this time, but just living with (or sleeping with) a man, perhaps another woman's husband. This woman has been passed around by some of the male population of Sychar. Jesus' words not only call the woman's attention to her sins; they call our attention to the sins of the men of that city.

C. (:17b-18) Pastoral Counsel
"You have well said, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

D. (:19) Partial Comprehension
"Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet."

Stedman: Most of the commentators take her response to be an evasion on her part, a change of subject in order to escape a very unpleasant probing by Jesus. I once thought that, but I have come to see her response in a deeper light. I believe now that this is an admission on her part that Jesus is dead right: "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. You have seen me, and you are right on. You know all about me." (Later, she goes into the village and says to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did.") By her response, she is admitting that he is right; this is what she has done and been. Then she links with it not an evasion, not a religious question to try to turn him off, but an honest plea for help. "Where do I go to get life?" is what she is saying. "You Jews say that the only place to offer the sacrifice that can cleanse my sin is in the temple in Jerusalem. Our people say it is here on this mountain. Where do I go? How can I find God? "

Deffinbaugh: Her question does not look like a rabbit trail to me; rather it seems an honest effort to get to the heart of the difference between the “faith” of the Samaritans and the “faith” of the Jews.

III. (:20-24) RECRUITS GENUINE WORSHIPERS -- INVITATION TO WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

A. (:20-21) The Place of Worship is Not the Priority

1. Plea for Clarification Regarding the Proper Physical Location

“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

2. Switching the Focus to the Spiritual Issue of Worship

“Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father.”

B. (:22) The Object of Worship is the Promised Messiah

“You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”

C. (:23-24) The Nature of Worship = “*in spirit and truth*”

1. Time Reference – inaugurating new era of worship

“But an hour is coming, and now is”

significance of First Coming of Christ

eschatological focus as well directed towards Second Coming

2. Nature of Worship Defined

a. Not bowing down in some physical locality limited by a temple structure

b. “*in spirit*” = Heart Worship

in the realm of our spirit as energized by the Spirit of God

impossible for non-believers

opposite of insincere or mere intellectual worship

c. “*in truth*” = in accordance with God’s revelation

3. Nature of Worship Significant to God

a. Desires “*true worshipers*”

b. Desires Worship directed towards the “*Father*”

c. Recruits such Worshipers

“for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers”

4. Nature of Worship Consistent with the Character of God

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”

Piper: When Jesus says in v. 23, *“True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,”* some take him to mean “in the Holy Spirit.” I’ve taken him to mean that worship must come from your spirit within instead of being merely formal and external. But in John 3:6 Jesus connects God’s Spirit and our spirit in a remarkable way. He says, *“That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* In other words, until the Holy Spirit touches our spirit with the flame of life our spirit is so dead it does not even qualify as spirit. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. So when Jesus says that true worshipers worship in spirit he must mean that true worship only comes from spirits that are made alive and sensitive and vital by the touch of the Holy Spirit.

(:25-26) CONCLUSION: IDENTIFICATION OF JESUS AS THE MESSIAH

A. Promise of Messiah

“The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ)’”

B. Function of Messiah

“when that One comes, He will declare all things to us.”

C. Fulfillment of Promise – Significant “I AM” statement

“Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He.’”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What application do you find here for questions relating to bigotry, prejudice and stereotyping of various groups? How can we be encouraged to reach out to those who are outside of our normal social circles?
- 2) What aspects of this passage point to the humanity of Jesus and what aspects highlight His deity?
- 3) What are some of the major concepts implied in the image of “*living water*”? Why was this such a perfect illustration for this setting? Do we make an effort to develop illustrations that are appropriate for the particular setting?
- 4) What is the significance of the time references in vv.21-23?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hendriksen: (Outline structured around insights for soul-winning)

- A. Appeal to her sympathy (:7)
- B. Appeal to her curiosity (:10)
- C. Appeal to her desire for ultimate rest and satisfaction (:14)
- D. Appeal to her conscience (:16)

Piper: So now we can complete the analogy: the fuel of worship is the grand truth of a gracious and sovereign God; the fire that makes the fuel burn white hot is the quickening of the Holy Spirit; the furnace made alive and warm by the flame of truth is our renewed spirit; and the resulting heat of our affections is worship, pushing its way out in tears, confessions, prayers, praises, acclamations, lifting of hands, bowing low and obedient lives.

Stedman: Jesus says three remarkable things:

First, he says, in effect, "Your question about where to worship is soon going to be entirely irrelevant. The hour is coming when geography will no more be an issue. Temples or buildings will not be necessary to worship God. God is going to, and has already provided, that your body is the temple; that is where he wants his worship to go on." By his death and resurrection, Jesus knew that he was going to destroy all the symbols of worship on earth. So temples, buildings and geographical locations are no longer significant. Your own body, your own person is the place where God wants worship.

Secondly, he said to her, "Your knowledge is incomplete. You have been the victim of garbled truth. You have some truth but there is much error mingled with it; you have been misled." This often happens. Most of the cults teach garbled Christian truth mixed with error. But Jesus says, "The Jews know more. They at least know where is the proper place to carry on worship by symbol because they are part of God's plan. 'Salvation is of the Jews.' " Jesus does not deny it. He himself speaks as a Jew. He recognizes that Israel is indeed part of God's program to bring salvation to the world, and he does not set it aside.

Thirdly, Jesus says, "Here is what true worship is: true worship is done in your human spirit." It is what we call worshipping from the heart. And it must be in truth. It must be honest, not a put-on. It is not something you do with your body while your mind is somewhere else. Worship is what you mean with all your heart. When we sing hymns, God is not interested in our just mouthing words. He is interested in our hearts meaning what we sing. Most of our hymns are hymns of worship, prayer and praise addressed to God. They are to come from the heart, so we are to sing with meaning. God is seeking such to worship him. In every congregation God is looking for those who mean what they are singing, who, from the heart, are saying these things to him. That is what worship is. And the reason it is worship is because it is in line with God's own nature.

God himself is a Spirit, he is invisible; and we too are spirit, in the innermost part of our being.

Deffinbaugh:

Politically, Samaria was not a distinct region, but its culture and religion were definitely distinct from that of Israel. We would do well to recall the historical relationship between Israel and Samaria. Under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the United Kingdom of Israel split into two fragments (1 Kings 12): the northern kingdom of Israel, led by the rebel Jeroboam, and the southern kingdom of Judah, under Rehoboam. Because Jeroboam feared that the two kingdoms might reunite, he established a counterfeit religion, with its own place of worship—Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-33). Later, a wicked northern king named Omri built the city of Samaria, which he made his capital, the capital of the Northern Kingdom. He also built a temple and an altar to Baal, a heathen deity (1 Kings 16:24-34). Eventually, the name of this city became synonymous for the entire Northern Kingdom, and thus its name, Samaria.

After repeated warnings from God’s prophets, divine judgment finally came at the hand of the Assyrians, who defeated Israel and scattered the middle and upper classes throughout the other nations they had conquered. They replaced the dispersed Israelites with heathen from other lands (2 Kings 17:23ff.). These heathen intermarried with the remaining Israelites resulting in a nation of half-breeds, a most distasteful and evil thing for a devout Jew (see Ezra 9 and 10; Nehemiah 13). Worse yet, the true religion of Israel became intermingled with heathen idolatry.

When the Jews of the Southern Kingdom of Judah were later taken captive by the Babylonians, they were allowed to maintain their racial and religious identity. After their 70 years of captivity were completed and they were granted permission to return to their own land, a number did so. When these returning exiles set out to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, the Samaritans offered to help them and were summarily refused (Ezra 4:2ff.). In about 400 B.C., the Samaritans constructed their own rival temple on Mount Gerizim. At the end of the second century B.C., this temple was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler of Judea. This greatly increased hostilities between the Jews and the Samaritans.

The Samaritans professed to believe in the God of Israel and awaited the coming of Messiah (see John 4:25). They accepted only the first five books of the Law, but rejected the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures. Wherever they found it necessary to justify their religion and their place of worship, they modified the Law. The relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans was definitely strained.

Boice: In all, the claim of Christ to be the great “I am” occurs seven times in John’s Gospel (in 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5), always as an expression of his claim to be God. And there are seven other very important instances in which the words are coupled with a noun describing him as the source of all good and the answer to all man’s needs. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life” (6:35) . . . “the light of the world” (8:12, 9:5) . . . “the gate” (10:7, 9) . . . “the good shepherd” (10:11, 14) . . . “the

resurrection and the life” (11:25) . . . “the way and the truth and the life” (14:6) . . . and
“the true vine” (15: 1, 5).

TEXT: John 4:27-42

TITLE: HARVEST TIME

BIG IDEA:
OPPORTUNISTIC EVANGELISM PAYS OFF

INTRODUCTION:

Remember discussion of Opportunistic Evangelism from previous lesson.

I. EXAMPLE OF THE DISCIPLES -- HINDRANCES TO OPPORTUNISTIC EVANGELISM CONTRASTED WITH EXAMPLE OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN -- ENTHUSIASM OF A NEW BELIEVER

A. Prejudice

1. The Disciples

"they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman" yet they knew better than to question the master's conscience regarding right and wrong and what is appropriate; Love overcomes Prejudice -- impossible to be successful at this very difficult type of evangelism (opportunistic) without love; apparently they had been content to ignore the spiritual needs of the Samaritans when they went into town to get the food; they just wanted to pass thru and get to Galilee--to the place of spiritual ministry--completely blind to what ministry the Lord would have for them on the way

2. Samaritan Woman

Prejudice had not shut her ears to the message of Christ and she took the initiative to break down the walls of prejudice for her fellow Samaritans -- asking them to give credence to a Jew.

B. Preoccupation with Physical Needs Rather Than Spiritual Ministry

1. The Disciples

"Rabbi, eat" -- a very reasonable concern; too often the good is the worst enemy of the best; the purpose of food is to give us the fuel so that we can effectively serve God -- but if we are missing the opportunities to minister we have things backwards; What was Christ doing instead of eating at that moment? Probably praying for a harvest of souls

2. Samaritan Woman

"she left her waterpot"

- a. Was it full? -- her desire to dedicate all that she had to her new Master; responding to His request for water; trusting Him with her valuable waterpot; telling Him to stay put while she brought her family and friends
- b. Was it empty? -- her haste to tell others

C. Perplexion Regarding Their Mission and True Power for Living-- for carrying out that Mission

1. The Disciples

What makes you keep going? What gives you the greatest satisfaction? What feeds you and makes life meaningful for you? What is God's Program? What part has He called you to fulfill in that Program? Are you gripped with a sense of your divine commission?

2. Samaritan Woman -- Simplicity and Single Focus

Her message was very simple: promised Messiah, Savior of world; content to tell others the little that she knew rather than waiting for full indoctrination; her life was not cluttered with other activities that prevented her from carrying out this mission -- she was able to focus on the task of evangelism very naturally; simply pointing other sinners to Christ (her closest friends might not have been the most upright people)

D. Procrastination Regarding the Urgency of the Task --

1. Disciples

this opportunity to evangelize cannot be put off until tomorrow; lost opportunities and lost forever;

Some believe it was probably December. It takes six months in Palestine before the crop is ready for harvesting. There were apparently four months still remaining. But more likely this is a proverbial saying. There is evidence that the agricultural year was divided into six two-month periods: seed/time, winter, spring, harvest, summer, and the time of extreme heat. Thus four months elapsed between the end of seed-time and the beginning of harvest. This might well have given rise to a proverbial saying indicating that there is no hurry for a particular task. The seed may be planted, but there is no way of getting round the months of waiting. Growth is slow and cannot be hurried. But not so in

terms of the urgency of being God's instruments in bringing salvation to needy souls. (Morris)

"Now is the day of salvation" and "Now is the day for testifying"

2. Samaritan Woman
zeal and enthusiasm

II. TEACHING OF CHRIST -- OPPORTUNISTIC EVANGELISM PAYS OFF

3 Reasons we need to be alert to seize every opportunity for evangelism (both sowing and reaping)

3 ways that it will pay off

A. It Sustains Us -- the spiritual fuel that keeps us going "food"

Stedman: The first thing Jesus taught them was that there is a deep satisfaction in obedience to what God wants that is just like eating food: it fills you up; you feel satisfied, ministered to, fed. Many have discovered that there is nothing like obeying God to give a deep sense of satisfaction to life.

Lenski: The disciples had left Jesus thirsty and hungry and now found him refreshed and declining to eat. Someone had been there in their absence and had just left."

B. It Fulfills God's Will

God has a Master Plan -- includes His will for our role in that plan -- our own divine commission or calling.

Oriented around spiritual gifts -- with regards to building up the body;

Everyone has the mandate to evangelize;

we have been sent into this world for a purpose;

Do we know our Father's will? Certainly He is not trying to hide it from us.

Are we accomplishing His Work?

Opportunistic Evangelism not only Sustains us and Fulfills God's Will but

C. It Enriches Us in Partnership with our Fellow Laborers in the Gospel (:36-38)

It truly pays off -- both now and for eternity --

both for us and for those we witness to who are the fruit destined for eternity and for those who participate in God's testimony over the life of that individual

saying of **R. Tarfon** A.D. 130: "The day is short and the task is great and the laborers are idle and the wage is abundant and the master of the house is urgent"

no competition between sower and reaper --
sowing is often viewed as hard and wearisome work -- in contrast to reaping with its joy (Ps. 126:5)
Each Christian worker is dependent for his work on the labor or his predecessors.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How available and eager are we to look for and seize opportunities for evangelism?

Do we bail out with excuses like:

- "I'm too tired"
- "I don't think this person would ever be interested in spiritual things"
- "I'm not the right person to identify with this individual"

2) How do we fall into the same trap of viewing only the physical dimension and overlooking the greater reality of the spiritual dimension?

3) What has been so important in our lives that we have been willing to skip a couple of meals for it? What really drives our thirst for satisfaction and accomplishment? What are the main goals and ambitions that motivate us?

4) Where have we had the joy of reaping where others have sown? How do we avoid becoming discouraged when our mission seems predominantly that of sowing instead of reaping?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: Our text challenges me to question just how committed I am to obeying our Lord. The "work" to which our Lord was committed was the "Father's work," the work of salvation. He was so committed to completing His work that He refused to eat a meal when it interfered with this work. Am I as committed to the salvation of men as God is? Am I willing to forego a meal, a restful evening, a bigger house, a more affluent lifestyle, so that God's work might be advanced? This text exposes my own self-centeredness, my own reluctance to subordinate my self-interests to God's interests.

I am also challenged to reevaluate what inspires and motivates me. My appetites provide me with strong motivation to eat and to satisfy myself. God's purposes and work motivated our Lord. Food gives us strength and sustenance. If our Lord's "food" was to complete the work His Father had given Him, then His strength and motivation for service came from this work. I hear a lot these days about "burnout," and I've always been troubled because I don't find this term in the Bible. Now, I'm beginning to wonder if the concept is biblical. Are Christians "burning out" because they have been working too hard at doing the Father's will? It seems to me that if the Father's work is that which strengthens and empowers us, then we can hardly "burn out" by making His work our work. This whole matter needs to be given more careful thought in the light of our text.

Stedman: Undoubtedly this is the work of the Spirit of God, working through this reborn woman. Immediately her words fall with unusual power upon the crowd and they respond by coming to Jesus. They never responded to her before, but now they do, because God is working in her. She immediately becomes an evangelist; she has to tell what happened to her.

Hendriksen: *"and at that moment his disciples came"* – The disciples had finished their business in Sychar and naturally returned to the well. Jesus had just made his great declaration, reaching a climax in a manner that was wholly natural and unforced. Yet, the divine providence is such that at that exact moment – not earlier, so that the conversation with the woman would have been interrupted; nor later, so that the disciples would have missed this great event (their Lord condescending to a Samaritan woman) with all its missionary implications – the disciples arrived! This is a glorious manifestation and illustration of the operation of God's providence for the furtherance of his kingdom."

Hendriksen: *"and many more believed because of his word"* The attitude of the Samaritans at the well contrasts sharply with those other Samaritan villagers who later refused to receive him because he was on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56). Nevertheless, we need not suppose that the faith of all these people of Sychar who went out to see Jesus was saving faith. With some it probably remained on the level of 2:23. With others, we may safely assume, it rose to the highest level after they had heard the word of Jesus himself. Also, the number of those who accepted him because of his own word was far larger than the number of those who had believed on him as a result of the woman's testimony."

Lenski: Now both statements are true, that the harvest is still four months off, and that the fields are right now white for harvest, ready to be cut. It is all clear the moment the disciples do what Jesus bids them do, *"Lift up your eyes and view the fields."* There on the path through the young grain the Samaritans were coming, impelled by the report from the woman. We now see why John has the picturesque imperfect ... there they were, still coming. They were the grain Jesus saw, white for harvest, ready to be gathered into the granary of the kingdom. Thus the contrast of the two kinds of "food"

(vs. 31 and 33) is carried over into the two kinds of “*harvest*.” The disciples and we with them are ever inclined to see only the material and must have our attention drawn especially (“*behold*”) to the spiritual. It often seems less real to us than the material, yet if anything it is more so.”

TEXT: John 4:43-54

TITLE: SIGN MIRACLE #2 – FAITH PEEPERS PREFERRED OVER SIGN SEEKERS

BIG IDEA:

EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL MUST HUMBLY TAKE JESUS AT HIS WORD TO EXPERIENCE THE REWARDS OF FAITH

(:43-45) INTRODUCTION: HOME SWEET HOME??

A. (:43) Progression -- Returning from Judea to Galilee
“And after the two days He went forth from there into Galilee.”

He had stayed for 2 days (4:40) with the Samaritan believers. Did not want to extend that stay any longer because He would arouse the opposition of the Jews??

B. (:44) Principle – Respectless at Home
“For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country.”
2 Possibilities debated as to identification of “his own country”:
- Judea and Jerusalem (Westcott argues for this)
- or Galilee (Capernaum / Nazareth)

Familiarity breeds contempt; taken for granted; not given the benefit of the doubt; had to go elsewhere to really prove himself in order to return with more respect.

Lenski: If a prophet is not esteemed in his homeland, how can that be a reason or serve as an explanation for Jesus’ present return to his homeland? Would it not rather serve as a reason or an explanation why he should leave his homeland? This point is urged by those who would regard Judea as his homeland, and they add that Jesus thus far had had little success in Jerusalem and in Judea. ...
(Lenski’s view) -- Jesus now, after winning his esteem in another land, comes back to his own land and finds that esteem awaiting him.

C. (:45) Paradox – Reception of Sorts
“So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they themselves also went to the feast.”

Received Him as a wonder worker, but did not honor or trust in Him as Messiah.

I. (:46-50) FAITH INITIATES WITH HUMBLE RELIANCE ON GOD’S WORD

A. (:46-47) Desperate Direct Appeal for Healing from the Only One who could Help
1. (:46a) Return to the scene of the Wine
“He came therefore again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine.”

2. (:46b) Sickness and Death are the Great Social Levelers

“And there was a certain royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum.”

Jesus had dealt with the notorious sinner; now He deals with the nobleman

3. (:47) Desperate Direct Appeal for Healing

“When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and was requesting Him to come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.”

Lenski: Although he is a royal official with servants at his command, he goes in person to beg help of Jesus. Yet only his desperate need drives him, his own free heart's desire does not draw him. If it were not for his sick son, he would not have troubled much about Jesus. God's providence often uses our need thus to drive us to find even more than just what we think we need.”

B. (:48) Differentiating Between Faith Peepers and Sign Seekers

“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”

Jesus challenges the motivation and tone of the man's approach.

C. (:49-50) Deciding to Simply Rely on God's Word

“The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he started off.”

II. (:51-53) FAITH BLOSSOMS FROM THE PROVEN FAITHFULNESS OF GOD'S WORD

A. (:51) Reward of Faith = Healing of His Son

B. (:52-53a) Record of Specific Confirmation

C. (:53b) Reproduction of Faith

“and he himself believed, and his whole household”

(:54) CONCLUSION:

“This is again a second sign that Jesus performed, when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Should those who wish to pursue ministry always choose to leave their home town in light of the prophecy of rejection quoted in vs. 44?

2) What were some of things that Jesus apparently did at the feast in Jerusalem as mentioned in vs. 45?

3) Why does Jesus seem to express such a disdain for performing signs and wonders (vs. 48) and yet the theme of John's Gospel centers around the special Messianic signs which Jesus did choose to perform?

4) How difficult do you think it was for the father to head for home without Jesus in tow?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Rodney Buchanan: I see in this story a model for how we are to approach God with our needs.

- We must go to Jesus
 - many people turn everywhere else but not to Jesus
 - willing to humble himself (even though a powerful Roman official)
 - put forth effort (travelled 20 miles)
 - how many sick people lived closer but did not come to Jesus in same way?
- We must overcome obstacles
 - Jesus initially seems to rebuff his request
 - People who pursue God overcome obstacles and are persistent in their quest for God. And God honors that persistence.
 - Official would not take No for an answer.
- We must take Him at His Word
 - This man believed without anything to prop up his faith.
 - Walk in obedience despite your feelings.
 - You have to ask with the expectation of receiving.
- He will abundantly bless and meet our needs

Steven Glover:

- 1) Notice the Resolve of his Faith (:46-47)
- 2) Notice the Request of his Faith (:47-49)
- 3) Notice the Response of his Faith (:50)
- 4) Notice the Reward of his Faith (:51-53)

Deffinbaugh:

What a great miracle this is! Do you notice that in one sense it is a miracle very similar to the changing of water into wine? Jesus turns the water into wine in a way that keeps most of those at the wedding from even knowing what had happened. It is a "sign" evident to a few, which results in the faith of only our Lord's disciples (2:11). So it is too with the healing of the royal official's son. If Jesus had chosen to perform this

miracle as the official had hoped (by personally coming and attending to his son), many would have followed along, and our Lord's popularity would have greatly increased. But this is not what our Lord wants at this point in time. That is why He left Judea and returned to Galilee (4:1-3). Jesus performs this miracle in such a way that only the official knows it is a miracle. As he "testified" of this miracle to his servants, they too become members of the "household of faith." Jesus not only performs a miracle, He does so in a way that is consistent with His purpose. . .

It is apparent that "sign-faith" is not pleasing to our Lord, for He chooses not to commit Himself to "sign-faith" believers. Sign-faith is not a bad starting point, but it should never end here. Jesus wants people whose faith is grounded in His word, not in miracles. . .

As I close, let me point out a very important principle: God often brings adversity into our lives—adversity beyond our ability to handle—so that we must come to Him as our only hope, so that we must trust in Him alone.

Stedman:

He stopped pleading with and begging Jesus to act according to what he thought was the right way to handle the situation, but accepted our Lord's own way of acting. I think he went, still troubled with doubts. He probably said to himself as he journeyed back home, "Why did I leave him? If I had just pressed him a little he would have come down." But he went; that is the point. Though he was uncertain, nevertheless he went; he obeyed the word of Jesus, though his mind was still troubled with doubt. Faith is not what you feel, it is what you do! . . .

Recently I was with a friend who is a close companion and friend of Tom Landry, the coach of the Dallas Cowboys. Many of you know that Tom Landry is a Christian. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Dallas Theological Seminary. My friend, who is the chairman of that board, told me that at a meeting recently Tom Landry said something that he will never forget. Landry said, "The job of a coach is to make men do what they don't want to do, in order to achieve what they really want." That is what Jesus does: he puts us through circumstances we do not want to go through; he makes us face things we do not like to face, in order to achieve what we have wanted with all our hearts all along. To do so requires the strengthening of faith. Faith's encouragement: that is what this incident is all about.

TEXT: John 5:1-18

TITLE: SIGN MIRACLE #3 -- GOD'S STRATEGY FOR PICKING A FIGHT –
THE LAW MAKER CAN NEVER BE THE LAW BREAKER

BIG IDEA:

**JESUS DEMONSTRATES HIS SUPREMACY OVER LEGALISM AND HIS
EQUALITY WITH GOD THE FATHER
(THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST -- AS EQUAL WITH THE FATHER -- AND
THE MOTIVATION OF MERCY TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER A
LEGALISTIC SPIRIT)**

INTRODUCTION:

- 1) List important strategic battles that Christians should be actively fighting today
- 2) List some unwise battles where resources are being wasted on issues that are not so strategic or crucial

Each of the 7 major Sign Miracles in John's Gospel focuses on a specific aspect of Christ's character as Messiah, equal in nature with God the Father:

- 1) Changing water to wine -- Superiority of the new covenant relationship; grace, joy, love
- 2) Healing nobleman's son -- Superiority of faith over signs; power of spoken word of God; Sovereign will of God; distance no problem for the power of God
- 3) Healing of paralyzed man in Chap. 5 -- Superiority of mercy and compassion over a legalistic spirit

CHRIST PICKED THE TIMING FOR THIS FIGHT VERY PRECISELY

Review: Up to this point in Gospel of John, Christ has been working quietly in the background, being very careful not to generate too much hostility from the religious establishment too quickly.

2:12-25 Hit-and-Run Cleansing of the Temple was His earlier ministry in Jerusalem, along with some initial signs to gain their attention and curiosity

Chap. 3 dealt with Nicodemus at night

4:1-3 purposely left Judea when the Pharisees started to show concern over the following He was attracting

Chap. 4 ministry to individual Samaritan woman followed by intense two day teaching ministry to the whole town

4:43-45 chose to go to Galilee BECAUSE a prophet does not get respect very readily on his home turf (you would think that would have been a reason to avoid Galilee -- but He did not want things to mushroom too rapidly)

4:46-54 Healing of nobleman's son = 2nd sign

5:1 represents a dramatic switch in Jesus' ministry; now He takes the initiative to go back to Jerusalem and pick a fight; embarking on a course of conflict with the religious leaders from which He could never turn back

I. (:1-9) THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DIVINE HEALING HIGHLIGHT THE MERCY AND COMPASSION OF CHRIST (CHRIST ORCHESTRATED THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THIS FIGHT VERY PRECISELY)

A. (:1-2) The Proper Occasion:

1. (:1) Special feast

“After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

Time of Celebration

Increased Concentration of People

Tone of Spiritual Renewal

2. (:2) Symbolic setting

“Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.”

"Bethesda" = "house of mercy"

B. (:3-5) The Proper Sick Person to Heal = Hopeless Situation

Why did Jesus pick this man? Deck stacked against this man –

Demonstrates a number of important principles that parallel our spiritual salvation:

1) (:3) Demonstrates the principle of Divine Selection -- there were multitudes from which to choose; these were not the movers and shakers; not the ones with the most potential for future ministry; Christ operates according to His own criteria of selection; we can't argue "That's not fair"; instead we must marvel at His gracious compassion; shows the value of the individual in God's eyes

“In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, (waiting for the moving of the waters;”

(Aside: Textual problem with verse 4; probably not in the original manuscripts)

2) (:5) Demonstrates the principle of Human Inability -- this must have been a particularly desperate case

“And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness.”

- a) Length of time -- 38 years – Imagine his frustration, loneliness, disappointment
- b) Type of illness -- some type of paralysis preventing him
from getting to the water = critical since “First in the Water” = key to healing
- c) Bankrupt of other resources or people who could help
- d) Despairing -- could not even bring himself to say the words:
"I do wish to get well" in response to Christ's question
without hope and yet desiring help
- e) probably very unworthy due to sin problem mentioned later

C. (:6-7) The Proper One to Provide Healing -- Compassion and Mercy of Christ

1) (:6) Merciful Offer of Hope Motivated by Compassion

“When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, ‘Do you wish to get well?’”

Key to Deliverance: Do you wish to get well?

Crippling condition = picture of bondage to sin

Pink: Did not the Savior ask the question to impress upon this man the utter helplessness of his condition! Man must be brought to recognize and realize his impotency. While ever we console ourselves we will do better next time, that is a sure sign we have not come to the end of ourselves. The one who promises himself that he will amend his ways and turn over a new leaf has not learned that he is "without strength." It is not till we discover we are helpless that we shall abandon our miserable efforts to weave a robe of righteousness for ourselves. It is not till we learn we are impotent that we shall look outside of ourselves to Another.

2. (:7) Realistic Defeatism

“Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”

D. (:8-9) The Proper Picture of Deliverance –

Divine Sufficiency Coupled with Human Responsibility

1) (:8) Divine Sufficiency -- Christ acted alone by speaking a few simple words; did not even make use of the pool

Result much more powerful than 38 years of human effort!

“Arise, take up your pallet, and walk.”

2) (:9) Human Responsibility -- The man was responsible to obey the command of Christ by getting up (after Christ had empowered Him), picking up his bed (a critical detail since Christ wanted to pick a man who had a mat to carry to stage the conflict with the legalistic Pharisees), and continuing to walk (Pres. tense verb while the others are Aorist)

“And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk.”

Transition (:9b) Ominous Note:

“Now it was the Sabbath on that day.”

Stedman: The Law of Moses did say that the Jews were to keep the Sabbath and not do any work on that day. The rabbis had carefully studied that regulation, and, probably innocently and with good intentions, had spelled out 39 different ways by which the Sabbath could be violated by certain types of work. One of those ways was carrying any kind of a load on the Sabbath day. Jeremiah 17 had warned against this. He specifically said, "Do not bring any burden out of your houses on the sabbath day," {cf, Jer 17:22}. Thus there was some merit and justification for their intervention in this case.

II. (:10-16) THE CONFRONTATION WITH SELF RIGHTEOUS LEGALISTS HIGHLIGHTS DELIVERANCE FROM SIN (CHRIST CENTERED THE FIGHT AROUND THE KEY ISSUE) LEGALISTS RESPOND WITH PERSECUTION RATHER THAN REJOICING

Center the fight around something worth fighting about

When the authority of Christ conflicts with the authority of Tradition, Bow to the authority of Christ

Mercy Triumphs Over Judgment

Micah 6:8; Hosea 6:6; James 2:13

As Co-equal with God the Father, Christ knows best what type of conduct is appropriate and pleasing to God

- 1) Legalism is concerned with what is permissible according to man-made rules
God is concerned with delivering people from sickness and sin for eternity
- 2) Legalism is concerned with exalting self by judging others according to our own rules
God is concerned with people seeing His good works and glorifying and obeying Him according to His standards (which emphasize the internal heart attitude over the externals)

A. (:10) The Judgmental Accusation

“Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.’”

B. (:11-13) The Innocent Response

I only was obeying the one who healed me.

Issue: Who has the Authority to say what is permissible and what is not?

- C. (:14) Spiritual Deliverance and Identification of Jesus
“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.”
- D. (:15) Corresponding Testimony
“The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.”
 Look how natural our witnessing should be.
- E. (:16) Building Opposition and Persecution
“And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.”

**III. (:17-18) THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST HIGHLIGHT HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD THE FATHER
 (CHRIST REFUSED TO BACK DOWN BUT INTENSIFIED THE CONFLICT TO MAKE HIS POINT)**

Jesus chose to pick this fight because He wanted to force people to choose between the Authority of Tradition (represented by the suffocating rules of the Jewish authorities) vs. His Divine Authority (as the Creator of the Sabbath and the Lord of the Sabbath, He knew what type of work was appropriate on this day)

Refused to bow down to legalism; made it clear that He claimed to be equal with God; no longer speaking in difficult expressions with hidden or double meanings

He had many opportunities to try to smooth things over and lessen the intensity of the situation, but chose instead to escalate the differences between true spirituality and legalism

Showed that the sabbath does not mean idleness, but works of mercy for the glory of God as an expression of gratitude and obedience

- A. (:17) Union with God the Father
“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

Christ could have tried to calm things down and settle out of court, but instead He intensified the conflict with this clear claim to Deity.

Not just some misguided, over-zealous good person. Now He must be judged to be either Liar, Lunatic, or Lord.

- B. (:18) Equality with God the Father

“For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do we respond to others with a critical, judgmental spirit instead of allowing mercy to triumph over judgment?
- 2) Where are we legalistic in what we allow or don't allow. Where do we substitute the authority of tradition for the authority of Christ?
- 3) How can we develop a more natural approach to witnessing so that we are excited to share with others what Jesus is doing in our lives?
- 4) Do we have the same type of identification with God the Father so that we can characterize our activities as completely within the will of God ... so that we are involved in performing the works of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: The facts, of course, are that the pool of Bethesda, like many similar pools in the Jerusalem area, is an intermittent spring. At times water is released in surges from hidden reservoirs in the hills around the city, causing these springs to rise and fall suddenly. This is what gave rise to the superstition about an angel troubling the pool. Undoubtedly healings did occur there. Even today healings take place in these special areas where people go, believing they can be healed. But most of these healings can be explained psychologically. When people believe they are going to be healed, and they are in a place where healings supposedly occur, and they do the expected thing, many of them are healed. Thus the pool at Bethesda had established a reputation as a place where people could be healed.

Deffinbaugh: Possible that this man ended up a believer or maybe even a betrayer:

Best Case Scenario

Let's give this man every benefit of the doubt as we work our way through the story. An angel really does come by the pool from time to time to stir it up, and the lucky²⁴³ person who manages to out-manuever all the rest of the ailing folks gets a healing. Jesus comes by the pool and takes note of this one particular fellow, who seems to have been unsuccessful for the longest time, and asks him if he would like to be healed. In effect,

the man says, “Yes.” Jesus commands him to stand, take up his bed, and walk, and trusting Jesus, he does. This just happens to take place on the Sabbath. The healed man is quickly intercepted by “the Jews,” who inform him that he is breaking the law by carrying his bed on the Sabbath. He tells them that the one who commanded him to get up and walk is the one who also commanded him to carry his bed. (The inference is that if He could command him to walk—and he did walk—then surely he would be wrong to fail to obey Him when He commanded him to carry his bed.) He also tells his accusers that he did not have the chance to find out the name of the One who healed him, and commanded him to take up his bed.

The former paralytic makes his way to the temple, where he praises God, and offers a sacrifice. There at the temple, while the man is worshipping, Jesus finds him. He warns him not to sin further, lest something worse happen to him. The man then knows that it is Jesus who healed him. So grateful is he for his healing that he cannot help but tell others. When he tells the Jews it is Jesus who healed him, it is to bear witness to his healing and the mighty work our Lord has done.

Worst Case Scenario

The paralytic is one of a great many physically infirmed folk gathered by the pool of Bethesda. This may be a comfortable place, out of the heat of the sun and the biting cold of the winter winds. It may be a good place to beg, since many would frequent the pool, just as Jesus does. And there is the popular myth about an angel, who comes from time to time to trouble the waters, so that the first one to get into the water is healed. The man waits by the pool, hoping for such a healing.

When Jesus arrives at the pool, neither this man’s pleas or his prayers or his piety fixes our Lord’s attention on him. It is our Lord’s awareness that the paralytic has suffered this way for 38 years. Our Lord seeks him out, asking him if he wants to become well. He does not ask him if he has the faith to be healed. The man isn’t even thinking in such terms. This man is locked in on only one kind of “miracle,” the miracle of being the first one into the angel-stirred waters. He does not—indeed will not—admit the failure of his system for obtaining healing. Instead, he makes excuses. It isn’t his fault; no one will help him into the troubled waters, and someone else always beats him into the pool. If he hopes for anything from Jesus, it is for Him to stand there beside him until another “stirring of the waters,” helping him into the water when this happens.

Jesus does not debate with the man about his superstitious system for being healed. But the way in which He does heal him is certainly in stark contrast with this man’s system. The man has to wait for “troubled waters.” Jesus immediately heals him, without the use of water. The man is one of a crowd, who hopes by his own efforts and initiative (with the help of others) to beat all the other ailing people into the water, thus obtaining a healing by his own efforts—a kind of “survival of the fittest” (or the fastest). Jesus heals him, without even being asked to do so. At the command of our Lord, the man stands up on his feet, takes up his bed, and walks. It seems he can do nothing other than obey. This happens to send the man on his way, avoiding a scene, and not

attracting the attention of the crowd. Jesus is thus able to “slip out” without creating hysteria among this multitude of hurting people, all of whom would seek to be healed. As he walks along carrying his bed on the Sabbath, the man is intercepted by the Jewish religious leaders. They are not concerned about this fellow—they do not even acknowledge his healing, let alone rejoice because of it. They are simply distressed that he is “breaking the rules”—their rules. The healed paralytic seems to be awfully quick to excuse himself. It isn’t his fault, he maintains; he is only doing what he has been told to do. The One who healed him told him to take up his bed and go. What was he to do? The One who has just healed him is now the One who is to blame.

The Jews demand to know just who this person is who told him to take up his mat and walk. He honestly doesn’t know. Jesus has managed to “slip out” since there is a crowd. The man would never have been able to identify Jesus as the one “guilty” of healing him unless our Lord had not Himself—for the second time—sought him out. This time Jesus finds the man in the temple. We are so eager for this man to “see the light” that we are almost willing to accept this as proof of some kind of faith. If this man has become a believer, why does John not mention it, as he has each previous time? Worse yet, why does John inform us that the man subsequently seeks out the Jews to tell them that the One they are after is Jesus? This man is a Judas—a betrayer, who turns on Him who has done only good to him.

Mike Rickman: Whom Can I Blame? Overcoming the Victim Mentality --

Today Jesus is asking you, ?Do you want to be healed??

Is it time to take responsibility for our own actions?

Is it time to stop blaming others?

Is it time to stop being a victim and start being victorious?

Is it time to pick up our bed and walk?

Westcott: It is difficult to understand the motive of the man in conveying this information to the Jews, since he knew the hostile spirit in which they regarded the cure. He was certainly not ungrateful, for he still speaks of Jesus as having cured him ... He may have wished to leave the responsibility of his illegal act on the sabbath with One who had power to answer for it; or it may be simplest to suppose that he acted in obedience to the instructions of those whom, as a Jew, he felt bound to obey.

TEXT: John 5:19-30

TITLE: DIVINE AUTHORITY VINDICATES ALL THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

CHRIST MANIFESTS EQUAL AUTHORITY TO GOD THE FATHER IN BOTH THE REALM OF LIFE AND THE REALM OF JUDGMENT

INTRODUCTION:

THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH ARGUING HIS CASE IN COURT

Clear claim to equality with the Father; the unique Son of God; intimate relationship of union

I. (:19-23) THE SON CANNOT ACT INDEPENDENTLY OF THE FATHER

A. (:19) Statement of Thesis – Complete Unity and Dependence

“the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.”

If He can make this point, case closed. Obviously God cannot break His own commandments (regarding the Sabbath or anything else). Christ attempting to show that He acted in complete unity with God the Father in performing this healing.

This theme brackets this section like 2 bookends -- Compare verse 30:

“I can do nothing on my own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

The glue that binds this unity of Father and Son together is the love of the Father for the Son (:20)

B. (:20) Explanation: Intimate Relationship of Love and Sharing

“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.”

Father takes the initiative to share everything with His Son.

Morris: Jesus’ actions do not proceed from merely human motivation. He acts only in accordance with the divine revelation. Thus He looks forward to doing greater works, for He will be shown greater works. The result will be that His hearers will be astonished. The following verses show that these “*greater works*” are the Son’s activities in giving life and in judging.

C. (21-22) Two Illustrations = Authority in the Realm of Life and Realm of Judgment
Two Prerogatives Belonging Only to God (**Zeisler**):

1. (:21) Authority in Realm of Life (emphasis on Resurrection)

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.”

Unity of Activity in Raising the Dead and Giving Them Life
(both in physical realm and in spiritual realm) --

If you thought it was a crime to heal a couple of crippled legs,
gag on this one -- Part of the greater works you are going to see
is the Son giving life to the dead

Legalism is incapable of giving life; the letter of the law kills.

2. (:22) Authority in Realm of Judgment

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.”

Unity of Activity in Executing Judgment

Jesus turns the tables on them; you thought you were sitting in
judgment on me; What you don't realize is that I will sit in
judgment over you

Legalism seeks to judge others, but will be condemned by God.
Man-made rules can never gain the favor of a Sovereign God who
saves by grace through faith.

D. (:23) Equality of Honor

“in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

Unity of Activity in Receiving Honor and Worship

There will come a day when every knee will bow and every tongue
will honor the Son -- the only question is whether you will
benefit from such a confession.

Impossible to claim to honor the Father when you deny Christ His
equality of personhood, activity and worship.

Legalism seeks to exalt self rather than directing genuine worship
to God.

Lenski: First, the equality of the Persons, secondly, the equality of the works, and now, thirdly, the equality of the honor and this expressed strongly with a positive and a negative statement.

II. (:24-30) THE SON WILL EXERCISE HIS AUTHORITY TO GIVE LIFE AND EXECUTE JUDGMENT

A. (:24-25) Faith in the Word of God is the Key

1. (:24) True in the Present

“he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

2. (:25) True in the Future and the Present

“an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”

B. (:26-27) Authority over Life and Judgment Intrinsic to the Son

1. (:26) Authority over Life Intrinsic to the Son of God

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so he gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.”

2. (:27) Authority over Judgment Intrinsic to the Son of Man

“and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.”

B. (:28-29) Reality of Future Resurrection and Two Different Destinies

1. *“those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life”*

2. *“those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment”*

C. (:30) Thesis Repeated in Summary Form – Submission to the Father’s Will

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent me.”

Deffinbaugh: Jesus is speaking to the Jewish authorities, those who have condemned Him on the basis of His works. They believe He is guilty of breaking the Sabbath and of blasphemy. In their eyes, He is worthy of the death penalty. These folks profess to be the people of God, and yet they dishonor the Son of God. They condemn others on the basis of their works. Jesus reminds His adversaries that this cuts both ways. Our Lord’s works demonstrate that He is indeed the Son of God. Their works will be the basis for their eternal condemnation. Their “fruits” will show their professions of faith to be insincere.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we careful to observe the works of the Father and of the Son so that we might tune our actions appropriately?
- 2) Do you ever feel that your heavenly Father is hiding Himself or His guidance or His truth from you? How does the intimacy of our relationship guarantee the depth of the sharing that takes place?
- 3) Why was judgment handed over to the Son? Why is Jesus especially suited for this work of judgment? It seems like such an unpleasant task ... why didn't God the Father reserve all judgment for Himself and let His Son have just the pleasant task of issuing life?
- 4) How can we align our sense of fairness with God's purposes and perspective when it comes to righteousness and judgment?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Jesus does not mean that it is physically impossible for him to do something apart from the Father, any more than it is physically impossible for us to do things apart from God. We can, and we do. And Jesus could have, too. Further on in this account he says that the Father has given him power to act "out of himself." Jesus could have created a whole universe over which he was God. He had the power to do so. But the whole point of this is, he chose never to exercise that power for his own benefit. Never! This is the explanation of his behavior in the wilderness when he was tempted by the devil to change stones into bread for his own satisfaction, to leap from the temple to gain the applause of people, or to gain the whole world for himself. He steadfastly refused to do so. That is the key. God gives his power to those who will not use it for their own benefit. That is one of the most profound secrets in Scripture. Jesus starts there: "The Son can do nothing."

Here is the secret of the release of the power of God -- nothing coming from me, everything coming from God; nothing for or from me, but everything coming for the Father and from the Father. Thus, the amazing import of this verse is: This is what Jesus is modeling for us. We have the same relationship to him as the Son, as he had to the Father. What the Father would do through him, the Son is prepared to do through us.

This is the process he is teaching us: God's power is not handed to us as a package deal that we can use for our own benefit and make a name for ourselves. If we think it is, we will discover that, though we may win the applause of many, we will remain hollow and empty in our hearts. God's power is released only when we use it as the Son did -- for the glory of God, for the doing of the Father's will at any given moment. When that happens, he gives us more power; we grow in our ability to manifest the power of God.

That is why a life that walks with God becomes more beautiful, more free, more real as it grows. Life becomes richer and fuller, even though it may be lived amidst hostile opposition, as in our Lord's case here. This is a pattern for us. God wants to teach us this very thing.

Deffinbaugh:

As I approach our text, I am reminded of a story circulating among the outdoor types, which goes something like this. In the mountains of the Northwest, a man was sitting beside a campfire while he roasted some kind of bird over the fire with eager anticipation. About this time, a forest ranger came upon the camp and asked the camper what he was preparing for dinner. The camper replied that it was a seagull. A frown came over the ranger's face as he informed this fellow that it was against the law to kill that particular bird, and that he would have to give him a citation.

The camper responded by telling the ranger how he had lost his way and had consumed all of his food. In desperation, he had managed to kill this seagull to maintain his strength. After listening sympathetically, the forest ranger told the fellow he would let him go this time with just a warning, and the camper thanked the ranger profusely. Just as the ranger was about to leave, he asked the camper, "Just out of curiosity, what does seagull taste like?" Thinking for a moment, the camper responded, "Well, I would place it somewhere between a spotted owl and a bald eagle."

Needless to say, this camper's words got him into even more trouble. He would have been better off not to say anything at all. Some may think our Lord's words in our text are something like this camper's statement. At the outset, Jesus is deemed guilty of breaking the Sabbath, and of instructing the healed paralytic to do likewise. But after our Lord defends His actions to the Jewish authorities. He is considered guilty of an even greater offense—claiming to be equal with God

Pink: But not only do the words "the Father loveth the Son" make manifest the perfect intimacy there is between them, but the additional words "showeth him all things that himself doeth" evidences another of the Divine glories of Christ, namely, the absolute equality of intelligence that there is between the Father and the Son. Let us again bring the thought down to a human level. What would be the use of discussing with an illiterate person the mathematics of the fourth dimension? What's the value of taking a child in the first grade and "showing" him the solution of a problem in algebra? Who, then, is capable of understanding all the ways and workings of God? No mere creature. Fallen man is incapable of knowing God. The believer learns but gradually and slowly, and only then as he is taught by the Holy Spirit. Even the unfallen angels know God's mind but in part—there are things they desire "to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12). To whom then could God show the full counsel of His mind? And again we answer, To no mere creature, for the creature however high in rank has no capacity to grasp it. The finite cannot comprehend the infinite. Is it not self-evident, then, that if the Father showeth the Son "all things that himself doeth" He must be of the same mind as the Father? that they are one, absolutely equal in intelligence! Christ has the capacity to apprehend and

comprehend "all things that the Father doeth," therefore, He must be "equal with God," for none but God could measure the Father's mind perfectly.

CS Lewis quote: Mere Christianity --

(Many) people say about Him (Jesus): "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

George Will writes in Men at Work: "Baseball umpires are carved from granite and stuffed with microchips...they are professional dispensers of pure justice. Once when Babe Pinelli called Babe Ruth out on strikes, Ruth made a populist argument. Ruth reasoned fallaciously (as populists do) from raw numbers to moral weight: 'There's 40,000 people here who know that last one was a ball, tomato head.'"

"Pinelli replied with the measured stateliness of John Marshall: 'Maybe so, but mine is the only opinion that counts.'"

The same is true for us.

There is only one opinion that counts so to speak.

It belongs to the Designer of the universe, for we are designed to live according to the moral law of God.

TEXT: John 5:31-47

TITLE: THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH ARGUES HIS CASE IN COURT

BIG IDEA:
CREDIBLE WITNESSES SUPPORT CHRIST'S CLAIMS BEFORE THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS

(:31) INTRODUCTION: ISOLATED TESTIMONY NOT SUFFICIENT

"If I alone bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true."

cf. courtroom drama

What makes for an effective witness?

Defendant can take the stand and testify on his own behalf; but that testimony better be supported by credible witnesses. Otherwise that testimony is open to question.

I. (:32-37a) GREATER WITNESS THAN EVEN JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. (:32) This Greater Witness is Fundamentally and Intrinsicly True (that of the Father)

"There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He gives about Me is true."

B. (:33-36a) This Witness is Greater than Any Human Witness

1. (:33) You Respect the Witness of John the Baptist

"You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth."

2. (:34) Christ Not Relying on Human Testimony

"But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved."

3. (:35) John the Baptist Performed His Role

"He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

4. (:36a) Appeal to a Greater Testimony than that of John the Baptist

"But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John"

II. (:36b) THE TESTIMONY OF THE WORKS OF JESUS = OBJECTIVE CONFIRMATION

A. Works Assigned to Him by the Father

"for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish"

B. Works Completed by the Son

“the very works that I do”

C. Works Validating the Connection Between Father and Son

“testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me”

III. (:37-40) THE TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER THROUGH HIS WORD REJECTED BY THE JEWS = HARDNESS OF HEART

A. (:37a) Irrefutable Testimony

“And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me.”

B. (:37b-38) Reasons for Rejection

1. Dull: *“You have neither heard His voice at any time”*

2. Blind: *“nor seen His form”*

3. Empty: *“You do not have His word abiding in you”*

4. Unbelieving: *“for you do not believe Him whom he sent”*

C. (:39) Wrong Reliance on the Scriptures Instead of the Son

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness of Me.”

D. (:40) Root Problem Lies with the Will

“and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.”

IV. (:41-44) REJECTION BY THE JEWS ATTRIBUTED TO A WRONG ORIENTATION = HUMAN PRIDE AND SELF RIGHTEOUSNESS

A. (:41,44) Seeking the Wrong Type of Recognition

“I do not receive glory from men”

“How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?”

B. (:42) Loving the Wrong Type of Character

“but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.”

C. (:43) Receiving the Wrong Type of Leadership

“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.”

V. (:45-47) THE TESTIMONY OF MOSES WILL END UP CONDEMNING THE JEWS – HYPOCRISY EXPOSED

Turning the tables on the Jews who boasted in their understanding of the Law of Moses

A. (:45) False Hope – Moses will Condemn You Instead of Save You

“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.”

B. (:46-47) False Faith – You don’t really Understand and Believe Moses so it is no Surprise that you don’t Understand and Believe Me

“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

The problem is not lack of revelation

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Analyze the different witnesses presented here by Christ. What makes each one credible? What is the relative importance of each witness? How did the Jewish authorities respond to each witness?
- 2) Why would it have been especially difficult for the Jews to swallow what Jesus told them about their response to Moses?
- 3) Why are there so many lifeless religions in the world (that lack credible witnesses) that still falsely command the respect and honor of so many?
- 4) What other types of witnesses do we rely on instead of the ones Christ chose here? How do we attribute glory and authority to the wrong people, ideas, traditions, etc (cf. :43-44)?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: I have noted a strange phenomenon over the years. People can hear the truth right out of the Scriptures for years and years and never seem to believe it, until they hear it from another voice. That is why it is a good thing to have other speakers come to a church. Oftentimes I have had other speakers preach the same truth I had been preaching for years, and seen people's faces light up at the revelation they had just heard. Afterwards they say, "I never saw that before!" I always want to ask them. "Where have you been! I have been preaching that for ten years!" . . .

Here Jesus puts his finger on the true reason for stubborn unbelief. Why would a man read the truth, know it to be truth, know that it speaks of Jesus, know him to be who he claims to be, and still refuse to come to him? Jesus says the answer is because what he really wants is the praise of men, right now. Ambition, the deadly enemy of truth! Such a one wants glory now, not in heaven some day. He seeks fame, recognition, prestige. He wants to be treated with respect and reverence now. He loves the praise of men so much he is unwilling to set it aside to receive the glory of God. That is the problem, Jesus declares.

Deffinbaugh:

The Jewish authorities reject Jesus. They not only reject His testimony concerning Himself, they set aside the testimony of John the Baptist, of our Lord's works, of the Father, and of the Scriptures. Because of this, they are the ones who should be accused. Those who are accusing Jesus will be accused, but not by Jesus. Their accusation will come from Moses, the one they revere, whose law they impose on themselves and others—as they interpret it. Their devotion to Moses is seen in the dialogue between the Jews and the blind man to whom Jesus gives his sight.

Jesus not only claims to be the Messiah, the Son of God, He claims to be the only source of eternal life. He says that to reject Him is to reject life, to reject the Father, and to seal our eternal condemnation. It is not enough to revere the Word of God, or even to diligently read and study it. The Jewish authorities did all this, yet they missed the main point of the Scriptures—the promise of a Messiah exactly like Jesus, in fact who was Jesus. The Word of God must abide in our hearts by faith. We must look for Christ in the Scriptures, and having found Him, we should love and obey Him. The Bible is not given so that we may amass knowledge about God. The Bible is given so that we may know, love, and serve God.

Witnesses to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God are many, and they are compelling. Men do not reject the claims of Christ for lack of evidence. They reject Him because sinful men do not wish to submit to Him as God, nor do they wish to come to Him as unworthy sinners, seeking grace. This is the reason the Jews reject Jesus. It is why the Gentiles reject Him as well.

Pink:

1. Christ's Witness not independent of the Father: verses 31, 32.
2. The Witness of John: verses 33, 34.
3. Christ's Witness to John: verse 35.
4. The Witness of Christ's Works: verse 36.
5. The Witness of the Father: verses 37, 38.
6. The Witness of the Scriptures: verse 39.
7. Christ's Witness against the Jews: verses 40-47.

The late Bishop Ryle called attention to five things in connection with our Lord's miracles. "First, their number: they were not a few only, but very many. Second, their greatness: they were not little, but mighty interferences with the ordinary course of

nature. Third, their publicity: they were not done in a corner, but generally in open day, and before many witnesses, and often before enemies. Fourth, their character: they were almost always works of love, mercy and compassion, helpful and beneficent to man, and not merely barren exhibitions of power. Fifth, their direct appeal to man's senses: they were visible, and would bear any examination. The difference between them and the boasted miracles of Rome, on all these points, is striking and conclusive." To these we might add two other features: Sixth, their artlessness. They were not staged mechanically: they happened in the natural course of our Lord's ministry. There was nothing pre-arranged about them. Seventh, their efficacy. There was as much difference between the miracles of healing performed by Christ and those of His miserable imitators which are being so widely heralded in our day, as there is between His teaching and that given out by these pretenders who claim to heal in His name. Christ's cures were instantaneous, not gradual; complete and perfect, not faulty and disappointing.

Lenski: We must not forget that Jesus faces the Jews with the consequences of their unbelief in a final effort to shatter that unbelief and turn it into faith. These last three verses are full of terrific force; either this will crush the hearts in contrition or be met with desperate obduracy, blindly set on its own destruction. We feel the force of Jesus' words when we understand how the Jews clung to their Moses, boasted in him, gloried in him, felt themselves absolutely safe in him—not, of course, the real Moses but the figure they had made of him in their own minds. With one sweep Jesus not only takes their Moses away but hurls the real Moses against them, as the one who already condemns them. The mastery with which Jesus does this must ever captivate our hearts.

Morris: The past tense shows that this witness (of the Father to the Son) is no new thing. The entire revelation of the Father from the very beginning has prepared the way for the coming of the Son. Rightly understood it bears witness to Him. This is the witness that means so much to Jesus. Because He has the witness of God He is not troubled by the opposition of man. But though this witness is so clear and so valuable to Him, He does not anticipate that the Jews will respond to it. Their ignorance is threefold:

- (i) They have never heard God's voice. . .
- (ii) They have never seen God's form . . .
- (iii) They have not God's word abiding in them. The Psalmist laid up God's word in his heart (Ps. 119:11), but they do not share his religious experience.

TEXT: John 6:1-15

TITLE: SIGN MIRACLE #4 – FEEDING 5000+ ON A LIMITED BUDGET

BIG IDEA:

THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE CAN ABUNDANTLY SATISFY ANY PHYSICAL NEED DESPITE THE APPARENT LACK OF PHYSICAL RESOURCES

(:1-4) INTRODUCTION: SIGN MIRACLES FEED ON ONE ANOTHER

A. (:1-2) Curiosity Without Commitment -- No Escaping the Curious Crowds
“After these things, Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). And a great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which he was performing on those who were sick.”

Only miracle recorded in all 4 go spels.

This miracle would meet the needs of the vast multitude of healthy people instead of the isolated sick.

B. (:3) Isolation Without Privacy -- Quality Time with the Disciples Still a Priority
“And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.”

C. (:4) Symbolism Without Understanding
“Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.”

Stedman: The multitudes were following Jesus everywhere despite the fact that it was the Passover season, when they ought to have been on their way to Jerusalem. The Law required that every male Jew celebrate the Passover there if they could possibly get away. So ordinarily these great multitudes would not be in Galilee but in Jerusalem.

Westcott: The notice of the feast is probably designed to give a clue to the understanding of the spiritual lessons of the miracle which are set forth in the discourse which followed (1 Cor. v. 7).

I. (:5-9) TEST OF FAITH –CAN YOU SEE BEYOND HUMAN SOLUTIONS (WHICH ALWAYS DEPEND ON AVAILABLE PHYSICAL RESOURCES)

A. (:5-6) Presenting the Test

1. Object Lesson Right at Hand

“Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him”

this was one hungry crowd out in the middle of nowhere; dependent on Jesus to meet their needs

2. Star Pupil Put on the Spot
“said to Philip”

Remember what it was like in school to be called on and put on the spot?

3. Trick Question
“Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?”

Stedman: “a predicament with no human solution”

B. (:7) Doing the Math = It just doesn't add up (Philip) – Calculated Reasoning
“Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.”

C. (:8-9) Thinking Outside of the Box – Let's at least start with what we have (Andrew) – Easily Frustrated
“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?”

II. (:10-13) SEED OF FAITH -- GOD HAS NO PROBLEM CREATING AN ABUNDANCE OUT OF WHAT LOOKS LIKE NOTHING (BUT WHAT ACTUALLY CONTAINS THE MUSTARD SEED OF FAITH)

A. (:10) Simple Obedience Can Compensate for Limited Faith (or Limited Understanding)
“Have the people sit down.”

Important to Follow the Directions Even When We Don't Understand the Outcome / Christ has the situation under control and organized; not performing wild miracles in some out of control, crazed frenzy

Pink: It is indeed blessed to note the response of the disciples to this command of their Master. Their faith had failed, but their obedience did not. Where both fail, there is grave reason to doubt if there is spiritual life dwelling in such a soul. Their obedience evidenced the genuineness of their Christianity. "If faith is weak, obedience is the best way in which it may be strengthened. "Then shall ye know,' says the prophet, 'if ye follow on to know the Lord.' If you have not much light, walk up to the standard of what you have, and you are sure to have more. This will prove that you are a genuine servant of God. Well, this is what the disciples seemed to do here. The light of their faith was low, but they heard the word of Jesus, 'Make the men sit down.' They can act if they cannot see. They can obey His word if they cannot see that all fullness dwells in Him to meet every difficulty. So they obey His command. The men sit down, and Jesus begins to dispense His blessings. And thus by their act of obedience, their faith becomes enlightened, and every want is supplied. This is always the result of walking up to the light we have got. 'To him that hath shall more be given.' That light may be feeble, it

may be only a single ray irradiating the darkness of the mind; nevertheless, it is what God has given you. Despise it not. Hide it not. Walk up to it, and more shall be added.

B. (:11) Simple Resources Can Multiply Into Abundant Blessing

“Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted.”

Important to Give Thanks in Anticipation of Blessing

C. (:12-13) Simple Math Can't Explain the Results --
Ended Up with More Than They Started With

“filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves”

(:14-15) CONCLUSION: SIGN MIRACLES MOTIVATE A POSITIVE RESPONSE ... BUT NOT NECESSARILY A RESPONSE OF FAITH

A. (:14) Right Concept of a Prophet

“When therefore the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, ‘This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world.’”

B. (:15) Wrong Concept of a King

“Jesus therefore perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force, to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.”

Stedman: What a strange reaction! They were not ready to follow him as the Messiah; they wanted to use him; they wanted God to work for them according to their program and their schedule.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What spiritual ministries would never have been started if the requirement had been that all the money had to be in place up front? Where have we chosen to step out in faith and initiate a ministry with our limited resources while trusting the Lord to supply the impossible?
- 2) When we face situations that are beyond our resources and humanly impossible how do we respond? Is our first reaction some type of calculated reasoning to try to figure things out on our own? Do we get frustrated with the enormity of the challenge? Do we turn to Christ and ask Him to sort things out in His providence and wisdom?
- 3) Why was this young boy willing to offer up his 5 loaves and 2 fishes? Did he have

the expectation that Jesus would do something special? Did he have seed faith of some type? Was it sufficient for him just to know that the Master had need of them?

4) In what ways do we try to grab on to Jesus and try to force Him to act in ways that would further our self interests rather than submitting fully to His agenda and program? How fickle is the crowd that followed Jesus to see Him perform more miracles; tried to force him to become the type of king they had long awaited; and later would turn on him in complete rejection?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: The Testing of Faith --

The last time we saw our Lord he was speaking to the people of Jerusalem, following the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. Here we find a major difference between the Gospel of John and the other three gospels. They seem to focus largely upon our Lord's ministry in Galilee, and for a two-year period they follow him in much of his healing and teaching ministry there. But John selects only two miracles out of that two-year period: The miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, and the accompanying miracle of Jesus' walking on the water to his disciples during the storm. All four gospels record these two miracles, and John's selection of this particular incident indicates there is something extremely important about it. In our Lord's words to the multitude on this occasion he gives the first hint of his approaching death. . . .

Mark says that Jesus "blessed, and broke" the bread {Mark 6:41 RSV}, and he uses the aorist tense, which is to say it was a single action never repeated. Then Mark uses the imperfect tense, "he kept on giving to the disciples." In other words, the miracle took place in our Lord's hands. As he held the simple meal in his hands he would break off pieces and give to the disciples, and he kept on doing that. There never was an increase in the amount in his hand, but there was always a continual supply until the whole multitude of five thousand males (the text uses that term) alone were fed, plus, undoubtedly, another three to five thousand more women and children. There were probably ten thousand people in that great crowd who were fed. And they were not given a tiny amount. This was not an airline meal! They "ate their fill," it says.

Deffinbaugh:

(1) Jesus commands us to do more than we are (humanly) able, because He enables us to do what He commands. The disciples are inclined to shirk their responsibility to feed these folks because the task is "impossible." Jesus does not let them off the hook, but rather lays the responsibility for feeding the 5,000 at their feet. What the disciples are not able to do on their own, they accomplish by the power of Jesus Christ. And not only are they able to feed this crowd so that all are filled, they even end up with a surplus. God ministers through our weakness. He does not select "strong" people so that He can use their strengths; He chooses weak people so that He can demonstrate His power through their weakness (see 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:5; 2 Corinthians 4:7–5:10; also

chapters 8, 10, 12). He gives us tasks which we do not have the strength to do ourselves, because He gives us His strength to carry them out.

(2) The magnitude of the task should not be used as our excuse for not attempting it, especially when the task is our Lord's command. How easy it is to use the magnitude of a given task as our excuse for not obeying our Lord. The Great Commission is a command given by our Lord to His disciples, and thus to His church. The Great Commission is therefore a command we are to obey; it is not a suggestion, and not a request. We are to be about this task, in whatever ways God puts before us. Let us see the magnitude of the mission as the occasion for faith, obedience, and prayers, and not as an excuse for apathy and idleness.

(3) Wonder of wonders, God has chosen to multiply and expand our puny efforts and contributions, so as to accomplish His will. The young lad with five loaves and two fishes had little to offer, but God multiplied what he had. Our efforts are so feeble, so fallible, and yet God uses us as "clay pots" to do His will. Even our failures are used of God to bring about His purposes.

(4) Those whom God uses to minister to the needs of this crowd are also those who gain the most from serving others. I wish to be very careful here, because I am not advocating that we "give in order to get." But it is interesting to note that this young lad ends up with "all he could eat," which is probably more than he had in the first place. And the disciples, who thought they had nothing to serve, each ended up with a full basket. As we give ourselves in the service of others, God cares abundantly for our own needs.

(5) The disciples are inclined to limit their ministry to what they have seen and done before. One of the great weaknesses of the church is evident in the statement: "But we've always done it this way before." Some things need to be done a certain way. But often we attempt to solve problems with only those means and methods with which we are familiar, to which we are accustomed. The disciples think of feeding the 5,000 only in terms of buying food at a store. Jesus has a better way. Jesus has a different way, a way they would never expect, a way they would never believe if told about it beforehand. God delights in doing the unexpected, so that His wisdom, power and grace are displayed through His handling of "impossible" situations. When we face difficulties, we should be careful not to limit the ways we expect God to minister through us. We dare not demand or even expect the unusual, but we certainly dare not deny the possibility.

(6) Our Lord cares about and takes care of our needs. Jesus ministers to these people because of their great need for teaching and healing. He also cares about their physical needs, because they are weary and hungry. Do you trust God to care for your needs? Jesus was thinking about feeding the 5,000 long before it ever entered the minds of His disciples. Jesus knew all along what He intended to do. Our Lord cares, and He cares well for our needs. Most of all, He cares about our need for the forgiveness of our sins. As we shall soon see, He became the "Bread of Life" by dying on the cross of Calvary,

by bearing the guilt and punishment for our sins. Have you trusted in Him who cared so much that He died on Calvary?

Pink: Some of our Lord's miracles were wrought in private, or in the presence of only a small company; others were of a nature that made it difficult, in some cases impossible, for skeptics to examine them. But here was a miracle, performed in the open, before a crowd of witnesses which were to be numbered by the thousand. . . .

What happened to Philip is, in principle and essence, happening daily in our lives. A trying, if not a difficult, situation confronts us; and we meet with them constantly. They come not by accident or by chance; instead, they are each arranged by the hand of the Lord. They are God's testings of our faith. They are sent to "prove" us. Let us be very simple and practical. A bill comes unexpectedly; how are we to meet it? The morning's mail brings us tidings which plunge us into an unlooked-for perplexity; how are we to get out of it? A cog slips in the household's machinery, which threatens to wreck the daily routine; what shall we do? An unanticipated demand is suddenly made upon us; how shall we meet it? Now, dear friends, how do such experiences find us? Do we, like Philip and Andrew did, look at our resources? Do we rack our minds to find some solution? or do our first thoughts turn to the Lord Jesus, who has so often helped us in the past? Here, right here, is the test of our faith.

O, dear reader, have we learned to spread each difficulty, as it comes along, before God? Have we formed the habit of instinctively turning to Him? What is your feebleness in comparison with His power! What is your emptiness in comparison with His ocean fullness? Nothing! Then look daily to Him in simple faith, resting on His sure promise, "My God shall supply all your need" (Phil. 4:19). Ah! you may answer, It is easy to offer such advice, but it is far from easy to act on it. True. Yea, of yourself it is impossible. Your need, and my need, is to ask for faith, to pray for grace, to cry unto God for such a sense of helplessness that we shall lean on Christ, and on Him alone. Thus, ask and wait, and you shall find Him as good as His word. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Ps. 43:5).

Morris: Jesus saw the effect on the crowds, and perceived that they would try and make a king of Him. There were fierce nationalistic longings among the Jews of that period. Doubtless many of the people who saw the miracle felt that here was a divinely accredited leader, who was just the person to lead them against the Romans. So they set themselves to make Him king. Like many others since, they wanted to use Him to further their own ends. But to Jesus the prospect of an earthly kingdom was nothing else than a temptation of the devil, and He decisively rejected it. (Luke 4:5-8). So, on this occasion He simply withdrew into the mountain until He was alone, thus effectively stopping the enthusiasm of these would-be king-makers. Bailey points out that there is "much of S. John's irony in the passage; He who is already King has come to open His kingdom to men; but in their blindness men try to force Him to be the kind of king they want; thus they fail to get the king they want, and also lose the kingdom He offers."

Stedman: We all love that story of the feeding of the five thousand, even though, perhaps, we do not understand its full meaning.

I am reminded of the story of the little boy who was asked what was his favorite Bible story, and he replied, "I like the one where everybody just loafs and fishes!"

TEXT: John 6:16-21

TITLE: SIGN MIRACLE # 5 – WALKING ON WATER – SINKING OR SWIMMING
ARE NOT THE ONLY TWO OPTIONS

BIG IDEA:
**THE PRESENCE OF THE MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE SHOULD CALM
ALL FEARS AND ACCOMPLISH ALL OBJECTIVES**

**(:16-17a) INTRODUCTION: SOMETIMES JESUS ASKS US TO DO THINGS
WE DON'T WANT TO DO**

“Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum.”

Check out the Synoptic Gospel accounts – the disciples did not want to get into the boat without Jesus and set off without Him.

**I. (:17b-19a) DIFFICULTIES CAN QUICKLY MULTIPLY OUT OF OUR
CONTROL**

A. (:17b) Difficulty of Darkness – Fighting Limited Vision

“And it had already become dark”

Not like modern times where you just turn on a bunch of powerful searchlights.

B. (:17c) Difficulty of Non-Arrival of Jesus – Fighting Decreasing Confidence

“and Jesus had not yet come to them”

Apparently they had been taking a course rowing close to shore, expecting at any time to meet up with Jesus and take Him on board.

Was Jesus spending time in prayer interceding for the disciples?

C. (:18) Difficulty of Storm on the Waters – Fighting Natural Elements

“And the sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing”

Things were getting out of control in a hurry.

D. (:19a) Difficulty of Not Making Expected Progress – Fighting Frustrated Expectations

“When therefore they had rowed about three or four miles”

**II. (:19b-21) ONLY THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CAN CALM THE STORMS
OF LIFE, QUIET OUR FEARS AND TAKE US WHERE WE NEED TO GO**

- A. Vision Correction – no problem with darkness for some reason
“they beheld Jesus walking on the sea”
- B. Arrival of Jesus – should be immediate confidence boost
“drawing near to the boat”
- C. Overcoming Their Natural Fears
“and they were frightened. But He said to them, ‘It is I; do not be afraid.’ they were willing therefore to receive Him into the boat”

Synoptics stress how He calmed the wind and the sea
 Sounds like there might have been somewhat of an issue of whether or not they should receive Him into the boat? Did Jesus actually choose to get into the boat or did He just convey the boat to shore? Synoptics report He got into the boat.

- D. Objective Instantly Realized
“and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why does Jesus intentionally put us in difficult situations?
- 2) What was Jesus doing while He was separated from the disciples? Why did He wait so long to come to them?
- 3) Why were the disciples initially scared when they saw Jesus walking on the water? Did the disciples believe in the appearance of ghosts?
- 4) Don't overlook the second miracle in this passage = the immediate arrival of the boat at its destination. When have we struggled for a long time without making any progress and then the Lord stepped in and solved the problem immediately?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: The feeding of the 5,000 and our Lord's walking on the sea seem to have a definite connection with Moses and the events of the Exodus. Later in this very chapter, and again in chapter 9, Moses is a prominent figure in the Gospel of John; the Jews who are in opposition to Jesus refer to him as their hero (1:17, 45; 3:14; 5:45-46; 6:32; 7:19, 22, 23; 8:5; 9:28-29). Under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites passed through the sea on dry land, and God provided His people with manna from heaven. Jesus is the One who is greater than Moses. He personally walks on the sea, and He

provides bread from heaven, the true bread which gives men eternal life. In our text, these two miracles link Jesus and Moses, and show that Jesus is the greater of the two.

Stedman: This whole incident is designed to teach his disciples the resources they have in their risen Lord. This is why John follows immediately by saying, "they were glad to take him into the boat." Their fear was immediately relieved when they realized it was indeed Jesus who was walking on the water, and he was in control of all events, so they willingly received him into the boat. Immediately there was a further demonstration of the power of Jesus, for they were instantly on the other side of the lake, to which they were going. The three or four remaining miles of the journey was suddenly accomplished, and they found themselves at the dock in Capernaum.

What is the meaning of this strange event? C. S. Lewis calls this a miracle of the new creation. Lewis called the feeding of the five thousand with the bread and the fishes a miracle of the old creation. There Jesus used natural objects -- bread and fish -- to feed a mixed crowd of believers and unbelievers in a supernatural use of the things of the natural world. But Lewis calls the miracle of Jesus' walking on the water a miracle of the new creation, by which he means, not the world to come, but the invisible realm of life, the invisible realities which are present in every believer. This, therefore, is a miracle intended only for those who believe, unlike the feeding of the five thousand, which was intended for anybody who happened to be there. It is to teach believers the resources that are available to them to quiet the agony of uncertainty and anxiety that often grips the heart in time of trouble.

Stedman quoting **Godet**:

In the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, Jesus had foreshadowed the sacrifice which he would make of his flesh for the food of the world. In the terrible night of darkness and separation which followed, he had suffered them to feel a foretaste of that more painful and more real separation which would follow his death. Now in this unexpected and triumphant return across the waves he prefigured his glorious resurrection and even his triumphant ascension, in which his church was to share, by being raised with him to heavenly places by the bread of his Spirit. The discourses which follow prove that the symbolical character which we have attributed to these miracles was not remote from the mind of St. John, nor from that of the Lord himself.

Hendriksen: The miracle on the sea is really four miracles in one:

- a. Jesus walks upon the sea (without suspending the laws of gravity, he controls them in the interest of the kingdom);
- b. he causes Peter to walk upon the sea (but this story is not found in the Fourth Gospel);
- c. he reveals himself as master of the storm, for when he enters the boat the storm ceases (not in John); and
- d. he conquers even space, for when he enters the boat, it is on the shore all at once.

Lenski: John adds the detail that "*immediately*" the boat "*was at the land to which they were going.*" In other words, the exhausted disciples were not compelled to begin their

rowing again in order to cover the considerable distance to the shore. We now see why John notes the distance covered during the stormy night voyage, some 25 to 30 stadia. He means to say that the boat was still far from shore when Jesus came to it. That distance melted away the moment Jesus stepped into the boat.

TEXT: John 6:22-40

TITLE: WHAT CAN FILL YOU UP? ONLY THE BREAD OF LIFE

BIG IDEA:

ONLY THE BREAD OF LIFE CAN SATISFY FOR ALL ETERNITY

(:22-26) INTRODUCTION: CROWD FOLLOWING JESUS FOR WRONG REASONS

“came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus”

A. (:22-23) Curiosity Driven

“saw that there was not other small boat there, except one”

Illustration: Like soccer coach counting his subs so he knows whether he has the right number of players on the field. Here they counted up the remaining boats = one.

intrigued by what they had witnessed of Jesus and wanted to see more

B. (:24) Crowd Mentality

“When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.”

C. (:25) Calculating Spirit – wanted to figure everything out down to the hour and minute

“Rabbi, when did You get here?”

Confounding of Their Detective Instincts = they were stumped

not satisfied until they can piece everything together and figure out how Jesus did it; like playing game of 20 Questions

looking for answers; wanted to put Jesus into their own, natural, logical box

D. (:26) Consumption Fetish

“you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled”

world content with immediate gratification and satisfaction for just the moment

Hendriksen: “What Jesus meant was that though these people had seen his miracles (especially the healing of the sick and the feeding of the ‘five thousand,’ but in a more general way, all the wonders which he had performed), they had not understood them in their quality as *signs* which pointed to him as the spiritual Messiah, the Son of God.”

Deffinbaugh: Earlier in John chapter 2 (verses 23-25), we saw that those with only “sign-faith” were those our Lord kept at arms reach; He did not commit Himself to them. If our Lord avoided “sign-faith” believers, then you can well imagine how Jesus feels about these people who are looking for a “free meal messiah.” Though they witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, these folks did not grasp its meaning, nor did they come to faith in Jesus as God’s Messiah. They have been given a free meal, and they want more of the same.

I. (:27-29) FAITH IS THE ONLY REQUIREMENT – THE FREE GIFT OF THE BREAD OF LIFE TIED TO FAITH IN CHRIST

A. (:27a) Spiritual Orientation Rather Than Materialistic

“Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life”

B. (:27b) Grace Orientation Rather Than Works

“which the Son of Man shall give to you”

“for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal”

Speaks to the issue of authentication – the Father has set His seal of approval on the Son; What does God value? What do we value? Possible reference here to the Holy Spirit and to the Father’s voice at the baptism of Christ.

C. (:28-29) Faith Orientation

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

Hendriksen: works vs. grace

“The roots of a tall oak perform a well-nigh unbelievable amount of work in drawing water and minerals from the soil to serve as nourishment for the tree. Nevertheless, these roots do not themselves produce these necessities but receive them as a gift. Similarly, the work of faith is the work of receiving the gift of God.”

II. (:30-35) THE BREAD OF LIFE CAN FULLY SATISFY – FAR SUPERIOR TO THE OT MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS WHICH PREFIGURED CHRIST AS THE BREAD OF LIFE

A. (:30-31) Can You Top This? – A Bold-faced Challenge

1. (:30) Demanding a More Impressive Sign

“What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?”

2. (:31) Raising the Bar by Pointing to the Miracle of Manna

“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’”

B. (:32-33) I Beg Your Pardon – A Few Corrections

Don't minimize the miracle Christ performed in the feeding of the 5000 when you compare it to the manna in the wilderness; Look at what it symbolized in Christ being the true Bread of Life

1. Consistency of the Giver = the same God the Father ... Not Moses

"it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but is My Father who gives you . . ."

2. Superiority of the Bread – the Reality vs. the Type

"the true bread out of heaven"

3. Superiority of the Bread – Life-Giving on a Global Scale vs. merely Life-Sustaining on a Local Scale

"gives life to the world"

C. (:34) Materialistic Response

"Lord, evermore give us this bread."

D. (:35) Identification of the True Bread of Life

"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

**III. (:36-40) ETERNAL SECURITY GUARANTEED –
ETERNAL SECURITY OF THE ELECT TIED TO THE RESURRECTION**

A. (:36) Unbelief Denies People the Benefits of the Bread of Life

"you have seen Me, and yet do not believe"

B. (:37a) Irresistible Grace

"All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me"

C. (:37b) Guaranteed Welcome and Security

"the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out"

D. (:38-40) Eternal Security Tied to the Resurrection

1. (:38) Focused Commitment to the Father's Will

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

2. (:39) Final Destiny of the Father's Will = Resurrection of All the Elect

"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

3. (:40) Fuller Definition of the Father's Will = Gospel Summary

"For this is the will of My Father"

1. Necessity of Revelation about Jesus
“that everyone who beholds the Son”

Romans 10 – *“How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?”* – Necessity of Preaching

2. Necessity of Faith in Jesus
“and believes in Him”

3. Gift of Eternal Life
“may have eternal life”

4. Guarantee of Resurrection
“and I Myself will raise him up on the last day”

Job not left to any subordinates; no doubt about the outcome

Hendriksen: “The doctrine of the preservation (hence, perseverance) of the saints is surely implied in the very term *everlasting life*.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How satisfied are we with Jesus? How sufficient do we find His resources to be? Do we still have a hunger and a thirst to have some void in our life filled? What types of things or pursuits are we trying to pour into those empty spots in our soul?

2) What connection, if any, is Christ trying to make here to the observance of the Lord’s Supper?

3) Think of the familiar expression: “Consider the source.” Why does Jesus keep coming back in the Gospel of John to this theme of Him having been sent from heaven by God the Father? Do we value the divine source of the written Word of God or do we take that for granted?

4) What is the identification of *“the last day”* referred to at the end of this passage?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: What are You Working For?

These people, like many today, clearly felt that the most important thing in life is to keep alive, to be healthy, strong and economically sufficient. That was what life was all about, they thought. Clearly this is the majority view of people all over the world today:

This is why people work. The Scriptures are always up to date. In this election year, candidates are being evaluated by the voters, not on their integrity, or their character, or what they propose to do about improving the moral conditions of this country, but on what will they do about the economy, how they will improve living conditions. . .

First, not all who see will come: "But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe." They had understood a good deal about Jesus -- and it is possible to see that he is a significant figure, an important person, a living person -- and yet they did not come. He is not talking here about intellectual apprehension of who he is when he says, "Come." He is talking about trusting him, committing yourself to him.

Secondly, all who are chosen will come. I think he said this great word for his own benefit. How encouraging that must have been to him! "All that the Father gives me will come to me." I have had to say this to encourage myself when I have been preaching: "If God has been at work, people will respond." The Spirit leads them, the Father draws them, and all who are chosen will come. So, to really and truly come is to reveal that you have been chosen. You do not have to struggle with it and ask yourself, "Am I chosen?" Just come. If you can come to Jesus you have been chosen.

Thirdly, all who come are welcomed: "Him who comes to me I will never cast out." No matter what your record, no matter what you have done, where you have been, or how proud, arrogant and self-sufficient you have been, when you come you will be welcomed. You will not be cast out. There is no sin Jesus cannot forgive, so come.

Fourthly, all who come are forever safe. You will never be lost; you will never lose what Jesus gives.

Deffinbaugh: We need to read verse 27 very carefully lest we misunderstand our Lord here (as His audience does). The verb "to work" is found but once in this verse. In the Greek text, the verb is an imperative in the present tense, and it is negated. The negation conveys the thought that men should not work—more precisely, that men should stop working.³⁷ We almost automatically read the verse this way: "Stop working for the food that disappears, but work for the food that remains to eternal life." The words "work for" are not in the original text, however. I do not believe we are to read them into the text as we do. Jesus is not suggesting that men cease working for earthly bread, but work hard for heavenly bread. He is saying that the "bread" which He offers is "bread" which He gives. It is not bread for which men work. Thus, the sense of His words would be something closer to: "Stop working for the food that disappears, and seek instead the bread which remains to eternal life, the bread which I give."

Pink: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). The Lord places Himself before us under the figure of bread. The emblem is beautifully significant, and like all others used in Scripture calls for prolonged and careful meditation. First, bread is a necessary food. Unlike many other articles of diet which are more or less luxuries, this is essential to our very existence. Bread is the food we cannot dispense with. There

are other things placed upon our tables that we can do without, but not so with bread. Let us learn the lesson well. Without Christ we shall perish. There is no spiritual life or health apart from the Bread of God.

Second, bread is a Food that is suited to all. There are some people who cannot eat sweets; others are unable to digest meats. But all eat bread. The physical body may retain its life for a time without bread, but it will be sickly, and soon sink into the grave. Bread, then is adapted to all. It is the food of both king and artisan. So it is with Christ. It meets the need of all alike; He is able to satisfy every class of sinners—rich or poor, cultured or illiterate.

Third, bread is a daily food. There are some articles of food which we eat but occasionally; others only when they are in season. But bread is something we need every day of our lives. It is so spiritually. If the Christian fails to feed on Christ daily, if he substitutes the husks of religious forms and ceremonies, religious books, religious excitement, the glare and glitter of modern Christianity, he will be weak and sickly. It is failure at this very point which is mainly responsible for the feebleness of so many of the Lord's people.

Fourth, bread is a satisfying food. We quickly tire of other articles of diet, but not so with this. Bread is a staple and standard article, which we must use all our lives. And does not the analogy hold good again spiritually? How often have we turned aside to other things, only to find them but husks! None but the Bread of life can satisfy.

Morris: The kind of sign they want is illustrated by the manna in the wilderness. In a way this is a strange choice, for the multiplication of the loaves in the early part of this chapter seems to be a sign of exactly the same type. But it took place on one occasion: Moses gave the manna for forty years. Jesus gave bread to five thousand: Moses supplied manna to a whole nation. Jesus gave them ordinary bread, bread such as they ate every day: Moses gave "*bread out of heaven*", and goodness knows what phantasies they had about this ... Add to this a Jewish expectation that when the Messiah came He would give men manna once more, and we see that there was much that might arouse speculation. Jesus had done something wonderful in multiplying bread. Could he go on from there and produce manna?

TEXT: John 6:41-59

TITLE: FEEDING ON THE BREAD OF HEAVEN

BIG IDEA:

**THE BREAD OF HEAVEN WILL ONLY BE RECEIVED BY HEARTS
PREPARED BY GOD THE FATHER**

INTRODUCTION:

cf. Parable of the Soils from Luke 8; looking for that good soil

**I. (:41-51) STUBBORN HEARTS STUMBLE OVER THE UNIQUE CLAIM OF
CHRIST TO BE THE LIVING BREAD = THE ONLY SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL
LIFE**

A. (:41-43) Stubborn Hearts Breed Grumbling Mouths

1. (:41) Self Righteousness Breeds Spiritual Blindness

“The Jews Therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, ‘I am the bread that came down out of heaven.’”

Cannot See Beyond the Physical -- No Comprehension of Bread from Heaven

This is not the type of soil conducive to receiving the seed of the gospel message. Murmuring and grumbling and arguing are never the channel to receiving God’s truth.

2. (:42) Familiarity Breeds Contempt – No Comprehension of Spiritual Relationships

“And they were saying, ‘Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, I have come down out of heaven?’”

3. (:43) Grumbling Breeds Rebuke

“Do not grumble among yourselves”

You are not accomplishing anything; you are not going to arrive at spiritual truth apart from divine revelation and illumination.

B. (:44-47) Prepared Hearts Breed Saving Faith

1. (:44) Effectual Calling / Drawing

“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Pink: The condition of the natural man is altogether beyond human repair. To talk about exerting the will is to ignore the state of the man behind the will. Man’s will has not escaped the general wreckage of his nature. When man fell, every part of his being was

affected. Just as truly as the sinner's heart is estranged from God and his understanding darkened, so is his will enslaved by sin. To predicate the freedom of the will is to deny that man is totally depraved. To say that man has the power within himself to either reject or accept Christ, is to repudiate the fact that he is the captive of the Devil. It is to say there is at least one good thing in the flesh. It is to flatly contradict this word of the Son of God—"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." . . .

As said above, the unregenerate sinner is so depraved that with an unchanged heart and mind he will never come to Christ. And the change which is absolutely essential is one which God alone can produce. It is, therefore, by Divine "drawing" that any one comes to Christ. What is this "drawing"? We answer, It is the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming the self-righteousness of the sinner, and convicting him of his lost condition. It is the Holy Spirit awakening within him a sense of need. It is the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming the pride of the natural man, so that he is ready to come to Christ as an empty-handed beggar. It is the Holy Spirit creating within him an hunger for the bread of life.

2. (:45) Effectual Teaching

*"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.'
Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."*

3. (:46) Unique Messenger / Revealer / Mediator

*"Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God;
He has seen the Father."*

Jesus alone can claim intrinsic intimacy with the Father.

4. (:47) Effectual Saving Faith

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."

C. (:48-51) Heavenly Bread Breeds Spiritual Life

1. (:48) Identification of the Bread of Life

"I am the bread of life"

2. (:49-50) Superiority of the Bread of Life

"Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die."

3. (:51) Connection Between Resurrection and Atonement

a. Identification Repeated

"I am the living bread"

b. Heavenly Source Reiterated

"that came down out of heaven"

c. Universal Offer – Faith Guarantees Resurrection

“if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever”

d. Necessity of Atonement

“and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

II. (:52-59) BELIEVING HEARTS SIMPLY FEED ON THIS LIVING BREAD AND RECEIVE THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE

A. (:52) Spiritual Symbolism Frustrates Human Reason

“The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, ‘How can this man give us His flesh to eat?’”

B. (:53-58) Partaking of Christ Essential for Spiritual Life

1. (:53) Theme Stated: Partaking of Christ Essential for Spiritual Life

“unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves”

2. (:54) Partaking of Christ Guarantees Eternal Life and Ultimate Resurrection

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

3. (:55) Essence of True Spiritual Food = Connection with His Atonement

“For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.”

Stedman: This (drinking blood) was most offensive to Jews because they had been taught all through the centuries that God did not want flesh in which there remained any blood. The word "kosher" means to cleanse; and it particularly refers to the preparation of meat. The Jews cannot eat any meat that has not had all the blood drained from it. In Israel last year I visited a factory where chickens were killed and canned for food for the Israelis. Every one of those chickens, thousands every day, had to be killed and its blood drained by a rabbi, otherwise it could not be sold on the Israeli market. Thus the thought of drinking blood was most offensive to these Jews.

Stefanski:

- Nothing else can satisfy
- Nothing else can give life

4. (:56) Partaking of Christ Constitutes Abiding Relationship

“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

Stedman: The most intimate physical act is sex, which is a way of sharing life together. Sex has been accurately described as "the urge to merge." That is what happens physically, but it also happens psychologically. Friendship is a form of sexuality, or

intimacy. When you are with a friend, what do you do? You tell your friend what you have been doing, and ask what he or she has been doing; you share your secrets. That is the urge to merge at the psychological level.

When we think about the greatness, the glory, and the wonder of God, what do we want? True worship is the desire to merge with God, for him to possess us and we to possess him. That is what Jesus says happens when we eat and drink his life. When we come and believe in him, and keep coming and keep believing in him, we grow into an intimate relationship with God.

5. (:57) Theme Repeated: Partaking of Christ Essential for Spiritual Life
“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.”

6. (:58) Contrast between OT Manna and True Bread of Heaven
“This is the bread which the fathers ate, and died, he who eats this bread shall live forever.”

C. (:59) Synagogue Setting
“These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are those who are referred to as “disciples” in the gospels always “true believers”? How does this affect our understanding of John 15 where we see certain branches (who did not abide in the vine) burned in the fire? How is Judas the ultimate prototype for this kind of false professor of faith?

2) What causes you to grumble against God? How can we develop a spirit of thanksgiving – even in those areas where we don’t fully understand what God is doing or what He is trying to communicate? How will such an attitude help prepare our hearts for God’s work of illumination?

3) Do you consider it fair that God only draws certain individuals (and not others) to Himself for spiritual understanding and salvation? Why do so many believers stumble over this precious truth?

4) Verse 57 compares our opportunity for spiritual life to that of the “*living Father*” and of His Son who “*lives because of the Father.*” What type of parallel is in view here when Christ says “*he also shall live because of Me*”?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: We think we choose Jesus, but he himself said to his own disciples, "You did not choose me, I chose you," {John 15:16a RSV}. We think that our choices determine our destiny, but there is no greater truth, perhaps, in the Word of God than to realize that our choices are the result of God's drawing. Why do we choose the way we do? To us it seems a natural affair that is all centered on what our wills desire. But the Scripture understands much more about our humanity than that. It reveals that God must draw us to himself or otherwise we would never come. No one would respond if they were not "drawn" of the Father. This is a very strong word. It means "compelled," to be "dragged along." That is how it is used in other places of Scripture.

Jesus tells how it happens: He calls it, "being taught of God." It is an opening of the understanding. It may happen suddenly, or it may happen slowly. It may happen very painfully. It happens not only to non-believers in order to draw them to the point of faith and conversion, but it happens also to Christians who need continually to be taught of God. Many have had the experience of hearing something they had known for years but had never really understood until something suddenly opened their eyes and they saw what it meant.

Deffinbaugh: Jesus gets to the bottom line of how men must respond to Him in verse 51: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats from this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." Jesus does provide the "bread of life," but He is this "bread." Those who "eat" of this bread will live forever. The bread that men must "eat" in order to have eternal life is the "flesh" of our Lord.

Pink: The Jews were murmuring against Christ. They were murmuring against Him because He had said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." This was a saying that offended them. And why should that cause them to murmur? They were, of course, completely blind to Christ's Divine glory, and so were ignorant that this very One whom some of them had seen grow up before their eyes in the humble home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, and the One that some of them, perhaps, had seen working at the carpenter's bench, should make a claim which they quickly perceived avowed His Deity. It was the pride of the human heart disdaining to be indebted to One who had laid aside His glory, and had taken upon Him the form of a servant. They refused to be beholden to One so lowly. Moreover, they were far too self-satisfied and self-righteous to see any need for One to come down from heaven to them, much less for that One to die upon the Cross to meet their need and thus become their Savior. Their case, as they thought, was by no means so desperate as that. The truth is, they had no hunger for "the bread which came down from heaven." What light this casts on the state of the world today! How it serves to explain the common treatment which the Lord of glory still receives at the hands of men! Pride, the wicked pride of the self-righteous heart, is responsible for unbelief. Men despise and reject the Savior because they feel not their deep need of Him. Feeding upon the husks which are fit food only for

swine, they have no appetite for the true Bread. And when the claims of Christ are really pressed upon them they still "murmur"!

Roy Fowler: Up until verse 53 Jesus has been using the word phago (fag-0) for eat. Phago means to set down and have a meal. That's what Jesus means. You have to go to the table purposely, sit down and take him into yourself spiritually. You have to fill up with the spiritual food called Jesus.

Starting in verse 54 Jesus uses another word for eat. He uses trogo (tro-go). Trogo for us is like the cattle in the field. They go around just about all the time grazing. We are being told that we are supposed to be constantly spiritually grazing on the spiritual food of Jesus or chewing our spiritual cud.

Eric Stefanski:

If you look through last week's bestseller list under non-fiction books, you'll find that three of them were from the same author: the late Dr. Atkins. In fact, diet books and cookbooks generally make up the greater share of non-fiction bestsellers; Americans are concerned about health...and concerned about having health in the least painful and best tasting way.

Thus we see a boxing champ selling us electric grills on TV and a hyperactive octogenarian who preaches the health benefits of drinking parsley, carrot, and cabbage juice to sell his machines at around \$200 a pop...and they're selling like hotcakes...a food that we are told to avoid...unless they're Dr. Atkins' 'special' pancakes, topped with sugar free syrup...

We are being bombarded with health advice, and nagging, and the debate between low fat and low carb products...It's nearly enough to make you lose your appetite completely. When we see how much time and effort people put into 'eating right' for maximizing their life in this world, and the things that happen to them, does it not make us cry out for more? Dr. Atkins recent death--caused by slipping on some ice and injuring his head--reminds us of the death of Frank Shorter: the leader of the 'jogging' movement in the 1970s...who died from a heart attack!

All of the exercise and all of the nutrition advice in the world is unable to sustain us for more than the few years of this earthly sojourn. We need such things to be good stewards of what God has given us in these "fearfully and wonderfully made" bodies, but we really need something beyond low-fat and no-fat, beyond vegetarianism, beyond low-carb and macrobiotic. With the words in today's Gospel, Jesus would have us receive something above the best of the foods we are able to prepare: GENUINE FOOD AND DRINK, the Food and Drink that alone will satisfy, and that we can eat only through the faith that God creates in our hearts.

Ryle: The "*eating and drinking,*" without which there is no life in us, means that sacrifice of His own body, which Christ offered up on the cross, when He died for sinners. The atonement made by His death, the satisfaction made by his sufferings, as

our Substitute, the redemption effected by His enduring the penalty of our sins in His own body on the tree, -- this seems to be the true idea that we should set before our minds.”

TEXT: John 6:60-71

TITLE: THE HARD TRUTH IS THE ONLY TRUTH

BIG IDEA:

FULL SECURITY FOR THE CHOSEN FEW BUT NO EASY BELIEVISM FOR TRUE DISCIPLES

I. (:60-65) HARD TRUTH CAN ONLY BE RECEIVED BY THE CHOSEN FEW

A. (:60) Some Truth is Hard to Swallow

“Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, ‘This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?’”

B. (:61) Hard Truth Can Cause Fatal Stumbling

“But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, ‘Does this cause you to stumble?’”

D. (:62-63) Consider the Source

1. (:62) Son of Man Came from Heaven

“What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?”

His Ascension would validate that He really did come from heaven and was at home there with His Father.

2. (:63) Spirit Gives Life

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

E. (:64-65) Only the Chosen Few Will Truly Embrace Christ

1. (:64) Identity of the Non Elect Known from the Beginning

“‘But there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.”

We should never be surprised by the unbelieving reaction of the majority.

2. (:65) Privilege of the Chosen Few to be Drawn to Jesus by the Father

“And He was saying, ‘For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.’”

II. (:66-71) HARD TRUTH WILL WINNOW OUT SOME FALSE DISCIPLES AND EVIL BETRAYERS

- A. (:66) False Disciples Turn Away in Unbelief
“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.”
- B. (:67-69) Despite Hard Truth, True Disciples Have No Recourse Other Than Christ
- (:67) Commitment Question
“You do not want to go away also, do you?”
 - (:68-69) True Confession
“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”

Stedman: If you have found Jesus to be like that, where else can you go? Who else can measure up to that? This is the testimony of those who walk with him and follow him. I have often said that the best definition of a Christian is 'someone who cannot quit.' I had a phone call once from a young man, a relatively new Christian who said to me, "I can't make it. I can't continue to be a Christian. It's too hard. I blow it all the time. I'm going to hang it up." I had heard that kind of thing before, so I said to him, "That's a good idea. Why don't you do that? I think you're right. Hang it up." There was a pause on the line, and then he said to me, "You know I can't do that." I said, "I know it. Of course you can't. You can't quit. Who can you go to? Where can you find answers and resources such as you have drawn on?" This is what Peter is saying to Jesus.

- C. (:70-71) Reassuring Words of Grace Balanced with Sobering Word of Warning
- (:70a) Reassuring Words of Grace – Personal Election
“Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve”
 - (:70b-71) Sobering Word of Warning for Evil Betrayer
“and yet one of you is a devil?’ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What exactly was the difficulty, the hard part, that caused these professing disciples to stumble?
- 2) Why did Jesus allow there to be a Judas in His most intimate group of 12 disciples? What was Jesus trying to accomplish? What lessons are there for us?

3) Do we ever find ourselves tempted to quit on the Christian faith but then come back to these same words and testify that we have nowhere else to turn? How can we find assurance from Peter's confession here?

4) In what ways do we turn back to the flesh and frustrate ourselves rather than living by the Spirit and enjoying the life and freedom He offers?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Many times in the Gospel of John people fail to grasp what Jesus means because they put too much emphasis on the symbols he employs. In Chapter 2, he said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again," {John 2:19}. They immediately thought he was talking about the beautiful building that stood on the top of Mt. Moriah. But John hastens to explain that Jesus was speaking of the temple of his body, which was symbolized by the building. In Chapter 3, when Nicodemus was told by Jesus, "Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God," Nicodemus looked at him with amazement and said, "How can I be born again? I can't get back into my mother's womb," {cf, John 3:3-4}. Nicodemus was thinking of gynecology, but Jesus was talking about eternal life, the gift of life imparted, which physical birth symbolizes. In Chapter 4, when Jesus said to the woman at the well, "If you knew who it is that is speaking to you, you would ask of me and I would give you water that would spring up unto eternal life," she thought he was talking about plumbing. She said to him, "Give me this water so I don't have to come here anymore to draw," {cf, John 4:10-15}. But Jesus went on to make clear to her that he was talking about the gift of life. Thus when he speaks here of "eating flesh" and "drinking blood," he is not talking about cannibalism, but about inner food, that which you live on, the philosophy of life that is real and meaningful.

Deffinbaugh: In the parable of the soils, the seed sown on rocky ground represents those who too quickly embrace Jesus and His teaching, without fully grasping what it means. They are offended by the suffering and affliction that comes into their life as a result of following Christ, and thus just as quickly, they fall away. In the case of the "disciples" in our text who leave Jesus, it is the suffering of Jesus which causes many to cease following Jesus. One cannot help but wonder, however, if it isn't fairly obvious to these folks that if their Master must suffer and die, they may also experience the same rejection and persecution, if not death. The teaching of Jesus is not what these "disciples" want to hear, and so they abandon the Master, who is God's Messiah. . .

Many are those who want a "bloodless" salvation, who do not wish to be saved by a suffering Savior. The most offensive thing about our Lord's teaching in John 6 is His insistence that He came to save lost sinners by way of the cross of Calvary. While all of the specifics of this are not spelled out, this is the essence of what Jesus is teaching, and of what His "followers" find repulsive. How can they miss this, as familiar as they are with the Old Testament and the "bloody" sacrificial system. As the author to the

Hebrews has written, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). John the Baptist introduced our Lord as the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, see also verse 36).

Pink: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63). This is indeed a searching word and one that greatly needs emphasizing today. The flesh "profiteth nothing." The flesh has no part in the works of God. All fleshly activities amount to nothing where the regeneration of dead sinners is concerned. Neither the logical arguments advanced by the mind, hypnotic powers brought to bear upon the will, touching appeals made to the emotions, beautiful music and hearty singing to catch the ear, nor sensuous trappings to draw the eye—none of these are of the slightest avail in stirring dead sinners. It is not the choir, nor the preacher, but "the Spirit that quickeneth." This is very distasteful to the natural man, because so humbling; that is why it is completely ignored in the great majority of our modern evangelistic campaigns. What is urgently needed today is not mesmeric experts who have made a study of how to produce a religious "atmosphere," nor religious showmen to make people laugh one minute and weep the next, but faithful preaching of God's Word, with the saints on their faces before God, humbly praying that He may be pleased to send His quickening Spirit into their midst.

Gary Huckaby: The teachings of Jesus was the strongest teachings that this world has ever heard. No one ever spoke stronger than Him. No wonder they turned away. He spoke in love, but He spoke the truth. Today people are "heaping to themselves teachers having itching ears." They don't desire the truth whole heartedly all the time. The multitude wants their ears tickled, their conscience salved, their hearts appeased but not cleansed. So they went away! What about you today? Will ye also go away?

Hendriksen: The reaction of the audience to this discourse was fourfold:

- a. The masses and their “religious” leaders, utterly rejected the message and belittled the speaker. Their sentiment is summarized in 6:42: “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it that he now says, ‘I have come down from heaven?’”
- b. The large group of rather regular followers (called “disciples” here) considered the discourse hard to accept; and when Jesus showed that unbelief was the root of this reaction, they, in large numbers, turned away from him.
- c. The innermost group of disciples (called “the twelve”) by mouth of Peter, made a glorious confession, recognizing Jesus as God's Holy One.
- d. Judas, though in rebellion against the divine speaker and his words, in typical traitorous fashion decided to remain in the company of Jesus!

Morris: During the first part of the ministry of Jesus people were attracted by his teaching and flocked round Him. Many attached themselves to Him, some of them wholeheartedly, some very loosely. But then came a time when their allegiance was tested. The real nature of the claims of Jesus became apparent. The true disciples were sifted from the false, and the deep from the shallow. We see something of this process beginning at this point of the Fourth Gospel. Hitherto there has been the dominant

theme of witness. Christ has been attested in one way and another and many have come to hear Him. But in this last discourse it has become obvious that He is not simply another Rabbi. His claims for Himself and His claims on His followers are such that it is no longer possible to follow Him unreflectively, and without committing oneself. So John tells us of what happened, not now among His enemies, but among His professed adherents, His disciples (v. 60) and the Twelve (v. 67).

Ryle: Our Lord says, "*the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*" By this He signifies that His words and teachings, applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, are the true means of producing spiritual influence and conveying spiritual life. By words thoughts are begotten and aroused. By words mind and conscience are stirred. And Christ's words especially are spirit-stirring and life-giving.

The principle contained in this verse, however faintly we may grasp its full meaning, deserves peculiar attention in these times. There is a tendency in many minds to attach an excessive importance to the outward and visible or "doing" part of religion. They seem to think that the sum and substance of Christianity consists in Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, in public ceremonies and forms, in appeals to the eye and ear and bodily excitement. Surely they forget that it is "*the Spirit that quickeneth*" and that the "*flesh profiteth nothing.*" It is not so much by noisy public demonstrations as by the still quiet work of the Holy Ghost on hearts that God's cause prospers. It is Christ's words entering into consciences, which "*are spirit and life.*"

TEXT: John 7:1-36

TITLE: WILLING TO DO HIS WILL

BIG IDEA:

**THE KEY TO SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT IS INWARD RIGHTEOUSNESS
REFLECTED IN OUR COMMITMENT TO OBEDIENCE AND IN OUR
SENSITIVITY TO THE WILL OF GOD
RESULT = TRULY SEEKING THE GLORY OF GOD**

INTRODUCTION:

Turning point in Gospel of John ... increasing opposition and antagonism from this point forward; Entering period of growing conflict and opposition. Note the attempts to kill Him: 7:19, 25; 8:37,59; 11:53

Period of 6 months has gone by since the feeding of the 5000. Shows that John's account is very selective; not trying to provide a comprehensive biography.

**I. (:1-9) THE LACK OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT IS DUE TO UNBELIEF
REFLECTED IN A SUPERFICIAL SHOW OF OBEDIENCE AND
INSENSITIVITY TO THE WILL OF GOD**

**RESULT = SEEKING THE GLORY OF SELF
(CAMOUFLAGED IN RELIGION)**

Spiritual Discernment is not guaranteed by:

- religious activity
- physical bloodlines
- access to truth

All of these were areas in which the Pharisees excelled

A. (:1-5) The Temptation is to Seek Your Own Glory Apart From Obedience and Sensitivity to the Will of God

1. (:1) Judicious Restraint

“And after these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.”

2. (:2) Impressive Festival

“Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was at hand.”

Feast of Booths judging on the basis of outward appearances seemed like an appropriate occasion for Jesus' public display of glory.

In actuality, the Passover was more appropriate. Feast of Booths will be more prominent in relation to Christ's 2nd Coming.

3. (:3-4) Natural Challenge to Prove Yourself (Presented by skeptics)
 - a. (:3) Show Your Stuff to Your Disciples – Cement Your Leadership
“His brothers therefore said to Him, ‘Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold Your works, which You are doing.’”
 - b. (:4) Show Your Stuff to the World – Grab the Glory
“For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”
4. (:5) Underlying Motive of Unbelief
“For not even His brothers were believing in Him.”

Tone of these comments seems to be sarcastic; putting forth a challenge where they did not feel that He could produce; somewhat of a sneer

Deffinbaugh: What our Lord’s brothers said to Him was rooted in unbelief and rejection—not in faith. For this reason, I have chosen to set aside the rendering (“advised”) of the NET Bible and revert to a much more basic rendering (“said to”) of the original text. I do not believe our Lord’s brothers are giving Him a piece of good advice. To sum up the essence of their words to Jesus irreverently (as unbelieving brothers would be inclined to do), “Put up or shut up!” I think our Lord’s brothers were embarrassed by Jesus and fed up with His ministry. I am tempted to believe that these brothers were aware that the Jews in Judea were seeking to kill Jesus. They urged Him to leave Galilee, the place of safety (and also the place where they lived), and to go to Jerusalem, the place of greatest danger

Wiersbe: These men certainly had the world’s point of view: if you want to get a following, use your opportunities to do something spectacular. . . No doubt the brothers knew that the multitude of disciples had deserted Jesus (6:66). This was His opportunity to recoup His losses.

B. (:6) Our Governing Principle Must Be Conformity to the Sovereign Plan of God

1. Sensitivity to the Father’s Plan
“My time is not yet at hand”
2. Vs. Disregard for the Father’s Plan
“but your time is always opportune”

C. (:7-9) Spiritual Discernment (With its Living Out of Righteousness and its Exposure of Wickedness) Will Always Be Hated By an Evil World

1. (:7) The World Hates Exposure of Its Evil
“The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.”

2. (:8-9) Those with Spiritual Discernment Run on a Different Track
“Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come. And having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.”

II. (:10-13) SPIRITUAL CURIOSITY (APART FROM FAITH AND INWARD RIGHTEOUSNESS) SPARKS LIVELY DEBATES BUT NO TRUE ALLEGIANCE

Without Spiritual Discernment, the Governing Principle remains the Strong Ties of Tradition and Legalism

- A. (:10) God’s Ways are Not Man’s Ways
“But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as it were, in secret.”
- B. (:11) Curiosity Seekers Never Arrive at the Real Truth
“The Jews therefore were seeking Him at the feast, and were saying, ‘Where is He?’”
- C. (:12) Differing Opinions But No Spiritual Discernment
“And there was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him”
 1. Good Man
“some were saying, ‘He is a good man.’”
 2. Deceiver
“others were saying, ‘No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray.’”
- D. (:13) Unified in Bondage to Legalistic Tyranny and Intimidation
“Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews”

Wiersbe: The debate began before Jesus even arrived at the city, and centered on His character (vv. 11-13). . . But when Jesus began to teach openly in the temple, the debate shifted to His doctrine (vv. 14-19). Character and doctrine go together, of course.

III. (:14-24) SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT DEPENDS ON INWARD RIGHTEOUSNESS

- A. (:14-16) Spiritual Discernment Evidenced in Powerful Teaching
The Source of the Teaching determines its power -- not just rabbinical training in the traditions of men, but direct discernment from a relationship with God the Father

1. (:14) Prominent Pulpit
“But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.”
 - Risky Business
 - Proper Timing
 - Priority of Edification

2. (:15) Powerful Impact
“The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, ‘How has this man become learned, having never been educated?’”

3. (:16) Divine Authority
“My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”

Tasker: The Jews show amazement that a man with no professional training as an interpreter of the law should dare to expound the Scriptures. If He was merely self-taught, then (so they appeared to have argued) His teaching, so far from possessing authority, was boastful and impertinent. Jesus refuted this charge by drawing attention to the divine source both of His claims to be a teacher and of the content of His teaching. He was no upstart, puffed up by His own self-gathered knowledge, nor did He aim at winning honor for Himself; He was sent by God and His supreme object was to reflect the glory of him that sent Him (16). That was the hall-mark of honesty and sincerity.

Pink: Education is an altar which is now thronged by a multitude of idolatrous worshippers. That, no doubt, is one reason why God’s curse has fallen on almost all our seats of learning. He is jealous of His glory, and anything which enters into competition with Himself He blights and withers. An unholy valuation of human learning, which supplants humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit is, perhaps, the chief reason why God’s presence and blessing have long since departed from the vast majority of our centers of Christian education. And in the judgment of the writer, there is an immediate and grave danger that we may shortly witness the same tragedy in connection with our Bible Schools and Bible Institutes.

B. (:17-18) Main Point: Spiritual Discernment Depends on Inward Righteousness

1. (:17) Commitment to Obedience = Key to Discernment
“If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.”

Piper: To receive Christ you must recognize him for who he really is, namely, One whose teaching is God's teaching and not merely man's. But, Jesus says in John 7:17, you will never know this about him (and thus never receive him for who he is) unless you have a will that inclines to do the will of God. . .

So Jesus is saying that the basic reason why people do not own up to the truth of what he teaches is not that they lack sufficient evidence, but that their wills -- or we could say their hearts -- are against God. The fundamental problem is not intellectual but moral.

The great obstacle to recognizing the truth of Christ is not deficient resources but deep rebellion against God. People cannot see and recognize the truth of Christ's teaching because the prevailing tendency of their will is insubordination against the authority of God. . .

the reason we can't see the truth of Jesus is because he embodies the will of God which we hate, namely, that God's glory and not ours should be the quest and passion of our lives.

2. (:18) Seeking God's Glory = Mark of Inward Righteousness

"He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

C. (:19-24) OT Illustration Validates Legitimacy of His Sabbath Miracle

1. (:19) As Law Breakers Themselves, They are in no Position to Judge Him

"Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you carries out the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

Morris: It was a favorite cause for self-congratulation among the Jews that they were the recipients of the Law (cf. Rom. 2:17). But now our Lord points out that there is a difference between receiving and keeping the law.

2. (:20) Wickedness Spews Out in Blasphemy and Denials

"The multitude answered, 'You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?'"

3. (:21-23) Parallel Between Jesus Healing on Sabbath and Circumcision on Sabbath

4. (:24) Supreme Principle of Judgment

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment"

Pink: Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). The connection between this verse and the preceding ones is dear. Christ had been vindicating His act of healing the impotent man on the Sabbath day. To His superficial critics it might have seemed a breach of the Sabbatic law; but in reality it was not so. Their judgment was hasty and partial. They were looking for something they might condemn, and so seized upon this. But their verdict, as is usually the case when hurried and prejudiced, was altogether erroneous. Therefore, did our Lord bid them; "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." He exhorted them to be fair; to take into account all the circumstances; to weigh all that God's Word revealed about the Sabbath. "In it thou shalt not do any work," was not to be taken absolutely: other scriptures plainly modified it. The ministrations of the priests

in the temple on the Sabbath, and the circumcising of the child on that day when the Law required it, were cases in point. But the Jews had overlooked or ignored these. They had judged by appearances. They had not considered the incident according to its merits, nor in the light of the general tenor of Scripture. Hence, their judgment was unrighteous, because unfair and false.

IV. (:25-29) SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE (WHERE DID CHRIST COME FROM?) CREATES MASS CONFUSION

A. (:25-26) Confusion Regarding the Response of the Religious Rulers

1. (:25) Desire to Kill . . .

“Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?”

2. (:26a) Yet Decline to Take Action

“And look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him.”

3. (:26b) What to make of it??

“The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?”

B. (:27-28) Spiritual Ignorance Lies at the Heart of Mass Confusion

1. (:27a) Self Deception

“However, we know where this man is from”

2. (:27b) Misconception

“but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from”

3. (:28a) Divine Correction

“You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true”

4. (:28b) No Perception

“whom you do not know.”

C. (:29) Certainty Based on Intimate Knowledge of God the Father

“I know Him; because I am from Him, and He sent Me.”

V. (:30-36) SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE (WHERE IS CHRIST GOING?) CREATES INCREASING ANTAGONISM (ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF MUCH POSITIVE RESPONSE)

A. (:30) Antagonism Frustrated by Divine Immunity

“They were seeking therefore to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.”

B. (:31) Antagonism Frustrated by Incipient Faith

“But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, ‘When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?’”

C. (:32-33) Antagonism Frustrated by Sovereignty of Christ

“the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. Jesus therefore said, ‘For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me.’”

D. (:35-36) Antagonism Frustrated by Spiritual Ignorance

“The Jews therefore said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? What is this statement that He said, You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come?’”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How easily do we become anxious or afraid? What can we learn from the calm, unruffled attitude of Jesus who had knowledge of those who were constantly seeking to kill Him? How did He avoid putting His heavenly Father to the test by acting judiciously and circumspectly – even though He could have argued that no one could kill Him until it was His time?

2) Are we actively testifying of the world, *“that its deeds are evil”*?

3) Do we put too much value on the status conveyed by educational degrees? Do we remember that both Jesus and His disciples were not products of some sophisticated educational system? Do we encourage and receive preaching from those who are evidently gifted despite their lack of formal credentials?

4) Do we bargain with God about matters of obedience: i.e. “Until you make such and such plain to me, I won’t do X”? Or are we willing to make the commitment of obedience up front and trust that God will then enlighten us along the path?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Four brothers of Jesus came to him ... like a Political Action Committee ... recommending that He adopt a more aggressive campaign strategy:

1) You need a larger arena. Galilee is too small for you. Why stay here in the sticks? You need to get down to Judea, to Jerusalem. That's the capital, the heart of the country.

- 2) Your Judean disciples need to see you again. Their faith needs to be supported and reinforced by witnessing miracles like the ones you have been doing up here. Remember that John's gospel opens with Jesus' ministry in Judea. There he won a great multitude of disciples. Some of them, of course, followed him to Galilee, but it is likely that a great many did not have any contact with him for months. Thus Jesus' brothers suggest that he needs to reinforce those ties and show them his powers.
- 3) If you want to be recognized as the Messiah, you have got to move out into the open where people can see what you are doing. It's a mistake to work in an obscure corner of the nation like Galilee. You need to change your plan if you want to reach the nation.
- 4) Finally, they suggested that his gifts were being wasted: "If you do these things, show yourself to the world."

Morris: When the feast was at its height Jesus came out of His seclusion and taught in the temple. His opening address is a call to make serious judgments, and not simply snap decisions on the basis of surface appearance. He points out that if anyone is really in earnest he will know whether Jesus' teaching is divine in origin or not. But in this situation the people are trying to kill him and thus break the very law they profess to uphold. Their consideration for the outward letter of the law (as shown in their concern for circumcision) contrasts sharply with their carelessness toward the deeper things to which the law points (as shown in their attitude toward Jesus' healing on the Sabbath). Their values are wrong. They are superficial. They do not understand the meaning of the law they profess to honor, and therefore they do not recognize that the authority of Jesus is the very authority of God.

Tasker: The brothers were wrong however in what they understood the glory of Jesus to consist. Like the Galilaeans in chapter vi, they imagined His glory to be limited to demonstrations of His miraculous powers, whereas in reality it could only be supremely displayed by His crucifixion. Just because the request of His brothers was based on so false a conception of His vocation, it was in fact another sign of their unbelief, and Jesus could not yield to it.

Hendriksen: Just how are the various elements of Christian experience related to each other? In general it may be said that, according to the teaching of Christ and the apostles, *knowledge* (concerning Christ and the facts of redemption: implying, of course, a knowledge of misery) comes first. When we try to trace our *love* for God in Christ to its source, we discover that it resulted from the contemplation of the facts of the Gospel and from our interpretation of the significance of these facts. Nevertheless, we hasten to add: knowledge as such never produces love. It results in love when the Holy Spirit applies this knowledge to the heart; i.e., when he creates in the heart a response to the love of Christ, the knowledge of which is already present in the mind. Now this love, in turn, expresses itself in deeds of *obedience*...

when we speak of *knowledge, love and obedience*, we are not thinking of three altogether separate experiences, but of one single, comprehensive experience in which the three are united in such a manner that each contributes its share, and all cooperate unto man's salvation and God's glory. This experience is personal in character. Hence,

we can no longer speak of the primacy of the intellect or of the primacy of the emotions or of the primacy of the will, but of the primacy of the sovereign grace of God influencing and transforming the entire personality for the glory of God.

Wiersbe: Chapter 7 has three time divisions: before the feast (vv. 1-10), in the midst of the feast (vv. 11-36), and on the last day of the feast (vv. 37-52). The responses during each of those periods can be characterized by three words: disbelief, debate, and division.

TEXT: John 7:37-53

TITLE: IS IT IN YOU?

BIG IDEA:

THE UNIQUE AND LOFTY CLAIMS OF CHRIST STIR UP DIVISION AND BIGOTED OPPOSITION

INTRODUCTION:

GATORADE theme from commercials: Is It In You?

**I. (:37-39) (UNIQUE AND LOFTY CLAIMS OF CHRIST):
FAITH IN CHRIST UNLEASHES THE ABUNDANT AND FULFILLING
MINISTRY OF THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT**

A. (:37) Only Jesus Can Truly Satisfy Man's Deepest Longings

"If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

Cf. Is. 55:1ff

B. (:38) Only Jesus Can Provide that Abundant Blessing That Will Spill Over to Others

1. Faith in Christ = Key

"He who believes in Me"

2. Fulfillment of Prophecy = Corroboration

"as the Scripture said"

3. Fullness of Blessing = Goal

"from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water"

This is what Christ desires for His disciples; not some little trickle of blessing

Morgan: There can be no overflowing life, until the life is filled and satisfied.

Pink: *"Out of his belly shall flow."* What is the "belly"? It is that part of man which constantly craves. It is that part which, in his fallen condition, is the natural man's god—"Whose god is their belly" (Phil. 3:19), said the apostle: styled their "god" because it receives the most care and attention. The "belly" is that part of man which is never really satisfied, for it is constantly crying for something else to appease its cravings. Now the remarkable thing, yea, the blessed thing, is, that not only is the believer himself satisfied, but he overflows with that which satisfies—out of his innermost parts "flow (forth) rivers of living water" The thought indeed is a striking one. It is not merely "from him" shall flow, but "out of his belly shall flow;" that is,

from that very part of our constitution which, in the natural man, is never satisfied, there shall be a constant overflow.

C. (:39) Word of Clarification

1. Identity of the “Rivers of Living Water”

“But this He spoke of the Spirit”

2. Timing Issues

“whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”

no such timing issues to impact us today since Jesus has been glorified; no delay in the giving of the indwelling Spirit

Meyer: The glory of Jesus is ever connected in Scripture with the reign of Jesus. There must be an ascension and an enthronement within; all things must be put under His feet; principalities and powers must own His sway; and when we glorify Jesus in our hearts and lives, setting Him on the throne, then the Spirit fills us with successive waves of power.

II. (:40-52) REACTIONS: DIVISION AND BIGOTED OPPOSITION

A. (:40-44) Differing Opinions on the Part of the Multitude

1. (:40) Getting Warm

“This certainly is the Prophet”

2. (:41a) Very Hot

“This is the Christ”

3. (:41b-42) Distracted and Confused

“Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”

4. (:43) Summary of Responses: Division

“So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him.”

5. (:44) Frustrated Opposition

“And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.”

B. (:45-49) Bigoted Opposition on the Part of the Religious Leaders

1. (:45-46) Mission Impossible

a. Charged with Capturing Christ

“Why did you not bring Him?”

b. Stymied by Authoritative Presence and Teaching
“Never did a man speak the way this man speaks”

2. (:47-48) Marshalling the Troops –
making sure no one was breaking rank and casting his lot with Christ
a. *“You have not also been led astray, have you?”*

b. *“No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?”*

3. (:49) Making Excuses –
How can you explain the fact that many of the multitude have believed
in Him?
“But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed.”

C. (:50-52) Determined Opposition Despite Word of Caution and Fairness from
Nicodemus

1. (:50) Identity of Nicodemus
*“Nicodemus said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of
them).”*

2. (:51) Word of Caution and Fairness
*“Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and
knows what he is doing, does it?”*

3. (:52) Determined Opposition – Their mind was made up already
*“You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and see that no
prophet arises out of Galilee.”*

Responded with ridicule and contempt; identified Christ with Galilee,
not knowing that He had been born in Bethlehem.

Wiersbe: Again, the leaders refused to face facts honestly but passed judgment on the
basis of their prejudices and their superficial examination of the facts. It is much easier
to label people (and *libel* people) than to listen to the facts they present.

Stedman: But the point, of course, is, they were sarcastic, pompous, cynical, and
calloused in their attitude. This is often the reaction of those who are disturbed by the
words of Jesus.

**(:53) CONCLUSION: No action able to be taken at this time; Jesus’ time had not
yet come**

“And everyone went to his home.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do we as believers still make the mistake of hewing out our own empty cisterns and trying to find satisfaction and fulfillment apart from the living water Christ so freely provides?
- 2) Are we satisfied with just a trickle of blessing or do we truly seek that abundant life which Christ promises? What type of ministry expectations do we have ... understanding the inner resource of the Holy Spirit which should overflow out of our life to others?
- 3) Why does the process of spiritual debating seem to lead more often than not to division instead of resolution?
- 4) What prevents unbelievers from giving Jesus a fair hearing and sincerely weighing the facts and the evidence supporting His claims?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Morris: The great advance was in His teaching on the Spirit. Some aspects of this have occupied us before, but on this occasion Jesus brings out the point that when the Spirit is within a man He overflows in abounding life. The Spirit-filled man cannot but be a blessing to other people.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a feast of thanksgiving primarily for the blessings of God in the harvest, but it was also observed with special reference to the blessings received during the wilderness wanderings, the time when God was pleased to manifest Himself in the tabernacle. It may be this which gives significance to John's recording of the happenings in this chapter. Neither in the tabernacle in the wilderness, nor in the temple which replaced it, was God fully manifested. The final and perfect manifestation of God was in Jesus, whose ministry would result in God's dwelling neither in a tent nor in a temple, but in men's hearts by His Spirit.

Morgan: Some Jewish writers tell us that during the observance of the feast for seven days, on each day water was carried in golden vessels from the Pool of Siloam, and poured out in the presence of assembled worshippers in the Temple. Other Jewish writers tell us that for seven days there was a procession of the priests, who went with empty vessels, either to Siloam's Pool, or outside the city to the brook Kidron, filled their vessels with water, and came back, chanting parts of the Great Hallel, then pouring out the water within the Temple courts. They tell us moreover that the symbolism related to two facts, one, that God had supplied their need with water in the wilderness, a physical provision; the other, that promises had been made, as in Ezekiel, and more briefly in Joel, and in Zechariah; that there should come a day when rivers of water should revivify the desert lands, a spiritual significance. This observance continued for seven days. On the last day there was no procession of the priests, no carrying of the

golden vessels of water; and the omission was as significant as the observance had been. The omission was to show, first that now there was no need for the supernatural supply of water, because they were no longer in the wilderness, but in the land; and secondly, that the great promises of spiritual refreshment had not yet been fulfilled.

Plummer: “*Law*” is emphatic. “You condemn the multitude for not knowing the law; but are we not forgetting the law in condemning a man unheard?” These learned theologians and lawyers were forgetting such plain and simple texts as Deut. i. 16, 17, xvii. 8, xix. 15; involving the most elementary principles of justice.

Meyer: Do you, my reader, know anything of this? Is your life comparable to a river, nay, to many rivers of holy influence? In the first place, do you know what it is to be satisfied? And in the second place, do you know what it is to communicate to others what you are receiving from the risen Lord? If not, are you not living below your privileges, and would it not be wise to do what the present writer did on one memorable occasion—put your finger on these words, and claim that, in all their heights, and depths, and widths, and lengths of meaning, they should be realized? The world would

soon cease to be thirsty if only each believer were to become like one of the ancient rivers of Paradise, which was parted into four heads. . .

He is the Sun; the heart that has learned the art of basking in His beams may live without human live. He is the Ocean; the life which is open to His fullness is preserved from ebb or fluctuation, and is independent of passing showers, with their pattering raindrops. He is the Man; the Man of men, in whom all the strength of the strong and the sweetness of the lovable dwell in unstinted and infinite abundance; and the nature which has acquired the habit of living in union with Him can exist amid the failure and disappointment of all earthly friendships. All the fullness of Godhead is in His vast and multitudinous nature.

Stedman: Physical thirst is the most powerful drive known to man. The sex drive can be contained, you can even deny satisfying hunger for weeks at a time, but one thing you cannot leave unsatisfied is thirst. It becomes a driving demon that takes over the whole of your life and makes you think of nothing else but satisfying it. That is what Jesus means. If you feel yourself driven, wanting something, restless and thirsty and longing for satisfaction, then his invitation is, “Come unto me and drink, and by means of the Spirit, which I will give to those who believe in me, I will satisfy that thirst.” . . .

What does he mean by that? The true sign of the Spirit is that you become a blessing to somebody else; someone else is helped through you. Your concern is to reach out to someone else in need and help him. When that happens you will find that your own thirst has been slaked; you will find a deep satisfaction of heart.

TEXT: John 8:1-11

TITLE: NO CONDEMNATION

BIG IDEA:

JESUS WILL NEVER ENDORSE A SPIRIT OF HYPOCRITICAL CONDEMNATION

INTRODUCTION:

Our status as sinners does not allow us to pass condemnation on other individuals, despite their obvious sins.

What is our motivation in passing judgment on others?

- to elevate ourselves
- to exalt our own legalistic soapboxes

Textual Problems: Generally acknowledged that this was probably an authentic incident in the life and ministry of Christ. However, this passage has serious textual problems; not included in many manuscripts; many variants even where it was included; difficult to resolve such issues. See what we can learn from this story.

Deffinbaugh: Quoting Calvin regarding authenticity of the text:

It is plain enough that this passage was unknown anciently to the Greek Churches; and some conjecture that it has been brought from some other place and inserted here. But as it has always been received by the Latin Churches, and is found in many old Greek manuscripts, and contains nothing unworthy of an Apostolic Spirit, there is no reason why we should refuse to apply it to our advantage.

(:1) CONTEXT / TRANSITION:

“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.”

The incident happened early in the morning following a night spent by Jesus communing with the Father on the Mount of Olives.

Contrast with 7:53 -- where everyone else had a home to go to; Son of Man did not have a place to lay His head.

Remember earlier theme: *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”* (7:24)

I. (:2-6a) SETTING THE TRAP

A. (:2) Stacking the Deck = their timing -- the right context to put Jesus on the spot

“And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.”

Another Public Teaching Opportunity

Sitting down = common posture for rabbinical teaching in the temple.

B. (:3-5) Staging the Test Case = their presentation

1. Selective Presenters = Experts in the OT Law

“And the scribes and the Pharisees”

2. Selective Perpetrator

“brought a woman caught in adultery”

- Why this particular woman?
- Where was the man? Was he involved in enticing this woman into the act in order to set up this test case? Was he present inognito, observing the reaction of Jesus? Double Standard
- Why this particular sin?

3. Selective Audience

“and having set her in the midst, they said to Him, Teacher”

- people who were serious about the OT law; the most orthodox

4. Selective Crime

“this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act”

No denying the crime;

No denying her guilt

How humiliating this must have been for her.

Deffinbaugh: The group does not come alone. They have with them an unwilling accomplice—a woman whose sin the law condemns, a sin for which she deserves to die. If, indeed, she is caught “in the very act of adultery,” she may be only partly clothed, if at all. I suspect they do not gently bring her along, but probably drag her “kicking and screaming.” No doubt, the woman is in tears, humiliated by her guilt and her exposure. Worse yet, she is stationed before the One who knows no sin—and at the same time, before the eyes of the crowd gathered at the temple.

5. Selective Case Law

“Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?”

Why hadn't they taken the woman to the proper authorities if their real motive was justice?

Stedman: It is clear they feel they have Jesus trapped by this; they have an airtight case, this "get-Jesus" committee!

C. (:6a) Setting Jesus Up = their motivation

“And they were saying this, testing Him, in order that they might have grounds for accusing Him.”

Dilemma:

1. Agree that she should be stoned:
 - lose favor with the common people who were well aware of their own sins
 - compromise the tone of His ministry = come to save rather than to condemn
 - possibly put Him at odds with Roman govt officials by taking vigilante approach
2. Advocate that she go free:
 - appear to compromise the standards of Moses and OT law
 - appear to be soft on sin

Stedman: They knew that Jesus was "The Friend of Sinners," that he was always on the side of the unfortunate and that he spent his time, not with the righteous, the wealthy or the respected, but with publicans and sinners. They obviously expected him to turn this woman loose. If he said that, he would be contradicting the Law of Moses and they would have him. They thought surely they had him trapped.

II. (:6b-9) TURNING THE TABLES (JUDGING THE JUDGES -- from Stedman)

A. (:6b) Condemning the Condemners

"But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground."

- Either by His silence; by ignoring them as not worthy to bring such a complaint
- Or condemning them by something he wrote – but probably not enough dirt to accomplish this! (Deffinbaugh)

B. (:7) Only Perfection Qualifies One for Exercising Condemnation

"But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'"

They misunderstood His silence; thought that He was stalling and avoiding them because He could not wriggle out of the dilemma; so they press their case.

Legal Principle: Beware asking a question when you don't know the answer!

C. (:8) Condemning the Condemners

"And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground."

D. (:9) Conviction of Sin Silences the Spirit of Hypocritical Condemnation

"And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older one, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she had been, in the midst."

III. (:10-11) SPRINGING THE BAIT – OFFERING A SECOND CHANCE

A. Free to Go

“Did no one condemn you? ... Neither do I condemn you; go your way.”

- treated her with respect and dignity
- treated her with compassion and mercy

Not being soft on sin.

Not minimizing the significance of adultery and all of its hurtful consequences.

Stedman: Even today if you are arrested for a crime, and nobody appears in court to accuse you, the judge will dismiss the case.

(Personal Illustration – Speeding ticket; court case on Christmas Eve)

B. Sin No More

“From now on sin no more.”

Not just, Don’t get caught ... but don’t even commit the sin.

Had she experienced a heart change through this encounter with Jesus?

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why doesn’t John record what Jesus actually wrote on the ground in this incident?
- 2) Based on this example, would local judges be justified in dismissing cases and just advocating that the individual go out and not repeat the offense? Why not? What would be the difference in that situation?
- 3) What other passages point us to focus our attention first on our own sins and make sure we are not judging from wrong motives or with a spirit of hypocritical condemnation? How do we balance these passages with others that clearly teach that we need to confront and expose sin in the world?
- 4) It is easy to overlook the fact that this woman almost lost her life that day. Can you imagine her relief and gratitude at having been given a second chance? What type of thanksgiving will we express today for our forgiveness of sins and the opportunity to live a holy life by the power of the Holy Spirit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Quoting C. S. Lewis in Mere Christianity:

If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity (sexual sin) as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All

the worst pleasures are purely spiritual. The pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and backbiting; the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me...they are the animal self and the diabolical self; and the diabolical self is the worst of the two. That is why a cold self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But of course it is better to be neither!

Stedman: Conjecture regarding what Jesus wrote in the ground:

My guess is that he wrote the four words, written once before by the finger of God, in the history of Israel. In the book of Daniel there is the story of King Belshazzar who put on a great feast and drunken revels and debauchery of every type was going on. Finally, the king resorted to the ultimate blasphemy of using in the revelry the sacred vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Suddenly a great hand appeared and wrote four words on the wall. The king turned ashen, and all the lords and courtiers were stunned and silent. They did not know the meaning of the Persian words, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN," which appeared, so they called in the prophet Daniel to interpret them. His interpretation was, "You are weighed in the balance and found wanting," {Dan 5:25-29}.

Pink:

That there was a symbolical significance to His action goes without saying, and what this is we are not left to guess. Scripture is its own interpreter. This was not the first time that the Lord had written "with his finger." In Exodus 31:18 we read, "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." When, then, our Lord wrote on the ground (from the ground must the "tables of stone" have been taken), it was as though He had said, You remind Me of the law! Why, it was My finger which wrote that law! Thus did He show these Pharisees that He had come here, not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. His writing on the ground, then, was (symbolically) a ratification of God's righteous law. But so blind were His would-be accusers they discerned not the significance of His act.

Deffinbaugh: Our Lord ignores His adversaries, responding to their challenge by His silence. How badly His opponents misinterpret this silence. They think His silence is because they have Him stumped. His silence achieves several things. With John Calvin, I believe our Lord's silence is intended to shame His adversaries:

By this attitude he intended to show that he despised them. Those who conjecture that he wrote this or the other thing, in my opinion, do not understand his meaning. ... For Christ rather intended, by doing nothing, to show how unworthy they were of being heard; just as if any person, while another was speaking to him, were to draw lines on the wall, or to turn his back, or to show, by any other sign, that he was not attending to what was said.

If our wives are offended by our reading the newspaper while they talk to us, imagine the offense of having Jesus refuse to look at His adversaries, appearing not to hear them, and instead occupying Himself by writing (or drawing) in the dirt!

Our Lord's silence should shame His enemies, but in fact, they are not at all ashamed—at least not yet. Jesus' silence gives them the impression that they have Jesus at a disadvantage, that He either cannot or will not answer them. So, they intensify their efforts. I suspect they raise their voices and press Jesus harder, demanding that He give them an answer. They put on a show for the crowd to see. All of this simply sets the scene for what our Lord is about to say. They could not have given Him a better introduction. . .

I believe that when our Lord stoops down to the ground, ignores His adversaries, and writes in the dust, He not only is prevented from looking upon this woman's nakedness and shame, but He also attracts the attention of the crowd to Himself, rather than to her. I admit no one I have read has come to this conclusion, but it is just like our Lord. The scribes and Pharisees want to put this woman on display, shaming her in public. Jesus seems to take the spotlight off of her and onto Himself. Can't you see the crowd fixing their eyes on the ground, stooping to see what Jesus is writing? . . .

The scribes and Pharisees think the law is the means for obtaining righteousness. In their minds, if one will but keep the law, one will be righteous, and God's blessings will be assured. No wonder these two groups are so devoted to the interpretation and application of the law to daily life—it is their life, their eternal life. But the law was never given so that men could work their way to heaven. The law was given as a standard of righteousness. The law was given to show all men that they are sinners, deserving of God's eternal wrath. The law was given to show men that they need grace. The woman seems to see herself as the law does—as one guilty of adultery, as one without any excuse, without any basis for mercy. The scribes and Pharisees feel as though they are above the law as its interpreters and guardians. They use the law to condemn others and to justify themselves. This short story of the Savior and the sinner captures the essence of the difference between our Lord's use of the law and the legalistic system of that day.

Pink:

The awful malignity of the Lord's enemies is evident on the surface. They brought this adulterous woman to Christ not because they were shocked at her conduct, still less because they were grieved that God's holy law had been broken. Their object was to use this woman to exploit her sin and further their own evil designs. With cold-blooded indelicacy they acted, employing the guilt of their captive to accomplish their evil intentions against Christ. Their motive cannot be misinterpreted. They were anxious to discredit our Lord before the people. They did not wait until they could interrogate Him in private, but, interrupting as He was teaching the people, they rudely challenged Him to solve what must have seemed to them an unsolvable enigma.

Ryle: We learn the nature of true repentance. . . He pointed out the chief thing which here case required, -- the necessity of immediate breaking off from her sin.

Let us never forget this lesson. It is the very essence of genuine repentance, as the Church catechism well teaches, to "forsake sin." That repentance which consists in

nothing more than feeling, talking, professing, wishing, meaning, hoping, and resolving, is worthless in God's sight. Action is the very life of "repentance unto salvation not to be repented of." Till a man ceases to do evil and turns from his sin, he does not really repent. – Would we know whether we are truly converted to God, and know anything of godly sorrow for sin, and repentance such as causes "joy in heaven"? Let us search and see whether we forsake sin. Let us not rest till we can say as in God's sight, "I hate all sin, and desire to sin no more."

TEXT: John 8:12-20

TITLE: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD . . . THE LIGHT OF LIFE

BIG IDEA:

**WHEN IT COMES TO THE VERACITY OF THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST
THERE IS NO HIGHER COURT OF APPEAL THAN THE GODHEAD**

INTRODUCTION:

Background of testimony in court;
How do you establish the truthfulness of the testimony?
How do you establish the credibility of the witness?
Can you believe what he is saying?
- OT law – truth established on the basis of two or three witnesses
- our complicated judicial process allows for all sorts of courts of appeal right up to the Supreme Court

I. (:12) LOFTY CLAIM OF CHRIST: THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD / THE LIGHT OF LIFE

A. Another of the “*I am*” sayings

“Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am’”

B. The Light of the World

“the Light of the World”

Jews stumbled over this emphasis of the need to be a light to the Gentiles around them. They wanted a nationalistic emphasis instead.

Implies that the world is in a state of darkness and death and separation from God.

C. The Light of Life

“he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

II. (:13) LYING CLAIM OF PHARISEES: UNSUBSTANTIATED TESTIMONY

“The Pharisees therefore said to Him, ‘You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.’”

Mistake of outright dismissal of the claims of Christ without further examining any of the evidence

Morris: The leaders of the opposition to Jesus are the Pharisees. They do not address themselves to the main question. Indeed, they do not speak of light and darkness at all. Typically, they fasten on a legal technicality. . .

But light establishes its claim. It does so, not by arguments, but by shining. Light must always be accepted for itself, and that notwithstanding the objections of the blind.

III. (:14-18) LEGITIMATE CLAIM ACCORDING TO THE GODHEAD

A. (:14) Legitimacy Proven by Personal Knowledge of Heaven

(as opposed to their Ignorance)

“Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness 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.”

First qualification for any witness in court is that they must have intimate personal knowledge regarding the subject matter; no mere hearsay testimony.

Hendriksen: This knowledge, moreover, is not only immediate, intuitive, and reflective but also complete.

B. (:15) Legitimacy Proven by Spirit of Mercy

(as opposed to Spirit of Hypocritical Condemnation)

“You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone.”

Stedman: You reject my claims because you look only at appearances. You judge according to the flesh. You regard me as nothing but a troublesome tub-thumper, a rabble-rouser who makes claims he has no right to; one who has no political influence, no wealth, no standing and no political power, and so you reject me. You even think I came from Nazareth, in Galilee, and for that reason you say I am not the Messiah. But you never investigated and found that I was born in Bethlehem, according to the word of the prophet. You do not know me at all. You judge by superficial things. You think that as the Messiah I am supposed to lead a revolt against Rome -- and I will, in God's time -- but because I do not do it yet you reject me. You never read the Old Testament that says many things have to come before that." Like many people today they were saying "No" to Jesus because of insufficient evidence. But they never bothered to look at the evidence that was there. "I do not judge people by outward appearances," Jesus declares. "I know what is in the hearts of men."

C. (:16-18) Legitimacy Proven by Joint Testimony of the Godhead (Father and Son)

1. (:16a) Conclusion: I Stand for All the Truth All the Time

“But even if I do judge, My judgment is true.”

2. (:16b) My Testimony is Not Unsubstantiated

“for I am not alone in it, but I and he who sent Me.”

3. (:17) Established Principle of Veracity of Two Supporting Witnesses
“Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true.”
4. (:18) What Better Two Witnesses Than God the Father and God the Son?
“I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”

IV. (:19) SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE RENDERS PEOPLE INCAPABLE OF BELIEVING THE TRUTH

“And so they were saying to Him, ‘Where is Your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.’”

(:20) CONCLUSION:

“These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.”

Stedman: Why did they not arrest him? Because the invisible hand of the Father was restraining them. We have already seen that, despite their rejection of Jesus, their ignorance, and their unwillingness to accept his claims -- and, as a result, all the hatred and the scorn they felt for him -- they could not stop him. Even though he spoke out in public right in the temple courts where the offering was taken, where everybody had to pass through, yet no one could arrest him because the Father was with him.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you have a good sense of who you are, where you are headed, etc.? Does this give you confidence in the face of those who would raise all sorts of questions and try to undermine your confidence?
- 2) How did *God the Father* bear witness to Jesus being His true Son and the one He had sent to be the Savior of the World, to be the Light of the World?
- 3) What are some characteristics of *light* and *darkness*? What is a personal example of trouble that you ran into at some point when you were physically walking in darkness?
- 4) Trace this theme of *judging righteous judgment* throughout the Gospel of John to this point. Why is this such an important emphasis for John? Do you have trouble concentrating on such repeated material rather than new material? Do you still get the impact of the words of Jesus?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: When Christians really believe what God says about them, when they refuse to listen even to their own feelings that lie to them about who they are, but they believe God has made them new creatures in Jesus Christ and they are free from the old life, the old sinful habits, they always have a tremendous sense of security and of effectiveness in their lives. That is what our Lord had. What marvelous serenity he displayed as he moved with confidence and courage through all the upset, the strife and the conflicting claims that he lived through! That is why he can say to these Pharisees, "I know who I am but you do not."

Deffinbaugh quoting D. A. Carson:

Of the incarnate Word we have already learned that the life 'was the light of men' (cf. notes on 1:4). The light metaphor is steeped in Old Testament allusions. The glory of the very presence of God in the cloud led the people to the promised land (Ex. 13:21-22) and protected them from those who would destroy them (Ex. 14:19-25). The Israelites were trained to sing, 'The LORD is my light and my salvation' (Ps. 27:1). The word of God, the law of God, is a light to guide the path of those who cherish instruction (Ps. 119:105; Pr. 6:23); God's light is shed abroad in revelation (Ezk. 1:4, 13, 26-28) and salvation (Hab. 3:3-4). 'Light is Yahweh in action, Ps. 44:3' (H. Conzelmann, TDNT 9, 320). Isaiah tells us that the servant of the LORD was appointed as a light to the Gentiles, that he might bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth (Is. 49:6). The coming eschatological age would be a time when the LORD himself would be the light for his people (Is. 60:19-22; cf. Rev. 21:23-24). Perhaps Zechariah 14:5b-7 is especially significant, with its promise of continual light on the last day, followed by the promise of living waters flowing from Jerusalem—this passage probably forming part of the liturgical readings of this Feast....

Pink:

"I judge no man" has been variously interpreted. Many understand it to signify that Christ here reminded His critics that He was not then exercising His judicial prerogatives. It is regarded as being parallel with the last clause of John 12:47. But we think it is more natural, and better suited to the context, to supply an ellipsis, and understand Christ here to mean, I do not judge any man after the flesh; when I judge, it is according to spiritual and Divine principles. The Greek word signifies "to determine, to form an estimate, to arrive at a decision," and here it has precisely the same force in each clause. When Christ said to these Pharisees, "Ye judge after the flesh," He did not refer to a judicial verdict, for He was not then replying to some formal pronouncement of the Sanhedrin. Instead, He meant, You have formed your estimate of Me after the flesh, but not so do I form My estimates.

"And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me" (John 8:16). This confirms what we have just said upon the last clause of the previous verse. "If I judge," or better "when I judge" My judgment is true. You may determine according to carnal principles; but I do not. I act on spiritual principles. I

judge not according to appearances, but according to reality. My judgment is according to truth, for it is the judgment of God—"I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." This was a full claim to Deity. It affirmed the absolute oneness of the Son with the Father. This statement of Christ's is parallel with the one He made later: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). He speaks here in John 8 of the Divine wisdom which is common to the Father and the Son. This being so, how could His judgment be anything but true?

Hendriksen: To *follow* the light, Christ, means to trust and obey him. It means to believe in him and out of gratitude to keep his commandments. Man must follow where the light leads; he is not permitted to map out his own course through the desert of this life. In the wilderness the forefathers had followed the pillar of light. The symbolism of the feast of Tabernacles (now in progress or just ended) reminded the audience of this light which the ancestors had enjoyed as a guide. Those who had followed it and had not rebelled against its guidance had reached Canaan. The others had died in the desert. So it is here: the true followers not only will not walk in the darkness of moral and spiritual ignorance, of impurity, and of gloom, but will reach the land of light. Nay more: they will *have* the light! The Antitype is ever richer than the type. Physical light – for example, that of the pillar of light in the desert or that of the candelabra in the Court of the Women – imparts *outward* illumination. *This* light, Jesus Christ as the object of our faith, becomes our *inner* possession: we *have* him, and this abidingly; cf. 4:14. He is, moreover, the *light of life*.

TEXT: John 8:21-30

TITLE: "I AM" IS THE SIMPLE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION: "WHO ARE YOU?"

BIG IDEA:

DESPITE REPEATED REVELATION, THE IDENTITY OF JESUS REMAINS AN ENIGMA TO THOSE BLINDED BY SIN

INTRODUCTION:

How should our witness be impacted by those who simply don't get the message? Do we experience frustration when we try to explain Who Jesus is and are met with blank stares? It is important that we persevere in continuing to proclaim the good news.

I. (:21-24) THE DESTINY FOR UNBELIEVERS IS DEATH BECAUSE OF SIN

A. (:21) Departure of Christ Creates Crisis of Urgency Regarding Discipleship – Will burst their bubble of Pride

"I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

Ryle: It is possible to seek Christ in vain.

Hendriksen: In their death they will experience no comfort and no peace of any kind, only dark despair. The One whom they have rejected will not be present to help them in their need. In their *sin* – all their sins viewed collectively, but separately in verse 24 (*sins*) – they will die. The wrath of God resting upon them, they will go to the place of everlasting perdition. They cannot go where Jesus is going; namely, to the Father.

B. (:22) Heaven is Beyond the Grasp of the Mind in Bondage to Sin

"Therefore the Jews were saying, 'Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, Where I am going, you cannot come?'"

C. (:23) The Kingdom of This World and the Kingdom of Heaven are Mutually Exclusive

"And He was saying to them, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.'"

D. (:24) Death Because of Sin is the Only Option Apart from Faith in Christ as the Son of God

"I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

II. (:25-26) LACK OF REVELATION IS NOT THE PROBLEM

- A. (:25a) Blinded Minds Simply Don't Get It –
They still ask the same old question
“And so they were saying to Him, ‘Who are You?’”

- B. (:25b) Repeated Revelation Not the Answer –
Despite the supreme quality of the Revealer
“Jesus said to them, ‘What have I been saying to you from the beginning?’”

- C. (:26) Continued Revelation is Still the Mission --
Ministry of Jesus Not Short Circuited by Spiritual Blindness
“I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these things I speak to the world.”

III. (:27-29) THE CRUCIFIXION WILL SHOW JESUS' CONNECTION TO GOD THE FATHER

- A. (:27) Foggy Haze – Missing The Connection Between the Son and the Heavenly Father
“They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.”

- B. (:28) Missing Link – The Crucifixion Will Help Make That Connection
 - 1. Certainty of the Crucifixion
“When you lift up the Son of Man”

But it will be too late at that time for them to benefit from this understanding. The idea here in this passage is that they are doomed because of their blindness. It will be a harsh reality that hits them at some point in the future.

 - 2. Significance of the Crucifixion
“then you will know:”
 - a. His Identity
“that I am He”

 - b. His Dependence Upon the Father
“and I do nothing on My own initiative,”

 - c. His Revelation From the Father
“but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”

- C. (:29) Blessed Union
 - 1. Powerful Union
“And He who sent Me is with Me”

2. Permanent Union
“*He has not left Me alone*”

3. Pleasing Union
“*for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him*”

(:30) CONCLUSION:

“*As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.*”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Some people would claim that it is harsh and unloving to preach about hell and the punishment for sins. What do we learn here from the example of Christ Himself?
- 2) How wide a gulf is there between the children of this world and the citizens of heaven? How should we expect to be treated as a consequence?
- 3) How do we respond when someone repeatedly just doesn't get it as we witness to them? Are we discouraged? Do we maintain our resolve to continue on in proclaiming the good news?
- 4) How was the action of Christ on the cross especially pleasing to His heavenly Father?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Morris: Jesus was “*lifted up*” on the cross, and He was also exalted in a deeper sense, for His greatest glory consists in His accepting the shame and the humiliation of the cross in order that thereby He might bring salvation to sinful men. Here Jesus is saying that the Jews will not understand who He really is before they have crucified Him. There is a revelatory aspect to the cross, and after the crucifixion those who reflect on it will be in a position to appreciate that Jesus is indeed more than man.

Westcott: The Lord meets the taunt of His opponents by developing that difference of nature in which lay at once the cause of their inability to follow Him, and the cause of their inability to understand Him. He and they belonged essentially to different regions; the spring of their life, the sphere of their thoughts, were separated from the spring and the sphere of His by an infinite chasm. The difference was equally great whether it was regarded in its final source or in its present manifestation. The circumstances of earthly

life give scope for the embodiment of two characters absolutely opposed. For earthly life lies between and in connexion with two orders, and it includes in itself two orders. It may be swayed by higher or lower influences; it may be fashioned on a fleeting or on an eternal type. And between these there can be no fellowship.

Stedman: In other words, "All of your thinking is limited by the narrow confines of this life. You do not understand what is going on in the invisible realms of life. You do not see what is bringing to pass all the historical occurrences of earth. You do not see the hand of God or the hand of the devil. You do not understand anything beyond the limited, narrow range of facts which you can see with your eyes and hear with your ears. But I am from beyond that. I am from above, from out of this world."

Deffinbaugh: In verse 12, Jesus invites men to follow Him as the "*Light of the world.*" Now, having been rejected by many as the true light, He issues a strong word of warning. He is going away. When He is gone, they will look for Him, but they will not find Him. Such people will "die in their sins," and they will not be able to go where He is going. What is clear to us now is completely misunderstood by those who reject Him. He is speaking of His departure by death, and of His return to the Father in heaven. He is speaking of the most glorious death possible, His sacrificial, substitutionary (dying not for Himself but for our sins) atonement, whereby the penalty for our sins was paid, and sin's power over us was broken.

Our Lord's adversaries presume they are going to heaven, and if Jesus is their enemy, then He must be going to hell. If Jesus is going to a place that they cannot go, then Jesus (in their minds) must be going to hell. And so they jump to the conclusion that He is speaking of His own death by suicide. I can almost hear them mumbling under their breath, "Good riddance!" Is He planning to take His own life? It almost seem as though He is going to spare them the trouble of killing Him.

Michael McCartney: "I Am" God's name found in Exodus 3:14 was an answer to Moses when Moses asked for credentials to prove to Israel that God had indeed authorized him to lead them out of bondage and into freedom.

The disclosure of the name given from the burning bush which was not consumed, represents that this entity was eternal and constant. This scenario revealed to Moses and Israel that this was the same God of their forefathers. "I Am" there designates a characteristic (The Main One) that "I Am" represents absolute timeless existence. He always was but with the twist He is here now, present tense and He will be with us also into the future.

TEXT: John 8:31-59

TITLE: EXPOSING FALSE FAITH

BIG IDEA:

PRETENDER DISCIPLES QUICKLY TURN HOSTILE WHEN CHALLENGED REGARDING THEIR BONDAGE TO SIN AND REGARDING THEIR DISHONORING OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Debate over what group of people is being addressed here. Some commentators want to make an artificial distinction and say that the “*They*” of vs. 33 is somehow a different group than the normal antecedent of vv.30-31. The problem is that people want to assume that any reference to “*belief*” always involves saving faith. That is just not the case in the Gospel of John.

(Deffinbaugh Title: Life Father, Like Son)

I. (:31-47) WHO’S YOUR DADDY? ISSUE = VICTORY OVER SIN EXPOSING THEIR TRUE FAMILY IDENTITY -- CHILDREN OF FAITH (SPIRITUAL ABRAHAM) OR CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL (MERE PHYSICAL SEED OF ABRAHAM)?

A. (:31-32) Test of True Discipleship

1. Administered to Faith Professors

“Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him”

2. Focused Around their Response/Connectivity to Christ’s Word

“If you abide in My word then you are truly disciples of Mine”

3. Graded on the Scale of a Lifestyle of Liberation

“and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

B. (:33-36) False Security Exposed

1. (:33) Radical Denial: Claim to be Spiritual

a. Based on family heritage

“We are Abraham’s offspring”

Doesn’t get any better than that for a pedigree

b. Based on false view of Freedom

“and have never yet been enslaved to anyone”

Always looking at the physical realm instead of the spiritual

c. Based on attitude of Denial

“how is it that You say, ‘You shall become free?’”

self righteous; unwilling to acknowledge their bondage to sin

2. (:34) Reality Check: Insight Into Spiritual Bondage
“everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin”
 3. (:35) Relationship Difference
 - a. Slave – *“the slave does not remain in the house forever”*
 - b. Son – *“the son does remain forever”*
 4. (:36) Real Freedom
“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”
- C. (:37-47) Actions are an Accurate Reflection of Family Nature
1. (:37-41a) Children of Abraham or Children of the Devil? (Part 1)
 - a. (:37a) Issue is Not Physical Heritage
“I know that you are Abraham’s offspring”
 - b. (:37b) Rejection of Truth Evident from Actions of Evil
“yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.”
 - c. (:38) Chip Off the Old Block
 - 1) Christ follows after His Father
“I speak the things which I have seen with My Father”
 - 2) They follow after Their Father
“you also do the things which you heard from your father”
 - d. (:39-41a) Claim to Spirituality Denied By Their Actions
 - 1) (:39a) Adamant Claim to Spirituality
“Abraham is our father”
 - 2) (:39b) Simple Test of Trust and Obey
“If you are Abraham’s children, do the deeds of Abraham”
 - 3) (:40-41a) Proof of Failure
“But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. You are doing the deeds of your father.”
 2. (:41b-47) Children of Abraham or Children of the Devil? (Part 2)
 - a. (:41b) Defending by Attacking
“We were not born of fornication;”

- b. (:41c) Claim to Spirituality and Inclusion in Family of God
“we have one Father, even God”
- c. (:42) Test of Love
“If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God; for I have not even come on My own initiative, but he sent Me.”
- d. (:43) Problem of Spiritual Blindness
“Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.”
- e. (:44-47) Problem of Allegiance to Lies Instead of Truth
 - 1) Inclusion in family of Satan
“You are of your father the devil,”
 - 2) Satan marked by wickedness rather than righteousness
“and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning”
 - 2) Satan marked by Lies Rather Than Truth
“does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”
 - 3) (:45-47) Inability to Receive Truth
“But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.”

**II. (:48-58) WHO'S THE GREATEST? ISSUE = ARE YOU HONORING CHRIST?
 EXPOSING THEIR BLASPHEMOUS DISHONORING OF CHRIST --
 GREATER THAN ABRAHAM OR DEMON-POSSESSED LIAR?**

A. (:48-50) Dishonoring Christ = Dishonoring God

1. (:48) Flippant Blasphemy

“The Jews answered and said to Him, ‘Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?’”

Deffinbaugh: If Jesus is becoming more and more direct in His accusations against His opponents, they are quick to retaliate with ugly accusations. Earlier, they accused Jesus of being an illegitimate child, but the words they speak here have to be their lowest blow ever. Of what greater offense can they accuse Him? They accuse Jesus not only of

being an illegitimate child, but also of being the son of a non-Jew, a Gentile, and thus (in their minds) a Samaritan, a demon-possessed Samaritan no less.

2. (:49) Fatal Flaw – Honoring God is not Optional

“I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.”

3. (:50) Final Accountability

“But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.”

B. (:51-55) Obeying Christ = Obeying God

1. (:51) Obedience to Christ Conquers Death

“if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death”

2. (:52-53) Lofty Claims Disrupt the Organizational Chart

“Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My words, he shall never taste of death.’ Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?”

3. (:54) God the Father Has the Final Say

“If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’”

4. (:55) Christ Knows and Obeys the Father

“and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I shall be a liar like you, but I do know Him, and keep His word.”

C. (:56-58) Christ Shares Eternal Existence with God the Father

1. (:56) Proof that Christ is Exalted Above Abraham

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.”

2. (:57) Perplexion on the Part of the Jews

“The Jews therefore said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’”

3. (:58) Punch line – Clear statement of Deity and Eternal Existence

“I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

(:59) CONCLUSION

“Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do we know whether or not we are “*abiding in Christ’s word*”? What does John say elsewhere about this concept of abiding?
- 2) What type of *freedom* are we experiencing in our Christian walk? What remnants of bondage still exist and need to be addressed so that all of the chains truly fall off?
- 3) What type of false security characterizes nominal Christians today? How would you describe the types of things they trust in for salvation?
- 4) What are we doing that is not bringing honor to Christ? How do we uphold His reputation at every opportunity?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Pink: Ye shall be made free (John 8:33). As already stated, this signifies that the natural man is in bondage. But this is a truth that the natural man cannot tolerate. The very announcement of it stirs up the enmity within him. Tell the sinner that there is no good thing in him, and he will not believe you; but tell him that he is completely the slave of sin and the captive of Satan, that he cannot think a godly thought of himself (2 Cor. 3:5), that he cannot receive God’s truth (1 Cor. 2:14), that he cannot believe (John 12:39), that he cannot please God (Rom. 8:8), that he cannot come to Christ (John 6:44), and he will indignantly deny your assertions. So it was here in the passage before us. When Christ said “the truth shall make you free”, the Jews replied “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man.” . . .

Apart from spiritual discernment, the religious professor presents before us a fair appearance. His evident sincerity, his punctiliousness, his unquestionable zeal, his warm devotion, his fidelity to the cause he has espoused, are frequently a mask which no human eye can penetrate. It is not until such professors are exposed to the searching light of God that their real characters are laid bare. It is only as the Word is faithfully applied to them that their awful depravity is revealed. It was not profligate outcasts, but orthodox Jews who are here seen taking up stones to cast at the Son of God, and they did this not on the public highway, but in the temple; Nor have things changed for the better. Were Christ here today in Servant-form, and were He to enter our churches and tell the great mass of religious professors that they were the bond slaves of sin, and that they were of their father the Devil and that his lusts they delighted in doing, they would conduct themselves exactly as their fellows did eighteen centuries ago. Terribly significant then is the final word of our chapter: the Savior “hid himself” from them,

and went out of the temple. It is so still. From the self-righteous and self-sufficient but blinded religious formalists, Christ still hides Himself; those who deny that they need to be made free from the slavery of sin He still leaves to themselves. But thank God it is written, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15).

Guy Caley: About 8 years ago I nearly swerved off the road in downtown St. Louis when I saw a Billboard with this message: A photo of a baby with the words "Who's my Daddy" and the telephone number 1-800-DNA-1005. I guess it's a sign of the times that the market for these services is great enough that the Billboards have now sprung up all over the country.

Who uses these service? Well, I think that's a topic for another sermon, but I can tell you who doesn't use them--those whose family resemblance is clear. Where the resemblance is strong, parentage is clear. Where the resemblance is missing, then parentage could possibly be called into question.

Paul Decker:

The "I AM" claim Jesus made was in regard to...

I. EXALTATION (48-50)

II. ETERNITY (51-53)

III. EXPECTATION (54-56)

IV. ESSENCE (57-58)

Morris: This section of discourse is addressed to those who believe, and yet do not believe. Clearly they were inclined to think that what Jesus said was true. But they were not prepared to yield Him the far-reaching allegiance that real trust in Him implies. This is a most dangerous spiritual state. To recognize that truth is in Jesus and to do nothing about it means that in effect one ranges oneself with the enemies of the Lord. It means also that there is some powerful spiritual force holding back the would-be believer from what is recognized as the right course of action. The man in that position is not free but a slave. Jesus makes it plain that his adversaries are slaves to sin and in the closest possible relationship to the Evil One. True freedom is to be found in the liberty which Christ gives. By setting themselves in constant opposition these Jews did but proclaim their servitude to the Enemy of men's souls.

Ryle: Our Lord teaches the great principle, that steady continuance is the only real and safe proof of discipleship. No perseverance, no grace! No continuance in the word, no real faith and conversion! This is one of the meeting-points between Calvinist and Arminian. He that has true grace will not fall away. He that falls away has not true grace, and must no flatter himself he is a disciple.

TEXT: John 9:1-41

TITLE: SIGN MIRACLE #6 -- THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

BIG IDEA:

OPENING THE EYES OF THE BLIND CAN ONLY BE A WORK OF GOD

I. (:1-12) THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD OPENS THE PHYSICAL EYES OF THE BLIND BEGGER

A. (:1-5) The Darker the Situation, the Greater the Opportunity for the Light to Make an Impact

1. (:1-2) Hopeless and Humiliating Condition

a. (:1) Hopeless

“And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth”

b. (:2) Humiliating

“And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’”

Cobb: How did Jesus view this person compared to His disciples? We tend to see people as interruptions, problems . . . We need to see people in ways we can meet their needs.

2. (:3-4) Opportunity for Works of God to be Manifest

a. (:3) Correction Regarding Cause of Blind Condition

1) Negatively: Not due to sin

“It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents”

Theological, moral issue: Is disease (especially major problems like this) always caused by some sort of direct relationship to personal sin?

2) Positively: Opportunity to glorify God

“but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

b. (:4) Exhortation Regarding Seizing Every Opportunity

“We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.”

3. (:5) Christ’s Role as the Light of the World

“While I am in the world, I am the light of the world”

B. (:6-7) Christ Combines His Divine Miracle Healing Power with Human Responsibility and Mundane Earthly Elements

1. Mundane Earthly Elements

“When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes”

Stedman: What does clay symbolize in Scripture? In Genesis we are told that God formed man from the dust of the ground, from the clay of the earth. That symbolism is used many times in Scripture. God is the Potter, we read in Jeremiah {Jer 18:4-6}. We are the clay. He molds us and shapes us into what he wants us to be. Believers, the Apostle Paul declares, "have this treasure in earthen vessels" {2 Cor 4:7} -- clay pots. And the pots are not very strong. Clay is not a very powerful substance. It is malleable and weak. Thus, all through Scripture, clay is used as a symbol of the weakness and fragility of human nature. We are all made of clay. We are clay pots. Some of us are even a little cracked! There is a science being developed here in California called "psycho-ceramics" to deal with cracked pots! This is what clay symbolizes.

2. Human Responsibility

“and said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). And so he went away and washed”

Would have been easier for the man to first be able to see before he was asked to Go to the pool of Siloam; but that is not how Jesus chose to do it.

Stedman: Clearly this is a description of what follows in this man's life. Our Lord has worked it out in this beautiful object lesson to indicate what it takes to open blinded spiritual eyes. Physical eyes can easily be opened by his power, but to open spiritual eyes takes a process of overcoming obstacles that lie in the way. Only as that process is completed, and men come to the place where at last they see who Jesus is, are spiritual eyes opened. This is the story of the remaining verses of this chapter. It is a story of the resistance that this man met, the obstacles to faith that he overcame, and the gradual insight that he gained as he learned more and more about Jesus until he found himself at last at Jesus' feet and his spiritual eyes were opened. It is all worked out in a most dramatic way.

3. Divine Miracle Healing Power

“and came back seeing”

C. (:8-12) Natural Reactions to the Miracle Fall Far Short of Worship and Glorifying God

1. (:8-9) Questioning the Reality of the Miracle – Do We Even Have the Same Man?

a. (:8) Posing the Question of Identity

“The neighbors therefore, and those who previously saw him as a beggar, were saying, ‘Is not this the one who used to sit and beg?’”

b. Some Say “Yes”

“Others were saying, ‘This is he.’”

c. Some Say “No”

“still others were saying, ‘No, but he is like him.’”

d. Definitive Answer Still Not Easily Accepted

“He kept saying, ‘I am the one.’”

2. (:10-11) Questioning the Logistics of the Miracle –
How was it done?

1. (:10) Posing the Question of Logistics (with skeptical attitude)

“How then were your eyes opened?”

2. (:11) Definitive Answer Still Not Easily Accepted

“The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to my, ‘Go to Siloam, and wash’; so I went away and washed, and I received sight.”

3. (:12) Desire to Confront Jesus

“And they said to him, ‘Where is He?’ He said, ‘I do not know.’”

II. (:13-34) THE INTERROGATION SEEKS TO FIND FAULT WITH JESUS RATHER THAN CREDITING HIM WITH THE WORKS OF GOD -- (THE SIGN MIRACLE WORKER IS REJECTED ALONG WITH HIS NEW DISCIPLE)

A. (:13-23) Interrogation #1 (Of the man and his parents) – Initial Fact Finding

1. (:13-14) The Pharisees Pursue Their Own Agenda of Discrediting Christ

a. (:13) They Have the Opportunity to Grill the Right Man

“They brought to the Pharisees him who was formerly blind.”

b. (:14) They Sense the Challenge to Their Legalistic House of Cards

“Now it was a Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.”

2. (:15-17) Grilling the Healed Man – Problem: Limited Knowledge

a. (:15) Reviewing the Logistics of the Miracle

“Again, therefore, the Pharisees also were asking him how he received his sight. And he said to them, ‘He applied clay to my eyes, and I washed, and I see.’”

b. (:16) Divided Reaction from the Pharisees

1) Negative – Centering on Legalistic Sabbath Violation

“This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”

- 2) Positive – Centering on Power of the Sign Miracle
“How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?”
 - 3) No Consensus
“And there was a division among them.”
- c. (:17) Drawing Out the Witness -- Based on Personal Experience
- 1) Asking his Opinion – fuller testimony; apply the facts as you know them and draw your own conclusion
“What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?”
 - 2) Receiving his Limited Endorsement
“He is a prophet.”
3. (:18-23) Grilling His Parents –
 Strategy: Cautious Answers and Deferring All Questions
- a. (:18-19) Verification Sought from Parents
 - 1) (:18) Initial Denial of the Miracle
“The Jews therefore did not believe it of him, that he had been blind, and had received sight, until they called the parents of the very one who had received his sight.”
 - 2) (:19) Investigating the Details
“Is this your son, who you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?”
 - b. (:20-23) Cautious Answers and Deferred Questions
 - 1) Cautious Answers
“We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees, we do not know; or who opened his eyes, we do not know.”
 - 2) Deferred Questions
“Ask him; he is of age, he shall speak for himself.”
 - 3) (:22-23) Fear of the Jews = Reason for their Strategy
“His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, ‘He is of age; ask him.’”

Deffinbaugh: The Pharisees initially refuse to believe that this man is truly healed of blindness. Then, forced to acknowledge his healing by the compelling evidence of this

fact, they concentrate their efforts on the method Jesus employed. Somehow this method doesn't fit into any of their preconceived categories, and so they are perplexed. It is almost as though they assume Jesus has committed a crime, but they can't figure out what the crime is, or how He accomplished it.

B. (:24-34) Interrogation #2 (just of the man himself) – Intensive Fault Finding
“So a second time they called the man who had been blind”

1. (:24) Right Issue / Wrong Presupposition

a. Right Issue – they correctly nailed what this incident is all about
“Give glory to God”

b. Wrong Presupposition – blinded by their prejudice and traditions
“we know that this man is a sinner”

2. (:25-27) Futility of Rehashing the Same Issues – their minds are made up

a. (:25) Sticking to the Simple Facts

“Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.”

cf. description of the operation of the Spirit in work of regeneration in John 3 – nobody can really describe in technical terms how that wind works with such power; beyond the control of man; but we see the results

b. (:26) Subverting Previously Clear Testimony

*“What did He do to you?
How did He open your eyes?”*

c. (:27) Sarcastic -- Tired of the Whole Process

“I told you already, and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?”

Deffinbaugh: I believe John chapter 9 is one of those places where we are expected to laugh at the blindness of the Pharisees, and at the “spunk” and wittiness of the man once blind. Here is a man for whom the Pharisees have no compassion and no regard; yet he shows them how they are inconsistent with their own theology. He amuses us as he pokes fun at the folly of the Pharisees. He alone (so far as the account informs us) comes to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. I believe we are intended to laugh at the Pharisees, because their folly should not be dignified by taking them too seriously. I believe as well that the most terrible experience for a prideful Pharisee would be to become the laughingstock of Jerusalem.

3. (:28-29) Attack Mode – trying to elevate Moses about Jesus

- a. Attacking the Healed Man
“You are his disciple”
- b. Appealing to Moses
“but we are disciples of Moses”
- c. Asserting their Authority
“We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.”

4. (:30-33) The Facts Don't Lie

- a. (:30) Disconnect between your Supposed Spiritual Authority and Your Ignorance of Physical Reality
“Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.”

Hard to refute the testimony of a changed life.

Deffinbaugh: The miracle man is now nearly up to full speed. Are these Pharisees saying they don't know where Jesus has come from? That is about like the CIA saying they don't know who the President of Russia is or that they can't find Cuba on a map. It is like the IRS saying they can't find the President's income tax return. The Pharisees are the folks who claim to “know everything,” and now they are saying they don't know where Jesus has come from. How can those whose job it is to know, who boast of knowing everything, not know this? It isn't as though Jesus is some unknown stranger to them. This One, whose origins they don't know, is the very One who gave the blind man his sight, something no Pharisee has ever done, and no Israelite has ever witnessed. How incredible that these Pharisees don't know about our Lord's origins!

- b. (:31) Criteria for Power in Prayer
“We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing, and does His will, He hears him.”
- c. (:32-33) Obvious Exercise of Divine Power
 - 1) (:32) Appeal to History
“Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.”
 - 2) (:33) Final Conclusion
“If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

5. (:34) Final Frustration and Excommunication

- a. Another False Presupposition
“You were born entirely in sins”

b. Expression of Pride / Unteachable Spirit
“and are you teaching us?”

c. Judgment of Excommunication
“And they put him out.”

Serious matter to be put out of the synagogue; obviously his parents had reacted the way that they did because of their fear of this same punishment.

III. (:35-41) THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD OPENS THE SPIRITUAL SIGHT OF THE REPENTANT BLIND

A. (:35-38) Initiating Faith in the Son of Man

1. (:35) Seeking out the Prepared Heart

“Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’”

Isolation of being excommunicated from family and friends more than compensated for by privilege of becoming intimate disciple of Christ.

Note how God takes the initiative to draw us to Himself in saving faith.

Public title used for Messiah: Daniel 7:13; John 6:27, 53, 62

Deffinbaugh: It is only at this low point in the once-blind man’s life that Jesus seeks to bring him to salvation. Our Lord does not give this man the gospel (telling him that He is the Messiah) immediately, because he is not yet ready for it. This man’s years of blindness and begging have given him much time to reflect on the relationship between sin and his physical infirmities. Jesus heals the man just after He claims to be the “Light of the world” (9:5-6). This man’s interrogation by stiff-necked Pharisees, his abandonment by his parents, and finally his expulsion from the synagogue are all instrumental in preparing this man for salvation. God knocks all the props out from under this man, so that he has to trust in Jesus as his Messiah. Lest this man cling to Pharisaism for salvation, like many are doing, Jesus orchestrates his excommunication from the tabernacle. Now he has nothing to cling to but Jesus, and Jesus is more than enough.

2. (:36-37) Satisfying the Sincere Questions of an Inquiring Mind

“And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.’”

3. (:38) Soliciting Saving Faith and Genuine Worship

“And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshiped Him.”

Cobb: Response to cults: If Jesus was not truly claiming to be God, how could both encourage and receive worship?

B. (:39) Identifying the Need for Humble Repentance

“For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind”

C. (:40-41) Indicting the Self Righteous, Unrepentant

“Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, ‘We are not blind too, are we?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

French: The miracle ends up being a parable: the blind man sees and the seeing Pharisees are blind.

Cobb: Blinded by pride and prejudice.

Deffinbaugh: What I am about to say has taken a long time for me to grasp. The time to preach this message was almost upon me when it came to me: this whole chapter is about judgment. That’s the way the chapter begins. The Pharisees (verse 34) and our Lord’s disciples (verse 2) conclude that this man’s blindness is divine judgment. Jesus wants us to understand that while this man’s blindness is not divine judgment, the gift of sight is judgment—judgment upon the very ones who judge (condemn) him. The Pharisees assume that blindness is God’s judgment upon sin, and the disciples believe virtually the same thing. Then, after this blind man begins to see too clearly, rebuking the Pharisees, these religious leaders excommunicate him—they condemn him. The one whom they condemn and put out, Jesus seeks out and saves. . .

And so it is that judgment and salvation are not two separate, unrelated matters; they are very much inter-related. The salvation of those who are unworthy, by the mercy and grace of God, is closely related to God’s judgment upon those who deem themselves worthy of God’s blessings and who look down upon the lowly. The giving of sight to the blind man is salvation for him and judgment for the Pharisees. The one who is considered cursed of God by the Pharisees is indeed blessed by God. Those who considered themselves blessed by God are the very ones who received His judgment.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Do we see people the way that Jesus sees them? Looking at their need; longing to apply mercy and the touch of healing? Do we have the proper perspective towards the divine purpose for suffering?

2) Do we make evangelism too complicated when really all that Jesus desires is that we give a simple explanation of how Jesus is impacting our life? As we get to know Jesus better are we more comfortable sharing Him with others?

3) Are we taking advantage of every opportunity to shine as a light in the world while we still have the time? Are we bold or intimidated by fear of how others will react?

4) What does Jesus mean in vs. 39 where He speaks of having come into this world "for judgment"? How does this mesh with John 3:16-21?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ryrie: Sickness and suffering were commonly held to be the consequences of one's sin. The religious problem became troublesome, however, when the victim was born with a handicap such as blindness. Jesus first corrected this false idea and then focused on the purpose of this particular suffering, which provided an occasion for revealing God's glory.

John Cobb: As Jesus presented Himself as the Light of the World, He met antagonism from the Pharisees who were trying to fulfill that role. They hated Christ and His exposure of their spiritual bankruptcy. They thought Jesus was a crazy liar and tried to kill Him.

Stedman: Why, then, was he born blind? "That the works of God might be made manifest in him," is Jesus' response. That gives a positive reason for this kind of affliction. It is an opportunity, not a disaster, but an opportunity for certain things to be manifested in such a person's life, and in the lives of people who come in contact with that person, that would otherwise never be brought out. You can surely think of examples of that. The handicapped -- oftentimes those who are handicapped from birth -- frequently develop inner qualities of peace and joy and strength that otherwise normal people do not have. The handicapped oftentimes show a tremendous strength of spirit that is able to take on challenges and endure difficulties that other people cannot. Fanny Crosby, that dear saint of the last century who wrote "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!" was blind from her earliest babyhood as a result of an accident. When she was only eight years old she wrote this little rhyme,

Oh, what a happy child I am,
Although I can not see.
I am resolved that in this world,
Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't.
To weep and sigh
Because I'm blind,
I cannot and I won't!

She lived to be over 90, and that beautiful, rejoicing spirit characterized her all her days.

Deffinbaugh: I understand Jesus to be speaking with reference to the nation Israel and of His coming to "His own" people as the promised "light" (see 1:1-18). The days of opportunity are indeed short for the nation Israel. Both Jesus and John the Baptist announced the coming of the King and His kingdom, and called upon Israel to repent, lest they face God's wrath. Jesus has come as the promised Messiah, and within a few months He will be rejected and crucified by His own people (with the help of the Gentiles). There is but a very small window of opportunity for Israel to repent and be saved. After this, the time for repentance (for that generation, at least) will come to a close. Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed, and the nation will be judged for its sin, and especially for its rejection of Messiah. There is indeed a very real sense of urgency merited by these circumstances, and our Lord speaks of this here. Jesus sees this situation not as His brothers would (an opportunity for a great public relations feat—see 7:1-5), and not merely as a time to minister to the sick and afflicted, as good as that may be. Jesus sees it as the time to do the works of the Father, works which He has been sent to do, works which He has little time left to perform.

Pink: We turn now to consider the doctrinal significance of what has just been before us. The blind beggar is to be viewed as a representative character, i.e., as standing for each of God's elect. Blind from birth, and therefore beyond the help of man; a beggar and therefore having nothing, he fitly portrays our condition by nature. Sought out by Christ and ministered to without a single cry or appeal from him, we have a beautiful illustration of the activities of sovereign grace reaching out to us in our unregenerate state. Our Lord's method of dealing with him, was also, in principle, the way in which He dealt with us, when Divine mercy came to our rescue.

"He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." This seems to have a double meaning. Dispensationally it symbolized Christ presenting Himself in the flesh before the eyes of Israel. Doctrinally it prefigured the Lord pressing upon the sinner his lost condition and need of a Savior. The placing of clay on his eyes emphasizes our blindness. "And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." This intimates our need of turning to the Word and applying it to ourselves, for it is the entrance of God's words which, alone, give light (Ps. 119:130).

The name of the Pool in which the blind beggar was commanded to wash is not without its significance, as is seen by the fact that the Holy Spirit was careful to interpret it to us. God incarnate is the Object presented to the needy sinner's view: the One who was "anointed" by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38). How is He presented to us? Not as pure spirit, nor in the form of an angel; but as "made flesh." Where is He to be thus found? In the written Word. As we turn to that Word we shall learn that the man Christ Jesus is none other than the "sent one" of the Father. It is through the Word alone (as taught by the Holy Spirit) that we can come to know the Christ of God.

"He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:7). The simple obedience of the blind beggar is very beautiful. He did not stop to reason and ask

questions, but promptly did what was told him. As the old Puritan, John Trapp (1647), quaintly puts it, "He obeyed Christ blindly. He looked not upon Siloam with Syrian eyes as Naaman did upon Jordan; but, passing by the unlikelihood of a cure by such means, he believeth and doeth as he was bidden, without hesitation."

Hendriksen: The disciples probably reasoned somewhat as follows: "Back of every physical affliction or defect lies a sin, generally the sin of the afflicted one. But how can this be true if the man is born with a defect? In that case he cannot have brought it upon himself through his own misconduct, can he? Is he being punished, then, for the sin of his parents? And if so, is this fair? But no, there is another possibility: the individual who was born with a defect may, after all, be the cause of his own misfortune; for he may have committed acts of sin while he was still in the womb!"

Tasker: The last three verses of chapter ix make it clear that this incident has been recorded primarily because it is an acted parable of faith and unbelief, and therefore of judgment, a theme that is never absent for long from this Gospel. When Jesus speaks, His words are truth and judgment. For though He does not deliberately take upon Himself the function of judge, yet, because He is the real Light which shows up the hidden motives and the darkest secrets of men, the inevitable consequence of His presence in the world is a separation between those who claim to have religious insight though they are in fact spiritually blind, and those who, conscious that they are blinded by sin, pray that they may be given the sight of which the sin inherent in their nature has robbed them. To awaken in men a sense of their spiritual blindness is a primary work of Jesus the Apostle of God, and the performing of it puts all who remain ignorant of their deepest need upon the defensive. Hence the indignant and touchy question of the Pharisees in verse 40, *Are we blind also?* But, as Jesus proceeded to point out to them, it is precisely when men say that they see, and because they say that they see, that their sin remaineth. They continue to be guilty men however unconscious of their guilt.

TEXT: John 10:1-21

TITLE: *THE GOOD SHEPHERD!*

BIG IDEA:

ONLY THE GOOD SHEPHERD LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP

INTRODUCTION:

Context is division between the Pharisees and religious leaders who only have their own interests in mind (protecting their positions of authority and wielding influence over the people) and Jesus who genuinely wants to direct the people towards God. The growing issue is that many people are now starting to follow Jesus and respond positively to His teaching and miracles causing the insecure Pharisees to feel threatened.

I. (:1-6) SIMPLE PARABLE: THE SHEEP CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND HURTFUL PREDATORS

A. (:1-2) Only the Legitimate Shepherd Can Approach the Sheep Openly

1. Hurtful Predators Are Recognized by Their Unauthorized Approach

“he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber.”

sheepfold here is the Jewish nation

Pharisees claim to be the authorities but are illegitimate;
blind leaders of the blind

Jesus came the appropriate way in accordance with OT prophecy

2. The Legitimate Shepherd Enters by the Door

“But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.”

Stedman:

In the East, shepherds brought their flocks into one central sheepfold every evening where half-a-dozen flocks gathered together and were guarded by a porter or gatekeeper behind locked doors. In the morning the shepherds returned and each called his own sheep. Although the flocks had been mingled together, each flock knew its own shepherd's voice, and each would follow its own shepherd and no other. This is the picture our Lord uses with regard to the encounter between the man who had been born blind and the false shepherds, the Pharisees.

B. (:3-5) Only the Legitimate Shepherd is Recognized and Followed

1. Positively: Recognized and Followed

- a. Recognized
 - 1) Granted Access by the Gatekeeper (John the Baptist)
“To him the doorkeeper opens”
 - 2) Personal Relationship with Each Sheep
“and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name”
- b. Followed because He Lovingly Leads
“and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them,”

Carr: When the shepherd calls forth his sheep, he goes before them and they instinctively follow him. He doesn't have to drive them, that is for goats. He just leads them out and they follow close behind.

- c. Followed because He is Recognized and Appreciated
“and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

2. Negatively: False Shepherds are not Recognized or Followed

- a. Not Followed (but Fled From)
“And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him,”
- b. Because Not Recognized
“because they do not know the voice of a stranger.”

C. (:6) Transition: No Understanding

“This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.”

II. (:7-18) SIMPLE EXPLANATION: ONLY THE LEGITIMATE SHEPHERD TRULY CARES FOR HIS SHEEP

A. (:7-10) Jesus as the Saving Door = Only Entrance to Eternal Life

- 1. (:7-8) Identification of Jesus as the Saving Door Contrasted with Hurtful Predators
 - a. (:7) Jesus as the Door
“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep”

Carr: If you will remember, there was only one opening going into or out of the sheepfold. It was in this opening that the shepherd lay. Therefore, the shepherd Him self became the door of the sheep. Nothing could enter the fold, nothing could exit the fold without going through the shepherd himself.

b. (:8a) Hurtful Predators
“All who came before Me are thieves and robbers,”

c. (:8b) Sheep Can Tell the Difference
“but the sheep did not hear them”

3. (:9-10) Purpose of Jesus as the Saving Door Contrasted with Hurtful Predators

a. (:9) Purpose of Jesus: Salvation / Protection / Nourishment
“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

b. (:10a) Purpose of Hurtful Predators: Exploitation / Destruction
“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy”

c. (:10b) Purpose of Jesus: Abundant Life
“I came that they might have life; and might have it abundantly”

B. (:11-18) Jesus as the Good Shepherd = Only Savior and Protector and Provider

1. (:11a) Identification of Jesus as the Good Shepherd
“I am the good shepherd”

2. (:11b) Distinguishing Function of the Good Shepherd
“the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep”

3. (:12-13) Contrast with Hired Gun

a. Driven by Loot rather than by Love
“He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd”

b. No Personal Stewardship of Ownership
“who is not the owner of the sheep,”

Huge difference between the Chief Shepherd who owns the flock and His under shepherds who are charged with the stewardship of caring for that flock.

c. Concerned for Personal Safety rather than for Protection of the Flock
“beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling, and is not concerned about the sheep.”

4. (:14-15a) Personal Intimacy with the Sheep

a. Identification of Jesus as the Good Shepherd
“I am the good shepherd”

b. Close Personal Relationship with the Flock

“and I know My own, and My own know Me,”

c. Parallel to Intimate Relationship Within the Godhead

“even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father”

5. (:15b) Distinguishing Function of the Good Shepherd

“and I lay down My life for the sheep”

6. (:16) Expanding the Flock to Include Gentiles on Equal Basis

“And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.”

7. (:17-18) Willingness to Voluntarily Lay Down His Life on Behalf of Sheep

“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

III. (:19-21) SPLIT REACTION:

A. (:19) Revelation of Truth Always Causes Division

“There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words.”

B. (:20) Emotional Rejection

“And many of them were saying, ‘He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?’”

C. (:21) Reasonable Reception

“Others were saying, ‘These are not the saying of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?’”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Examine the Scripture passages that speak of the compassion of God towards those who are bereft of shepherding. How are these folks described? How would you define a pastor’s heart?

2) How does our modern day emphasis on ministerial salaries and professionalism put us at risk for overlooking the sacrificial and loving work of a faithful shepherd?

3) Do you find it confusing that Jesus mixes together an allegory of imagery involving both a door and a shepherd? Why did He combine these two aspects?

4) In what special and unique sense was Christ granted the authority to both lay down His own life and take it up again?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Carr: Jesus proves that He is the Shepherd of the sheep because He came into the world in the right manner. He entered according to plan. He had presented His credentials to His people. Notice the proof that He came in the right way:

1. He had been virgin born - Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23
2. He had been born in Bethlehem - Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6
3. He had come in the fullness of time - Gal. 4:4
4. He had been brought out of Egypt - Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:14-15
5. His arrival had provoked the rage of the enemy - Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:16-18.

Deffinbaugh: As the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ is the ultimate standard for all shepherding, and for every shepherd. Let me first say that Jesus Christ is the Great Shepherd:

Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, equip you with every good thing to do his will, working in you what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen
(Hebrews 13:20-21).

I am always very nervous when men who are called pastors use John chapter 10 of themselves. Christ alone is the true, good, and great Shepherd. In Peter's words, He is the Chief Shepherd:

So as your fellow-elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings and as one who shares in the glory that will be revealed, I urge the elders among you: give a shepherd's care to God's flock among you, exercising oversight not merely as a duty but willingly under God's direction, not for shameful profit but eagerly. And do not lord it over those entrusted to you but be examples to the flock. Then when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away (1 Peter 5:1-4).

We are, at best, under shepherds. If we truly love our Lord, then we, like Peter, will devote ourselves to the passion of our Lord—shepherding His flock.

Pink: Character is revealed by our conduct in the crises of life. When is it that the hireling fleeth? It is when he seeth "the wolf coming." Ah! it is the wolf that discovers the hireling! You might never have known what he was had not the wolf come. Very suggestive is this figure. It has passed into our common speech, as when poverty and starvation is represented by "the wolf is at the door." It suggests a crisis of trial or fierce testing. St. Paul made use of this simile when addressing the Ephesian elders: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). This is all very searching. How do you act when you see "the wolf" coming! Are you terror stricken? Or, does approaching danger, temptation, or trial, cast you back the more upon the Lord?

Hendriksen: quotes OT passages about evil shepherds: "Woe unto the shepherds that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith Jehovah" (Jer. 23:1ff). "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the sheep?" (Ezek. 34:1, 2). Semitic people (e.g., the Assyrians) often refer to their rulers (kings, princes, religious leaders, etc.) as shepherds. "Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaves the flock!" (Zech. 11:17).

Hendriksen: In the present allegory the difficulty which has baffled so many interpreters consists in the fact that Jesus is referred to both as *the door* (10:7, 9) and as *the good shepherd* (10:11, 14). How can he be both? ... So great is Jesus that his significance can never be fully expressed. No symbol, taken by itself, can do justice to his fullness. He is, indeed, both door and shepherd. We encounter exactly the same phenomenon in the book of Revelation. John expects to see *a lion* (Rev. 5:5), but he sees . . . *a lamb* (Rev. 5:6). The lamb stands, as having been slaughtered! John expects to see *a bride* (Rev. 21:9); but he sees *a city* (Rev. 21: 10). – Yet when we begin to study these seeming irregularities, we see a good reason for every one of them. To be sure, a bride cannot at the same time be a city, but the church of God (to which both bride and city refer) can be (and is) both! Christ is both lion and lamb. So also here is John 10, though it is entirely true that a door cannot at the same time be a shepherd, it is also true that Jesus is both at the same time! . . .

The main theme throughout is Jesus as the good shepherd, contrasted with the evil shepherds. To be sure, Jesus is also the door. But this thought is secondary. It is a very beautiful and very necessary element in the entire picture, but it is subordinate to the main idea. It is introduced, first, to show who the false shepherds are. They are those who try to enter the fold illegitimately; i.e., not by the door (faith in Jesus and appointment by him) but by some other way (intimidation, for instance, 9:22). The true shepherd is not at all like that. He has the right of entrance ("to him the doorkeeper opens"). The idea of Jesus as the door also does duty in stressing the fact that he furnishes rest, safety (salvation even!), and food for his (spiritual) sheep. Being the good shepherd, he is naturally the door!

TEXT: John 10:22-42

TITLE: BELIEVE THE WORKS (WHICH HARMONIZE WITH THE WORDS)

BIG IDEA:

THE GOOD WORKS OF CHRIST SUBSTANTIATE HIS CLAIM TO DEITY

(:22-23) INTRODUCTION: OCCASION / SETTING

A. (:22) Feast of Dedication

“At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem.”

The Jews were celebrating a political victory and looking for another political savior to come along and bail them out. They were not in the proper mindset to receive the type of Messiah promised in the OT.

B. (:23) Jesus in the Temple

“It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.”

Stedman: That Feast, which we call by the much more familiar term "Hanukkah," is celebrated when we Christians celebrate Christmas, in late December, so there is a gap in time between Verse 21 and Verse 22 of approximately three months duration. . .

Winter in Israel is the rainy season. The "portico of Solomon" was a large roofed-in enclosure supported by beautiful columns that filled one side of the temple arena. There, sheltered from the rain, our Lord resumed his teaching ministry during the Feast of Hanukkah. Hanukkah celebrates the purification and rededication of the temple after its defilement under the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, in the year 165 BC. The feast looks back on that dramatic, exciting period in Israel's history when the Maccabee family revolted against Israel's Syrian overlords. After a terrible time of murder and slaughter, and defilement of the temple courts by the offering of pigs on the altars of Judah, Judas Maccabeus and his sons drove out the Syrians, reclaimed the temple for the Lord and dedicated it anew. That event is celebrated down to this day in the Feast of Hanukkah.

I. (:24-30) THE SAVING WORKS OF SOVEREIGN GRACE BEAR TESTIMONY TO THE DEITY OF CHRIST

A. (:24-26) No Type of Witness Can Sway the Minds and Hearts of the NonElect

1. (:24) The Witness of Christ Fell on Deaf Ears

“The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, ‘How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’”

2. (:25) The Works of Christ Backed Up His Testimony (But Without Effect)

“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these bear witness of Me.’”

Problem was not lack of revelation

3. (:26) Failure to Believe Can Only be Attributed to Exclusion from the Family of the Elect

“But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep.”

B. (:27-28) Five Aspects of the Saving Works of Sovereign Grace

The miracles (works) which Jesus did to point to Himself as the legitimate Messiah were all sign miracles of His greater works of Sovereign Grace.

1. Revelation and Illumination

“My sheep hear my voice”

Hear with recognition and understanding and commitment to obey.
What type of hunger do we have for the Word of God?

2. Intimate Loving Knowledge

“and I know them”

Are we truly abiding in Christ and seeking to draw closer to Him?

3. Effectual Leadership

“and they follow Me”

Where are we on the path of discipleship?

4. Regeneration

“and I give eternal life to them”

Why Present tense here ... keeps on giving ...

5. Eternal Preservation

“and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.”

C. (:29-30) The Deity of Christ Demonstrated in His Union with the Father

1. (:29) Family Solidarity

- a. Family Relationship

“My Father”

- b. Family Gift Giving

“who has given them to Me”

- c. Family Majesty

“is greater than all”

d. Family Sovereignty

“and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

2. (:30) Supreme Claim to Deity

“I and the Father are one.”

II. (:31-39) IRONY: UNDERSTANDING CHRIST’S CLAIM TO DEITY GENERATES HOSTILITY INSTEAD OF FAITH IN THE SELF RIGHTEOUS TRADITIONALISTS

A. (:31-33) Irony: Sinful Men Trying to Stone the God of Good Works

“The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?’ The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.’”

B. (:34-36) Irony: The Experts in the OT Have the Law Thrown in Their Face

“Jesus answered them, Has it not been written in your Law, I said, You are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, You are blaspheming, because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’”

Deffinbaugh: Can they not see what both our Lord and this psalm are saying? This psalm is not just a text Jesus has chosen to stump His adversaries. It is not a cute trick, which shames those who would pose trick questions to Messiah. He is the fulfillment of this psalm, as they are. They are the “gods” whom God is coming to judge. They are the “gods” who will die like men; He is the God who will die to save His sheep, only to rise again from the dead. This text says it all, but they cannot see it, for they are blind, while He is the light of the world. They cannot hear, for He is not their shepherd.

C. (:37-38) Irony: Good Works Alone Should be Sufficient Validation

“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”

D. (:39) Irony: The Angry Jewish Leaders Unable to Seize One Solitary Man

“Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.”

(:40-42) CONCLUSION:

A. (:40) Seclusion in the Company of John the Baptist

“And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and he was staying there.”

B. (:41) Testimony of John the Baptist

“And many came to Him and were saying, ‘While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.’”

C. (:42) Response of Faith

“And many believed in Him there.”

Importance of repentance as a theme of teaching of Jesus which would be consistent with message of John the Baptist and would have been rejected by the self righteous legalistic Jewish leaders.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do people react so strongly against the teaching of God's Sovereignty with respect to Election and Salvation when clearly Jesus addresses these issues head-on (rather than trying to dodge them)?
- 2) Where do we act as hypocrites without the testimony of our works to back up the testimony of our words? How were the sophisticated Jews of Jerusalem put to shame by the country folks who flocked to the ministry of John the Baptist and were so receptive to the Word?
- 3) Why do so many cults argue that Jesus never claimed to be Deity and to be equal with God the Father when even those who were His most zealous enemies clearly understood His claim?
- 4) How is our witnessing impacted by the knowledge that only those who are of the “sheep of Jesus” will actually hear, understand and embrace the gospel message?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: “Their idea of what the Messiah would do and Jesus' fulfillment of the predictions of the Messiah were wide apart. They pictured the Messiah as a conquering hero who, like the family of Judas Maccabeus, would drive out the Romans, free the temple and enable the Jewish nation to again gain control of the land. But Jesus gave no indication that he ever intended to do that. Therefore, for him to say to them, "I am the Messiah" would have been to arouse totally false hopes in their minds. But he did tell them by other means that he was the Messiah. . .

Stedman: Re vv.34-36:

Note the force of his argument. The 82nd Psalm begins,

*God has taken his place in the divine council;
In the midst of the gods he holds judgment: {Psa 82:1 RSV}*

This psalm deals with the judges of Israel, the human judges who settled disputes -- the Supreme Court, if you like -- of Israel. What the psalm is saying is that these men are acting as agents of God: God is in their midst; the judgment they pronounce is the judgment of God. The psalm clearly calls them "gods." Verse 6 of this Psalm, the verse Jesus quoted, says,

*I say, "You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
nevertheless, you shall die like men,
and fall like any prince." {Psa 82:6-7 RSV}*

His argument is, "If men, plain vanilla men just like other men, who serve as judges and do God's work in that way can be called gods without blasphemy -- even the Scriptures do it and they cannot be wrong -- how can you accuse me of blasphemy when I claim to be a Son of God and do the work of God?" Many people think that that is all Jesus meant to claim: That all he is saying is, "I am just like these other men in the Old Testament who were judges. They could be called gods and weren't stoned for blasphemy, why, then, are you stoning me when I say I am a Son of God? The psalm says, 'You are the sons of the Most High,' so why should I be accused of blasphemy for saying the same thing?" Some of the scholars claim this is what Jesus is claiming -- that he is merely a man doing the work of God. But that ignores the words of Jesus here that go far, far beyond that.

What he said was, "Do you say of him whom the Father sanctified. (consecrated), and sent into the world...?" That is a claim no mere man can make. He is saying, "I existed before I came to earth. Before I appeared as a man I existed. I came from God. I was sent of God. I was one with God." This, without doubt, is a claim for the sharing of deity. His argument then becomes, "If mere men who do God's work can be called "gods" without blasphemy, how then can you charge one who is one with God and comes from God a blasphemer?"

Deffinbaugh: You may remember the slogan the Allstate Insurance Company promoted (and to my knowledge still uses): "You're in good hands with Allstate." John tells us that our Lord's sheep could not be in better hands—the hand of the Son and the hand of the Father. No one could be more secure than one of His sheep.

Here John emphasizes the relationship between our Lord's sheep, the Good Shepherd, and God the Father. He makes it very clear that the salvation and (eternal) security of the sheep are not the result of our sheepish efforts, but rather the sovereign will and working of God. It is the Father who chose us for salvation and gave us to the Son. It is the Father who purposed to save us through the sacrifice of His Son. It is the sovereignty of God which assures our salvation. No one overrules His will. No one

overpowers Him. No one nullifies what He has achieved. No one takes away those He has purchased.

Why is the subject of the sovereignty of God such a sensitive matter to some, and even viewed as offensive, when it is the sovereignty of God which is the basis for our salvation and our security? These strong words concerning His sovereignty and our security are not my words, these are John's words, and ultimately God's words.

Matthew Henry:

The divine grace of his works convicted them of the most base ingratitude. The works he did among them were not only miracles, but mercies; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endear himself to them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these he had repeated, and multiplied: "Now for which of these do you stone me? You cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore you will pick a quarrel with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which." Note, (1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful.

Dr. Ronald Scates:

Before the first rock is launched at Him, Jesus makes a biblical defense of His claims and He quotes Psalm 82:6. Jerry read that Psalm, one that we don't read very much. It is a Psalm of Asaph. In that Psalm, Asaph points out that the Jewish judges and magistrates are corrupt because they are not providing justice for the poor and the weak and the oppressed and Asaph refers to these judges and magistrates as gods (small g). So Jesus points to this verse in scripture as a warrant for referring to human beings as being gods without necessarily being blasphemous. What is Jesus doing here? Is He backing away from His unique claims to deity? Not at all, not at all. What Asaph is saying when he refers to Jewish magistrates and judges as "gods" is that they are men and women who have been given the God-like task of serving as God's judges over the people of Israel. In Exodus 7:1 Moses himself is referred to as a "god" as God takes him and sets him apart and says "You are going to be my mouthpiece Moses to the people of Israel." In fact you and me, when we are chosen by God and set apart to be His ambassadors it is not totally out in left field to say that we are kind of God-like in the tasks that the Lord has put before us. The Lord sometimes chooses to speak through us and touches other people's lives through us.

Now it is one thing to look at human beings in that light and it is a whole other thing to claim to be God, the almighty God, the maker of heaven and earth, which is what Jesus does. But the question is: was He really? And if so, what kind of evidence do we have to back that up? Christmas hinges on whether Jesus really was God or not. There are all kinds of people in the Bible that produced miracles, but you can look from Genesis to Revelation and none of them ever claimed to be God. There are all kinds of people throughout Jewish history who have claimed to be the Messiah, but were unable to perform miracles. But along comes Jesus and He is able to do both. Jesus backs up His

claims with action and what Jesus does by citing Psalm 82:6 is to remind the Jews that they have violated a key theological principle, and it is one that you and I violate to our own peril. The principle is this: that you cannot separate who Jesus is from what Jesus does. You can't separate His words from His actions. In Psalm 82:6 Jesus interprets that verse using a very common rabbinical teaching device: arguing from the lesser to the greater. What He says by quoting Psalm 82:6 is this "Hey permission has been given to call unholy, unjust judges 'gods'. Then how much more the one person whom God has chosen as His own and sent into the world," meaning of course Himself. All kinds of people have claimed to be God but they can't back it up with miracles. Others have produced miracles but they have never claimed to be God. Jesus says "I am God and I can back it up with what I've done." Jump back to verse thirty-two. Notice that Jesus, when He asks them what the charges are, He says "Which of these miracles, which of the things I did are you going to stone me for?" What the Jews have done is they've compartmentalized. In their spiritual blindness they have compartmentalized who Jesus is from what He does; what He says from those miracles, and so they try to nail Him for His words totally overlooking His actions.

<http://www.centralpc.org/sermons/1998/s981220.htm>

Covenant Community, Whitehall, Montana :

There is a big idea in this teaching of Jesus. There have actually been many arguments over the last five hundred years about the meaning and implications of this particular teaching of Jesus. This passage is the primary text for a doctrine called the Perseverance of the Saints. The idea is that once God truly converts a sinner, he will be kept to the end of time. Some people say both experience and the biblical records reveal many people who confess faith in Christ for only a period of time. There certainly are those who turn away and betray the faith. So, how do we understand this promise of Christ that he will not lose any of his sheep? Given the possibility and example of others who have fallen away from the faith is this promise of Christ believable?

The first point to consider is precisely whom the sheep represent throughout this passage. Clearly, the sheep do not represent all who merely claim to believe in God. The Jewish people claimed to believe God, yet Jesus says they are not his sheep in verse 26. The sheep in this passage is not the visible church of God, but a smaller group of people. The flock is who has been baptized with the Holy Spirit and regenerated through saving faith. Those who sincerely put their confidence on Christ and follow him can be assured of their eternal security.

A better term for this doctrine may simply be "The Perseverance of God." True Christians certainly do follow Jesus Christ, yet it is really not their perseverance which gives them security. The whole idea of Jesus Christ as the good shepherd really implies that it is his constant care and action which gives his sheep security. It would be no security if our salvation should rest on our own shoulders. Last week we looked at what makes the Great Shepherd truly great. It is his servant hood to his people that makes him great. He does for his people what they cannot do for themselves. Gordon Spykman puts it well when he writes, "[A] life of obedience is motivated and directed by a faith which finds in God's grace its source of strength. It is therefore utterly misleading to distinguish justification as an act of God from sanctification as human activity, as though faith picks up where grace leaves off. Life cannot be parceled out that way -

"partly this" and "partly that." Scripture allows for no such 50/50 cooperation. Such synergism is contraband. Sanctification as well as justification is wholly by grace and wholly by faith simultaneously and unceasingly." That is the reason we have to believe this promise of Christ. He has promised to hold us in his hand which is the safest place to be. It is his perseverance.

Jesus gives a parable that explains to some degree the falling away of some who receive God's word. In Mark 4 Jesus speaks of a farmer who sows seed on different types of ground. Let's read verse 13-20. The evidence we ultimately have that people are Christ's sheep is that they bear fruit. Throughout the Bible faith and faithfulness always go together. Not everyone who claims to follow Christ is his sheep, because even Judas Iscariot was a member of the twelve, yet Christ called him a devil. Though we do not know by looking at anyone if they are truly converted, Christ knows his sheep and protects them like a good shepherd.

What we should remember as we consider our lives, is that the good works we do by faith we also do by grace. There is no reason for us to harbor any pride in our own lives. In a way the good works that we do in this lifetime are not really our good works at all, but Christ working in us. That may sound strange, but it is true. Even in the Old Testament when the people were told to sanctify themselves, God said he would sanctify them. Leviticus 20:7-8 reads, "Consecrate yourselves to the Lord and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord who makes you holy." This idea of God's working in his people continues throughout the New Testament. The writer of Hebrews says, "May the God of peace... equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ." Paul also writes in Colossians 1:28-29, "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy which so powerfully works in me." What is clear from the entire Bible is that God takes care of his own. God perseveres in all true Christians to fulfill his purposes. As a young child is led by his parents hand, so the sheep of God's pasture are led by the Good shepherd.

<http://www.truthinliving.org/Sermons/Jn%2010%2019-30.htm>

Tasker: If the deeds of Jesus were not essentially *good*, possessing a goodness that was so unmistakably good that it could only be an expression of *God's* goodness; or if there were a radical contradiction between what He was doing and the claims He was making; or if there were not evidence that He had been set apart and commissioned by God for the discharge of his holy mission, then He would indeed be a blasphemer and a pretender, unworthy to demand or to receive the homage of mankind. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not* (37). A man is known both by his words and his deeds. And Jesus is perceived, with a perception which becomes a permanent understanding, to be living in unbroken union with the Father by all who are not blind to the evidence that God's creative and redemptive power is present in all that He says and does – not in what He says apart from what He does, nor in what He does apart from what He says, but in His words which interpret His deeds and in His deeds which corroborate His words.

TEXT: John 11:1-44

TITLE: SIGN MIRACLE #7 – THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

BIG IDEA:

RESURRECTION (THE ULTIMATE SIGN MIRACLE) DEMONSTRATES BOTH THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE VALUE JESUS PLACES ON FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

Stedman: For me, the hardest problem I have to handle as a Christian is what to do when God does not do what I have been taught to expect him to do; when God gets out of line and does not act the way I think he ought. What do I do about that? ...

We cannot believe that God is not going to work according to the logic of the situation as we understand it. The incredible arrogance of the human mind, including my own, that thinks it knows more than the mighty, infinite mind of God never fails to amaze me. But everywhere Scripture drives us back to this: believe his word. Trust his word. It will not fail. It will not leave us in the lurch at last. We cannot understand the delays, but we must never question God's ways or lose faith in his word.

I. (:1-16) SIGN MIRACLES ARE MOST IMPRESSIVE WHEN YOU MAXIMIZE THE DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY

Why would Jesus choose to wait and raise the level of difficulty from that of healing the sick to that of raising the dead? – This is the question that must be answered.

A. (:1-3) A Simple Opportunity

1. (:1) Crisis of a Critical Nature

“Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.”

2. (:2) Connection of a Compassionate Relationship

“And it was the Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.”

Stedman: What John is trying to show us is that this home in Bethany, on the other side of the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, was a love-filled home. That is the dominant note of this whole scene: a home filled with love. Martha loved Jesus; Mary loved Jesus; Lazarus loved Jesus; Jesus loved them; they loved each other. This was a home filled with love, therefore it was one of the most welcome havens for our Lord during his troubled earthly lifetime.

3. (:3) Call for Concerned Deliverance

“The sisters therefore sent to Him, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.’”

Expectation is clearly expressed. Since you love Lazarus as well as Mary and Martha, you will spring into action immediately and solve this crisis.

B. (:4-6) A Surprising Complication

1. (:4) Key to the Crisis

a. Clear Promise

“This sickness is not unto death”

Stedman: The remarkable thing about that is, if you carefully check out the schedule of timing of this event, Lazarus was already dead when the message reached Jesus. It took two days for the messenger to get to the Jordan, so when Jesus returned to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days. It is difficult for us to believe that Jesus did not know that because of the insight that the Spirit of God had given him on numerous occasions. But he sees this as a signal from the Father that something tremendous is going to happen in connection with it, thus he sent back this remarkable word, "This illness is not unto death."

b. Immediate Purpose

“but for the glory of God”

c. Ultimate Purpose

“that the Son of God may be glorified by it”

Hendriksen: The answer which Jesus gave indicates that he was looking beyond death. When he said, *‘This illness is not unto death,’* he did not mean, ‘Lazarus is not going to die,’ but ‘Death will not be the final outcome of this illness.’ The culmination will be *‘the glory of God,’* i.e., the manifestation of the power, love, and wisdom of God, so that men may see and proclaim these virtues. One should compare this with 9:3.

2. (:5) Kindness Called For

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”

Must have been difficult for Mary and Martha to wait and not see Jesus come in time. Must have been difficult for Jesus to see them so disappointed.

3. (:6) Callousness Seemingly Demonstrated

“When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was.”

We want to manipulate the Lord like a rabbit’s foot to act in our timing and to accomplish our own agenda. We fail to see the bigger picture and find fault with the Lord for not taking what we view to be the simplistic approach.

C. (:7-16) A Scared Response from the Disciples

1. (:7-8) Risky Business

“Then after this He said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’ The disciples said to Him, ‘Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?’”

Stedman: Have you noticed the many times in the gospels when Jesus confounds his disciples? They do not understand his actions. These are those hard moments when God does things we do not understand. We cannot figure them out. They are beyond us. They baffle us and discourage us at times. Yet what they reveal is how little we understand. It is God who is the realist. He never deceives himself. He always acts in perfect accord with what the situation demands. He does not suffer from illusions and fantasies like we do. He does not pursue hopeless aims like we do. He acts in line with reality.

2. (:9-10) Providential Protection

a. Fixed time span for earthly ministry of Jesus

“Are there not twelve hours in the day?”

Implies urgency

b. Lighted pathways

“If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.”

c. Danger outside of God’s plan

“But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

Tasker: for while the time allotted to Him by His Father for the display upon earth of divine power is still present, no harm can come to Him. He can travel safely, as a man walking in the sunlight, unmolested by the powers of darkness.

3. (:11-14) Literal Mindedness

“Lazarus is dead”

4. (:15) Final Explanation and Assurance

“and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.”

5. (:16) Sarcastic Response

“Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with Him.’”

II. (:17-29) SIGN MIRACLES ARE MOST IMPRESSIVE WHEN EVEN DEVOUT BELIEVERS HAVE GIVEN UP HOPE

Why had Lazarus been placed in the tomb? -- This is the question that must be answered.

A. (:17) Hope Buried

“So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.”

B. (:18-19) Grief Beyond Consolation

“Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning their brother.”

C. (:20-21) Bitter Blame

“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Tex Hudson:

- “If” looks back
 - “If” emphasizes the selfishness of our lives
 - “If” seeks for explanation and excuses; shaking our fist at God; God does not owe us an explanation
- “Lord” – acknowledges control, etc.

D. (:22-27) Lesson in Faith

1. (:22) Faith not Extinguished

“Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

Pretty impressive statement.

2. (:23) Promise Reiterated

“Your brother shall rise again”

3. (:24-26) Confusion Regarding the Eternal vs. the Now

4. (:27) Confession of Faith

“Yes, Lord, I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world.”

E. (:28-29) Small Steps of Obedience

“The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”

III. (:30-37) NOTHING BREAKS THE HEART OF GOD MORE THAN THE UNBELIEF AND SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS OF HIS OWN PEOPLE

Why did Jesus weep? – This is the question that must be answered.

- true that He is compassionate and loving; but that is not the answer

A. (:30-32) Broken Record – Encounter with Mary parallels that of Martha

“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

B. (:33-35) Broken Heart of God
“Jesus wept.”

C. (:36-37) Broken Analysis -- Good Data, Wrong Conclusions

Assumption that Lazarus’ death was a mistake that Jesus wished had never happened

1. (:36) Crying Interpreted as Expression of Love and Sorrow
“Behold how He loved him!”

2. (:37) Criticism of His Failure to Act – No credit for the tears
“Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him who was blind, have kept this man also from dying?”

IV. (:38-44) RESURRECTION IS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE DEMONSTRATION OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Why did Jesus make such a spectacle about this miracle? – This is the question that must be answered.

A. (:38) Time for Action

“Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.”

B. (:39) Test of Obedience and Natural Objection

1. Test of Obedience
“Remove the stone”

2. Natural Objection
“Lord, by this time there will be a stench; for he has been dead four days.”

C. (:40) Testimony of Faithfulness

“Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

D. (:41-44) Thanksgiving in Advance of Awesome Miracle of Resurrection

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why would Jesus choose to wait and raise the level of difficulty from that of healing the sick to that of raising the dead?

2) Why had Lazarus been placed in the tomb?

3) Why did Jesus weep?

4) Why did Jesus make such a spectacle about this miracle?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Apple: Alternative Approach --

CHRIST IS THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF ONE WHO TRUSTED GOD COMPLETELY AND CONFIDENTLY

- I. (:4) FAMILIAR WITH GOD'S PLAN & PURPOSES = THE GLORY OF GOD
Not: "God, why did you let this happen?"
confident in God's sovereignty
- II. (:6) SENSITIVE TO THE FATHER'S TIMING = ALWAYS DID THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME
no need to dash off to try to correct God's "mistakes"
- III. (:7) SECURE IN THE FATHER'S PROTECTION -- "His hour had not yet come" until then He must be about His Father's business
- IV. (:11,23-26) BOLD IN DEMONSTRATING THE POWER OF GOD -- dramatic claims
Mary and Martha gave Him every oppty. to back down
- V. (:41-42) CONFIDENT IN PRAYER -- total assurance
- VI. (:43) CONFIDENT IN PUBLIC -- "called with a loud voice"

Conclusion: (:44) His confidence was justified

Stedman: Jesus' reaction here is highly significant: He was "*deeply moved in spirit and troubled.*" It is very difficult to capture in English what the Greek text is saying here. The word for "deeply moved in spirit" is a word that only occurs three or four times in the New Testament, and in each place it is associated with a sense of indignation, of anger. It is a word that the Greeks used to describe a horse snorting with anger. Jesus is indignant, he is moved with anger, and it showed in his face: he "troubled himself"; he evidenced it by what he did and the way he looked. John emphasizes that his reaction to the deep grief of Mary and her friends is one of sharp anger.

James May:

I think it would help us greatly to realize that our seemingly hard or impossible circumstances are nothing to God. His power transcends our trouble. His power is not limited by our faithlessness or our hopelessness. Jesus has resurrection power and he

cannot only bring victory when we haven't given up hope, but he is just as able to bring us the victory after we have long given up hope. . .

I believe that God wanted everyone who stood near to experience the "smell of death" that came from that tomb. Jesus wanted everyone there to know that it was not by the power of human flesh that resurrection and deliverance would come, but by the power of Almighty God. There would never be a doubt that God's resurrection power was

what brought Lazarus back from death and nothing else. God will share his glory with no one! . . .

Jesus was four days late yet he was right on time. God's will is sovereign. Don't give up hope. Even when it seems hopeless God is in control. He has the power to resurrect your life once again and bring deliverance and victory. He may not answer until all hope is gone and there seems to be no way out but he will answer.

Ock Soo: WHY DID JESUS GROAN IN HIS SPIRIT?

On His way to the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus Christ groaned in the spirit when He saw that Mary and the Jews who came with her were weeping. Why did Jesus groan in His spirit? The meaning of the weeping of Martha, Mary and the Jews was that they admitted the death of Lazarus. Furthermore, the reason of their weeping was the disbelief of Jesus Christ who could bring Lazarus round. After all the situation turned out that Martha, Mary and the Jews stood against the faith of Jesus Christ, as a result of their disbelief. Their disbelief blocked the work of Jesus Christ. The reason why Jesus Christ is troubled and groans in His spirit is not that He has no power to take care of our confronting problems, like death, sickness, or failure in business. The true reason is that we limit Him with the thought like this "Of course, He is able to take care of this and that kind of problems, but not the one I am facing." Martha and Mary knew that Jesus Christ was able to heal the sickness. That was why they sent a message to Jesus Christ. They did believe that Jesus Christ could heal their brother, if He came before he died. And yet Jesus Christ wanted them to have the great faith that was more than what they had. That is to say, Jesus Christ wanted them to believe that the power of Himself can not only heal the sickness, but also bring the dead back to life. Pitifully, Martha and Mary could not believe that Jesus Christ was able to restore stinking Lazarus who had been dead four days, even though they believed that Jesus Christ could heal their sick brother. That caused Jesus Christ to be sad and weep. Our Lord Jesus Christ never sighed in His spirit, nor was troubled because of those who fought against Him, or nailed Him on the cross. But Jesus Christ was very sad and sighed deeply, when He saw those who were discouraged after they used human methods to solve their problem as a result of the disbelief of the power of Jesus Christ. Closing our heart highly to Jesus Christ, placing no faith in God, and leaving problem as it is; all these aspects are same as covering the entrance of tomb of Lazarus with the stone. Until Jesus Christ came to the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus Christ had to fight against the disbelief of the people. That caused Him to shed tears.

Deffinbaugh: Years ago, a very fine young man in our church was attending seminary and also working with our youth. Torrey had an excellent opportunity for a summer internship at another church in the South. While he was on his way to this southern city, his air-cooled Volkswagen engine totally melted down. Word of Torrey's car problems reached us, and on Sunday morning someone shared his car problem with the church and asked for prayer. Someone else jokingly remarked that "Bob" (me) should be sent down to fix the car. I quickly responded, "I can heal the sick (cars), but I can't raise the dead."

We all got a laugh out of this, but one must admit that there is a significant difference between healing the sick and raising the dead. We are all familiar with the expression, "Where there's life, there's hope." Behind this expression is the assumption that so long as there is life, there is also hope for some kind of remedy. Once death comes, however, all hope for a cure is lost. The good news is that according to our text, this saying is wrong so far as the Christian is concerned. Due to the victory of our Lord over death, we can say, "Where there's death, there's hope." Our text addresses the Christian's hope in the face of death. Let us listen and learn, for there is great hope and comfort to be found in John chapter 11.

Deffinbaugh:

I want to be very careful how I say this, because it could easily be misunderstood. One of the greatest hindrances to spiritual renewal is that people refuse to die, or better yet, they refuse to admit they are dead. Too many Christians are trying to wring something good for God out of their fallen flesh, as though their bodies were weak, needing only a little divine help. We are dead with respect to any good works. It is His resurrection power which we all need to live the Christian life . . .

Biblical faith is resurrection faith, faith which trusts in a God who is able to raise the dead. How many Christians are trying to "keep something alive" that God has declared to be dead? We do not live by the principle, "Where there's life, there's hope." We live by the kind of faith which believes that God brings about life through death. Let us not strive to keep alive what should be laid to rest. Let us not strive to preserve life when God means to produce it. It all begins when we acknowledge, with God, that we are sinners who are dead in our trespasses and sins. We must cease striving to produce "dead works," which we hope will please God, and confess that our finest deeds produced by fleshly efforts are an offense to God. Death is not the end of our hope, but its starting point. It is by means of the death of our Lord that we die to the guilt, penalty, and power of our sins. When we trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, we acknowledge our own sin and inability to save ourselves. We believe that when He died on the cross, He died in our place, suffered the penalty for our sins, and that in His resurrection from the dead, we were also raised to newness of life. Have you experienced this salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord? I urge you, this very moment, to confess your sin and to trust in the Good Shepherd, who gave up His life and then took it up again, for your salvation.

TEXT: John 11:45-57

TITLE: WANTED -- DEAD OR ALIVE

BIG IDEA:

THE REDEMPTIVE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE IS PLANNED OUT IN PROPHETIC IRONY BY HIS CHIEF ENEMIES

(:45-46) INTRODUCTION: TWO REACTIONS – BELIEF VS. BETRAYAL

A. (:45) Belief

“Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him.”

Can't get a more impressive sign than the resurrection from the dead.

B. (:46) Betrayal

“But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done.”

Nobody likes a tattletale! Usually you think of someone reporting about bad things someone has done to get them into trouble; ironically in the case of Jesus it was always His good works that were reported to get Him into trouble with the religious authorities.

I. (:47-53) TWO OPTIONS – POLITICAL CRISIS

A. (:47-48) Do Nothing and Risk Political Suicide

“Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, ‘What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’”

Stedman: In the council of the Sanhedrin there were two parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were what we would call today "fundamentalists." They were the religionists, the party that took literally everything in the Law. They tried to carry out the commands of the Law, and boasted in their ability to live according to it. We get their point of view in these opening verses. It is they who say, as John records, "What are we to do?" Actually, what they literally said was, "What are we doing?" You can hear the panic in that: "What are we doing? Things are getting out of hand. This man is performing all these signs." Then, typically, they projected into the future: "If we let this go on everybody is going to believe in Jesus, everyone is going to accept him as the Messiah." They saw that as a tragedy. In their view, the Messiah would lead a political uprising and that would result in the wrath of Rome coming down upon them: "The Romans will come and destroy both our temple and our nation."

B. (:49-53) Silence the Sign Worker and Save the Status Quo

1. (:49) Arrogant Voice of Political Realism

“But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all.’”

2. (:50) Callous Voice of Expediency

“nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.”

3. (:51-52) Redemptive Voice of Prophetic Insight

“Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”

Stedman: Free will is a very inadequate vehicle to carry out the divine program. It does not see enough. Although Caiaphas himself was a scalawag -- an unprincipled, ruthless unbeliever -- because he was the high priest, his office made him a prophet, and God spoke through him anyway. This is a remarkable description that John gives us of how God can use men even against their will and without their knowing they are being used.

4. (:53) Evil Conspiracy

“So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.”

Deffinbaugh: These words of the High Priest and the decision of the Sanhedrin are amazing. They are almost beyond belief. Jesus has just raised a man from the dead, and so they decide the best way to counteract our Lord’s ministry is to kill Him, the One who is life. Teenagers today would say, in response to these words, “H e l l o ...” Others would suggest that these Jews might do well to “wake up and smell the coffee.” These people are so threatened, so much in a state of panic, that they are not thinking clearly at all. The best way to be rid of one who can raise the dead is to put Him to death? Hmmm ... Am I missing something? Are they missing something?

II. (:54-56) TWO VENUES – CONFLICTING TENSION – WAITING ON GOD’S TIMING

A. (:54) Private – Personal Protection / Private Ministry

“Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.”

B. (:55-56) Public – Obligatory Observance / Public Ministry

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves. Therefore they were

seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another, as they stood in the temple, 'What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?'"

(:57) CONCLUSION: JUDAISM'S MOST WANTED

"Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him."

cf. America's Most Wanted TV show; cf. FBI Most Wanted list

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How powerful is unbelief and self righteousness that the incredible miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead could be the impetus for such dastardly plotting?
- 2) Where do church leaders fall into the trap of making policy based on political expediency rather than scriptural convictions?
- 3) How can this passage be powerfully used to combat the type of expediency thinking that is so prevalent?
- 4) How does the prophetic insight of Caiaphas present the seed concepts of the church as the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in one undivided body?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: What they did not know, or what they forgot, was that Israel was not being preserved by their clever political manipulations. This nation had been preserved all through its history because of the sovereign hand of God's protection upon it. They were a people whom God had said he would guard if they would walk in any degree before him. What was keeping this nation a nation, and keeping the temple central in their faith, was the hand of God. When they put the Messiah to death God removed his protection, and the nations, which had been hovering like birds of prey waiting to pounce upon them, came in and fulfilled the predictions of Jesus himself that the city would be destroyed. Now we can see that these religious zealots, these fundamentalists in their view of Scripture, were wrong. They thought they were right, they did what they felt was only necessary to do to preserve themselves, but they were terribly, horribly wrong.

Deffinbaugh: Up till now, the Jewish leaders have kept their intention to kill Jesus secret. They fear the masses and know Jesus has great popularity. The people know that

the Jews oppose Jesus, and that they want to know His whereabouts so they can arrest Him. They also know that one can be put out of the synagogue for even talking about Him. But now in verse 57, the Jews declare Jesus to be an outlaw, a wanted man. Anyone who knows His whereabouts is to turn this information over to them. No doubt this word reaches the ears of Judas, and when he approaches these leaders in chapter 12, it is in response to this official order. This order also explains the secrecy of our Lord in making preparations for the Passover, for example. He will not give Judas an opportunity to betray Him until it is His "time."

Goettsche: The Sanhedrin was a "supreme court" of sorts. It was made up, by some reports, of 71 members who were divided among the Pharisees, the Sadducees and was led by the High Priest. If you think of one of our houses of Congress you wouldn't miss the picture by much. The Sanhedrin was given a limited scope of power by the Romans to take care of matters in Israel. The Sanhedrin then became a group very concerned about maintaining order so as not to lose the power of self-rule that they had.

Goettsche:

Before we shake our heads at the depth of these men's sin we must look at how easily we rationalize and excuse sin. The cycles are pretty predictable.

1. Transgression, exposure, repentance
2. Transgression, exposure, excuse
3. Transgression, exposure, justification
4. Transgression, exposure, "I didn't do anything wrong"
5. The one who transgressed blames the one who disagrees with them as being narrow-minded.

Hendriksen: That Caiaphas was a rude and sly manipulator, an opportunist, who did not know the meaning of fairness or justice and who was bent on having his own way "by hook or by crook," is clear from the passages in which he is mentioned (Matt. 26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 11:49; 18:13, 14, 24, 28; Acts 4:6). He did not shrink from shedding innocent blood. What he himself ardently craved, for selfish purposes, he made to look as if it were the one thing needful for the welfare of the people.

TEXT: John 12:1-11

TITLE: ANOINTED FOR BURIAL . . . CELEBRATING RESURRECTION

BIG IDEA:

COSTLY DEMONSTRATIONS OF GENUINE DEVOTION TO CHRIST CAN TAKE PRIORITY OVER ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHARITABLE GIVING

I. (:1-3) SWEET DEVOTION – ESSENCE OF TRUE WORSHIP

A. (:1) The Description of the Setting – Connection Between Death and Resurrection

1. Timing – Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross Imminent
“six days before the Passover”

2. Location
“came to Bethany”

3. Significance – Resurrection Power
“where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.”

Stedman: Here we meet again our old friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Here in Bethany they are preparing a special supper for Jesus, not in their own home, but, as we learn from the other gospels, in the home of Simon the leper. We don't know anything about this man, other than the fact that he had been a leper. Very likely he had been healed by Jesus, otherwise he could not have hosted this supper. There is an implication here that Simon had been touched by Jesus, delivered and freed from his disease. Filled with gratitude for what our Lord had done for him, Simon took this opportunity, despite the fact that there was a warrant out for the arrest of the guest of honor, to serve a private supper for Jesus and his intimate friends.

B. (:2) The Details of the Event – Celebration Meal of Fellowship with Close Friends

1. Fellowship Meal
“So they made Him a supper there,”

2. Dedicated Service (one form of worship, **Stedman**)
“and Martha was serving;”

3. Intimate Companionship (another form of worship)
“but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.”

C. (:3) The Demonstration of Devotion -- Costly Anointing

1. The Cost of Devotion – Nothing but the Best
“Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard”
nothing too extravagant when it comes to expressing love
opening herself up to rebuke and criticism; but motivated by love

2. The Humility of Devotion (another form of worship)

“and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair;”

Morris: This is probably to be taken as an act of utter humility. Mary is taking the lowliest possible place. A little later in this Gospel there is an incident wherein Jesus rebuked the disciples by washing their feet, a menial task which none of them would willingly undertake (13:2ff). To attend to the feet was the task of the most lowly slave.

3. The Sweet Fragrance of Devotion

“and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

Devotion to Christ has a pleasing impact on other believers.

Stedman: She spared no expense, she cared nothing for the customs of the day, entering into a supper where women were usually not welcome, letting down her hair in public, an unthinkable act in that culture, and openly expressing her love for Jesus. But that's how love acts. It is uncaring of expense.

Deffinbaugh: This is not the only account of a woman anointing Jesus in the New Testament. In fact, every one of the Gospels has an “anointing” account, but it does not seem as though all of the Gospel accounts refer to the same event. Luke’s account of the “sinful woman” who anoints Jesus at the home of Simon the Pharisee does not seem to be the same as the anointing of which we are reading in John chapter 12. The two accounts in Matthew and Mark, however, do seem to refer to the same incident John describes in our text.

II. (:4-8) SLIMY DECEIT – HEART OF A TRAITOR – COUNTERFEIT LOVE

A. (:4-6) Pretense of Spirituality by Judas

1. (:4) Consider the Source

“But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said”

2. (:5) Sounds Like a Plan

“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?”

Objection sounds super spiritual; but masks his lack of genuine love.

3. (:6) Ulterior Motives

“Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.”

Deffinbaugh: Judas Causes a Stink --

Judas presents his case in a way that appeals to the higher motivations of his peers, and which masks his own greed. The perfume is worth a year’s wages. It could be sold, and

the money given to the poor. It should be sold and the money given to the poor. A number of his fellow-disciples agree. They look upon Mary with anger and lash out at her. I can almost see her break down in tears as these men shame her for her selfless act of worship.

B. (:7-8) Priority of Devotion to Christ

1. (:7) Restraining Order

“Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My burial.”

2. (:8) Reordering of Priorities

“For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me.”

Mary must have known that opposition to Jesus was mounting and there may not be any more opportunities to so express her devotion. How are we maximizing our opportunities?

(Illustration: When my Dad was dying, I had opportunity to review eulogy with him before delivering it at his funeral.)

III. (:9-11) SNOWBALLING DISSENSION – DIFFERENT REACTIONS

A. (:9) Snowballing Curiosity (regarding both Jesus and Lazarus)

“The great multitude therefore of the Jews learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.”

B. (:10) Snowballing Plotting (to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus)

“But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus to death also;”

C. (:11) Snowballing Faith

“because on account of him many of the Jews were going away, and were believing in Jesus.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Compare OT accounts of extravagant gifts bestowed on kings; or read through the Song of Solomon and note the intensity of devotion expressed in that love relationship. Where have we been extravagant in the expression of our devotion to our Lord and King? Why did she use her hair (instead of a cloth) to wipe His feet?

2) How does this passage guard us from being too critical or judgmental of the forms and expressions of worship chosen by others? Remember that man looks on the external appearance, but God looks on the heart.

3) How do some religious hucksters wrongly use this passage to try to drum up donations for their particular “ministry” – which in reality pads their pockets more than meets the needs of the poor and disadvantaged? How is Judas the best prototype for Counterfeit Ministers?

4) What do we learn here about the equality of women in terms of personal worship and how Jesus responds to sincere expressions of devotion?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Many people who outwardly seem to be committed to Christ, in fact, really think of worship as a waste of time. They don't worship God. They don't do their work "as unto the Lord." They fall in step with the ways of the world. At the end of this account John includes in the third group the chief priests, these outwardly religious men who inwardly were hateful murderers, conferring together to find ways to trap Jesus. Both groups, the curious and the counterfeit, join in the crowd crying out at Pilate's judgment seat, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" {Luke 23:21, John 19:6}. This is John's revelation of what happens in the unworshipping heart. . .

Here are three simple people, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, unknown, obscure, but rich, filled with love, peace and joy to such a degree that they can only express it in the best way they can, according to their temperaments, in ways that say how much their lives have been blessed by Jesus of Nazareth. That's what worship is -- reminding yourself how much Jesus means to you.

Deffinbaugh: The Sweet Smell of Love and the Stench of Greed

I love this song, written by Gloria Gaither and Bill George, as sung by Steve Green:

One day a plain village woman
Driven by love for her Lord
Recklessly poured out a valuable essence
Disregarding the scorn
And once it was broken and spilled out
A fragrance filled all the room
Like a prisoner released from his shackles
Like a spirit set free from the tomb.

Broken and spilled out
Just for love of you, Jesus
My most precious treasure
Lavished on thee
Broken and spilled out
And poured at your feet

In sweet abandon
Let me be spilled out
And used up for thee.

Lord you were God's precious treasure
His loved and His own perfect Son
Sent here to show me the love of the Father
Just for love it was done
And though You were perfect and holy
You gave up Yourself willingly
You spared no expense for my pardon
You were used up and wasted for me.

Broken and spilled out
Just for love of me, Jesus
My most precious treasure
Lavished on me
Broken and spilled out
And poured at my feet
In sweet abandon
Let me be spilled out
And used up for me.

Matthew Henry: As a voluntary exposing of himself to the fury of his enemies; now that his hour was at hand he came within their reach, and freely offered himself to them, though he had shown them how easily he could evade all their snares. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus was voluntary in his sufferings; his life was not forced from him, but resigned: Lo, I come. As the strength of his persecutors could not overpower him, so their subtlety could not surprise him, but he died because he would. (2.) As there is a time when we are allowed to shift for our own preservation, so there is a time when we are called to hazard our lives in the cause of God, as St. Paul, when he went *bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem*. . .

Doubtless she intended this as a token of her love to Christ, who had given real tokens of his love to her and her family; and thus she studies what she shall render. Now by this her love to Christ appears to have been, (1.) A generous love; so far from sparing necessary charges in his service, she is as ingenious to create an occasion of expense in religion as most are to avoid it. If she had any thing more valuable than another, that must be brought out for the honor of Christ. Note, Those who love Christ truly love him so much better than this world as to be willing to lay out the best they have for him. (2.) A condescending love; she not only bestowed her ointment upon Christ, but with her own hands poured it upon him, which she might have ordered one of her servants to have done; nay, she did not, as usual, anoint his head with it, but his feet. True love, as it does not spare charges, so it does not spare pains, in honoring Christ. Considering what Christ has done and suffered for us, we are very ungrateful if we think any service too hard to do, or too mean to stoop to, whereby he may really be glorified. (3.) A

believing love; there was faith working by this love, faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed, who, being both priest and king, was anointed as Aaron and David were. Note, God's Anointed should be our Anointed. Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows? Let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections above all competitors. By consenting to Christ as our king, we must comply with God's designs, appointing him our head whom he has appointed, Hos. i. 11.

Pink: Judas had no love for Christ, hence it was impossible that he should appreciate what had been done for Him. Very solemn is this: he had been in the closest contact with the redeemed for three years, and yet the love of money still ruled his heart. Cold-heartedness toward Christ and stinginess toward His cause always go together. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). There are many professing Christians today infested with a Judas-like spirit. They are quite unable to understand true zeal and devotedness to the Lord. They look upon it all as fanaticism. Worst of all, such people seek to cloak their miserliness in giving to Christian objects by a pretended love for the poor: 'charity begins at home' expresses the same spirit. The truth is, and it had been abundantly demonstrated all through these centuries, that those who do the most for the poor are the very ones who are most liberal in supporting the cause of Christ. Let not Christians be moved from a patient continuance in well doing by harsh criticisms from those who understand not. We must not expect professors to do anything for Christ when they have no sense of indebtedness to Christ.

Tasker: Mary understands that the words "extravagance" and "waste" are irrelevant where Christian devotion is concerned because the death of Jesus was no waste; and she knows instinctively that "high heaven rejects the lore of nicely calculated less or more." Here character in the Gospels is wholly consistent. She understands better than her sister Martha that, when Jesus of Nazareth is visiting their home, every possible moment must be spent in His presence (see Lk. x. 38-42). And she understands now that, when Jesus is with them for the last time before His passion, nothing could be less wasteful than offering Him a sacramental token of loyalty, understanding and devotion, however costly that offering may be. Jesus commends her for her loving insight, as He reminds His disciples that they will always have the poor as the possible recipients of their charity, but they will not always have Himself."

Hendriksen: The chief priests were absolutely ruthless. In order to gain their objective, they were willing to kill not only Jesus but also Lazarus. The latter, too, was an offence to them, and this for two reasons: a. the reason definitely stated here: "*on account of him many of the Jews were going away believing in Jesus*" (literally: *were going away and were believing*, but this is clearly hendiadys): and b. Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and the chief priests, being Sadducees, did not believe in the resurrection! – So they plotted to kill him also, hoping in all probability that he might not rise again. It would seem that the decision with respect to Lazarus was never carried out."

Howard Harden: What is your most favored possession? What is in your box? If you could pin point what it is, would you give it to Jesus? Your most valued possession may not be the same as Mary's or as mine. But it is when we take what is most valuable to

us in all of life and place it at the feet of Jesus that we truly give him a “sacrifice of love.” And when we do that, we learn first hand what the Psalmist said in Psalm 37:4, that if we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts. THAT is what Jesus wants this Christmas and every day of the year!

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=53143&ContributorID=5341>

R. Davis:

Main Idea: Selfishness, pride and bitterness are all attitudes that will keep us from celebrating God’s presence in worship

Interrogative: What are the barriers that will keep us from celebrating God’s presence in worship. . .

The first barrier is...

II. We cannot worship with a selfish heart (v. 3)

1. Mary was so grateful for what Jesus had done for her family, that she gave her very best to Jesus (v. 3)
2. Judas who pretended to be concerned for the poor, was actually only concerned with what he could take (v. 6)
3. Worship is an act of selfless giving, not an act of selfish taking.

The Second barrier is...

III. We cannot worship with a proud heart (v. 3)

1. Mary’s act of wiping Jesus feet with her hair was a sign of submission to her master. (v. 3)
2. Do you think Judas was the kind of person that would humble himself enough to wash the masters feet?
3. Worship is an act of humility before God.

The third barrier is...

IV. We cannot worship with a bitter heart (vv. 4-5)

1. Mary’s heart was full of love and devotion toward Jesus as evidenced by her actions
2. Judas was not only bitter toward her for what she did, but also toward Jesus (he was addressing Jesus) (You could have stopped her!) (v. 5)
3. Our bitterness and criticalness toward others will affect our attitude toward God.

TEXT: John 12:12-19

TITLE: THE BANDWAGON OF POPULAR ACCEPTANCE

BIG IDEA:

WELCOMING CHRIST AS KING CAN BE A SHALLOW LIP SERVICE SPECTACLE WITH MINIMAL UNDERSTANDING AND ZERO COMMITMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Good Christmas message: look at all the hoopla surrounding Christmas. The world recognizes the connection to the coming of Christ into the world; but the world has minimal understanding of His significance and zero spiritual commitment to His Lordship. That does not stop them from putting on quite the spectacle! You don't see people going around openly badmouthing Christ. They love the babe born in the manger. But you also don't see people falling on their faces in repentance from sin and opening their hearts to His righteousness and His rulership.

I. (:12-13) NO COST INVOLVED IN BLESSING JESUS AS KING WITH MERE LIP SERVICE

A. (:12-13a) Passover Pilgrims Flock to the Main Attraction

“On the next day the great multitude who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him”

B. (:13b) Mass Participation in the Hallelujah Chorus

“and began to cry out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.’”

II. (:14-16) JESUS PERFECTLY FULFILLS MESSIANIC PROPHECY REGARDLESS OF OUR LEVEL OF COMPREHENSION

A. (:14-15) Perfect Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy

“And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ‘Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’”

B. (:16) Comprehension Catches Up Later

“These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.”

III. (:17-18) MANY IMPRESSIVE REASONS FOR THE MULTITUDES TO SHOW SOME LEVEL OF INTEREST IN JESUS

A. (:17) Different Crowd – Same Reaction

“And so the multitude who were with Him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness.”

Only highlighting the most recent and most spectacular sign miracle; but all of the sign miracles recorded by John in this gospel are in view.

B. (:18) Drawing Power of the Sign Miracles

“For this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.”

(:19) CONCLUSION: POPULAR ACCEPTANCE DOES NOTHING FOR JESUS EXCEPT FOR TURNING UP THE HEAT OF THE OPPOSITION

“The Pharisees therefore said to one another, ‘You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.’”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is “Triumphal Entry” a bad title for this event on the road to the cross?
- 2) What is the significance of the laying down of palm tree branches in front of the path of Christ?
- 3) What type of welcome as King has Christ found in your heart? How do you bless Him in word and deed?
- 4) How could so great a popular following evaporate in such a short span of time?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Tex Hudson: Chronology of Triumphal (!) Entry events: (compare parallel passages)

1. (Matt. 21:1-3, 6-7; Mark 11:1-6; Luke 19:29-34)
Jesus leaves Bethany; 2 disciples get colt
2. (Matt. 21:4-5; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:35; John 12:14-15)
Disciples place outer garments upon both animals; Fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9;
Donkey = symbol of Peace; Jesus came as King of Peace
3. (Matt. 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36)

People follow Jesus from Bethany towards Jerusalem; spread other garments;
This is Group A of three different groups

4. (John 12:1, 12, 13a, 18)
Other pilgrims in Jerusalem (Group B) heard
 - a) Lazarus raised from the dead
 - b) Jesus on His way to the city of JerusalemPilgrims come out the Eastern Gate, cut palms and proceed to follow Jesus.
Josephus reports up to three million people??? great multitude
5. (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9, 10; Luke 19:37,38; John 12:13b)
2 Crowds (A and B) meet; enthusiasm mounts; they descend the western slope of
the Mount of Olives and draw near to Jerusalem; crying out “Hosanna” = “Save Now”; but calling out emotionally for the wrong type of political salvation and from the wrong basis
6. (John 12:17)
Group from Bethany bear testimony to deeds of Jesus; (“Look at Lazarus over there!”) Enthusiasm grows
7. (Luke 19: 39,40; John 12:19)
Pharisees listen to crowds; become jealous; ask Jesus to rebuke disciples
8. (Luke 19:41-44)
Jesus seeing Jerusalem, knows that praise for Him is shallow and based upon the identification of Jesus as the expected earthly King. Jesus breaks into weeping for the Jews as He sees the hardness of their hearts.
9. (Matt. 21:10-11)
Jesus enters city; Other people (Group C that had remained in Jerusalem) ask who is this man? By this point all 3 groups are mingled together.
10. (Matt. 21:14; Mark 11:11a)
Jesus arrives at Temple; heals the blind and lame
11. (Matt. 21:15-16)
Children of the temple shout: “Hosanna to the King!”
12. (John 12:19)
Pharisees realize their total helpless state.
13. (Matt. 21:17; Mark 11:11b)
At evening, Jesus and the 12 return to Bethany; do not stay in Jerusalem.

14. (John 12:16)

Disciples did not understand initially because OT prophesied that Messiah would live forever. After Christ was glorified, the disciples realized that this Triumphal Entry was a fulfillment of prophecy.

Edward Morgan:

2 Different types of parades = gatherings of people to express something from their heart:

- 1) victories to celebrate
 - achievements – like astronauts
 - those in honor given special recognition; ride in car at head of parade
 - displays and floats – like Rose Bowl parade
- 2) sad occasions
 - like funeral processions
 - or demonstrations that express anger
 - or protests against injustice

These 2 different types have 2 features in common:

- 1) planning of some sort
- 2) spontaneous response of those engaged in it and those watching it

You can see both features in this account:

- 1) Planning – accomplished by Godhead
 - timing chosen carefully = at the end of His ministry
 - occasion = all Jews gathered together in Jerusalem
 - Planning possible because:
 - perfect knowledge of hearts of men and of every detail
 - perfect control over all people and events
- 2) Look at Spontaneity on the part of the different types of people who participated
 - opposers – like the Pharisees (12:19)
 - pilgrims (12:12-13) – religious feeling, but no spiritual relationship
 - seekers (12:17-18) – restless in heart; dissatisfied; looking for a true testimony
 - believers / disciples

Stedman: So not only is this not a welcome to the city of Jerusalem, it's not even a spontaneous demonstration. Most of us have felt that when Jesus appeared the crowd became excited and spontaneously began to break the branches off the palm trees to welcome him. But a careful reading of all four gospels indicates that this was a carefully planned demonstration, orchestrated by none other than Jesus himself! He was the one who was timing events according to his schedule. The other gospels indicate that he had made arrangements weeks in advance for a donkey to be available to him, He told the disciples they would find an ass with its colt tied beside it. "Loose them and bring them both to me" {cf, Matt 21:2}, he told them. "If anybody asks you what you are doing, tell them, "The Lord needs them," {cf, Matt 21:3}. This is exactly what

happened. It is clear that some weeks earlier, during a quick visit to Jerusalem, he had made these arrangements. During that visit he also arranged to rent a room in which he

and his disciples would celebrate the Passover together. And he had known weeks or months, perhaps even years earlier, the exact day when this would take place.

Mark Beard:

I. THE ROAD TO THE CROSS WAS A ROAD OF DESTINY (vv. 12-13).

A. Jesus had come to save the world and now was His time.

In v. 13, the word "*Hosanna*" is "an Aramaic expression meaning 'Save now!' used either literally as a petition for deliverance or as a technical term ascribing praise to God." (**Michaels**, 222)

The people were ready for deliverance—but from what? Jesus had come to save them from their sins, not from their political situation.

B. The people perceived Christ as the One who would “come” from God.

At this time He was the people’s choice for Messiah. He had given the blind their sight, made the lame to walk, and raised the dead. Surely He was sent from God.

The prophet Zechariah had prophesied, "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.*" (Zechariah 9:9)

II. THE ROAD TO THE CROSS WAS A ROAD OF DEVOTION (vv. 14-15).

A. His entrance into Jerusalem announced His commitment to the task ahead.

But do not forget that His journey did not begin there on that dusty road nor was He there by accident.

In his book *And the Angels were Silent*, Max Lucado writes, "Forget any suggestion that Jesus was trapped. Erase any theory that Jesus made a miscalculation. Ignore any speculation that the cross was a last-ditch attempt to salvage a dying mission. For if these words tell us anything, they tell us that Jesus died...on purpose. No surprise. No hesitation. No faltering.

No, the journey to Jerusalem didn't begin in Jericho. It didn't begin in Galilee. It didn't even begin in Bethlehem. The journey to the cross began long before. As the echo of the crunching of the fruit was still sounding in the garden, Jesus was leaving for Calvary." (**Lucado**, 15)

B. His humble arrival was evidence of His submission to God.

The people wanted a king so badly that they would have gladly taken Him, by force if necessary, and made Him king. They dreamed not of the Kingdom of God but of deliverance from Roman rule—not of doing God’s will but of winning a great military

victory. But for the man the people hoped would be king, the donkey He rode was His only throne.

Jesus said in Mark 10:45, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

III. THE ROAD TO THE CROSS WAS A ROAD OF DISCOVERY (v. 16).

A. The people would discover that their idea of the Messiah was all wrong.

“They greeted Him as a king, though ignorant of the nature of His kingship.” (Tasker, 147) That is the essence of their problem. They did not understand the nature of His kingship or kingdom.

B. The disciples would discover the plan of God.

The fact that they did not understand the significance of His actions until later is not to be held against them. It was all happening so fast and all the pieces of the puzzle had not come together. On the contrary, it is to their credit that they put all the pieces together after Christ was resurrected.

IV. THE ROAD TO THE CROSS WAS A ROAD OF DELIVERANCE (vv. 17-19).

A. The path Jesus took was the way of salvation for mankind.

“There is a Russian fable about a master and a servant who went on a journey to a city. Before the two men could reach the destination they were caught in a blinding blizzard. They lost their direction and were unable to reach the city before nightfall. The next morning concerned friends went searching for the two men. They finally found the master, frozen to death, face down in the snow. When they lifted him they found the servant -- cold but alive. He survived and told how the master had voluntarily placed himself on top of the servant so the servant could live.” (Lucado, 22-3)

The road to the cross is certainly no fable; but like the master in the story, Christ knew that He must die in order for others to live.

B. This was a road to deliverance that Satan could not block.

“His continued popularity with the people as a miracle-worker was creating a dangerous situation for the authorities, who are forced to admit that their counter-measures have not yet proved effective. It almost seemed as if Jesus had the world at His feet!” (Tasker, 147)

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=56451&ContributorID=1227>

Robert Massey: Now notice that Jesus was riding a donkey, just as the prophet had said. One of the customs of the ancient Mid-east, was that, whenever a city was conquered, the victorious king would ride into the city at the head of his troops. The type of animal he chose to ride was extremely important. If he was seated upon a horse, it was a sign that the city would be put to the sword for the king was riding his “warhorse” as a sign of judgment against the conquered people. However, if the king chose to ride a donkey, the city could breathe a sigh of relief, it meant that the king was coming in peace (you can’t fight a battle on a donkey). . .

Why did He weep? I believe because He realized their insincerity. One preacher said, “He realized the cheering crowd was filled with people who were caught up in the excitement, but they were not truly recognizing Him as the Messiah. Before the end of the week, the cheers of the fickle crowd would turn to boos. Why? These people were looking for a Liberator to make their lives easier. Instead Jesus invaded their religious comfort zones and upset them. In the next verse after this passage, He scattered the tables of the crooked money changers. Over the next few days He would say things that were neither popular nor politically correct. Some of the ones shouting “crown Him” would be the same ones shouting “crucify Him.” Instead of “Hail Him” they’d be shouting, “Nail Him.” Jesus saw their superficial belief and it broke His heart.”

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=57942&ContributorID=7363>

Carr: V. 24, 27, 32-33 To Die For Sin - These verses paint a clear picture of why this King came into the world. He came to die! His ministry here was not about the preaching, the miracles or the Disciples. His entire life was centered around the day He would climb Calvary and be nailed to a cross. His entire purpose in living was to die on the cross!

TEXT: John 12:20-36

TITLE: THE HOUR HAS COME FOR THE LIFTING UP OF THE SON OF MAN

BIG IDEA:

ONLY THE SACRIFICIAL DEATH OF THE SON OF MAN CAN PRODUCE LIFE FOR ALL MEN WHO BELIEVE

(:20-23) INTRODUCTION: THE HOUR HAS COME FOR THE GLORIFYING OF THE SON OF MAN

Death of Messiah = major problem for Jews; outside the realm of their expectation
Access to Messiah = major problem for Gentiles; how can they worship on an equal footing with the Jews?

A. (:20-21) Gentiles Desire Equal Access to Jesus

“Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’”

They approached the disciple with the Greek name that they thought could gain them the most favorable access.

B. (:22-23) The Hour Has Come for Universal Access

“Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came, and they told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.’”

But before Jesus would rush out and entertain the entreaty of these Greeks, He had to first go to the cross and die for sins.

I. (:24-26) SACRIFICIAL DEATH IS THE NECESSARY PATHWAY TO LIFE

A. (:24) Harvest Law Parable – Seed Must Die in Order to Bear Fruit

(Dying = Pathway to Multiplication)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

B. (:25) Application to Salvation – Gaining Eternal Life

(Losing = Pathway to Gaining)

“He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.”

Stedman: Any part of your life which is like the life the world lives you must learn to hate. What is the life the world lives? Well, it is basically self-centered, is it not? Listen to the philosophies echoed in the words of those around you, or even your own

thinking. How often do you hear the echo of this philosophy, "Me for me! Number One first. What's in it for me. Take care of yourself, because nobody else will." That is the life the world lives. Now, says Jesus, you must learn to hate that life. Learn to recognize that any part of your life lived on those terms is a life that will wreck you, leave you lonely, abandoned, derelict, unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

C. (:26) Application to Discipleship – Gaining the Approval of the Father
(Serving = Pathway to Glory)

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

Ryle: One object of our Lord in saying these words was evidently to prevent His disciples looking for good things in this life, if they followed Him. They must give up their Jewish ideas about temporal rewards and honors in Messiah's service. They must understand that His kingdom was entirely spiritual, and that if they were His disciples they must be content to lose much in this life, in order to gain the glory of the life to come. So far from promising them temporal rewards, He would have them distinctly know that they must give up much and sacrifice much if they wanted to be saved.

The other object our Lord had in view in saying these words was to teach all Christians in every age, that like Him they must make up their minds to sacrifice much, and to die to the world, in the hope of a harvest of glory in a world to come. Through death we must seek life. Eternal life must be the great end, a Christian looks to. To attain it he must be willing to give up everything.

II. (:27-33) SACRIFICIAL DEATH IS THE CROWNING PURPOSE OF THE SON OF MAN

Examine the various implications of Christ's great work of Atonement; of Redemption:

A. (:27) Tension Implications -- Purpose Driven Death (cf. Rick Warren's excellent book: *Purpose Driven Life*)

"Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour.'"

B. (:28-30) Glorifying Implications

1. Goal: Redemption Glorifies the Father

"Father, glorify Thy name."

2. Corollary: Redemption Completes the Vindication of the Son

"There came therefore a voice out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it, were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, 'An angel has spoken to Him.' Jesus answered and said, 'This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.'"

- C. (:31) Judgment Implications
1. Upon the World System
“Now judgment is upon this world;”
 2. Upon Satan himself
“now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.”
- D. (:32) Scope Implications -- Limited but Universal Atonement
“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”
- E. (:33) Explanation of Figure of Speech (“Lifting Up”)
“But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.”

III. (:34-36A) SACRIFICIAL DEATH MUST BE RESPONDED TO IN FAITH WHILE THERE IS STILL OPPORTUNITY

- A. (:34) Confusion Regarding the Identification of the Son of Man
“The multitude therefore answered Him, ‘We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?’”
- B. (:35-36a) Urgency of Responding in Faith
“Jesus therefore said to them, ‘For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.’”

Hendriksen: The closing admonition is very touching and beautiful: While you have the light (Christ in your midst, as the source of truth and salvation), believe – exercise saving faith, by God’s sovereign grace; -- in the light, in order that you may become sons of light, i.e., lights (a Semitism; cf. Matt. 5:14), having the light of Christ not only round about you, but within your hearts and minds (cf. Eph. 5:8; I Thess. 5:5).

(:36b) CONCLUSION: TENSION BETWEEN REVEALING AND HIDING

“These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.”

Deffinbaugh: Having said this, Jesus hid Himself from them. This is a most unexpected statement. Jesus had entered Jerusalem in the most “public” way possible—His “triumphal entry.” Each day Jesus came to the temple, where He performed miracles and taught. (And, from the other Gospels, we know that Jesus also debated with the scribes and Pharisees and religious leaders.) Now, after Jesus has spoken of His imminent death as His “glory,” and the Father in heaven has “seconded” His words, the crowd is not so sure they want a suffering Savior. Jesus reminds them that He is the “light,” and that they had better heed His teaching as the truth. To reject it would be to

walk in darkness. There is nothing more to say. They have a choice to make, and Jesus goes into seclusion, so that they can decide. As I read these words, there is a strong sense of finality, of closure, here. Except for the last words of our Lord, recorded in the closing verses of John chapter 12, Jesus has said all there is to say. Israel must now decide whether to believe the teaching of the Pharisees, or the teaching of Jesus. They must put their faith in a suffering Savior or in a would-be military messiah.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we know any groups of people (like the Greeks back in the day of Christ) that experience prejudice today and are treated as spiritual outsiders – required to jump through special hoops to gain the same sort of access and privileges? How must these Greeks have felt? What drove them to face these obstacles and pursue contact with Jesus?
- 2) What has changed from earlier chapters in John, where clearly the “*hour*” had not yet come? Are we available to God to perform His will in whatever “hour” He has appointed for our particular service? Do we minister according to His timetable or according to our own schedule and convenience?
- 3) What type of inner agony did Christ endure during this troubled time? Cf. the accounts of the Garden of Gethsemane. Cf. Heb. 12:2-4. How do we reconcile His commitment to do the will of His Father with His desire to have the cup pass from Him if at all possible? How essential was the death of Christ in terms of having all of our sins laid upon Him?
- 4) Why is death described as a “*lifting up*”? What OT images are brought to minds here?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Carr: Jesus used a picture familiar to all who heard Him speaking. Everyone knew that before a crop could be harvested, seed had to be planted first. As those grains of seed were placed into the ground and died, they provided the means whereby a plant would be produced. This new plant possessed the potential to bear thousands of new grains. Because Jesus died and is risen from the dead, He has the power to duplicate His life in every single person who places their faith in Him.

Stedman: Because Jesus knew the Scriptures, he could interpret the meaning of this event. He knew what the coming of these men signified because he knew the Scriptures. He knew that it was predicted by the prophets that when the Messiah came, he would be a light unto the Gentiles, although he was to come to the lost sheep of the

house of Israel. Up to this point, Jesus had restricted his ministry to the confines of Israel's boundaries. Again and again he had announced the fact that he had come but to the Jews. "Salvation," he said, "is of the Jews," {John 4:22 KJV}. But now he recognizes that the hour was striking for the good news to move beyond the confines of Palestine. In the coming of these Gentiles, Jesus sees that the time has come for the promise to leap beyond the boundaries of Israel unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Since that could not happen apart from his crucifixion and resurrection, he knows his hour has come.

Stedman:

That gives us our clue to what loneliness is. It is unfulfilled life, an unshared life. It is not being developed. It is an incomplete life that stops short of what it is intended to do. That is loneliness. **Dr. F. B. Meyer** once said,

Many people complain of lonely and solitary lives. They account for their condition by supposing it to be due to the failure of other people. It is however attributable to the fact that they have never fallen into the ground to die, but have always consulted their own ease and well-being. They have never learned that the cure of loneliness comes from sowing oneself in a grave of daily sacrifice.

There he puts his finger upon the cause of this distressing thing that bothers so many today. It is as the Lord suggests here, an attempt to hold on to life, to cling to it, grasp it to oneself, and satisfy oneself, and this results in an undeveloped life.

Deffinbaugh: In saying what He has, Jesus speaks primarily of Himself and of His imminent death. Jesus means that He will soon die, and that by means of His death, He will produce much life. He cannot be the Savior of the world without first dying. At the "triumphal entry," those who heralded Jesus as the "King of Israel" expected Him to "save now" (this is what "Hosanna" means). What the masses failed to grasp was that He could only save men by giving up His life, by experiencing the death penalty for sin in the sinner's place. It was not our Lord's immediate coronation that would save many, but His death. It was not His acceptance by Israel, but His rejection, that would produce "much fruit."

One might wonder what this has to do with the Greeks. We might agree that Jesus must die before He can reign over Israel as its King, but what does this have to do with the occasion? Why does Jesus speak of the necessity of His death in response to the Greeks request to meet with Him? I believe there are two primary reasons. First, whether Jews or Greeks, the death of Jesus Christ in the sinner's place is the only way of salvation. Were the Greeks seeking Jesus as the Savior? His answer is that to be their Savior, He must die. Second, in order for the Greeks to be saved as Greeks, Israel must first of all reject Jesus as the Messiah, so that the gospel can be widely proclaimed to the Gentiles. This is in keeping with the principle, "To the Jew first, and also to the Greeks" (see Matthew 10:5-6; Romans 1:16; 2:9-10).

Pink: The grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies: it has life in it, and carries it with it through death itself. The death which it undergoes is in the interest even of the life, which it sets free from its encasement—from the limitations which hedge it in—to lay hold of and assimilate the surrounding material, by which it expands into the plant which is its resurrection, and thus at last into the many grains which are its resurrection-fruit. How plain it is that this is no accidental likeness which the Lord here seizes for illustration of His point. It is as real a prediction as ever came from the lips of an Old Testament prophet: every seed sown in the ground to produce a harvest is a positive prediction that the Giver of life must die.

Pink: But what is meant by "*I will draw*"? Ah, notice the sentence does not end there! "*I will draw all unto me.*" The word "men" is not in the original. The "all" plainly refers to all of God's elect. The scope of the word "all" here is precisely the same as in John 6:45—"And they shall be all taught of God." It is the same "all" as that which the Father has given to Christ (John 6:37). "The promise, 'I will draw all unto me must, I think, mean that our Lord after His crucifixion would draw men of all nations and kindreds and tongues to Himself, to believe in Him and be His disciples. Once crucified, He would become a great center of attraction, and draw to Himself; releasing from the Devil's usurped power, vast multitudes of all peoples and countries, to be His servants and followers. Up to this time all the world had blindly hastened after Satan and followed him. After Christ's crucifixion great numbers would turn away from the power of Satan and become Christians" (Bishop Ryle). Christ's design was to show that His grace would not be confined to Israel.

The Greek word here used for "draw" is a very striking one. Its first occurrence is in John 6:44, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*" Here it is the power of God overcoming the enmity of the carnal mind. It occurs again in John 18:10, "*Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant.*" Here the term signifies that Peter laid firm hold of his sword and pulled it out of its sheath. It is found again in John 21:6, 11, "*Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes.*" Here it signifies the putting forth of strength so as to drag an inanimate and heavy object. It is used (in a slightly different form) in James 2:6, "*Do not rich men oppress you and draw you before the judgment seats?*" Here it has reference to the impelling of unwilling subjects. From its usage in the New Testament we are therefore obliged to understand Christ here intimated that, following His crucifixion, He would put forth an invincible power so as to effectually draw unto Himself all of God's elect, which His omniscient foresight then saw scattered among the Gentiles. A very striking example of the Divine drawing-power is found in Judges 4:7, "*And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hands.*" In like manner Christ draws us unto Himself.

Ryle: "*The hour is come . . . Son of man . . . glorified.*" The true key-note to this verse, and the two which follow, is probably this. Our Lord saw the state of mind in which His followers were. He saw them excited by His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and the desire of strangers like the Greeks to see their Master. He saw they were secretly

expecting a glorious kingdom to be immediately set up, in which they would have chief places, power, and authority. He proceeds to rectify their conceptions, and to remind them of what He had repeatedly told them, His own death.

The hour has certainly arrived for my being glorified. I am about to leave the world, ascend up to my Father, finish the work I came to do, and be highly exalted. My earthly ministry of humiliation is ending, and my time of glory is drawing nigh. But all this is to be brought about in a way very different from that which you are thinking about. I am going to a cross first, and not a throne. I am going first to be condemned, crucified, and slain. . .

Let us carefully mark here the immense importance which our Lord attaches to his death. Nothing can explain this but the old foundation doctrine of the Bible, that Christ's sacrificial death on the cross is the only satisfaction and atonement of the sin of the world. A passage like this can never be thoroughly explained by those who regard Christ's death as nothing more than a martyrdom or an example of self-denial. It was something far greater and more important than this. It was the dying of a corn of wheat, in order that out of its death should spring up an enormous spiritual harvest. Christ's vicarious death is the world's life.

TEXT: John 12:37-50

TITLE: CULMINATION OF PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST SUMMED UP IN REJECTION

BIG IDEA:

THE REVELATION OF THE FATHER VIA THE LIGHT OF HIS SON CANNOT BE RECEIVED BY EYES THAT ARE BLINDED AND HEARTS THAT ARE HARDENED

INTRODUCTION:

The rejection by the Jewish nation of their promised Messiah is coming to a head. Despite pockets of belief, the vast majority of the Jews seem unable to embrace Him with saving faith. The religious leaders especially are intensifying their opposition. This section attempts to explain this shocking level of unbelief.

I. (:37-43) REJECTION IS NO SURPRISE BUT STILL SHOCKING

A. (:37) Lack of Faith is Shocking Due to the Quality of Revelation
(Lack of Faith Not Due to Lack of Revelation)

“But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him.”

B. (:38-41) Lack of Faith Is No Surprise Given the Testimony of Isaiah --
Attributed to Blinded Eyes and Hardened Hearts –

1. (:38) Prophecy of Faith Vacuum

“that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, ‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’”

2. (:39-40) Prophecy of Judgmental Blinding and Hardening

“For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ‘He has blinded their eyes, and He hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them.’”

3. (:41) Foresight of Isaiah

“These things Isaiah said, because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.”

C. (:42-43) Even Seed Faith Stunted by Fear of Men

1. (:42) Paralyzed by Fear

“Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.”

2. (:43) Performing for Men
“for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”

II. (:44-50) REJECTION MEANS CONDEMNATION BECAUSE THE WORDS OF JESUS REFLECT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD THE FATHER

- A. (:44-45) Faith in Christ Mirrors Faith in God the Father
 1. (:44) Commonality of Faith
“And Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me.’”
 2. (:45) Commonality of Vision
“And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me.”
- B. (:46) Light Can Deliver From Darkness
“I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness.”
- C. (:47-48) Rejection Means Condemnation
“And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”
- D. (:49-50) The Revelation from Christ Mirrors the Revelation from God the Father
“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Were these blinded and hardened Jews in that condition because of their previous failure to respond in faith to the revelation that God had given them?
- 2) In what sense did Isaiah see ahead of time *the glory* of the arm of the Lord?
- 3) How do we wrongly alter our behavior to conform to the peer pressure around us and to seek *the approval of men* rather than of God?
- 4) Do we follow Christ’s pattern of faithfulness to communicate to others all that the Father has revealed to us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Joel Smith: Playing to an Audience of One

Who determines how you act, speak or think? You have an audience. You perform for somebody. The only people who are purely self-interested are psychopaths. Who is your audience? There are only two options:

The Audience of One?

Of course I'm talking about God here. There are those people who live totally for the approval of God. Living before the Audience of One means that before others they have nothing to prove, nothing to gain, nothing to lose.

This is what God is after. Playing to the Audience of One is the truest form of worship. It's a life where the person is completely sold out to God. They have no agenda except to seek God's approval. Those who play before the Audience of One find and fulfill their purpose in life. Not only do they worship when God's people are together, they take their worship outside of the facility and live it out in the world. This is what God is after.

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=56151&ContributorID=2857>

Deffinbaugh: The first incident in chapter 12 is Mary's anointing of our Lord for burial. It may be out of chronological sequence, but John places it here in chapter 12. Judas (followed by a number of other disciples in the Synoptic accounts) cannot fathom how such "waste" could be permitted by Jesus. Mary's actions appear to the disciples as needless extravagance. Our Lord puts her act of love in a different light. How different this act of extravagant love appears in the light of the cross of Calvary. That is just what Jesus does. He justifies Mary's actions in the light of His imminent death. Calvary sheds an entirely different light on this incident. In the light of the priceless gift Jesus is about to bestow by the shedding of His blood, how appropriate Mary's gift becomes. Her actions cannot be rightly appraised apart from the cross.

The second incident in John chapter 12 is the "triumphal entry" of our Lord into Jerusalem. The crowds are ecstatic with joy. They welcome Jesus as their king. Nowhere does Jesus speak of this event in terms of glory, and elsewhere we learn that Jesus actually wept (Luke 19:41-44). This incident does not make any sense at all—until after the death of our Lord at Calvary. Jesus did not come to Jerusalem to be crowned as their king, or to throw off Roman rule. Jesus came to Jerusalem to be mistakenly identified (as a political deliverer), to be rejected, and to be glorified by dying on a Roman cross at Calvary. We cannot properly understand or appreciate this "triumphal entry" until we view it in the light of the cross. This apparent earthly "success" is momentary, lasting less than a week. Our Lord's glorious death at Calvary has benefits that last for eternity. The cross makes such things clear.

The third incident in John chapter 12 is the “seeking Greeks.” We are perplexed as we see Jesus virtually “brushing off” their request for an interview. Why would Jesus not meet with true seekers? The answer, once again, is bound up with the cross. It is the rejection of Jesus by the Jews which takes Him to the cross. It is at the cross that salvation is accomplished for all who believe in Christ, whether Jew or Greek. It is the cross of Calvary that makes perfect sense of our Lord’s response to the request of the Greeks.

Three incidents in chapter 12 have one thing in common—they require the cross of Calvary to make any sense to the reader, and to be of any value to men. Every week we observe communion, or “the Lord’s Table” as we refer to it. Some say that remembering our Lord’s death weekly deprives it of its meaning and significance. We would differ. We believe that the cross of our Lord puts everything else in its proper perspective. That is also why Paul restricts his message to the “cross of Christ” (see 1 Corinthians 1:18-25). There is no better way to see things clearly than from the vantage point of the cross.

What a turning point this chapter is for the nation Israel. Jesus has come down to the earth, the Word of the Father. He has spoken to men for God; He has spoken to men as God. Israel has seen Him perform “so many miraculous signs” (12:37). He has entered Jerusalem as the Messiah. And it is now Israel’s hour of decision. They have already rejected Him, and even those who have believed in Him are keeping silent. The cross is but a few hours away. Israel’s rejection of Jesus as their Messiah fulfills prophecy and paves the way not only for His work on the cross, but for the salvation of the Greeks, who are already seeking Him.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/joh/deffin/john-30.htm>

Bruce Goettsche:

The Road of Rebellion:

- 1) The First Thing That We See along the Road of Rebellion Are People Who Are Unmoved by the Supernatural.
- 2) The Second Thing You Will See on the Road of Rebellion is People Who are Hardened in their Hearts
- 3) But, There Is Also a Third Thing You Will See on the Road of Rebellion . . . You Will See Those Who View "Faith" in Purely Academic Terms.

The Road of Faith:

- 1) The road of faith is lined with people who have gone from the darkness to the light.
- 2) The Person on the Road of Faith Is Willing to Follow the Path of Christ Even
- 3) Though the World Is Walking in the Opposite Direction.

The People on the Road of Faith Are Heading to Eternal Life

<http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/030297.html>

Pink: “*These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him*” (John 12:41). A striking testimony is this to the absolute Deity of Christ. The prediction quoted in the previous verse is found in Isaiah 6. At the beginning of that chapter the prophet sees

"Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Above the throne stood the seraphim, with veiled face, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." The sight was too much for Isaiah, and he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone." Then a live coal was taken from off the altar and laid upon his mouth, and thus cleansed, he is commissioned to go forth as God's messenger. And here the Holy Spirit tells us in John 12, "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him"—the context makes it unmistakably plain that the reference is to the Lord Jesus. One of the sublimest descriptions of the manifested Deity found in all the Old Testament is here applied to Christ. That One born in Bethlehem's manger was none other than the Throne-Sitter before whom the seraphim worship. . .

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." This points a most solemn warning to the class we have just mentioned above. A faith which does not confess Christ is not a saving faith. The New Testament is very explicit on this. Said the Lord Jesus, *"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God"* (Luke 12:8, 9). And in the Epistle to the Romans we are told, *"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (John 10:9). These Jews referred to in our text were satisfied that Christ was neither an impostor nor a fanatic, yet were they not prepared to forsake all and follow Him. They feared the consequences of such a course, for the Jews had agreed already that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John 9:22). These men then deemed it wisest to conceal their convictions and wait until the Messiah should place Himself in such a position that it would be safe and advantageous for them to avow themselves His disciples. They were governed by self-interest, and they have had many successors. If any should read these lines who are attempting to be secret disciples of the Lord Jesus, fearing to come out into the open and acknowledge by lip and life that He is their Lord and Savior, let them beware. Remember that the first of the eight classes mentioned in Revelation 21:8 who are cast into the lake of fire are the "fearful"!

"For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). These men, whose minds were convinced but whose hearts remained unmoved, not only feared the religious authorities, but they also desired the approbation of their fellows. They were determined to retain their good opinion, even though at the expense of an uneasy conscience. They preferred the good will of other sinners above the approval of God. O the shortsighted folly of these wretched men! O the madness of their miserable choice! Of what avail would the good opinion of the Pharisees be when the hour of death overtook them? In what stead will it stand them when they appear before the judgment-throne of God? *"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* How we are reminded of our Savior's words, "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44). Let us remember that we cannot have both the good-will of sinners and the good-will of God: *"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is*

enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Nathan Lewis:

Jesus declares that faith in himself and the Father results in freedom from the darkness of this world!

It is a matter of faith, not fairness. Jesus says that you can't have him without the Father, and you can't have the Father without him. Your faith is faith in both of them united. Your faith gives you eyes to see and to accept the mystery of their union. Not only are the Father and the Son united as persons equal in power and glory, but they are also united in their mission. The Father has sent the Son and the Son has come with the purpose to free from this world's darkness any who would listen and respond in faith. This darkness is comprised of all of this world's confusion; of all of this world's wickedness; of all of this world's bondage; of all of this world's futility. Jesus the light, enlightens the heart and mind with the truth; Jesus the light exposes wickedness for what it truly is so that you would turn from it with grief and hatred; Jesus the light bursts the chains of addiction and perversion with the blazing fire of resurrection glory; Jesus the light restores hope by casting its rays towards heaven as well as shedding light upon God's providence aiding you now in this realm.

(47-50) On the last day God will hold those who lack faith responsible for their disobedience and rejection of Jesus Christ, the Savior.

(47) Jesus makes it clear that as long as the final day of judgment has not yet arrived, there is time for you to be saved. Jesus insists that his mission is to save, not to judge. This is an amazing statement of Jesus: he is not willing to judge anyone, even the person who hears his words and willfully rejects them. He is willing to suspend judgment until the last day! Jesus said this about the first group, who saw his miracles and refused to believe. He came to save. On the last day God shall judge. (48) *"There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day."* Then Jesus claims that his words are not his own but they belong to the Father who commanded him to say these words, even how to say them! This is amazing! God's command is authoritative, overriding any other command in the universe! God's command leads to eternal life. This same God is the Judge, whose voice condemns on the Last Day. This is the same God who commanded that some peoples' eyes be blinded and hearts be stone-cold toward him.

This does not seem to be fair, but it certainly appears to be consistent! If God is God, and he is the God who speaks, what happens when he speaks? What other voice in the universe may compete? What other will may overpower? Who has the right to harden hearts? God. Who has the right to grant eternal life? God. Who has the right to hold people responsible for their sins on the last day as Judge? God alone.

Whose command created all things? God's command. Whose command saves? God's command. While it does not seem to be fair, it certainly appears to be consistent. But is

it just? God is a God of Justice. Is it just for him to harden hearts then hold those hardened hearts responsible for sin on the Last Day? Yes. God is Just, and in his justice, he has every right to condemn all of us. The issue truly is not about God's justice. If you have a problem with God's fairness or lack of it, you have a problem with God's mercy. God is also merciful. So, does this mean that God must be merciful to every single person who has lived or who ever will live? No. God says, *"I will have mercy on whom I have mercy."*

St. Paul then continues in Romans 9 to write, *"It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: 'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden. One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?' But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory-- even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?"*

Friends, for centuries the Church, founded upon the 12 apostles has declared these words to be the very words of God. You may not like them; you may even hate them. How can you love God and yet hate his words which are inseparable from him? You may choose to declare that these are not God's words, that they have been recorded in error.

You may choose to explain them away so that when you have completed your fine presentation, these words mean exactly the opposite of their plain and straightforward meaning. You may choose to ignore these words and pretend that they do not exist. Before you make your choice, would you consider them for just one more moment with me? What is it that you do not like about these words? I'll tell you what I do not like about them? They insist that God is in absolute control of my life; that his will overrides my will as he pleases; That I am owned by God and not myself; God has the right to condemn and to save as he pleases; Yet I do not have the right to question his good pleasure! In short, these words declare that God is God alone and that I am not God. Jesus stands before us today saying, *"I know that the Father's command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."* Are you willing today to submit to the command of God that leads to eternal life? Jesus claims that he is the only way, that his word is the only word that flows from the Father's command. This means that your word is no foundation for eternal life, but instead, you must receive the word of Jesus by faith.

Each and every Christian must come to a point in his life where he abandons the accusation, "It's not fair," and replaces it with the confession, "*Your will be done, O Lord.*"

<http://www.evergreenpca.com/john12e.htm>

Ryle: Concerning the unity of the Father and the Son, we must be content to believe reverently what we cannot grasp mentally or explain distinctly. Let it suffice us to know that our Saviour was not like the prophets and patriarchs, a man sent by God the Father, a friend of God, and a witness for God. He was something far higher and greater than this. He was in His Divine nature essentially one with the Father: and in seeing Him, men saw the Father that sent Him. This is a great mystery; but a truth of vast importance to our souls. He that casts his sins on Jesus Christ by faith is building on a rock. Believing on Christ, he believes not merely on Him, but on Him that sent Him.

TEXT: John 13:1-17

TITLE: FOOT WASHING: A SIMPLE FUNCTION WITH PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE

BIG IDEA:

MOTIVATED BY LOVE, BELIEVERS NEED TO HUMBLE THEMSELVES AS SERVANTS AFTER THE PATTERN OF CHRIST AND DO THEIR PART TO SEEK THE ONGOING SANCTIFICATION OF ONE ANOTHER

Tasker: I would suggest that verse 1 should be separated from the incident which immediately follows it, and regarded as an introduction to the whole of the remaining chapters. As Passover approached, Jesus became aware that His public ministry to the Jews was over, and that the time for His supreme ‘work’, His death, had come.

(:1) INTRODUCTION: FINAL DISCIPLESHIP INSTRUCTIONS (LEADERSHIP PREPARATION) -- MOTIVATED BY PERSEVERING LOVE

A. Feeling the Urgency of Fleeting Opportunity and the Appropriateness of the Occasion

“Now before the Feast of the Passover”

Jesus predicted to die as the great Passover Lamb: I Cor. 5:7; John 1:29; I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8

B. Focusing Steadfastly on the Goal

“Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father”

1. Fullness of time – track concept of *“the hour”* in Book of John
John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 17:1

2. A Departure = A Leaving from this world

3. An Arrival = A Cleaving to the heavenly Father

C. Finishing Strong with Persevering Love

“having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

“The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many.”

“His own” -- Concept of Election important throughout the Epistle

“the world” is a dangerous and dark place; we need encouragement and ministry of others

“to the end” -- **Ryrie**: “loved them to the fullest extent”; “loved them to the uttermost”

Stedman: Jesus knew the time was short; his hour of departure was at hand. The end of an era is always a critical time, a time of pressure. . . Jesus feels this Passover is the divinely appointed time. All through his ministry he knew he was to be the "*Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world,*" {cf, John 1:29}. He also knew this would occur when the nation was gathered to offer the Passover lamb, the feast that was instituted in Egypt as the angel of God's wrath passed over the houses of the Israelites when he saw the lamb's blood upon their doorposts. In that rich and redolent symbolism, our Lord sees himself. The time has also come when he, as the grain of wheat, must fall into the ground and die. He sees, as a result of his death, a great harvest of Jews and Gentiles to follow.

I. (:2-11) FOOT WASHING: THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

A. (:2) The Antagonism of Satan – Betrayal and Opposition – Fighting God’s Program tooth and nail with his own aggressive agenda of Opposition

“And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,”

B. (:3) The Agenda of God the Father – Delegation and Unity – Sovereignly Orchestrating His Master Plan

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God”

Stedman: Jesus knew exactly who he was. He knew his origin: He had a deep sense of his own identity. Those who know who they are, we say, are "secure." They cannot be derailed, or turned aside from what they are determined to do. Knowing who they are, they have a deep sense of security. Throughout this account Jesus never panics. He is always in control, moving with a quiet majesty through the events of his arrest and his appearance before Herod, Pilate, and the chief priests. He is in full control because he knows who he is.

C. (:4-5) The Activity of Jesus: Foot Washing – Humble Service / Necessary Cleansing

“rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

Goes way beyond the Oriental custom of showing hospitality.
We see here some symbolic aspects of the kenosis – the laying aside of the glory of Jesus and his humbling Himself to serve others.

Study symbolism of water as it relates to cleansing by the Word; ministry of Holy Spirit also in view here.

D. (:6-10) The Assumptions of Peter – From Inappropriate to Presumptuous to Fanatical

1. (:6-7) Inappropriate Assumption– Superiors should not wash feet of Inferiors

“Lord, do you wash my feet?”

Response: *“What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter.”*

Proves that there is a greater spiritual significance to this physical activity of cleansing. Peter would have understood lessons associated with humility and service. Something greater is involved here.

Charles Ashman: It is rather clear that Jesus was teaching something by His act, and that it was something Peter did not understand, and that it was something that dealt with cleansing and fellowship. That something was and is the Lord’s great present and perpetual work of cleansing the believer via the Word from the pollution of sin. It covers the whole aspect of progressive sanctification by the Word of God.

(from Grace Seminary Notes)

Stedman: First, in typical fashion, he displays his utter ignorance: "Lord, do you wash my feet?" In the original this question is very emphatic. The two pronouns are placed together, as though Peter said, "Do you my feet wash?" Clearly he is offended by the Lord's actions, because he has totally misunderstood the nature of authority.

Like us, Peter has been brought up to view authority as a hierarchical structure. Authority belongs to the man at the top, and the sign of it is that people serve him, doing for him what he wants them to do. The mark of authority is that others work for you or under you. The whole world operates on this basis. How many people do you have under you? How many people work for you? In business, home, school, sports, the military, political life, everywhere, that is the invariable view of the nature of authority. Peter was offended because the Lord ignored that. The one at the top, the one with true authority, in Peter's view, ought to be served. But here the One who clearly deserved to be served was instead serving. Peter was offended by that, perhaps because he hoped one day to have a degree of authority himself, when he himself would be served.

2. (:8) Presumptuous Assumption

“Never shall You wash my feet!”

Response: *“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.”*

Shows that the spiritual reality involved goes way beyond just acts of service and love shown towards one another. Apparently the concept is fundamental to union and fellowship with Christ. There is a positional cleansing that occurs at the point of justification. But the ongoing process of sanctification is just as essential – i.e., if you are not participating in that process you really do not have the life of Christ within. This cleansing must be performed by Christ Himself.

3. (:9-10) Fanatical Assumption

“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”

Response: *“He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.”*

Deals with the need for cleansing from the daily defilement of sin.

E. (:11) The Apostasy of the False Disciple

“For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’”

II. (:12-17) FOOT WASHING: THE APPLICATION TO BELIEVERS

A. (:12) Painting the Picture

“And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’”

The Master Teacher wanted to drive home the point of His object lesson

B. (:13-17) Enforcing the Example

1. (:13) Authority Invoked

“You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.”

2. (:14-15) Example Mandated

“If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.”

3. (:16) Compliance Expected (Argument from the Greater to the Lesser)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.”

4. (:17) Obedience Blessed

“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What type of unpleasant (dirty work) tasks do we volunteer for in an effort to show Christian love and practical service to others? Are we truly motivated by Christian love?

2) Some groups of churches like the Grace Brethren believe that Christ mandated foot washing as a Christian ritual or even ordinance (on the same level with baptism and the

Lord's Supper) that should still be practiced today (over and above its obvious symbolic significance). How would you respond to this?

3) What are some of the practical ways that we can seek the ongoing sanctification and daily cleansing of our brethren? How does our culture tend to view sanctification as an individual discipleship responsibility rather than a corporate, church-oriented, shared responsibility?

4) Is our view of leadership consistent with the servant model demonstrated by Christ, or do we put leaders on such a pedestal that we isolate them from such practical acts of service?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Calvin: Hitherto Peter's modesty was excusable, though it was not free from blame; but now he errs more grievously, when he has been corrected, and yet does not yield. And, indeed, it is a common fault, that ignorance is closely followed by obstinacy. It is a plausible excuse, no doubt, that the refusal springs from reverence for Christ; but since he does not absolutely obey the injunction, the very desire of showing his respect for Christ loses all its gratefulness. The true wisdom of faith, therefore, is to approve and embrace with reverence whatever proceeds from God, as done with propriety and in good order; nor is there any other way, indeed, in which his name can be sanctified by us; for if we do not believe that whatever he does is done for a very good reason, our flesh, being naturally stubborn, will continually murmur, and will not render to God the honour due to him, unless by constraint. In short, until a man renounce the liberty of judging as to the works of God, whatever exertions he may make to honour God, still pride will always lurk under the garb of humility.

Deffinbaugh: Jesus has washed the feet of the disciples purposefully. It was a task that needed doing, and our Lord did it. It was also a way that Jesus could demonstrate His unfathomable love for His disciples. But beyond this, it was a lesson which the disciples desperately needed to learn, a lesson in humility. These men were still looking at leadership from a "secular" point of view, rather than from a divine perspective. The secular world looks upon leadership as the opportunity to be served. A leader has many people "under him," and thus he "uses" them to minister to his own needs. In the kingdom of God, a position of leadership is simply a place of service. No matter where one finds himself on the leader-follower scale, the Christian is to serve God by serving others. Leadership is simply one place of service. It enables one to serve as others cannot.

Pink: The water with which the Savior here cleansed the soiled feet of His disciples was an emblem of the Word: "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*" (Ps. 119:9). Fully and blessedly is this brought out in Ephesians 5:25, 26: "*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he*

might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Every clause of this passage is found here in John 13. He 'loved' them, the Church. He 'gave himself' for them, the 'supper' setting forth that: that He might 'sanctify,' separate to Himself, thus they were 'his own'; and 'cleanse' it with the washing of water by the Word. It is complete; His constant, perfect provision for our being kept clean" (Mr. Malachi Taylor). It is to be particularly observed that the Lord did not leave this work unfinished or half done: like a perfect servant, our Lord not only "washed" their feet, but He "wiped" them as well! . . .

There is a partial cleansing which the believer still needs, a daily washing to counteract the defiling effects of this world. Our daily contact with the evil all around causes the dust of defilement to settle upon us so that the mirror of our conscience is dimmed and the spiritual affections of our heart are dulled. We need to come afresh into the presence of Christ in order to learn what things really are, surrendering ourselves to His judgment in everything, and submitting to His purging Word. And who is there that, even for a single day, lives without sin? Who is there that does not need to daily pray, "Forgive us our trespasses"? Only One has ever walked here and been unsoiled by the dust of earth. He went as He came, unstained, uncontaminated. But who is there among His people that does not find much in his daily walk that makes him blush for shame! How much unfaithfulness we all have to deplore! Let me but compare my walk with Christ's, and, unless I am blinded by conceit or deceived by Satan, I shall at once see that I come infinitely short of Him, and though "following his steps" (not "in his steps" as it is so often misquoted), it is but "afar off." So often my acts are un-Christlike in character, so often my disposition and ways have "the flesh" stamped upon them. Even when evil does not break out in open forms, we are conscious of much hidden wrong, of sins of thought, of vile desires. How real, then, how deep, is our daily need of putting our feet in the hands of Christ for cleansing, that everything which hinders communion with Him may be removed, and that He can say of us, "Ye are clean"!

David Keithley: Christian love is Active –

- He got up. That's an action.
- He took off His outer clothing. That's an action.
- He wrapped a towel around His waist. That's an action.
- He poured water into a basin. That's an action.
- He washed their feet. That's an action.

<http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/030997.html>

TEXT: John 13:18-38

TITLE: WHO IS ON THE LORD'S SIDE . . . WHO WILL SERVE THE KING?

BIG IDEA:

**AGAPE LOVE IS THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD FOR DISCIPLESHIP
LOYALTY AND THE REVEALING BENCHMARK FOR FAITHLESS
BETRAYAL**

INTRODUCTION:

What is the greatest commandment?

- Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength
- Love your neighbor as yourself

Love vs. Selfishness is a good test of Loyalty vs. Betrayal.

**I. (:18-20) BECAUSE OF ELECTION, CHRIST CAN ACCURATELY
PROPHECY BETRAYAL VS LOYALTY**

A. (:18a) Election Is a Done Deal

"I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen."

B. (:18b) Betrayal by a Close Companion Fulfills OT Prophecy

"but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up the heel against Me.'"

Stedman: But the psalm said that the act of treason would be a heartless, reprehensible thing, done in the face of the friendship that was offered him, like a heel lifted up to kick someone in the face. Our Lord says the event will be certain and it will be literal.

C. (:19) Prophecy Validates the Identity of Christ

"From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He."

Deffinbaugh: Jesus is not telling His disciples these things so that they will understand Him and believe what He has said at that very moment. He tells them these things which will occur in the future so that they will believe when these prophecies are fulfilled. Then His disciples will know that Jesus was in full control, bringing about that which the Father had purposed in eternity past. In His earthly sojourn, Jesus was always in control. He was never, a helpless victim.

D. (:20) Loyalty Cements Our Relationship with Christ and with the Father

"Truly, truly, I say to you, 'he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.'"

II. (:21-30) CHRIST ORCHESTRATES HIS OWN BETRAYAL ACCORDING TO THE FATHER'S TIMETABLE

- A. (:21a) The Pain of Betrayal – Not a pleasant subject
“*When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit,*” (cf. 11:33; 12:27)
2 Possibilities (or a combination):
- Pain because betrayal cut Him right to the heart
- Pain because of His compassion for Judas – that he would so tragically miss out on God’s available blessing
- B. (:21b) The Prophecy of Betrayal
“*and testified, and said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.’*”
Very specific prophecy since we are only dealing with the 12 disciples
- C. (:22) The Perplexity of Betrayal – How could any of us be a traitor?
“*The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking.*”
- D. (:23-26) The Pinpointing of Betrayal – Who is it?
cf. game: Pin the tail on the donkey
cf. police lineup where the accuser picks out the bad guy
- (:23-25) John Appointed to Ask the Tough Question
“*Lord, who is it?*”
 - (:26) Judas Identified
“*Jesus therefore answered, ‘That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.’ So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.*”
- C. (:27-30) The Process of Betrayal – 4 different people involved (or groups of people)
- (:27a) Activated by Satan
“*And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him.*”
 - (:27b) Accelerated by Christ
“*Jesus therefore said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’*”
 - (:28-29) Assumed Loyal by the Other Disciples
“*Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, ‘Buy the things we have need of for the feast’; or else, that he should give something to the poor.*”

They had no clue about his evil, selfish heart and how he had been stealing from the money box all along. They continued to trust him.

Deffinbaugh: And yet Judas seems to be the last one any of the disciples would have suspected of being the betrayer of whom our Lord was speaking. He seems to have been seated in the place of honor at the Last Supper, beside our Lord. He was the one entrusted with the money that was given to our Lord (John 12:6). Even when Jesus indicated that Judas was His betrayer by giving him the bread, the disciples still did not recognize him for who he really was. In this sense, I think, Judas was just like his “real father,” the devil: 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

4. (:30) Acted on by Judas

“And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.”

Ryrie: The “hour” for which Christ, the light of the world, had been waiting, when the powers of darkness would engulf Him, begins in darkness.

III. (:31-35) CHRIST’S DEPARTURE MAKES AGAPE LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN ESSENTIAL (AS THE CHRISTIAN STANDARD FOR DISCIPLESHIP LOYALTY)

A. (:31-32) Departure Involves Immediate Glory for God the Son and God the Father
“When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said,”

1. Son of Man Glorified in Dying on the Cross

“Now is the Son of Man glorified,”

2. God Glorified in Jesus Dying on the Cross

“and God is glorified in Him;”

3. God will Glorify Jesus in Resurrection and Ascension

“ if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately”

Stedman: This is the secret of glory, the principle by which we achieve glory. Glory is the recognition of who you really are. This is something we all long for. We are all striving for glory. We want to be recognized; we want people to know us. We long to be seen, to become the center of attention. We all want people to think highly of us. This is what Jesus is talking about. The secret of attaining this, he says, is to give yourself up, to lose yourself. He is looking ahead to the cross. The cross became a certainty the minute Judas left the room, and Jesus says, "Now [in view of this cross] is the Son of man glorified..."

B. (:33) Departure Involves Temporary Physical Separation

“Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’”

- C. (:34-35) Departure Involves a New Emphasis on Agape Love for the Brethren
1. (:34) The Command Calls for a New Christlike Standard for Love
“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
 2. (:35) The Evangelistic Impact on the World
“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

David Keithley: We must keep in mind that what the world needs most of all is not new government leaders, or educational reform, or more legislative initiatives. The world is not desperate for more prisons or fewer bombs. It is not dying for lack of better programs or slicker church services. What the world needs most is to be able to SEE THE DIFFERENCE CHRIST CAN MAKE. They need to see Christ's transformation demonstrated in the people of God.

3. The Implied Demonstration of Loyalty to Christ Himself
 Once you can no longer see Christ physically, demonstrations of love to the brethren will be a concrete way of expressing love and loyalty to Christ Himself.

IV. (:36-38) LOYALTY TO CHRIST MUST MATURE BEYOND THE EMOTION OF UNTESTED COMMITMENT AND THE DESPAIR OF AGONIZING FAILURES

- A. (:36-37) Untested Commitment
“Simon Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, where are You going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you shall follow later.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.’”

Stedman: Peter was perfectly sincere when he said these words. He was thoroughly committed to Christ and his cause. He felt right down to his toes that he would lay down his life for his Lord. His loyalty mounts to the fore here, and he declares he is quite willing to die for him. Jesus knows he means it, but he also knows that it is a totally unreliable commitment. He knows that it comes from purely natural affection, and natural affection is never strong enough to handle the demands against love in this life. . .

We must learn that our zeal for Christ will not do what he wants done. We have to learn through failure, hurt, and rejection, to glory in his love for us -- not our love for him -- then our own hearts will begin to burn with his same love.

- B. (:38) Agonizing Failures
“Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a cock shall not crow, until you deny Me three times.’”

Deffinbaugh: I cannot miss the fact that John has placed two men in close proximity to each other in John chapter 13: Judas and Peter. Judas was an unbeliever, who betrayed the Lord of Glory. Peter was a believer, who denied His Lord. What is the difference between the two? All the difference in the world. In some ways, Judas looks like “Mr. Perfect” in the New Testament—up till the time that he betrays our Lord. But over and over again in the Gospels, Peter seems to be messing up, doing or saying the wrong thing (even as he initially refuses to let Jesus wash his feet in our text). But while Peter often sinned, each occasion of sin was for him a point of repentance and return. How quickly Peter repents of his foolishness in chapter 13. It is true that Peter failed many times, just as we do, but each failure was a point of return. For Judas, his apparent failures seem to be few, but in spite of all the opportunities he was given to repent and turn to the Lord, he never did. Far better to fail often and return to the Lord, than to appear to do well, and never turn to Him at all. What a difference there is between Peter, whose sins were a “point of return,” and this final sin of Judas, which was his “point of no return.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Recognizing that God still holds Judas responsible for his reprehensible actions, what insight do we gain from this passage into God’s sovereignty? What type of interaction is there between God and Satan? What are the limitations of Satan’s powers?
- 2) What is “*new*” about this commandment to love that Christ gives here? What is so essential about this Christian trademark of loving?
- 3) By looking at the example of Judas, how can we become more sensitive to our own limitations of judging according to appearance and not being able to look inside another person’s heart? How can we easily be deceived by Satan’s ministers who appear as angels of light?
- 4) By looking at the example of the failure of Peter (despite the self-deception of his heart regarding his own abilities), how can we combat pride and submit ourselves to the Lord’s grace and take care so that we do not stumble as well? How can we encourage ourselves in the Lord when we do fail to get back up and return to Him in repentance and faith?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Here our Lord is saying that his love for us will stimulate and awaken within us the ability to love other people; his love will be the measure, the cause and the identifying mark of authentic love from him.

Our love, if we understand this and relate to it, will be like Jesus' love. I do not need to detail for you what that is. It takes the whole of the gospels to tell of the marvelous, wonderful love of Jesus. I see at least three characteristics that were unusual (and inimitable) about his love:

First, it was without respect of persons. He did not love people who were nice to love, as we do. He chose to love the unlovely: people who were rejected, difficult to love, looked down upon, held in contempt by society. He loved them, not because he wanted the good feeling of love, but simply because they needed love, and his love responded. This is the characteristic of his love. It goes out to people who need love regardless of what they are like, no matter how dirty, leprous, hurtful, proud or arrogant they may be. It goes out because they need love, without respect of persons.

Secondly, that love will be expressed in deeds, not just words. It will not be mere talk about love, singing songs about love or calling oneself loving and not showing it. Love will be expressed in deeds. Remember the Lord's words at the scene of the last judgment when the sentence is pronounced to those on the right hand of the judge: "*Enter into the kingdom that has been prepared, because when I was sick you visited me, when I was hungry you fed me, and when I was naked you clothed me...*" {cf, Matt 25-34-35}. Deeds, not words.

Thirdly, it is a love without end. This is how John describes that love where he introduces the whole chapter in these words, "*Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end.*" He never gave up on them. He loved them as long as his love could do anything to reach them. And his love included even Judas. The love of Jesus reached out to all.

Deffinbaugh: This text instructs us regarding the purpose of prophecy. Many Christians look at Bible prophecy as a kind of puzzle—something that we can figure out if we're smart enough or persistent enough. Jesus' words in our text inform us that there are many prophecies that we do not even recognize as such until after they have been fulfilled (such as the prophecy concerning Judas in Psalm 41:9). Prophecy is not given to us so that we can know exactly what will happen in the future. Much prophecy is written so that when God brings about His plans and purposes, we will realize that He has already told us this would happen, and that it has happened just as He said it would. Prophecy is one way that God promotes and protects His glory. He tells us what He is going to do ahead of time so that when He does it, it is all His doing. . .

There are many things concerning biblical prophecy that we do not and will not know until they are fulfilled. What we are meant to know is that God has a plan, that He has a

goal toward which all of human history is headed. Prophecy reminds us that God is in control, and that we do well to trust and obey Him. Prophecy tells us what is certain in very volatile and uncertain times, such as our own. And even though there are many aspects of a certain prophecy that we don't understand, we should simply believe and obey the parts that we do. The disciples surely did not understand what Jesus was telling them about the future in our text, but they did understand what He was saying about loving and serving one another. They understand what they are to set themselves to be doing.

David Keithley: We need to stop for a moment and ask the question for ourselves. Is it I, Lord? Is there something in my life that needs to be rooted out? Listen to the nudgings of the Holy Spirit. When you're about to do something and you feel that sinking feeling that so often accompanies our sinfulness, ask, "Do I really want to betray Christ?" "Do I really want to blemish His name after all He's done for me?" Stop for a moment and consider the consequences of your actions. Will they lead us to that slippery slope that is so difficult to climb back up? Are our actions going to make it easier to sin the next time that the opportunity arises? Are they giving Satan a foothold in our lives, to encourage our sin, to applaud it?

To put it as succinctly as I possibly can: Ask yourself: Am I portraying Jesus in my actions or am I betraying Him through by actions? If you can't answer that your actions will portray Him, then remember the warning to Cain that still applies today: Sin is crouching at the door, it desires to have you. You must master it. And remember, you're not alone. May God's Spirit who is in you help you to master it.

<http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/031697dk.html>

Ryle: The crucifixion brought glory to the Father. It glorified His wisdom, faithfulness, holiness, and love. It showed Him wise, in providing a plan whereby He could be just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. – It showed Him faithful, in keeping His promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. – It showed Him holy, in requiring His law's demands to be satisfied by our great Substitute. – It showed Him living, in providing such a Mediator, such a Redeemer, and such a Friend for sinful man as His co-eternal Son.

The crucifixion brought glory to the Son. It glorified His compassion, his patience, and his power. It showed Him most compassionate, in dying for us, suffering in our stead, allowing Himself to be counted sin and a curse for us, and buying our redemption with the price of His own blood. – It showed Him most patient, in not dying the common death of most men, but in willingly submitting to such horrors and unknown agonies as no mind can conceive, when with a word he could have summoned His Father's angels, and been set free. – It showed Him most powerful, in bearing the weight of all a world's transgressions, and vanquishing Satan and despoiling him of his prey.

Tasker: But, while the death of Jesus and His return to the Father are the occasions of His own supreme glory, for the immature disciples, now tenderly called *little children*, they bespeak grievous bereavement and interminable separation (33). Jesus therefore

explains to them that the forthcoming physical separation need not mean spiritual separation. It is true that they will not be able to follow Him at once into the heavenly sphere where He is going, for they will not die immediately; but it is also true that, inspired by His own love for them, they will be able to love those for whom He is laying down His life; and in so far as they do that they will be dwelling in Him and He in them. The world, moreover, confronted by the mutual love of Christ's disciples will take note that they have been and still are "*with Jesus*" (see Acts iv. 13). In obeying Christ's new commandment the disciples will find the sting of separation drawn. The old commandment enacted that men should love their neighbors as themselves; and this old commandment is by no means annulled by the new. But to love others not because we like them, or are bound to them by family, social or national ties, nor because they happen geographically or some other way to be our neighbors, but solely because they are fellow-sinners redeemed by Christ, this is indeed obedience to a new commandment, for it is new not only in the sphere of its exercise and in the motive which inspires it, but also in the degree of self-sacrifice it evokes. In Hoskyns' words "whereas the Old Testament demanded that men should love their neighbors as themselves, the New Law is that they should love the brethren better than themselves, and die for their friends."

TEXT: John 14:1-14

TITLE: TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS --
THE ROAD TO GOD THE FATHER GOES THROUGH JESUS

BIG IDEA:
**OUR HEARTS NEED THE REASSURANCE THAT OUR FAITH IN CHRIST
SECURELY CONNECTS US TO GOD THE FATHER**

**(:14) INTRODUCTION: FAITH IN CHRIST = FAITH IN GOD THE FATHER
= ANTIDOTE FOR ANXIETY AND FEAR**

“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”

In light of Christ’s soon departure to rejoin the Father in heaven, the disciples were in need of words of reassurance.

Christian life is a marathon (cf. Rick running in marathon in Hawaii over Christmas break – Dec 2003).

Understand the Jewish OT background of monotheism. Faith in Christ as equivalent to faith in Jehovah God was quite an expansion in their thinking.

Stedman: That verse could well be called a Manual for Stress Management, a remedy for anxious and troubled hearts. Here is where we find the answer to the question, "How do you spell relief?" . . . while we cannot prevent stress, we can overcome it. ..

"Believe in God, believe also in me." In this version both of those words "believe" are in the imperative mood, i.e., they are commands. There is some question among the commentators as to whether these should be indicative statements: "You do believe in God; you do believe in me," or whether they are commands, as rendered here. The Greek text will bear either rendering. The best way to take it, in line with the context, is, "You do believe in God; believe also in me."

I. (:2-6) SHOW US THE WAY – JUST LOOK TO JESUS WHO IS THE WAY TO GOD

“I am the Way” -- the world is searching for the way to God and a true spiritual relationship

A. (:2-3a) Jesus, Our Heavenly Home Builder

“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you”

Deffinbaugh: Our Lord is telling His disciples and us that there is plenty of room for us all in His Father’s heavenly house. Dwelling with Him there will be a significant improvement on their “housing” while on earth with Jesus: “As they were walking along the road, someone said to him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’ But Jesus

said to him, *‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’*” (Luke 9:57-58). A good deal of the time, the Lord and His disciples may have been camping rather than living comfortably in some spatial home. What Jesus promises His disciples is a dramatic (what an understatement!) improvement.

B. (:3b) Jesus, Our Close Companion

“I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”

Implications regarding the Second Coming

Intimate Friendship with the Master of the Universe

C. (:4-6) Jesus, Our Absolute Answer to Every Important Question

The world has rejected the concept of absolute truth. Jesus presents Himself in absolute terms.

1. (:4) Simple Statement

“And you know the way where I am going.”

2. (:5) Need for Reassurance

“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?’”

3. (:6) Powerful Reinforcement in absolute terms

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.’”

Stedman: Many bristle with indignation at those words. When I quoted this verse in a Bible study once, a woman said, "That's terribly narrow-minded." I said, "Yes, it is, but that is the way truth is. I find the phone company to be terribly narrow minded too. If you want to call someone up you must dial the exact numbers, in the exact order given; they will not allow any deviation. The IRS is terribly narrow-minded. They require you to state your income exactly. They don't accept a wild guess on your part." "But I think you must interpret a verse like that," she said. "How would you interpret it?" I asked her. She said she didn't really know how. I said, "Well, if it is true, if Jesus means what he says that there is only one way to God, that those that try to come another way will not end up with the God who exists, but with some god of their own invention, and, if there is only one way, how could he ever have said it any plainer than he does here, 'No one comes to the Father but by me'?"

Carr: In this passage, Jesus gives us a threefold assurance:

1. How can I be saved? He is the Way!
2. How can I be sure? He is the Truth!
3. How can I be satisfied? He is the Life!

II. (:7-11) SHOW US THE FATHER – JUST LOOK TO JESUS WHO ENABLES US TO EXPERIENCE GOD

“He who has seen Me has seen the Father” – the world is searching for genuine spiritual experience

A. (:7) Simple Statement

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”

B. (:8) Need for Reassurance

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’”

C. (:9-11) Powerful Reinforcement supported by both the Words and Works of Jesus

1. (:9-10a) Tone of Patient Exasperation

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?’”

2. (:10b-11a) Testimony of Words of Jesus

“The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me;”

3. (:11b) Testimony of Works of Jesus

“otherwise believe on account of the works themselves.”

Deffinbaugh: Jesus is not encouraging His disciples to become miracle-workers here. In fact, He is doing the opposite. He is urging His disciples to believe His words, because they are the Father’s words. If they must have added verification, let them take note of His miraculous works as the Father’s accreditation and approval of His teaching. The “high road” is to simply believe in what Jesus has said. The “lower road” is to believe what He has said because of the miracles He has done. Let us not twist this text and our Lord’s words to promote miracles, signs, and wonders, when Jesus speaks of sign-faith as second-class faith.

III. (:12-14) SHOW US THE POWER – JUST LOOK TO JESUS WHO EMPOWERS US TO ACCOMPLISH THE WORKS OF GOD

“greater works than these shall he do” – the world is searching for significance and fulfillment

A. (:12) Simple Statement

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.”

Stedman: he who keeps on believing in me, not just he who becomes a Christian but he who keeps on growing and trusting as a Christian "will also do the works that I do." Remember these words were first addressed to the apostles. Surely our Lord is referring to his miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, opening the blind eyes, and curing the lame. In the book of Acts these words were literally fulfilled . . .

But he goes on to a second promise, "Greater works than these shall he do." What intriguing words! On occasion a young, starry-eyed Christian has said to me, "God has anointed me to do the greater works that Jesus promised." By that he meant greater physical miracles. I submit to you that this word of Jesus can not possibly mean that. The bald fact is, there are no greater miracles in the physical realm than the works Jesus did. What could be greater than raising a man who had been dead four days, healing someone who had been ill for 38 years, or restoring instant sight to blind eyes? There are no greater physical miracles. So when Jesus speaks of "greater works" he must mean "greater" in a spiritual dimension. . .

When we look at both the record of Scripture and of church history we see how true this is:

On the day of Pentecost, 40 days after our Lord uttered these words, Peter, filled with the power of the Spirit, preached with such effect that 3,000 people were converted in one day. That never happened during Jesus' ministry. Perhaps a few hundred on occasion believed when he preached, but mere handful was the usual response, never thousands as the book of Acts reports.

When Billy Graham preached on the parable of the prodigal son in Wembley Stadium during his first crusade in London in 1955, 3,000 people became Christians. According to the record there was no account of any conversions when Jesus told that story. That was a "greater work."

In his ministry in Palestine Jesus probably never spoke to crowds larger than 5,000-7,000 people, but even I had the privilege in January of this year, on Super Bowl Sunday, of preaching to 10,000 people in Grace Community Church in Panorama City.

Luis Palau told me just recently how thrilled he was to speak to a great crowd of 700,000 people in one vast meeting in Guatemala City.

A few years ago Billy Graham preached to over a million people gathered in a great public square in Seoul, Korea. That is far more than Jesus ever accomplished.

B. (:13) Need for Reassurance (Jesus doesn't wait for the question this time)
"And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

C. (:14) Powerful Reinforcement

“If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What precious promises do we cling to when fear or worry threatens to disturb our spiritual equilibrium? Do we truly believe that we can exercise our will to turn towards faith instead of fear?
- 2) What do we learn about heaven and about the Second Coming of Christ and about our own death from this passage? What comfort can we give to others who might be facing a death in the family?
- 3) Where are we being suckered by the world system into its agenda of “tolerance” and failing to stand for the absolute truth of God’s revelation?
- 4) What insights into the doctrine of the Trinity can we glean here?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: I believe this indicates that these two events (the second coming of Jesus back into time to carry out his announced prophetic program, and the coming of the Lord personally for each believer upon death), are really one and the same. Other passages suggest this. It is very likely that when we step out of time, we step into eternity, and in eternity there is no waiting for anything. What you are spiritually ready for is what occurs. The event for which the Spirit of God is now getting us ready, throughout this earthly journey, is the coming of the Lord for his own. When we breathe our last, every true believer finds himself at this great world-shaking event when all believers are caught up together, and enter into glory at once. You may find some implications of that disturbing. If you want further information on it, I would like to suggest a chapter in my book, *Authentic Christianity*, called *Time in Eternity*.

Stedman: I remember listening years ago to a radio broadcast of the Bible Study Hour, when Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, was the speaker. I'll never forget his telling of the occasion when his first wife had died. He, with his children, had been to the funeral service for her. As he was driving his motherless children home, they were naturally overcome with grief at the parting. Dr. Barnhouse said that he was trying to think of some word of comfort that he could give them. Just then a huge moving van passed them. As it passed, the shadow of the truck swept over the car. And as the truck pulled on in front of them, an inspiration came to Dr. Barnhouse. He said, "Children, would you rather be run over by a truck, or

by its shadow?" The children said, "Well, of course, Dad, we'd much rather be run over by the shadow! That can't hurt us at all." Dr. Barnhouse said, "Did you know that two thousand years ago the truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus ... in order that only its shadow might run over us?" And he went on to explain how David had said in the 23rd Psalm,

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. {Psa 23:4a KJV}*

This is the promise which every believer has from the lips of Jesus himself: "I will come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Carr: quoting illustration—

A pioneer missionary in Africa tells how he was taking the gospel to a new tribe, far to the north. With his bearers, he arrived at a village, a point beyond which his porters refused to go. The missionary appealed to the local chief. Was there someone in his village who could act as his guide to the distant northern tribe? The chief summoned a man, tall, battle scarred, carrying a large axe. A bargain was made and the next morning the missionary set off through the bush, following his new guide. The way became increasingly rough and the path had all, but disappeared. There was an occasional mark blazed on a tree, occasionally a narrow path. Finally the missionary called a halt. He asked the guide if he was sure he knew the way. The man pulled himself up to his full height. "White man," he said, "you see this axe in my hand? You see these scars on my body? With this axe I blazed the trail to the tribal village to which we go. I came from there. These scars I received when I made the way. You ask me if I know the way? Before I came, there was no way. I am the way!"

Hendriksen: Jesus does not merely show the way; He is Himself the way. It is true that He teaches the way (Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21), guides us in the way (Luke 1:79), and has dedicated for us a new and living way (Hebrews 10:20); but all this is possible only because He Himself is the way.

Deffinbaugh: The words recorded in chapter 14 (indeed, in 13-17) are intended to minister to the troubled spirits of the disciples—but not to give them immediate comfort. Have you ever noticed that virtually every advertisement for pain relievers claims the same thing—fast relief? I have yet to find any advertisement which says: "Our product will not give you quick relief. If you purchase it and take the recommended dosage, nothing will happen for some time. ..." The "relief" which our text offers is not "fast" relief. The Upper Room Discourse is not a "play by play" account of the events that took place in the Upper Room, as the disciples experienced and perceived them at the time. The Upper Room Discourse is a reconstruction of these events, recorded years later, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. These words were written by John after the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost, who enabled the disciples to recall and understand what they had seen and heard in their last hours with the Lord (see 16:12-16).

The immediate effect of our Lord's words to His disciples was confusion and sadness. I would like to suggest that this was exactly what our Lord intended them to produce—for the moment. Suppose the disciples really did grasp what Jesus was about to do. Suppose, for example, that the disciples understood that Judas was about to betray our Lord and to hand Him over to the Jewish authorities, so that they could carry out a mock trial and crucify the Son of God on the cross of Calvary. I think I know what Peter would have done—he would have used his sword on Judas, rather than the high priest's slave. I believe the disciples would have attempted to prevent what was about to happen, had they known what that was. But the confusion our Lord's words produced threw them off balance. The result was that when Jesus was arrested, they fled. They did not die trying to defend the Savior, and in part this was because they were utterly confused by what was happening. Jesus' words were not intended to produce instant "relief," but eternal joy. The confusion and sadness that the Upper Room Discourse created in the disciples enabled Jesus to die just as He knew He must, just as it had been planned, purposed, and promised long before. The disciples were surely not "in control" at this point in time, but, as always, the Master was.

While our Lord's words in the Upper Room are intended to comfort and encourage His disciples later on, they are also words that apply to Christians today as well. Whose spirit does not find comfort in these words: "Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father's house. Otherwise, I would have told you ..."? Let us turn, then, to this assuring, comforting text to find peace for our souls in these troubled times.

Bruce Goettsche: We live in a day and age where the watchword is tolerance. Everywhere we turn we are told we need to be more tolerant. We are urged to use inclusive language, we need to watch for offensive stereotypes, we must confront our harmful prejudices. We must now say "physically-challenged" instead of "handicapped" and "undocumented resident" in place of "illegal alien." We should avoid "Dutch treat" because it implies that people from Holland are tightwads and "siesta" because it gives the impression that Latin Americans are lazy. The fast-growing list seems endless.

We are also cautioned about religious intolerance. We are to respect people of other faiths . . . in fact we are to affirm that everyone has a right to believe what they want. We have no problem with this . . . it is a guaranteed right in the constitution. However, we are also being urged to proclaim that every religion is equally valid for those who believe it. If it "works for you" then I should say that it is true for you. This is where Christians step into the midst of controversy.

Christians cannot state they view every religion as equally valid and true. This is what brings the critics clamoring to our door with cries of narrow-mindedness and intolerance . . . how dare we say that the only true way to God is the way of Christianity. But dare we must . . . not because we want to swim against the tide . . . but because that is the truth as it is presented in the Bible.

<http://www.unionchurch.com/archive/050497.html>

TEXT: John 14:15-31

TITLE: *IMMANUEL – THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD*

BIG IDEA:

DESPITE HIS IMMINENT DEPARTURE, CHRIST PROMISES ONGOING REVELATION / ILLUMINATION TO THOSE WHO DEMONSTRATE THEIR LOVE BY OBEDIENCE

INTRODUCTION:

Problem the disciples faced:

- If Christ was the one to reveal God the Father to them . . .
- and Christ was about to die on the cross and return to heaven . . .
- How would they continue to behold God and grow in their knowledge of Him?

One of the greatest passages to reveal the doctrine of the Trinity – special emphasis on the person and role of the Holy Spirit

cf. Doctrines of Revelation vs. Illumination; some things promised directly to the apostles here with respect to revelation that we receive more by illumination; same power and presence of God at work

Continues the theme of Reassurance from first half of John 14

Immanuel means “God with us” – much here about the Abiding Presence of God

I. (:15-17) PROMISE OF THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. (:15) One Condition for Blessing: Demonstrate Love by Obedience

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

How different from the legalism of the Pharisees!

B. (:16) One United Triune God at Work:

Emphasis: Abiding Presence of God the Holy Spirit – this is the major emphasis in this passage – explaining the upcoming new and expanded role of the Holy Spirit

1. Intercessory Ministry of God the Son

“And I will ask the Father”

What type of response does Christ receive from His petitions of the Father?

What had He just promised us in Chap. 14 about asking and receiving?

2. Gift of God the Father

“and He will give you”

3. Nature of God the Holy Spirit
“another Helper”

Proves the Personality of the Holy Spirit – distinct from Christ; yet another of the same kind.

Ryrie: The Holy Spirit is called the *Helper* (Greek: *paraclete*, as also in 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). In the root of this word are the ideas of advising, exhorting, comforting, strengthening, interceding, and encouraging. The only other occurrence of the word outside this discourse in the N.T. is in 1 John 2:1 applied to Christ and translated “Advocate.” Here and in the other passages in John cited above, Christ teaches that the Holy Spirit (1) will indwell Christians (vv. 16-17); (2) will help the disciples recall the events of His life (14:26); (3) will convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (16:7-11); (4) will teach believers the truth (15:26; 16:13-15).

4. Eternal Scope
“that He may be with you forever.”

Another support for Eternal Security and Perseverance of the saints.

C. (:17) One Dominant Function of the Holy Spirit

1. Proclaimer of Truth
“that is the Spirit of truth”

2. Accessible only to Believers
(chiastic structure: A B B A -- Behold / Know / Know / Behold)

a. Unknown by the world

“whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him”

b. Intimate with Believers

“but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you”

II. (:18-21) PROMISE OF THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF CHRIST HIMSELF

A. (:18) Separation is Only Temporary

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

Westcott: The fulfillment of the promise began at the Resurrection, when Christ’s humanity was glorified; and the promise was potentially completed at Pentecost. The life of the Church is the realization of the Pentecostal coming of the Lord, which is to be crowned by His coming to Judgment. No one specific application of the phrase exhausts its meaning.

B. (:19) One Dominant Function of God the Son

1. Accessible only to Believers

a. Unknown by the world

“After a little while the world will behold Me no more;”

b. Intimate with Believers

“but you will behold Me;”

2. Provider of Life

“because I live, you shall live also.”

C. (:20) One United Triune God at Work:

Emphasis: Abiding Presence of God the Son

1. Significance of Pentecost

“In that day you shall know”

Some debate over what “day” is referred to here.

2. Son Abides in the Father

“that I am in My Father,”

3. Believers Abide in the Son

“and you in Me,”

4. The Son Abides in Believers

“and I in you.”

D. (:21a) One Condition for Blessing: Demonstrate Love by Obedience

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me”

E. (:21b) Blessing From the Triune God

1. Loved by God the Father

“and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father”

2. Loved by God the Son

“and I will love him”

3. Enlightened by God the Holy Spirit

“and will disclose Myself to him” (through the abiding Holy Spirit which continues to be the main emphasis of this passage)

Stedman: Now, if it takes love to obey, what produces love? That is really the question, isn't it? That is the issue. If you see a Christian disobeying Christ, or you yourself are tempted to disobey, what is it that will turn you around and make you obey? It is love. Well, how do you produce love? What will make you love him? This is what ties

together Verses 20 and 21. It is that basic secret of our identity which creates love -- the Spirit in us, releasing to us the love of Jesus, awakens love from us in return.

Stedman: That is, occasions and circumstances will arise in which Jesus will be very near, very real, very dear to you. Increasingly you will learn to know him, and to enter into the understanding of the being and character of the Son of God. This speaks to the hearts of all who are Christians. The one thing we want more than anything else is a deeper knowledge of Jesus. This he promises to those who love him and thus obey him: He will manifest himself to them. I can testify that there have been times in my own experience, particularly of recent days, when the Lord Jesus has been more real to me than any other person -- so real, it seemed, that I could touch him! This is the manifestation of his response to love from us.

III. (:22-24) PROMISE OF THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD THE FATHER

A. (:22, 24b) One Dominant Function of God the Father

1. (:22) Accessible Only to Believers – Question of Accessibility Introduced
“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?’”
2. (:24b) Prime Mover
“and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.”

B. (:23a, 24a) One Condition for Blessing: Demonstrate Love by Obedience

1. (:23a) Stated Positively
“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word’”
2. (:24a) Stated Negatively
“He who does not love Me does not keep My words”

C. (:23b) One United Triune God at Work:

Emphasis: Abiding Presence of God the Father

1. Abiding Love
“and My Father will love him,”
2. Abiding Presence
“and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.”
primarily through the indwelling Holy Spirit

IV. (:25-31) SUMMARY OF REASSURANCE

A. (:25-26) Consistent, Ongoing Revelation / Illumination / Enlightenment Promised

1. (:25) Ministry of Christ

“These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you.”

2. (:26) Ministry of the Holy Spirit (work of the united Triune God)

“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 said to you.”

B. (:27-28) Encouragement to Peace and Joy (vs. Anxiety/Fear and Discouragement)

1. (:27) Encouragement to Peace – Totally different from what the world can offer

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

Stedman: We can have that peace under any circumstance, because, as he says, it is not given as the world gives. If you are all upset over something that keeps eating away at you, and you ask a doctor for help, he will give you a tranquilizer -- chemical peace! But as soon as it has worn off you are right back where you were before. You will have to take more tranquilizers until your mind is dulled and you are half-sedated. That is how the world gives peace. Or it resorts to escapism -- take a trip to Hawaii, go off to the mountains, lose yourself in some activity. When you return, the trouble is still there, of course. But here Jesus speaks of what Paul calls "peace that passes understanding," {Phil 4:7 RSV}. Events do not affect it. It is internal, not subject to external pressure. Circumstances may not have changed, but there has been imparted to you a consciousness that the One who indwells you is able to handle your problem and you are at peace because of that.

2. (:28) Encouragement to Joy – Contingent upon Jesus returning to the Father

“You have heard that I said to you, I go away, and I will come to you. If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

C. (:29-31) Final Words of Encouragement

1. (:29) Encouragement of Fulfilled Prophecy

“And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe.”

2. (:30) Encouragement Regarding Limited Power of Satan

“I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”

3. (:31) Encouragement of His Own Obedience -- Fulfilling His Mission

a. Testimony to the World

“but that the world may know that I love the Father”

b. Obedience to His Father

“as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.”

c. Let’s Go

“Arise, let us go from here.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Is our obedience truly motivated by love? How would you define legalism? What stirs up this love for Christ within us?

2) Study the concept of *orphans* throughout the Scriptures. What type of compassion does God have for orphans? How do we treat those who are so isolated and vulnerable? How does Christ show His abiding commitment to us and ensure that He is not an absentee Father?

3) How does the Holy Spirit *disclose Christ* to us and make His life more real and tangible?

4) Study verse 30 in more depth. What type of victory or invincibility over Satan is Christ proclaiming here? What is the meaning of *“he has nothing in Me”*?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Review from **Pink**:

Many and varied were the grounds of comfort which the Lord had laid before the apostles. First, He assured them that He was going to the Father’s House. Second, that He would make provision for their coming there. Third, that when the necessary preparations were completed, He would come and conduct them thither. Fourth, that He had opened the way for them, had made them acquainted with the way, and would give them the energy necessary to go along that way. Fifth, that He would not withdraw from them the miraculous powers which He had conferred upon them, but would enable them to do still greater things. Sixth, that whatever they needed for the discharge of the work to which He had called them, on asking in His name, they should assuredly obtain. Seventh, that a Divine Person should be sent to supply His place, acting as their instructor, guide, protector and consoler. Eighth, that they should not be "left orphans," but He would return to them in possession of an endless life, of which they should be partakers. Ninth, that in a soon-coming day they should apprehend the oneness of life, shared by the Father and the Son and the sons.

Stedman: This Spirit will be "*another*," a separate but similar Person to himself. "*I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor*," Jesus

promises, thereby, clearly indicating it will not be himself but someone else. He uses a word for "*another*" which in Greek means "another of the same kind." Here again is a clear reference to the mystery of the Trinity; three persons in one, Father, Son and Spirit, all distinct, separate one from another, yet forming only one God. The Spirit will take over the work that Jesus had been doing with the disciples. The reason they had held firm in their faith for three and a half years was because they were with Jesus. The minute they lost sight of who he was, even when he was physically present, they began to come apart. He upheld them; he strengthened them; he counseled them; he ministered to them. But now he promises another is coming who will do this same work. . .

The Spirit is truly a remarkable resource. He is a source of knowledge not to be found in any university in the land. Marvelous as Stanford University is, with its vast collections of human learning and knowledge, it cannot function in the realm that is the purview of the Spirit of God alone. There is fundamental knowledge about life, absolutely necessary to properly function as a human being, that will never be found in any secular university, but is made available to us only by the Spirit. This resource is a fountain of strength, an ability to revive, to encourage, to put new vim into life. The Spirit can grant a cleansing of the conscience and heart that human psychology knows nothing about. . .

The good news for these men is that they would not lose Jesus when the Spirit came. He would be back by means of the Spirit, and he would stay with them. When it reads "I will not leave you desolate," the actual word used is "orphans." "I will not leave you orphans." That was surely how they felt -- like orphans. The One whom they had learned to love and trust was leaving them. But Jesus promises, "when the Spirit comes, I will come with him." Here he puts his finger on what is probably the most wonderful truth about the coming of the Spirit: His primary work is to make Jesus real to his disciples. The mark of the Spirit-filled life is not signs, or wonders, or tongues, but an ever-deepening consciousness of the reality of Jesus Christ. That is the Spirit at work.

Grant: The temple of the Lord had been completed, and the priests brought the ark of the covenant, which symbolized the presence of the Lord, to its place of rest in the most holy place. As they left, a glorious cloud filled the entire temple, again symbolizing the presence of the Lord. The Lord was indeed dwelling among his people, symbolized by his presence in the temple. It was an awesome sight (1 Kings 8:6-11).

An even more awesome thought is that just as the Lord filled the temple with his presence, he fills us with his presence. Each believer in Jesus Christ is a temple inhabited by the Lord. His glory fills our temples.

The New Testament transforms the concept of the temple, which is where God dwelt. The transformation takes three different spiritual forms. First, God dwelt with Christ. Second, God dwells with his people corporately. This is the emphasis in John 14:1-14 - the spiritual temple that we inhabit. Third, God dwells in each believer. This is the emphasis in John 14:15-31 - the spiritual temple that each of us is, the house that the Lord inhabits. We not only dwell in God, but God dwells in us.

Grant: This beholding has something to do with living, for Jesus immediately says that "because I live, you shall live also." Jesus tells them that he is living presently, but they "shall" live. Evidently, they are not living now. This obviously cannot mean physical life. It must mean spiritual life. In fact, Jesus himself will define life in a strictly spiritual sense only a few moments from now (John 17:3). They will live spiritually when the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in them. And Jesus defines spiritual life in John 17:3 as knowing the Father and knowing him. Spiritual life concerns being related to God and relating to him. The Spirit gives life (John 6:63, 2 Corinthians 3:6).

Why is it that we live spiritually because Jesus lives spiritually? It's because we have been baptized, or placed, into Christ by the Holy Spirit, and we are now clothed with, or surrounded by, Christ. (Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 12:13). We have been united with Christ. That means what's true of Christ in his humanity is true of us. If Christ has the Holy Spirit in him, that means we do as well. So we have the Holy Spirit living in us as an implication of the Holy Spirit's having placed us into Christ.

Jerry Bridges, quoted by **Bruce Goettsche :**

Love for God, then, is the only acceptable motive for obedience to him. This love may express itself in a reverence for him and a desire to please him, but those expressions must spring from love. Without the motive of love my apparent obedience may be essentially self-serving. Negatively, I may fear God will punish me, or at least withhold his blessing from me, because of some disobedience. I may abstain from a particular sinful action out of fear I will be found out or because I don't want to feel guilty afterward.

Positively, I may be seeking to earn God's blessing through some pious actions. I may conform to a certain standard of conduct because I want to fit in with and be accepted by the Christian culture in which I live. I might even obey outwardly because I have a compliant temperament, and it is simply my " nature " to obey my parents, or my teacher, or civil authorities, or even God.

All of these motives-both negative and positive-may result in an outward form of obedience, but it is not obedience from the heart. Our behavior may appear outstanding to other people but not be acceptable to God because it does not spring from a motive of love to him. Only conduct that arises from love is worthy of the name of obedience. [The Discipline of Grace, Bridges p.118,119]

Hendriksen: Re vs. 20

In the new dispensation, beginning with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples (and those who afterward embrace the Christ by living faith) will recognize and joyfully acknowledge the closeness of the relationship between the Father and the Son (as has been shown in connection with verse 18). They will then also understand that this union is in turn the pattern for the relationship between Christ and his followers. To be sure, these two relationships are not identical. Between the Father and the Son there is basically (as the root of the unity in outward operation) a unity of essence. This unity is

absolute, incapable of growth. On the other hand, between the Son and believers there is an ethical and spiritual unity. We love him because he first loved us. This unity is capable of growth. Nevertheless, in view of the fact that Christ by means of the Spirit actually lives in the hearts of believers, the former is truly a pattern for the latter.

So close is the relation between Christ and believers that while he is the vine, they are the vine-branches. He is the shepherd; they the sheep. They are the members of the body of which he is the head.

TEXT: John 15:1-17

TITLE: SPIRITUAL HORTICULTURE – ABIDING IN CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

FRUIT BEARING RESULTS FROM ABIDING IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: Remember the Context:

Disciples have left the upper room and are on the way to Gethsemane (14:31);

Final training of the disciples and preparation for departure of Christ;

Judas (that false professor of faith) has departed so that Christ is just speaking to the remaining genuine disciples. His betrayal is imminent.

I. (:1-8) ABIDE IN CHRIST’S LIFE AS BRANCHES IN THE VINE AND SO BEAR MUCH FRUIT

A. (:1) Identification of the Key Players

1. Christ is the True Vine – Source of Life

“I am the true vine”

genuine, perfect, without imperfection

cf. John 1:9 – the true light

cf. John 6:30-35 – the true bread

the other wasn’t false, but imperfect

Gil Rugh: (lots of good info. from his tape on this passage) -- OT background that Israel is the vine of God ... but always in negative sense as a degenerate vine that failed to accomplish God’s purpose and did not bear fruit; worthless; Jesus in contrast is all that God intended His vine to be; Ps. 80:8-16; Is. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 15; Hos. 10:1). If a vine fails to produce fruit it is worthless; wood not good for anything else; can’t build houses with it or even burn it for heat.

2. The Father is the Vinedresser – Cultivator of Life

“and My Father is the vinedresser”

cf. OT imagery above of God as the vinedresser

cares for the vine; the fruit belongs to Him

B. (:2-3) All Believers Bear Some Measure of Fruit – Proving their Connectivity to Christ

1. (:2) Dead or Alive – Only Two Types of Branches – Not abiding vs. Abiding

a. Dead Branches (non fruit bearing = all false professors of faith like Judas) Removed

“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away”

Key phrase: “*in Me*” – must take it here to mean professing believers; not a statement that these are actual believers (if they were they would be bearing some measure of fruit). Look at other instances in the Gospels where people have some sort of external connection to the kingdom but are not truly part of it (cf. Matt. 7:15-23; wheat and tares Mat. 13). Also Romans 11:13-24.

Not looking here at some third group of “carnal believers” that somehow have genuine life but never produce any fruit.

Therefore, all true believers abide (remain) in Christ ... the question is one of degree.

It is clear that the contrast is not between good Christians (who will get lots of rewards) and poor Christians (who will still get to heaven but miss out on rewards). Very misunderstood passage.

It is also not teaching that Christians can lose their salvation.

“*take away*” – in what sense? not loss of reward for believers like 1 Corinthians 3; but not even connected to the life of Christ. Speaking of the eternal fire of hell and God’s condemnation.

b. Live Branches (fruit bearing = all true believers) Pruned

“and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.”

Significance of fruit: the testimony or evidence that you are a child of God (Matt. 3; Matt. 7)

What is the nature of this Fruit?

- Christian character qualities; fruit of the Holy Spirit
- impact on the lives of others

Stedman: God came looking for justice and righteousness; instead he found oppression, cruelty, exploitation, and indifference to the needs of others. So it is evident from that parable that the fruit which God expects of the vine is moral character, or as we have it in the New Testament, the fruit of the Spirit -- the fruit which the Spirit produces. The life which is in the vine produces fruit which Paul describes in Galatians 5 as: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. The fruit, in other words, is Christ-likeness. And our Lord is indicating that the very purpose of the vine is to produce such fruit.

All different levels of fruit bearing; goal is to mature and bear as much fruit as possible

Why does God prune us? to make us more productive

How does God prune us? often through difficult circumstances; the testing talked about in book of James

2. (:3) Fruit Bearing is Not a Works Oriented Approach to Salvation

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

cf. John 13:10 – same type of emphasis

Christ has cleansed us with His Word; The work of regeneration is solely by grace through faith; our fruit has no part in atoning for our sins; However, if Christ has cleansed us and given us a new heart and a new nature, we will demonstrate that changed life through fruit of some sort.

Stedman: I struggled for a while with this word prunes because in the Greek it is really "cleanses." It seemed to me a far cry from cleansing away debris to pruning back the branches -- until I learned that, in the usual practice of viticulture (i.e., the care of vines), the branches are pruned back each year in order to cleanse them. That is, a vine produces certain shoots (called "sucker" shoots) which start to grow where the branch joins the stem. If allowed to continue to grow, they would dissipate the life of the vine through so many branches that the vine would produce little or no fruit but would produce leaves instead. So every vinedresser knows it is important to prune away these little sucker shoots in order that the vine may produce more fruit. And since they grow right where the branch joins the stem, creating a tight cluster where dirt, leaves, and other debris collect, the pruning is therefore a cleansing process. This is what our Lord has in view.

C. (:4-5) All Fruit Depends on Connectivity to Christ

1. (:4) No Fruit Possible Apart from Abiding

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

Concept of Abiding: idea of permanence and perseverance

Absolute dependence; "make our permanent home" - **Deffinbaugh**

2. (:5) Much Fruit Possible in Connectivity to Christ

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

D. (:6-7) Two Different Destinies – Depending on Connectivity to Christ

1. (:6) Negative -- Judgment

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

2. (:7) Positive – Blessing of Answered Prayer

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”

Stedman: We must never forget that prayer and promise are linked together. Prayer is not a way of getting God to do what you want him to do, rather it is asking him to do what he has promised to do. We pray according to the promises. So if you want to make your prayers effective begin to read and study the promises of God. When you do, you will pray according to the mind and will of God.

E. (:8) Ultimate Goal = Glory of God through Abundant Fruit Bearing

“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

II. (:9-15) ABIDE IN CHRIST’S LOVE BY LOVING ONE ANOTHER AND SO BEAR MUCH FRUIT

A. (:9) Divine Pattern for Mutual Love

“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.”

B. (:10-12) The Pathway for Love and Joy is the Pathway of Obedience and of Christ

1. (:10) Love Defined by Obedience

“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.”

2. (:11) Obedience and Love Always Bring Joy

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

3. (:12) Christ Always is Our Pattern

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”

C. (:13-15) Love and Obedience Under gird the Intimacy of Friendship

(:16-17) CONCLUSION

A. (:16) Abide in Christ’s Life and so Bear Much Fruit

1. Divine Election is the Root of our Life

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you”

2. Fruit Bearing is the Purpose of our Life

“ that you should go and bear fruit”

Requires taking the initiative to “Go”

3. Divine Preservation is the Promise of our Life
“and that your fruit should remain”

4. Answered Prayer is the Blessing of our Life
“that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you.”

B. (:17) Abide in Christ’s Love and so Bear Much Fruit
“This I command you, that you love one another.”

Love must essentially be an action rather than an emotion.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we fully appreciate the possibilities of who we have the potential to become and what we have the potential to accomplish as we abide in Christ?
- 2) What have been some examples of the pruning process of God in our lives? Where has He used His Word; where has he used painful experiences?
- 3) What does it mean to you to be treated as a “*friend of God*”?
- 4) Does any believer really experience the fantastic type of carte blanche answers to prayer that are promised in this passage? Why did Christ speak in such absolutes regarding prayer and its attendant blessings?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gil Rugh: (from his sermon tapes on this passage)

John uses this word “*abide*” more than any other NT writer – 42 times in the Gospel; 22 times in 1 John; 2 times in 2 John; 1 time in Revelation. It means “to dwell, remain, live.” There is a mutuality to the abiding.

Wrong Views:

- You can stop abiding as a Christian and lose your salvation.
- There are 2 kinds of Christians: those who are abiding and those who are not abiding

Right View: every Christian abides in Christ all of the time! Remember the concept of mutuality – if you stop abiding in Christ, He stops abiding in you. The life flows from

the vine into the branches and guarantees fruit production (which is not the same for every believer). Apart from Christ we have nothing of the genuine true godly character of Christ and are deemed worthless.

(This does not deny the application that we need to be exhorted to greater intimacy in our union with Christ ... that is still a valid application.)

Edward Morgan: Pruning done for 2 reasons:

- 1) In the first stages of growth, when you see the buds at the top and the roots at the bottom, sometimes there are deviations (undercut its own desire to establish itself apart from the graft = break of the roots growing at the top where they don't belong)
- 2) When the vine begins to grow and produce too many branches, they become useless and they sap the strength of the vine; cut them away so that more fruit may be produced (Heb. 12:1-2)

How does God do this?

- through His Word (15:3) – as we try to apply it
- through His pruning knife of adversity

C. I. Scofield: To abide in Christ, is, on the one hand, to have no known sin unjudged and unconfessed, no interest into which He is not brought, no life which He cannot share. On the other hand, the abiding one takes all burdens to Him, and draws all wisdom, life, and strength from Him. It is not unceasing consciousness of these things, and of Him, but that nothing is allowed in the life which separates from Him.

Deffinbaugh: Some think that the “fruit” our Lord refers to here is the “fruit of the Spirit” (see Galatians 5:22-23). Others think of the “fruit” as new converts—those who have been saved as a result of the witness of the branches. I understand the term fruit a bit more broadly. I believe that as we abide in Christ, He abides in us, and when He abides in us, Jesus Christ becomes evident in and through us. The “fruit” then, is being Christ-like. The church is the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12). I believe we bear fruit as Christ is manifested in and through our lives. He is seen in us as we manifest His character (Galatians 5:22-23). He is evident in us as we carry on the work He began when He was on this earth (see Acts 3:6, 12-16; 4:13). Being fruitful, then, is manifesting Christ in our lives.

Deffinbaugh: Think about what “home” means to us:

- Home is where your heart is; it is where you want to be (especially during holidays).
- Home is the place to which you return, the place to which you are eager to get back to (e.g., when you've been on vacation).
- Home is where you feel comfortable, and can really be yourself.
- Home is a place of safety and security.
- Home is where you bring your friends when you wish to have fellowship with them.
- Home is our base of operations; it is at the center of what we do.
- Home is where you find your strength for life; it is where you eat and sleep.
- Home is where the people and the things we love the most are found.

Isn't this what Jesus Christ should be for the Christian? Shouldn't He be our place of refuge and security? Should He not be the source of our life and strength? Shouldn't He be the reason for our fellowship with others? Shouldn't He be where our heart is?

To further explore this matter of Jesus Christ as our "abiding place," our "home," let us consider the opposite of making Him our home. What is it that should not be our "home"? Answer: this world. The old song goes, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through ..." Isn't that really true? John warns us not to become too attached to the world, not to love it:

Goettsche quoting **Chuck Swindoll**: Principles for Hectic Lives:

Chuck Swindoll in his fine little book INTIMACY WITH GOD talks about maintaining (or regaining) a sense of God's presence in our lives. If I may summarize, Swindoll says that what we need it to:

unclutter our lives and live more simply.
build times of quiet and reflection into our lives
learn to listen to and listen for God.

When was the last time you gave any attention to your relationship with God?

TEXT: John 15:18-16:6

TITLE: PREPARATION FOR PERSECUTION

BIG IDEA:

**REMEMBERING THE ENCOURAGING PROPHETIC WORDS OF CHRIST
MAKES PERSECUTION MORE PALATABLE**

**I. (:18-21) PERSECUTION (HATRED) SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE FROM A
PREDICTABLE WORLD**

A. (:18) Don't Imagine Your Persecution to be Unique --

Persecution Follows a Predictable Pattern – We are in good company!

Disciples follow in the footsteps of the Master (no “Woe is me” mentality)

“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.”

B. (:19) Don't Try to Avoid Persecution by Conformity to the World --

Election and Sanctification Qualify Disciples for Persecution –

Disciples have been chosen to be “unworldly” – Don't lose our saltiness!

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Stedman: You are different, and the world does not like anything different. The one unrelenting pressure of society around us is to conform, to shape up. (1 Pet. 4:3-4)

Scott Grant: We often expend much effort trying to get the world to love us, or at least not to hate us. The effort is not only wasted, it's misguided. It's wasted because the world will never really love us. In order for it to love us, we have to act like people we are not. We'd have to be like the world's "own." If the world loves in response to an act, it's not loving what's really there. It's misguided because in order to be like the world, we have to adopt its ways, which are destructive.

C. (:20) Don't Think You Are Exempt from Persecution --

Disciples Will Receive the Same Response as the Master

1. Prophetic Reminder

“Remember the word that I said to you”

2. Universal Principle

“A slave is not greater than his master”

3. Parallel Response

a. Persecution

“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you”

b. Discipleship

“if they kept My word, they will keep yours also”

D. (:21) Don't Take it Personally –

Persecution is not your fault!

1. Persecution is Ultimately Directed Against Christ

“But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake”

2. Persecution Stems From an Ignorance of God

“because they do not know the One who sent Me”

II. (:22-27) PERSECUTION (HATRED) OF CHRIST RENDERS THE JEWS GUILTY AND WITHOUT EXCUSE (IN LIGHT OF SUCH ABUNDANT REVELATION)

A. (:22) Words of Christ Condemn Them

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.”

B. (:23) Key Link Between God the Son and God the Father

“He who hates Me hates My Father also.”

C. (:24) Works of Christ Condemn Them

“If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.”

D. (:25) They are Without Excuse – Condemned by Their Own Prophetic Law

“But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’”

Such hatred is inexcusable!

Scott Grant: The word written in their law comes from either Psalm 35:19 or Psalm 69:4, or perhaps both. In each case King David is writing of his enemies, who hate him "without a cause." Jesus, as the eternal inheritor of the throne of David, understands these words as his own. In Psalm 35, David said of those who hated him: "But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer kept returning to my bosom. I went about as though it were my friend or brother; I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother" (Psalm 35:13-14). Those who hated David not only had no cause to hate him; they had every cause to love him, for he treated them as friends.

E. (:26-27) Supporting Witnesses for Truth About Christ

1. (:26) Witness of the Holy Spirit

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that

is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness of Me.”

2. (:27) Witness of the Apostles

“and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

III. (16:1-6) BEING FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED – ENCOURAGING WORDS SUSTAIN FAITH THROUGH TRYING TIMES OF SEPARATION AND PERSECUTION

A. (:1) The Goal is Abiding in Christ by Grace Through Faith

“These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling.”

B. (:2-3) Trying Times of Religious Persecution Are Coming

1. (:2) Self Deceived Motive of Spiritual Service

“They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.”

2. (:3) Actual Motive of Spiritual Ignorance

“And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me.”

C. (:4-6) Knowledge of the Future Can Be a Mixed Blessing – Immediate sorrow ... but lasting encouragement

1. (:4) Persecution Foretold Ahead of Time

“But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”

2. (:5) Separation Brings Increased Pressure ... Should Stir Our Curiosity

“And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are you going?’”

Disciples are too preoccupied with themselves and the difficulties that lie ahead to be able to focus on what revelation Christ has for them.

3. (:6) Sorrow is the Immediate Reaction . . . Until We fully understand and trust the resources God has provided

“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.”

(Verses 5-6 are transitional and could be taken with the next section as well.)

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the benefits of expecting persecution instead of being surprised by it? Are we honest enough to tell new believers to expect persecution and to prepare them to deal with it properly?
- 2) Why does the world tolerate luke-warm Christianity but react with such intensity and hostility to sold-out Christianity?
- 3) What type of witness is John talking about in vv.26-27? What is the content of this testimony? To whom is the testimony directed? What is the connection of these verses to this section?
- 4) When do we find ourselves *sorrowful* in our Christian walk (16:6) when Christ intends us to be excited or joyful or expectant? What is wrong with our perspective in those instances?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: I had lunch last week with Brother Andrew, the man who has been called "God's Smuggler." He has faced the hostility of anti-Christian governments all over the world as he has carried in Bibles to the believers in these countries. Now he is involved not so much in Bible distribution as in ministering to the persecuted saints behind the Iron Curtains of the world. He told me how he encourages them by quoting often a verse from Psalm 18, "By my God I can run through a troop; by Him I can leap over a wall," {cf, Psa 18:29}. He asks them, "What do you think it takes to run through a troop and to leap over a wall?" The answer he gets is usually something about faith. Then he says, "No, what it takes is a troop and a wall. How are you going to run through a troop if there is no troop? How are you going to leap over a wall if there is no wall?" There must be opposition, persecution, pressure and resistance or you cannot demonstrate that you are equipped by God to handle that kind of situation. Thus Jesus says here, it cannot be avoided.

Stedman: Our Lord has indicated to them that there were certain things he did not say to them from the beginning. He did not tell them of the hostility of the world. He did not tell them about the tremendous opposition and persecution they would face. Nor did he tell them how to meet it. And he says why: "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you." There he indicates our need as human beings to be kept and supported and strengthened. He was keeping these disciples himself. Since he was there, they had no need to know all that he was keeping them from, or how it was done. "But now," he says, "I'm going away. Now you'll need to understand what has been happening."

There he reveals to us the basic need of our humanity: to be kept. This is what the Scriptures teach us about ourselves -- that we are basically born to be dependent on something or someone else to keep us. We are not able to handle life by ourselves.

Scott Grant: Jesus wants us to understand the world's hatred toward his followers. First, it's rooted not in hatred toward believers but in hatred toward God. This allows us to distance ourselves from it. Second, we can testify about Jesus in the face of the world's hatred. And finally, hatred is not something we need be surprised by; in fact, we should expect it.

Deffinbaugh: In the first half of chapter 15, Jesus has instructed His disciples to “abide in Him.” In our text, He does not turn to a different subject, but rather to a different aspect of abiding. Abiding in Christ is the source of our life, our fruit-bearing, and of our fellowship, both with God and with our fellow Christians. Abiding in Him is also the reason the world will hate us. The same hatred for Jesus which prompts unbelievers to call for His crucifixion will soon be vented upon those who have identified with Jesus, and through whom our Lord will continue to work in this world. And so Jesus turns to the subject of persecution, and the ministry of His Spirit, who will not only give His disciples joy in the midst of their afflictions, but who will enable them to witness and to reap a harvest of souls from among those who hate both Jesus and those who abide in Him. . .

The Jews falsely assumed that they had a relationship with God, based upon: (1) their ancestry, namely the fact that Abraham was their forefather (see Matthew 3:9-10; John 8:33ff.); and (2) their keeping of the Law of Moses, at least by their definition of it (see Matthew 5:20; Romans 2:17–3:20). Ironically, they accused Jesus of being just the opposite: (1) that He was an illegitimate child (John 8:41), and (2) that He was a law-breaker and a sinner (John 5:18; 9:16, 24; 18:30-31). They claimed God as their father and were incensed when Jesus claimed God was His Father (John 5:17ff.; 8:31ff.). Jesus now indicates that if anyone hates Him, they also hate the Father. How incredible! The very ones who believe that they love God have demonstrated that they hate Him, and the proof of this is the fact that they hate Jesus.

Bruce Goettsche: How to Be Popular

When you were in Junior High School it is likely that your personal self-image was shaped largely by one factor. It was not your grade point average, not the stuff you possessed or the clothes you wore, it was how popular you were with your peers. If you were popular with the crowd you felt confident and good. If you were not you were confused and often depressed. The desire to be popular can affect the kind of car we buy, the toys we enjoy, the clothes we wear. Peer pressure is so powerful simply because popularity is so important. . .

Why the fierce reaction? Living in the light exposes the darkness by contrast...

- your ethics expose the duplicity of the world's methods.
- your values imply that the behaviors of the world are condemned by God

- your compassion exposes the heartless self-absorption of the world
- your peace and joy angers those who want what you have

Pink: The principal Subject in the passage which is to be before us is the world's hostility against Christ and His people. Its hatred is mentioned seven times—solemn witness to its awful entirety and inveteracy. The transition from the preceding section is quite natural and easy. The Lord had been speaking to and of "his own;" now He contemplates "the world." He had just declared that His disciples are His friends; now He turns to describe His and their enemies. He had set before the apostles the proofs of His love for them; now He warns them of the world's hatred. The connection between the last verse of the previous section and the opening one of our present portion is most significant. "These things I command you, that ye love one another." Various motives had been presented for them loving one another, chief among them being the example of His own wondrous love. Now an entirely new and different reason is advanced: Christians need to be united together by the bonds of brotherly affection because the world, their common enemy, hated them. . .

The warning which the Lord Jesus here gave the apostles is much needed by young believers to-day. The inexperienced Christian supposes that the hatred of the world against him is a reproach. He thinks that he is to blame for it. He imagines that if only he were kinder, more gentle, more humble, more Christ like, the enmity of unbelievers would be overcome. This is a great mistake. The truth is, the more Christ like we are the more shall we be antagonized and shunned. The most conclusive proof of this is found in the treatment which our blessed Savior received when He was in the world. He was "despised and rejected of men." If then the purest love which was ever manifested on earth, if goodness incarnate was hated by men in general, if the brighter His love shone, the fiercer was the enmity which it met with in response, then how can we expect to be admired and esteemed by the world? Surely none will entertain the horrible thought that any of us can surpass the prudence of the Son of God!

Hendriksen: To be sure, there had been predictions of coming persecution (Matt. 5:10-12; 10:16-39). But *these things* (15:18-16:3) – the fact that the world hates the disciples because Jesus has chosen them out of the world, that this hatred was in reality directed against Jesus and against the Father, that it was absolutely inexcusable and was rooted in the sinister condition of the heart which deliberately refused to acknowledge the true God, that the time was actually coming when men would regard the putting to death of Christ's followers to be tantamount to an act of worship altogether pleasing to God – these things, with that emphasis and in that forthright manner, had never been revealed before. One does not find "*these things*" in Matt. 5:10-12, which speaks only of persecution in general and of slander in particular --, nor in Matt. 10:16-39, which describes the outward forms of persecution (arrest, flogging, death, name-calling), but says very little about the hidden root from which this persecution springs (only Matt. 10:22, 24, 25, 40; cf. John 15:20, 21). The reason why Jesus had not said *these things* from the beginning was that it had not been necessary then, because he was still with them. As long as he was physically present, the brunt of the attack was directed against him, not against his disciples. From now on there would be a change. With Jesus crucified, the Sanhedrin would begin to vent its wrath upon his followers.

TEXT: John 16:7-15

TITLE: THE DEPARTURE OF CHRIST UNLEASHES THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

BIG IDEA:

THE HOLY SPIRIT EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATES GOD'S TRUTH ON A WIDER SCALE TO BOTH THE WORLD AND TO BELIEVERS

(:7) INTRODUCTION: THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST WILL ACTUALLY BE EXPANDED IN HIS ABSENCE THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

Jesus could not physically be everywhere geographically at once; but the Holy Spirit can. Disciples were downcast at the prospect of the departure of Christ; Jesus changes their perspective to see the advantage that lies ahead.

I. (:8-11) THE HOLY SPIRIT CONVICTS SINNERS OF THEIR NEED FOR A SAVIOR (PAVING THE WAY FOR THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL)

A. (:8) Summary: Ministry of Conviction towards the World

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment”

Scott Grant: We don't need to convince people that they are sinners; we don't need to convince people of the righteousness of Christ; we don't need to convince them that they are being judged by God. Thankfully, we have no part in the conviction. We are neither prosecutors nor judges. But we are witnesses. We can tell people about sin, righteousness and judgment and leave the convicting up to the Helper.

Stedman: When I travel around the country I visit many different churches. And so many times I find that the thing most emphasized by the church in its attempts to reach out to the world is the church! The church presents the program of the church, and what the church will do, and offers the church to society. The early Christians never wasted their time in that. They never talked about the church; they talked about the Lord. The church doesn't save anybody. The church doesn't help anybody. It is the Lord who does it. He redeems, he changes, he revolutionizes, he forgives, he restores, he heals -- not the church! When the church is Spirit-filled it talks about Jesus. And when the world hears that, then it is finally convinced that its most basic and fundamental sin is not the evil things it does but the fact that it does not believe in Jesus.

B. (:9) Conviction Regarding Failures – Rooted in Unbelief

“concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me”

Connection between sin and death and judgment

Different words for sin: missing the mark; rebellion; etc.

Fundamental root sin = failure to believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- C. (:10) Conviction Regarding Standards – Displayed in the Character of Christ
“and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me”

Need for believers to display that righteousness that comes from Christ;

World does not believe in absolutes; but the Holy Spirit presents righteousness in absolute terms.

Stedman: The Old Testament has a wonderful term for that: "The beauty of holiness." We are talking about inner beauty. One of my favorite psalms says, "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," {Psa 90:17a KJV}. There is something beautiful about whole people. They attract us, they capture our attention. The truly beautiful people, therefore, says Jesus, will be those who, despite all the failure and the weakness and the stumbling folly of their lives, have, by faith in Jesus, been made whole inwardly, and that inner wholeness then begins to transform, in a process, all of the outer life until they gradually reflect it in their behavior. That is what the world will learn.

- D. (:11) Conviction Regarding Accountability – Exemplified in the Judgment of Satan
“and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged”
There are consequences for rebellion against God

II. (:12-15) THE HOLY SPIRIT COMMUNICATES GOD’S TRUTH TO BELIEVERS (ESPECIALLY IN WAYS THAT GLORIFY CHRIST)

- A. (:12) Progressive Revelation

“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

- B. (:13) Purposeful Revelation

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak”

Primarily a reference to direct prophetic revelation via the process of inspiration to complete the canon of NT Scripture; but by way of application speaks to the Holy Spirit illuminating all of us.

- C. (:13b) Prophetic Revelation

“and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

cf. Book of Revelation

- C. (:14-15) Particular Revelation – Focused on Person of Christ

“He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you.”

Christ-centered nature of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
Pattern of receiving and disclosing.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What *advantages* do believers have today over that of the apostles who studied under the feet of Jesus personally? Why can the Holy Spirit not be given until after Christ departs?
- 2) How does the Holy Spirit go about *convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment*? What role do believers play in this process?
- 3) Why didn't Jesus communicate more truth to the disciples? Why did He feel that they were not able to "*bear*" certain truths at that point in time? What truths do you think these were?
- 4) Trace the emphasis on the Trinity in these middle chapters in the Gospel of John, Why does the Holy Spirit focus on Jesus instead of on Himself when it comes to disclosing truth?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ryrie: The Spirit, through apostles, evangelists, and preachers, will *convict* the world. *To convict* means to set forth the truth of the Gospel in such a clear light that men are able to accept or reject it intelligently; i.e., to convince men of the truthfulness of the Gospel. The Spirit will help break down the indifference of the typical pagan who has no conviction of sin, who holds a low regard for righteousness, and who pays no heed to warnings of the coming judgment.

Stedman: You see, the Holy Spirit is not coming to the world; he is coming to you, to the church, to the Christian. And when he comes to the Christian, this will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. That is what he is saying. In fact, back in Chapter 14, Jesus had said specifically to these disciples that when the Spirit of truth would come, the world would not be able to receive him. It does not receive him -- it cannot receive him -- because it neither sees him nor knows him. Therefore he does not come to the world; he comes to us. But when he comes to us and operates in us as he intends, he will have this three-fold effect upon the world. . .

As the world observes what the Spirit does to Christians they will learn,
- First, the nature of reality: Jesus is behind all things. He is Lord of life.

- Secondly, they will learn that beauty starts from within: It is not painted on from without. It does not come by spraying, by painting, or by rubbing it on. It comes from within. And
- Thirdly, they learn the true nature of liberty, to be a free person and to live as sons of the living God.

Scott Grant: One of my favorite songs is "There is a Redeemer," which was reworked by Melody Green and performed by Keith Green. One of the reasons I like it is because the refrain includes all members of the Godhead: "Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son / and leaving your Spirit till the work on earth is done." I play it on the guitar from time to time. Recently, the last line in the refrain has caused me to choke up, because I'm gaining more familiarity with the Spirit - who he is and what he does. Last summer I read through the Upper Room Discourse and then Acts through Revelation, looking for nothing but the Spirit. I was deeply moved at a few points as I saw what the Spirit was doing. I've seen more of the "advantage" that he is. I've seen how he nurtures my relationship with God.

Hendriksen: Traces the usage of word "*convict*" in NT ... He will publicly expose its guilt and call it to repentance. . . . The result of this operation of the Spirit is not indicated here. From Acts 2:22-41; 7:51-57; 9:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:24; 2 Cor. 2:15, 16; Tit. 1:13, we learn that in some cases the result will be conversion; in others, hardening and everlasting punishment. . . .

Note how this prophecy of Jesus was actually fulfilled. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) deals exactly with these three subjects: a. *sin*, the sin of rejecting the Christ ("*you by the hand of lawless men crucified and killed him*" . . . "*this Jesus whom you crucified*"); b. *righteousness*, the righteousness of Christ ("*Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved by God*"); and c. *judgment*, the judgment of those hostile to Christ ("*Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet . . . Save yourselves from this crooked generation*"). The result was: "*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'. . . . And there were added to them that day about three thousand souls.*"

Deffinbaugh: We should also see from our text an example of the fact that God reveals truth to us progressively. Jesus had much to say to them, but not at that moment. Jesus will teach them after His resurrection and before His ascension (see Luke 24:13ff.), but most of the teaching will be done by the Holy Spirit, after our Lord's departure. This is the subject of verses 13-16. While Jesus will be physically absent, the Holy Spirit will be present among and within them. The things which the Spirit teaches them are the things which Jesus will be teaching them. The reason Jesus can say this is that the truth which the Spirit is teaching is the truth which He hears from our Lord. The Spirit's teaching comes from and glorifies the Lord Jesus (verses 3-4), just as our Lord's teaching came from and glorified the Father (John 8:26, 40).

We should take note of the important fact that Jesus is speaking to His disciples here. He promises to reveal truth to them through the Spirit. He does not make a general

statement, that new truth will be revealed to an indefinite number of people, over an indefinite period of time.⁷⁴ He informs them that He will reveal His truth to them. I believe that this promise of future revelation through the Holy Spirit is a promise that pertains to the New Testament apostles⁷⁵ and is not a promise which can be claimed by men today. By future revelation, I mean revelation which claims to be Scripture and which has authority as Scripture (i.e., the Bible). It seems clear to me that the apostles, through whom the New Testament Scriptures were given, were viewed as a distinct group, confined to New Testament times. Those who were to be regarded as true apostles were accredited by the "signs of a true apostle":

Bruce Goettsche: My parents live near O Hare airport in Chicago. You can stand on the back porch and count plane after plane coming in to land at the airport. They are a couple of miles from the airport but you can hear the jets clearly. But do you know what? After you are there for awhile you don't hear the jets at all. It's not because the noise isn't there . . . you've just tuned it out. That's what has happened to too many believers. We have silenced the Spirit's whispers so many times that we don't hear them any longer.

Dwight Moody once illustrated this truth as follows: "Tell me," he said to his audience, "How can I get the air out of this glass?" One man said, "Suck it out with a pump." Moody replied, "That would create a vacuum and shatter the glass." After many impossible suggestions, Moody smiled, picked up a pitcher of water, and filled the glass. "There," he said, "all the air is now removed." He then went on to show that victory in the Christian life is not by "sucking out a sin here and there," but rather by being filled with the Spirit

TEXT: John 16:16-33

TITLE: SEEING JESUS CLEARLY SOLVES EVERYTHING

BIG IDEA:

SEEING JESUS BY FAITH CONNECTS US TO DIVINE LOVE, JOY AND PEACE

(:16-18) INTRODUCTION: SEEING JESUS SHOULD BE OUR GREATEST CONCERN

A. (:16) Cryptic Contrast

1. Soon You Won't See Me

"A little while, and you will no longer behold Me"

This is a monumental statement; should create great concern among the disciples. Do we understand the full ramifications of not being able to behold Jesus?

2. Soon You Will See Me Again

"and again a little while, and you will see Me."

This combination of statements stirred up a lot of curiosity and questioning. The question of what time is in view is a difficult one throughout this section. There seem to be 2 different levels of meaning:

- one, relates to that time of direct teaching by Jesus during His post resurrection appearances to these disciples; but the scope of the passage goes way beyond this ..
- the other is that overall dispensation of the Spirit inaugurated on the day of Pentecost ... which has been the emphasis in these last chapters as Christ prepares His disciples for His departure

The figurative language allows for these simple words to be taken in multiple senses.

John MacArthur: Jesus said that when He went to the Father, He would send the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26). According to Romans 8:9, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. So when Christ said the disciples would see Him again, He was saying He would be back not in a physical body, but through the person of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit would dwell in us (John 14:17). In John 16:7 the Lord said, *"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."* Christ couldn't send His Spirit yet because the Spirit was a reward to Him from the Father for accomplishing the work on the cross (Eph. 1:13-14). When Christ went to heaven having accomplished His work, the Father sent the Spirit, whom Christ sent in His place. . .

Christ pledged that He would return after His temporary departure. And when He returned, it wouldn't be in His physical body, which could be in only one place at a time. He would be in every believer at all times. Sure enough, within a few weeks of making His pledge, the apostles received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4). The phrase "a little while" can be used to refer to weeks, so that interpretation is appropriate. The first "little while" talks of hours, and the second speaks of weeks.

B. (:17-18) Concerned Confusion ... Disturbing Perplexity

“Some of His disciples therefore said to one another, ‘What is this thing He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me;’ and ‘because I go to the Father?’”

Jesus is talking in figurative language and the disciples are still not grasping the full spiritual significance of seeing Jesus by faith.

“Behold Me” = The Key!

I. (:19-24) SEEING JESUS BY FAITH CONNECTS US TO DIVINE JOY – JOY OVERCOMES SORROW

A. (:19) Don't Hesitate to Seek Clarification from Jesus – only He can dispel the fog of confusion

“Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, ‘Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not behold Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me?’”

- Jesus knows our every need before we even ask
- The blind leading the blind will never get anywhere – why did the disciples hesitate to come to Jesus directly and get answers?
- Make sure that we are focusing on the right questions
- We need to arrive at true spiritual understanding – to come through the fog of confusion and arrive at settled conviction
- cf. “Ask Jeeves” internet site – We need to Ask Jesus for understanding

B. (:20-22) The Joy of the Resurrection will Dispel the Labor Pains of the Coming Crucifixion and Temporary Separation

1. (:20) Sorrow will Come (but not to stay); But Joy Will Follow (and will remain!)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy.”

Stedman: Most of us assume that our sorrow is going to be replaced by joy. But the promise of Jesus is that the very thing which caused the sorrow is also going to be the cause of the joy. That is a revelation of one of the great principles which mark authentic Christianity, one of the ways by which our Lord works in

our life. He takes the very thing which causes us heartache and sorrow, and turns it into a cause of joy. That is most remarkable!

2. (:21) Natural Illustration of Childbirth – what could be more natural?

“Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world.”

3. (:22) Assurance that Abiding Joy Will Be Forever Theirs – in conjunction with Beholding Jesus

“Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you.”

The lasting nature of this joy proves that it persists throughout the entire dispensation of the Holy Spirit – not just for that limited time of post resurrection appearances. Hence the seeing by faith and by the personal, direct ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit must be involved.

C. (:23-24) Faith Transacts Requests Into the Joy of God’s Good Gifts

1. (:23a) Faith Unnecessary When Sight Answers All Confusion

“And in that day you will ask Me no question.”

Speaking in immediate sense of His post resurrection appearances. This will also be true of our seeing Jesus in glory and walking by sight instead of by faith.

Second level of meaning (for period of Holy Spirit dispensation): prayers will be addressed directly to the Father in the name of Jesus

2. (:23b) Promise of Answered Prayer when transacted by Faith

“Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, he will give it to you in My name.”

3. (:24) Joy Comes from Asking and Receiving

“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full.”

II. (:25-28) SEEING JESUS BY FAITH CONNECTS US TO DIVINE LOVE – LOVE OVERCOMES SEPARATION

A. (:25) Plain Truth

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.”

MacArthur: Whenever the Lord spoke in veiled statements, enough of it was understood to make it meaningful, yet a rich truth always remained hidden for the Holy

Spirit to reveal later on. Christ gave enough information so that a man was without excuse for rejecting Him, but there was still enough left unsaid so that the Spirit of God could spend this whole age of grace unfolding it for us.

Scott Grant: The hour that is coming, the one that Jesus has been anticipating throughout this discourse, concerns the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus couldn't tell them plainly about the Father because the Father couldn't be understood apart from the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of his Son. Following these events, the Holy Spirit would come to explain.

B. (:26-27) Love as the Fruit of Faith Meets Our Needs

“In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father.”

What is involved in asking in the name of Jesus?

Interesting cycle:

- We love God the Father because He first loved us;
- He loves us because we have loved Him and believed in His Son

MacArthur: With the coming of the Spirit, the disciples would be able to do what they had never done before: go directly to the Father in the name of Jesus. In John 16:23-24 Christ told them, "Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." A new age was coming, and they disciples would be able to go directly to the Father with their requests, provided their requests were in Jesus' name. To pray in Jesus' name means to pray for what He would want. You can't just pray for anything you want. You need to say, "Father, I come because Jesus sent me, and I'm asking You to do this for His sake." You are to ask for what is consistent with Christ's will. When you do that, God will give what you ask for.

Deffinbaugh: Jesus will have an intercessory ministry on our behalf, but His work on the cross will bring about a personal, intimate relationship between the Father and all who trust in His Son. No wonder the veil was torn asunder when Jesus died on the cross (Matthew 27:51). We now can come to God directly, because of the Son.

C. (:28) Christology Course: Simple Summary of Intimate Relationship Between Jesus and the Father

1. Eternal Coexistence as Deity

“I have come forth from the Father”

Unselfish sacrifice of love to leave the riches of heaven to be made poor so that we could become rich through Him

2. Incarnation as True Humanity
“and have come into the world”

Oppty for men to witness His earthly ministry of compassion and mercy and love

3. Substitutionary Atonement
“I am leaving the world again”

Voluntary submission to the will of the Father

4. Ascension and Glorification / High Priestly Ministry (Chap. 17)
“and going to the Father”

Implied: He will also return again in power and glory

III. (:29-33) SEEING JESUS BY FAITH CONNECTS US TO DIVINE PEACE – PEACE OVERCOMES STRUGGLES

- A. (:29-30) False Confidence Sets Us Up for Big Time Struggles

“His disciples said, ‘Lo, now You are speaking plainly, and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.’”

Deffinbaugh: We should be admonished by the puffed up claims of the disciples. The disciples claimed to fully understand Jesus, His ministry, and His message. They most certainly did not. We should be very careful about assuming that we “have it all together” in matters which we may not understand as well as we claim. The fundamentals should be clear to us, but there are many other things which we will only “know” clearly and completely “then.” We should especially be wary of those who would seek to teach us, claiming they have a full and complete grasp of God’s truth. The most brilliant scholars and students of Scripture that I know are still the best students, ever seeking to understand His Word better, and willing to listen to the insights of other students of Scripture. Those who know it all do not need to learn any more, they think. They need only to teach, and not to be taught.

- B. (:31-32) Our Failures Never Compromise the Self Sufficiency of the Godhead

“Jesus answered them, ‘Do you know believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.’”

The abiding presence of God leaves no room for loneliness and despair.

- C. (:33) Victory of Christ is the Basis for our Peace Amidst Struggles

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How much time and effort and focus do we devote to trying to “*Behold Christ*”? In what way do we have much more opportunity than the disciples who walked with Jesus?
- 2) What are some specific examples of *sorrow* in your life that Jesus has turned into *joy*? How did this happen?
- 3) What is going through your mind when you finish off your prayer with the classic closing line of “*in Jesus name, Amen*”? What should our understanding be of this phrase?
- 4) Do you feel that Jesus is speaking plainly to you today? Do you come to Him directly for clarification and understanding? Does our knowledge lead to pride and over confidence or do we remain humbly dependent on Him to continue to enlighten us and cause us to grow?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John MacArthur: Man exists because God wanted him to. Since God wanted man to be, He has wonderful things in store for all mankind. The things that man is looking for-- faith, hope, and love--are exactly what Jesus can give him. First Corinthians 13:13 says, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Those three things come from having a relationship with Jesus Christ. He gives man what he needs most. Man cannot exist without faith, hope, and love, and those are the things Jesus talks about in John 16:25-33.

Hendriksen: In view of all that has preceded in this chapter – the promise of the Holy Spirit’s coming and work, the prediction of the Son’s glorious return, the assurance of the Father’s abiding love – it is not surprising that the chapter ends with a note of victory. Having just about reached the end of the path, Jesus can look back, and can say, ‘*I have conquered.*’ However, the past tense (*perfect*, for abiding result) also indicates certainty with respect to the impending battle. The victory is sure. Jesus had fully committed himself. Hence, he is able to speak as if Calvary even now lay behind him.

Tasker: The joy of the disciples after the resurrection will be the joy of a new life in which their relations with God will be more direct and more confident than they have been hitherto. They will be more confident because the period of anxious and doubtful

questionings, of which several instances have been given in these chapters, will be over. No longer will the disciples ask anything of Jesus; but with fuller insight into the mind of their Lord they will be able to do something, that, owing to their limited understanding, they have not yet been able to do. They will be able to pray directly to the Father with the joyous certainty that God will answer their prayers by virtue of the victory won by Jesus on the cross. They will pray *in Christ's name* pleading the merits of His sacrifice (23). It is no meaningless formality that Christians end their liturgical prayers with the words '*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*'

Stedman: "In my name" means, first, asking in line with our Lord's objectives. To ask in anyone's name means to ask as though you were that person. This means we are to ask for what Jesus would want, what he is after, and not for our own desires. Prayer is not a means by which you get God to do what you want. It never is that. Prayer is a means by which God does through you what he wants, and it is a very necessary part of the process that you pray. James tells us, "You have not because you ask not," {Jas 4:2b RSV}. Prayer is an integral part of that process. We must ask. But James also says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to consume it on your passions" {Jas 4:3 RSV}, your own desires. Rather, it is to be for the objective God has in your life. . .

Second, to pray "in Jesus' name" means an acceptance of the process by which God works, and which Jesus relied upon. That process, as we know, is the cross and the resurrection -- i.e., a cross which represents the end, the hopelessness of everything else, and a resurrection beyond it, beyond what could possibly be anticipated by men. That is the way God works. He is a God of resurrection! . . .

The third element of praying "in Jesus' name" is to pray in dependence upon his performance, upon his activity. It is Jesus who will do these things. He says so! "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," {John 14:13 RSV}. It is not done by our scurrying around trying to arrange things and work them out for ourselves. It is done by our reliance upon him to carry it through in his own unique way. . .

(Finished sermon quoting from song Day by Day)

Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here.
Trusting in a Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause to worry or to fear.
He whose heart is kind beyond all measure,
Gives unto each day what He deems best,
Lovingly, it's part of pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

Goettsche: Prayer is a privilege and a tremendous resource. Through prayer we tap into:

- God's comfort for painful times. His strength is perfect.
- God's guidance in uncertain times. He has promised to guide us into all truth . . . but we must let Him.
- God's fellowship at any time. Prayer stokes the fires of joy. If the flame begins to die down spending time with the Father will enable joy to blaze again.
- God's power in impossible times. Someone has said, "Lord, help me remember that there is nothing you and I can't face . . . together." It's true. The most impossible situation can be overcome through prayer.

TEXT: John 17:1-26

TITLE: *THE PASSING OF THE TORCH*

BIG IDEA:

FOR THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF MUTUAL DIVINE GLORIFICATION, JESUS PETITIONS THE FATHER FOR THE UNITY AND SECURITY OF THE ELECT (PARTICULARLY THE APOSTLES) WHILE THEY CARRY OUT THEIR MISSION IN AN UNFRIENDLY WORLD

INTRODUCTION:

The passage reads almost like contract language as Jesus recalls His faithfulness in finishing the work which the Father has given Him to do; then petitions His heavenly Father to follow through and complete all that is necessary to protect and secure the elect as they remain in the world which hates them and carry out their important mission.

The passage alternates back and forth between reciting the completed responsibilities of Christ and soliciting the faithful performance to all terms and conditions of the covenant relationship on the part of the Father.

In every deal, you have certain things that are “show stoppers” – which if left unresolved will kill the transaction. Jesus wants to make sure that there are no show stoppers as He prepares to leave His disciples and entrusts them back into the hands of His loving Father.

(Picture Isaac talking to Abraham right before being offered up on the altar – “Dad, don’t draw back now; you must carry out the divine plan; you must focus on the ultimate glory that will come via the resurrection.”)

Could logically break this down into 3 messages:

- :1-5 Jesus and His Father
- :6-19 Jesus and His Immediate Disciples
- :20-26 Jesus and His Universal Church

Ryle: It is needless to say that the chapter before us contains many deep things. It could hardly be otherwise. He that reads the words spoken by one Person of the blessed Trinity to another Person, by the Son to the Father, must surely be prepared to find much that he cannot fully understand, much that he has no line to fathom. There are sentences, words, and expressions, in the twenty-six verses of this chapter, which no one probably has ever unfolded completely. We have not minds to do it, or to understand the matters it contains, if we could. But there are great truths in the chapter which stand out clearly and plainly on its face, and to these truths we shall do well to direct our best attention.

I. (:1-5) JESUS CALLS ON THE FATHER TO LIFT HIM UP TO HEAVEN (BY WAY OF THE CROSS OF REDEMPTION) AND CONSUMMATE THEIR MUTUAL GLORIFICATION

A. (:1) Commitment to the Cross of Redemption and Subsequent Glory

1. Engaging the Father's Attention

"These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said"

We see Jesus turning His focus from preparing His disciples for His departure to entreating His Father to carry through with the divine plan of redemption.

Final Intercessory Prayer on earth; to be followed by His high priestly intercessory ministry in heaven

What poise and unselfishness is shown by Christ in His final hours.

2. Embracing the Climactic, Redemptive Moment

"He said, 'Father, the hour has come'"

3. Executing the Plan of Mutual Divine Glorification

a. Divine Follow Through by the Father

"glorify Thy Son"

b. Divine Follow Through by the Son

"that the Son may glorify Thee."

Stedman: We must understand what this term "*glorified*" means. How is someone "*glorified*"? The word means to make manifest hidden values, hidden riches. . . All his inner qualities of grace and truth became visible. Here our Lord is praying that by means of the cross something that is hidden to the world will be manifested. . . We do not have to guess what that is because he tells us. It is, first, that God has given him "*power over all flesh*," i.e., he has Lordship, sovereignty, the right to rule over all the nations of the earth. This will come by means of the cross. . . But more than that, our Lord also states that through the cross he will gain the right to give eternal life to all whom the Father brings to him. . . Thus the cross reveals both his Lordship and his Saviorhood. He is the source of life to all who come to him.

B. (:2-3) Responsibility for the Propagation of Eternal Life

1. (:2) Stewardship of the Responsibility

"even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life."

- The Authority = Universal and Divine
- The Target Group = the Elect
- The Mission = Giving the Gift of Eternal Life

Tasker: *authority* to determine the ultimate destiny of men (cf. Mat. xxviii. 18).

2. (:3) Essence of Eternal Life

“And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

C. (:4-5) Consummation of the Divine Mission of Atonement and Mutual Glorification

1. (:4) The Role of the Son

“I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.”

2. (:5) The Role of the Father

“And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory, which I had with Thee before the world was.”

Ryle: I think the meaning of this sentence must be this: “Give glory to Thy Son, by carrying Him through the cross and the grave, to a triumphant completion of the work He came to do, and by placing him at Thy right hand, and highly exalting Him above every name that is named. Do this, in order that He may glorify Thee and Thy attributes. Do this, that he may bring fresh glory to Thy holiness, and justice, and mercy, and faithfulness, and prove to the world that Thou art a just God, a holy God, a merciful God, and a God that keepeth His word. My vicarious death and my resurrection will prove this, and bring glory to Thee. Finish the mighty work. Glorify Me, and in so doing glorify Thyself. Finish Thy work, not least, that Thy Son may glorify Thee by bringing many redeemed souls to heaven, to the glory of Thy grace.”

II. (:6-16) JESUS CALLS ON THE FATHER TO PROTECT THE ELECT (APOSTLES) WHILE THEY REMAIN IN THE WORLD

A. (:6-8) The Message of “Who God Is” Has Been Faithfully Delivered and Faithfully Received (ready to be reproduced and propagated)

“I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee; for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me.”

B. (:9-12) The Petition for Security with the Goal of Unity

1. (:9-10) Petition Based on Mutual Divine Ownership

“I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine; and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.”

Tasker: The Greek verb (*glorified*) is in the perfect tense. Jesus’ glory has already shone in the face of His disciples. They are already in a real though limited sense a

reflection of Himself. They have caught the infection of His spirit, become interested in the things in which He is interested, learned to love what He loves and to hate what He hates. The perfect tense implies that this reflection of Jesus in His apostles will remain.

2. (:11) Petition for Security with the Goal of Unity

“And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.”

3. (:12a) Petition Based on Past Performance of the Son

“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them,”

4. (:12b) Exception Clause – Unique Case of Judas

“and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled”

This shows that the emphasis in these verses is on the twelve apostles rather than on all professing believers ... because Judas is the only unique exception.

D. (:13) Apostles should be Filled with Divine Joy (rather than Separation Sorrow)

“But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.”

E. (:14-16) Petition for Protection from the Hating World and from the Evil One

1. (:14) The Hatred of the Enemy

“I have given them Thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

- Stewards of the Word of God
- Hated by the world
- In the world but not of the world
- Following the example of Christ

2. (:15) Protection vs. Deliverance

“I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”

3. (:16) Following in Christ’s Footsteps

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

III. (:17-19) JESUS CALLS ON THE FATHER TO SANCTIFY THE APOSTLES IN THE TRUTH

- A. (:17A) Petition for Consecration of Life and Mission
“Sanctify them in the truth”

Ryrie: Sanctify means to set apart for God and His holy purposes; so also v. 19.

Stedman: But what does "*sanctification*" mean? It means to separate, or set apart, to a specific purpose; to put to an intended use. You are sanctifying those pews at this moment as you sit on them. You sanctified your car as you drove here this morning. (It did not make it run better but it was put to the proper use!) I sanctify my comb when I comb my hair -- I use it for its intended purpose. And what are we intended for? What purpose did God have in mind in making man? That he might use him as the instrument of his working and to manifest his character. That he might be the instrument of God. When you become that, you are sanctified. In this context it includes a sense of personal agreement with that, a determination, a willingness, to do it. Thus we could use the word "commitment." Our Lord is praying that these men be personally, willingly committed to the work of being used of God.

- B. (:17b) Prescription/Power for Consecration of Life and Mission
“Thy word is truth.”

- C. (:18) Purpose for Consecration of Life and Mission
“As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”

Scott Grant: We are set apart in Christ to know God so that Jesus might send us into the world, just as the Father sent him into the world. Jesus carried his relationship with the Father into the world, which he loved. Likewise, we carry our relationship with the Father into the world, which we love. We are set apart first of all to know God and second of all to be sent into the world. If we are going to be sent into the world, we had better be set apart to know God.

- D. (:19) Pattern for Consecration of Life and Mission
“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”

IV. (:20-23) JESUS CALLS ON THE FATHER TO PROMOTE THE UNITY OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS TESTIMONY BEFORE A WATCHING WORLD

- A. (:20) Expanding the Scope of Intercession to the Universal Church

“I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.”

- B. (:21a) Desire for Organic Unity Patterned After the Godhead

“that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us”

not talking about organizational unity here

MacArthur: Now, listen to this: In what way are the Father and the Son One? It isn't experientially--it's essentially. Do you know what I am saying? They share the same life. Right? They share the same common eternal life. So, He is not saying, "I hope that they'll get along as well as we get along." He is saying, "I want those who belong to me to share the same eternal life that we share," and that prayer is answered every time a person is saved, because when you are saved, you literally share the common eternal life. . .

If I believe that the Bible is absolutely the Word of God, that it's inerrant; that it's inspired; that every Word of God is true in the original autographs, and so forth, and so forth... And somebody comes along and says, "Well, I don't believe that. I'm a Christian. I believe the gospel part, but I don't believe in any other part." I'm going to have a hard time connecting with that person in mutual ministry--agreed? Or if I believe that the Spirit of God works through the Word of God, and you believe the Spirit of God works through "tongues"--we are going to have a hard time. We can love each other, but we are going to have a hard time locking arms in ministering, because we are going to have two different sanctification paradigms. We are going to be going two directions.

C. (:21b) Desire for Effective Testimony

"that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me."

D. (:22) Shared Glory Promotes Organic Unity Patterned After the Godhead

"And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one"

E. (:23) Mature Unity Promotes Effective Testimony

"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me."

V. (:24-26) CONCLUSION: FOR THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF MUTUAL DIVINE GLORIFICATION, JESUS CALLS ON THE FATHER TO BRING THE CHURCH INTO HIS VERY PRESENCE TO LET THEM BASK IN THE DIVINE LOVE

A. (:24a) Longing for Visible Union in Glory

"Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me"

Deffinbaugh: When Jesus told His disciples He was going away to a place where they could not follow Him, they may have wrongly concluded that He did not want them to be with Him any longer. This conclusion would be completely wrong. Jesus very much

wants them to be with Him, and that is precisely what He prays for in verse 24. The reason that they cannot be with Him is because He is going to the Father in heaven, and they have work yet to do on earth. They will thereby experience the glory of identifying with Him as the suffering Savior. They will not behold His heavenly glory until they are in heaven with Him. This is what Jesus asks the Father to do—to bring His disciples to be with Him in heaven, so that they can behold His heavenly glory.

B. (:24b) Appreciation of God’s Personal Sovereign Love
“for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.”

C. (:25) The Great Gulf Between the World and the Church
1. Defining Characteristic of the World = Ignorant of God / Rejection of God
“O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee”

2. Defining Characteristic of Christ and the Church = True Knowledge of God
“yet I have known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me”

D. (:26) The Enjoyment of Love is Worth the High Price of Revelation

“and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the relationship between the “*keeping*” function of God the Father exercised for our benefit and our own responsibility of “*abiding*” in Christ?
- 2) Do we live as though we are on the battlefield being actively pursued and attacked by the evil one himself and all of his wicked cronies?
- 3) How has the Lord been using His truth, the Word of God, in my life to set me apart to live the type of purpose-driven life He has planned for me? Am I accomplishing the mission that I have been sent into the world to perform?
- 4) What am I doing either to promote or to disrupt the unity of Christ’s church? How concerned am I for the impact of the Church’s testimony on the watching world?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Here is a completely different approach from a study I did years ago – would be a good

Christmas Eve message with packages wrapped with a card inside explaining each of these precious gifts:

Big Idea: **ALL THAT CHRIST HAS RECEIVED FROM THE FATHER HE HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN TO US**

I. GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN TO CHRIST

- A. Authority over all men (:2)
- B. The Elect (:2, 6, 9, 24)
- C. Work to be accomplished during His earthly ministry (:4)
- D. Glory – which Christ had initially and the Father is going to restore in terms of its visible manifestation (:5, 22, 24)
- E. Words (:8) to speak
- F. All Things (:10)
- G. Name (:11, 12)
- H. Love (9:23, 26)

II. GIFTS CHRIST HAS GIVEN TO US

- A. Peace (16:33) – even in the midst of distress
overcoming, victorious peace
- B. Eternal life (:2)
context = death, which is but an entrance into life, not our final destination
- C. Joy (:13) the full measure of the joy of Christ
- D. Word of God (:14) = Truth (:17)
- E. Glory (:22) – the same glory that God gave to Christ
- F. Love (:26) – caps it all off

Stedman: We are clearly not to isolate ourselves from the world. When he sent these men out to preach, Jesus had said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," {Matt 10:16}. No sensible shepherd would ever do that, for wolves are dangerous animals. With one slash of their teeth they can rip a sheep's throat wide open. The world can do that to believers too. We must never forget that it is a dangerous place. The only safeguard is the provision the Shepherd has made to be with us, and in us. Maintaining that loving relationship with him is what enables Christians to be in the world, but not of the world -- to make contact with the world, to establish friendships in the world, and yet to be kept from the terrible dangers of the world.

Goettsche: Re vv.1-5 -- A Glimpse at the Heart of the Savior

In the text before us we see Jesus once again making claims to be equal to God. In verse five He says, "glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." Jesus claims to be eternal. In verse 10 He says, "All I have is yours, and *all you have is mine.*" [italics added] Jesus claims equal authority to the Father. In verse 11 He says, "....so that they may be one as we are one." He claims to be one (equal to) with God. And then in verse 24 he says, "Father, I want those you have given me to be

with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me before the creation of the world." Jesus claims a right to glory. These are incredible claims.

Deffinbaugh: Re :6-19

As I study this prayer, there seems to be one primary request, with a three-fold outcome. The request of our Lord is that the Father keep His disciples safe. The three-fold outcome is: (1) their unity in Him; (2) their joy in Him; and (3) the fulfillment of their mission. When all of our Lord's statements are reduced to their least common denominator, Jesus indicates that He is leaving His disciples and returning to His Father. The Father has given His name to the Son, and so it is in this name that Jesus asks the disciples to be kept (verse 11). Jesus states that He has watched over His disciples and kept them safe while He was with them. He did not lose a one. Our Lord did not lose Judas, because he never truly believed in Jesus as the Messiah. His departure was not an exception to the rule, but the fulfillment of prophecy (verse 12).

Deffinbaugh: Re distinction between Apostles and believers of today

I was struck by the structure of our Lord's prayer in John 17. Jesus clearly separates and distinguishes between those who were our Lord's disciples at the time (verses 6-19), and those who would later come to believe in Him through the witness of the disciples or others (verses 20-26). I take this distinction to imply that there is a substantial difference between His disciples (or apostles) and other Christians, who are saved at a later time. There are those who would teach that there are apostles today, just as much as there were apostles in New Testament times. At least some would maintain that these contemporary "apostles" speak for God, with greater authority than others. Jesus speaks of His disciples as a distinct group, a very restrictive group. The disciples themselves seem to concur with this, as can be seen by their insistence in Acts 1:12-26 that one who would replace Judas must have been present with Jesus. It would seem as though only two men met the requirements set down by the disciples for Judas' replacement. We need to be careful about calling men apostles today, when Jesus seems to have restricted them to His day. The apostles of the first century church seem to be in a class of their own. Our Lord's prayer appears to assume this distinction. I am reminded of the writer to the Hebrews, who also distinguishes the apostles from those who will believe because of the gospel that they proclaimed:

Deffinbaugh: Re Unity

It does seem to me that homogeneous grouping in churches does violence to the doctrine of Christian unity. From a purely secular, marketing mentality, "birds of a feather do flock together." People do feel more comfortable around others who are just like them. But God has not called us to comfort. God has called us to conform to the image of His Son. What a testimony it is when a church has a mix of races, cultures, and social strata. Here is where the world can behold true Christian unity and stand in awe. Let us be careful not to compromise biblical standards or doctrine in an effort to appear formally united, but let us strive to practice that organic and functional unity which God intended for us to demonstrate, to His praise and glory, and to our good.

Tasker: The society of the Church has been created by God for a specific purpose. Its *raison d'être* is to convey to the world the revelation imparted by Jesus, and to reflect the self-sacrificing love manifested by Jesus on the cross. The supreme joy of Jesus lay in His willingness to make that sacrifice, and in the assurance that by so doing He would win the decisive victory against the prince of evil. And He now prays that His disciples may experience the same joy when they proclaim the gospel after His departure (13). He does not pray that they may escape from the world, for that would be to frustrate the divine purpose; nor that they may be immune from the world's hatred, for it is inevitable that that hatred should continue to be directed against both Jesus and His friends precisely because they cannot conform to the world's standards. The world, in so far as it lies under the evil one, and the society illuminated by divine truth, are eternally opposed. The one from beneath, the other is from above. Jesus therefore prays the Father that the disciples may be so dedicated to their task, and so sanctified by the truth about God that He has taught them, that they may be able to fulfill their vocation as His apostles, as completely as He has fulfilled His vocation as the Apostle of God. The Father sent Jesus into the world to reunite sinful man to Himself, and in so doing to reveal to them God's love for sinners; the apostles are sent by Jesus to proclaim the good news of this reconciliation, and to reflect the divine love in their personal conduct (18).

Ryle (quoting **Bullinger**):

I conclude these introductory observations by advising all who wish to study thoroughly this wonderful chapter of Scripture, to consult, if they can, the following works specially devoted to the elucidation of it: viz., "Manton's Sermons on Seventeenth John," 400 folio pages; "George Newton's Exposition of Seventeenth John," 500 pages folio; and "Burgess's Expository Sermons on Seventeenth John," 700 pages folio. These three books, having been written by Puritans 200 years ago, are ignored by some and despised by others. I simply venture the remark that he who cares to examine them will find that they richly repay perusal.

Hendriksen: Diagrams the course of Love around which this chapter revolves:

The Son loves the Father (17:4)	The Father loves the Son (17:26b)	Believers love the Son (17:8c)
The Son loves believers (17:6a)	The Father loves believers (17:26c)	Believers love the Father (17:6d)

C. J. Bennett: Believe Series – 11/15/20 – **The High Priestly Prayer**

Question: Wouldn't you love to be a fly on the wall to hear a conversation between two very important people on a key topic? Eternal Son speaking to His heavenly Father; weighty significance of these intimate words

Transitioning from His Earthly Ministry to His Intercessory Ministry

Chapter 17 often divided into 3 parts:

- Prayer for Himself (:1-5)
- Prayer for His Immediate Disciples (:6-19)

- Prayer of His Future Disciples (:20-26)

I. Jesus Prays for God's Glory (:1-5)

Concerned for glory for Himself in a way that contributes to the glory of the Father; we often pray just with our own well-being in mind;

This glory will be Jesus' reward rightly;

John 7:18; 11:4 – concerned for glory

Jesus sees nothing in the world as more important than the glory and will of God.

God is zealous for His own glory since He is altogether glorious.

If God acted in a way to minimize His own glory He would be acting in a way that denies the truth and denies His own person.

Is. 48:9-11

Jesus has power and authority given to Him by the Father as a gift in eternity past in order that Jesus would give eternal life to all the Father gives to Him;

Vs. 5 – Jesus was in the presence of the Father in all of His glory before the beginning;

John 1:1; in a face-to-face intimate relationship in perfect harmonious fellowship – perfectly satisfied and in need of nothing or no one; Jesus didn't need us.

Do you think of yourself as being a gift of eternal love from the Father to the Son?

John 6:37, 39 – I will not lose the gift that you gave Me

Eternal life = to experientially know (more than mental assent);

more emphasizing quality than quantity of life; not so much everlasting life but personal knowledge of the One who lives forever; not just a ticket to heaven;

Is this type of **pursuit of the glory of God** (of knowing God more fully and joyfully) what characterizes your life? If you made this your #1 goal, how would your life be different? Should be the chief end of our life.

Jer. 31:34 – Prophecy of New Covenant = they will all know the Lord = tremendous privilege

Jer. 9:23-24 – boast that we know the Lord

[Gospel message to those who don't yet know the Lord]

II. Jesus Prays for Believers

A. For their Protection

Vs. 11 – wants the Father to preserve them; keep watch over them

Vs. 12 – While I was with them, I guarded them; now I need you to guard them

Keep them from evil (or the evil one) as they remain in the world as the sent ones;

Endurance in spiritual warfare;

Jesus intercedes on behalf of His own; sending disciples out on a mission just as Christ had been sent out on mission by the Father;

We will have results based on the Spirit's ministry of convicting others

Does not pray that we would not experience hardship or suffering; but that we would be kept by the power of God

Set apart by the truth of the Word of God – we have to know it and be changed by it;
Not enough that we just care – we must have the right message

B. For Their Unity – for Oneness of All His People

17:11; 20-23

The oneness of the believers is grounded in the oneness in the Godhead;

The purpose of this oneness – to make God known to others;

The Father loves us with the love that He has for His Son --

John 3:35; 5:20

C. For Their Glory

TEXT: John 18:1-11

TITLE: THE MASTER OF THE MOMENT -- SUBMITTING WITHOUT A FIGHT
BUT IN TOTAL CONTROL

BIG IDEA:
**THE GREAT MAJESTIC "I AM" VOLUNTARILY SURRENDERS TO THE
POWERLESS ARRESTING PARTY GUIDED BY TRAITOROUS JUDAS**

**I. (:1-3) UNNECESSARY SEARCH AND SEIZURE TAKES PLACE IN A
SECLUDED GARDEN WITH TRAITOROUS JUDAS GUIDING AN
EXCESSIVE BUT POWERLESS FORCE**

A. (:1-2) Familiar Secluded Setting

1. (:1) Familiar to Jesus and His Disciples

"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples."

Hendriksen: The one outstanding event which had occurred here was David's passing over this same brook, while fleeing before his rebellious son Absalom (II Sam. 15:23). Was he not, in this act of humiliation and suffering a type of Christ?

2. (:2) Familiar to Judas

"Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples."

Obviously, Jesus was making no effort to hide Himself from the betraying designs of Judas. He continued on His normal course; no need for such excessive force since He was not planning to put up any resistance.

MacArthur: Now you ask the question: "Why did He go there? If He knew He was going to get into this mess, why did He go?" He went there because it was...

- The Place of Prayer

He wanted to talk to the Father, and He did. John doesn't tell us about His agonizing in prayer as the other writers do (Mt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-46).

- The Place of Rest

It was the place where He could go to get away from the all of the conflict.

- The Place of Sweet Fellowship with His Disciples

Here they could be alone together. But all of these reasons were secondary.

- The Place of His Arrest

The main reason Jesus went there was to make it easy for Judas and the soldiers to

arrest Him. You say, "You mean this wasn't a surprise?" He mapped out this scene before the world began. The Old Testament details what Judas was going to do not only in the typical prophecy of Ahithophel's situation, but in very accurate verbal prophecy (e.g., Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14). Zechariah 11:13 even prophesies the fact that the chief priests would use the thirty pieces of silver to buy the potter's field. Jesus went to that Garden because He was forcing the confrontation that would result in His death.

B. (:3) Fortified Arresting Party

"Judas then, having received the Roman cohort, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons."

Judas must have expected trouble. He certainly was fearful of the powers of Jesus. The Jews and Romans were fearful of the reaction of the public.

Ryrie: A Roman cohort would be a group 300-600 Roman soldiers. (Perhaps less were involved here; tough to say)

Hendriksen: Torches and lanterns . . . to search for the Light of the world! And it was full moon! Swords and cudgels . . . to subdue the Prince of Peace! This was a cruel insult. It proved how thoroughly his mission had been misinterpreted. For the Man of Sorrows, the very sight of this band of ruffians, which considered him their quarry, meant indescribable suffering. They had come out against him as if he were a criminal, a robber for instance. This was agony. He felt the bitter insult, as is clear from the words he spoke (Matt. 26:55). He saw the approach of the power of darkness (Luke 22:53).

II. (:4-9) OMNISCIENT SURRENDER AT THIS THE APPOINTED HOUR

A. (:4) The All Knowing One Puts the Arresting Party on the Spot

"Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?'"

B. (:5-6) Initial Identification and Reaction of Fear

"They answered Him, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I Am He.' And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them. When therefore He said to them, 'I Am He,' they drew back, and fell to the ground."

Morris: But the answer is in the style of deity. This must have been a most unexpected move on His part. The soldiers had come out secretly to arrest a fleeing peasant. In the gloom they find themselves confronted by a commanding figure, who so far from running away comes out to meet them and speaks to them in the very language of deity.

C. (:7-9) Repeated Identification and Request for Release of the Disciples

"Again therefore He asked them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that I Am He; if therefore you seek

Me, let these go their way.’ that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, ‘Of those whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one.’”

Carr: The deity of Jesus is also seen in the concern He possessed for His Disciples. He is concerned that they not be arrested, but that they be allowed to go free. You see, Jesus was concerned with the protection of His men. They were special to Him and He was determined to see that their need was met that night. How does this demonstrate His deity? By the simple fact that He cared more for their welfare than He did for His own! In His actions you do not see the selfishness manifested by most humans. He shows a self-sacrificing love that defies description. Only God is able to love to that degree!

III. (:10-11) MISGUIDED AND ABORTED ATTEMPT AT RESISTANCE BY PETER

A. (:10) Impetuous Peter Springs Into Action – tries to take matters into his own hands
“Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus.”

MacArthur: Here is impetuous Peter. It is not enough that Christ has protected him; now Peter draws a knife and starts cutting into the crowd. You can imagine the Lord saying, "After all I have just gone through to get you off the hook, and now you are doing this!" The Bible says that Peter cut off his right ear, but you should know Peter well enough to know that he wasn't aiming for an ear. Nothing would have made him happier than to see the man's head rolling down the hill. So, Peter wanted to move into the army -- he felt invincible. After all, Christ was right beside him. He probably figured, "If I get into trouble, the Lord will just say, 'I am.'" So he felt secure and invincible in the presence of Christ and drew the sword and whacked off an ear.

Fortunately, Malchus had fairly good reactions. And then, in a beautiful demonstration of His protective love, Jesus recreated his ear -- gave him a new one (Lk. 22:51).

B. (:11) Peaceful Jesus Submits to the Father’s Plan
“Jesus therefore said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?’”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the irony of so much force being employed to capture someone who is voluntarily surrendering Himself?
- 2) Why was Jesus identified primarily as “*the Nazarene*”? What was the connotation of this reference? When the disciples were first called “Christians” was it a positive or

negative reference? Do we shrink back at all from identification with the name of Christ?

3) How important was Judas' role in this betrayal scene if John does not even bother to mention his betrayal kiss? Did Judas and the soldiers not really recognize Jesus until He identified Himself??

4) When do we try to take matters into our own hands as Peter did rather than submitting to the control of the Master of the Universe? Are we prepared to drink the cup which the Father has given us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: There are four preeminent features in John 18:1-11 that show us the supremacy of Christ. What could be a humiliating thing, as He is arrested as a common criminal, turns out to be glory. The four features that I want you to see are: His Supreme Courage, His Supreme Power, His Supreme Love, and His Supreme Obedience. The wretchedness, injustice, and hellishness of Satan's plot to kill Jesus begins to unfold in chapter 18. But instead of Christ being degraded as the devil intended, we will see Him exalted to the highest heavens. We will see His unbounded magnificence burst open in a series of tremendous truths concerning His incomparable person.

Stedman: Perhaps the most striking feature of that account is the event which John does not record – the agony of Jesus in the shadows of the garden. Each of the other three gospels relates this incident when Jesus took Peter, James and John and asked them to pray with him. Then, retiring further into the garden, he knelt and cried out to his Father, asking that if possible the cup might pass from him. But John says nothing of the loud cries, the tears, the bloody sweat that fell from his brow, his three-fold prayer, and his strengthening by the angel who appeared to him at the end of his ordeal.

The reason John does not mention these incidents is because they reveal Jesus in his human weakness and his recognition that he was about to be put through a terrible ordeal. His response to that was to cry out in pain and fear, out of which God delivered him and strengthened him. What John actually records is the picture of the Lord after that event, striding out in dignity and majesty, in full command of what is happening. This is what John wants us to see, especially as he relates to these two men, Judas and Peter. He draws a contrast in each of these movements of this chapter and here the contrast is between Judas and Peter. . .

John is trying to picture the ridiculous contrast between the expectations of these soldiers and the dignity and majesty with which our Lord conducted himself. Part of that is conveyed by the fact that, when Jesus gives orders, the soldiers obey him. He said, "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." Though John does not say so, it

is clear that the disciples took full advantage of that and fled as fast as they could. Peter, of course, could not leave. He had crawled out on a limb earlier by saying he would defend Jesus to the death. He drew his sword and aimed a blow at the head of the high priest's servant, but the man ducked, and ended up having his ear lopped off. (We can tell John was an eyewitness because he says it was the man's right ear.) By his impetuous action Peter is made to look like a fool. Jesus rebukes him, tells him to put his sword away, and indicates that he is totally out of line in his actions.

Deffinbaugh: That phrase from “Silent Night” came to my mind as I was preparing this message. Jesus was, is, and will always be Lord. The more I have studied the events leading up to the crucifixion of our Lord, the more convinced I have become that Jesus was in control of all that took place in the final hours of His life. And so I have chosen to title this lesson, “Jesus, Lord at Thy Death.” How easy this is to forget. In truth, it could be the epitaph for chapters 18-20. . .

John leaves the kiss of Judas out because things do not go according to the prearranged plan of Judas and the Jews. Jesus would not attempt to elude them or to conceal His identity. Jesus would not attempt to avoid His arrest, illegal though it might be. Instead of our Lord's identity being revealed deceitfully by the kiss of Judas, our Lord identified Himself. Judas had nothing to contribute other than to indicate the place where Jesus could be found. As Judas, the Jews, and the Roman soldiers arrived, it was Jesus who took charge, bringing to pass the events that followed. . .

We should not be surprised, then, that when we come to the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of our Lord, John makes it very clear that Jesus is the One who is in control—not the Roman soldiers, not the Jewish religious leaders, not the mob, not Judas, and certainly not the disciples. Jesus is in control. And so it is that He confronts those who seek to arrest Him. So it is that they fall down before Him. So it is also that Jesus prevents a massacre and secures the release of His disciples. Jesus is able to bring about His death at just the right time, and in just the right manner, even though the Jews wanted to stone Him at some time other than during Passover. Jesus is Lord at His death, just as He was Lord at His birth.

Jesus is always Lord, as He is Lord at this very moment. I think many of us who profess to be Christians need to be reminded of this fact daily. Does our world seem chaotic and out of control? When governments topple, when leaders die or are removed from office, when Y2K fears send some into a state of panic, we need to be reminded that our Lord is employing “all things” to bring about His perfect plan.

Goettsche: We see the degree of human depravity revealed in this scene:
- On the part of the lynch mob that came out looking for such a good man
- On the part of a close friend Judas who was willing to betray such a man.

Pink: The entrance of Christ into the Garden at once reminds us of Eden. The contrasts between them are indeed most striking. In Eden, all was delightful; in Gethsemane, all was terrible. In Eden, Adam and Eve parleyed with Satan; in Gethsemane, the last

Adam sought the face of His Father. In Eden, Adam sinned; in Gethsemane, the Savior suffered. In Eden, Adam fell; in Gethsemane, the Redeemer conquered. The conflict in Eden took place by day; the conflict in Gethsemane was waged at night. In the one Adam fell before Satan; in the other, the soldiers fell before Christ. In Eden the race was lost; in Gethsemane Christ announced, "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none" (John 18:9). In Eden, Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand; in Gethsemane, Christ received the cup from His Father's hand. In Eden, Adam hid himself; in Gethsemane, Christ boldly showed Himself. In Eden, God sought Adam; in Gethsemane, the last Adam sought God! From Eden Adam was "driven"; from Gethsemane Christ was "led." In Eden the "sword" was drawn (Gen. 3:24); in Gethsemane the "sword" was sheathed (John 18:11).

TEXT: John 18:12-27

TITLE: HIDING AND DENYING

BIG IDEA:

THE FRIGHTENED DISCIPLES HIDE AND DENY WHILE JESUS TESTIFIES OPENLY HE HAS NOTHING TO HIDE

(:12-14) INTRODUCTION: THE IRONY IN THE ARREST OF JESUS

A. (:12) Ironic Political-Religious Alliance

“So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him”

Hendriksen: Irony of Jesus being bound:

He, the One who had come into the world to bring freedom, and apart from whom freedom is absolutely impossible was himself bound. He was bound, however, in order that we might be loosed from our sins.

B. (:13) Ironic Role Reversal: Great High Priest brought before the Religious Hierarchy

“and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.”

C. (:14) Ironic Insight of Caiaphas

“Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.”

Ryle: This verse contains one of John’s peculiar explanatory comments, and as such comes in parenthetically. It is as though he said, ‘Let us not forget that this was the very Caiaphas, who after the raising of Lazarus, had said publicly that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. Behold how he is made the unconscious instrument of bringing that saying to pass, though in a widely different sense from that which he intended! Calvin compares him to Balaam.

Let us note how the great wicked men of this world—the Sennacheribs and Neros, and bloody Marys, and Napoleons—are used by God as His saws and axes and hammers to do His work and carry out the Building of His Church, though they are not themselves in the least aware of it. Indeed Caiaphas helps forward the one great sacrifice for the sins of the world!

Deffinbaugh: John wants us to know that Caiaphas, before whom our Lord will stand trial, is a judge who has already made up his mind about Jesus. Caiaphas, by whom Jesus would be condemned to die, was a man who had already determined that Jesus must die. This is not going to be a just trial. That much is clear already. And so John tells us the only thing about Caiaphas that really matters – that his mind is already made up.

I. (:15-18) PETER'S FIRST DENIAL (BEFORE HARMLESS SLAVE GIRL DOORKEEPER) CONTRASTED WITH OPEN IDENTIFICATION

A. (:15a) The Tale of Two Disciples Introduced

“And Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple”

Only two disciples brave enough to follow at a close enough distance to monitor what was taking place. Apparently the others had fled and hid.

B. (:15b-16) The Insider Disciple (probably John) Identifies Openly with Jesus

“Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest, but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought in Peter.”

C. (:17-18) The Outsider Disciple (Peter) Denies Connection with Jesus

“The slave-girl therefore who kept the door said to Peter, ‘You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves, and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.”

II. (:19-24) RIGHTEOUS RESPONSE OF JESUS TO INITIAL INTERROGATION: I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE

A. (:19) Annas Probing Two Key Areas (note common chiasmic structure again)

“The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about:”

1. His Disciples – Looking for Political Revolutionaries

2. His Doctrine/Teaching – Looking for Religious Heretics

B. (:20-21) Jesus Professing to be an Open Book in Same Two Areas

1. (:20) Examine My Public Teaching – No Heretical Hidden Agenda or Secret Message

“Jesus answered him, ‘I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.’”

2. (:21) Examine My Audience – No Rallying Disciples to Political Fanaticism

“Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said.”

religious leaders like yourselves have heard the same things my disciples have heard

C. (:22-23) Officer Punishing Jesus Unjustly

1. (:22) Unjustified Reaction

“And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, ‘Is that the way You answer the high priest?’”

2. (:23) Righteous Response

“Jesus answered him, ‘If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?’”

Hendriksen: One is especially impressed with the dignity and majesty of this reply.

D. (:24) Transition: On to Caiaphas

“Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.”

III. (:25-27) PETER’S SECOND AND THIRD DENIALS HAPPEN QUICKLY

A. (:25) Second Denial (Before the officers of the guard around the fireplace)

“Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, ‘You are not also one of His disciples, are you?’ He denied it, and said, ‘I am not.’”

B. (:26-27) Third Denial (Before the relative of Malchus)

“One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with Him?’ Peter therefore denied it again; and immediately a cock crowed.”

(Some technical questions regarding the order and number of Peter’s denials when the record of the other Synoptic Gospels is analyzed. We will not address those questions here beyond the comment below.)

Deffinbaugh: We should not be shocked that Peter denied his Lord three times. Indeed, when all of the Gospels are taken into account, it would appear that Peter denied Jesus to more than three people, on three different occasions. Mark’s Gospel includes a very significant addition to the other accounts. Here, Jesus predicts that the rooster will crow twice before Peter denies Him thrice (14:30). Mark then informs us that the rooster did crow a first (14:68), and a second (14:72) time. This means that before Peter denied his Lord the last time, he was actually warned, though it would appear he completely missed this warning. Peter’s denials fulfilled our Lord’s prophecies of his fall, a warning which Jesus may have repeated three times

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why were the Jews and the Romans working together in their pursuit and arrest of Jesus? How did they normally operate in the political and religious realms? What

types of tension existed between the different groups?

2) How did the use of parables contribute to the ability of Jesus to maintain the same message in public as He did in private with His disciples? Was His ministry more focused on public or private teaching? What does the openness of Jesus' teaching say about secret societies such as the Masons?

3) Why is so much emphasis placed on what went down with Peter and so little information provided about what took place with the other unnamed disciple?

4) What can we learn from Peter's fall to guard ourselves against denying our Lord when the pressure is on? What were some of the weaknesses in Peter's life that were exposed here? What are some of the resources and disciplines that will help us to lean on the grace of our Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Annas begins this interrogation on a totally illegal basis. Like American law, Jewish law never required anybody to testify against himself, yet that was what Annas did with Jesus. The point John is making is that Peter was asked a fair and simple question, one that did not jeopardize him in the least, yet he answered with lies and pretense. But, when Jesus was asked devious and illegal questions, he replied openly and honestly, only to be met by contempt and by a stinging blow to the face.

Our Lord's response is very interesting, especially in light of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," {Matt 5:39 RSV}. Does that mean that we are to meekly let people do whatever they want with us? Some have interpreted it that way. But this account in John explains what Jesus meant. He did not literally turn the other cheek, but figuratively he did: He simply repeated his previous position which had brought on the unwarranted slap on the cheek. When Annas began to question him, what he had said, in effect, was, "This is not right. The law does not allow you to question me. Besides, it is not necessary. Ask those who heard me. They can tell you. Bring witnesses. That is what the law requires." When the minion of the high priest, no doubt in an attempt to endear himself to his master, strikes him a stinging blow, Jesus does the same thing, saying to the man, "If I have done wrong then tell me what it is. If not, why do you hit me? That is against the law." He simply repeats the position he had taken earlier and stands his ground, without retaliation or personal abuse. That is what it means to turn the other cheek: Stand on your rights but without becoming angry or striking back. What a beautiful model this is.

Tasker: There were many therefore who could be called upon to testify to the words they had heard Him speak, without the demand that He should bear unsupported witness to Himself in defiance of the Jewish law of evidence, which was the very thing that the Jews had previously accused Him of doing.

Ryle: This fall of Peter is doubtless intended to be a lesson to the whole Church of Christ. It is recorded for our learning, that we be kept from like sorrowful overthrow. It is a beacon mercifully set up in Scripture, to prevent others making shipwreck. It shows us the danger of pride and self-confidence. If Peter had not been so sure that although all denied Christ, he never would, he would probably never have fallen. – It shows us the danger of laziness. If Peter had watched and prayed, when our Lord advised him to do so, he would have found grace to help him in the time of need. – It shows us, not least, the painful influence of the fear of man. Few are aware, perhaps, how much more they fear the face of man whom they can see, than the eye of God whom they cannot see. These things are written for our admonition.

Lenski: Jesus had no esoteric doctrine. He did not present one kind of doctrine in public for the crowd and another doctrine behind locked doors for the initiate. . . . Jesus simply states the facts regarding the utter publicity of his teaching. Did Annas not know that? Is it not ridiculous for him to ask about something that has been published so openly before the entire nation for over three years? Others may conspire in secret like the Sanhedrin, not so Jesus; others may have secret teaching which they communicate behind locked and guarded doors under seal of oaths, not so Jesus.

Deffinbaugh: How gracious John is here in dealing with Peter's failure. You will remember that these men are both fishermen; they have already worked together (Luke 22:8), and they will work together very closely in the Book of Acts (3:1, 3, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14). John does not tell us that Peter found it necessary to underscore his lie with cursing (see Matthew 26:73), that Jesus looked at Peter from a distance (Luke 22:61), or that after the rooster crowed Peter went out and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:74-75). The Synoptic Gospels supply all of these details. I believe John's purpose in recording the denials of Peter is not to make Peter look bad, but rather to contrast Peter's testimony with that of Jesus and show how Jesus' words of prophecy are, once again, fulfilled exactly.

MacArthur: This begins the mockery of this indictment and arraignment before Annas. He had no right to ask Jesus that question. He was not to be the one who testified. That is not a legitimate trial. Instead of saying, "Now we have brought You here because You have been accused of this crime, and here are the witnesses," Annas says, "Well, why don't You tell us about Your disciples and Your doctrine." He wanted Jesus to talk about a planned insurrection or about heresy. Then they could say, "You're planning a revolution," or, "You're a heretic," and they would have justification for the trial. Maimonides, the great Jewish medieval scholar, said, "Our true law does not inflict the penalty of death upon a sinner by his own confession." That was part of the Jewish law, and the Roman law agreed. They had to have witnesses. Jesus did not have to prove Himself innocent, they had to prove Him guilty. So Annas violated the principles of Jewish justice when he questioned Jesus. But that was nothing unusual because the whole trial was illegal. Annas wanted Jesus to say He was training His disciples for a revolution, or to say He was teaching heresy. In either case, they would then have something to try Him for.

TEXT: John 18:28 – 19:16

TITLE: TRIAL: PILATE FORCED TO CONSIDER THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

NEUTRALITY IS NOT AN OPTION WHEN IT COMES TO CHECKING OUT THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST AND PASSING JUDGMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Pilate wanted no part of this controversy. He was forced into a position of checking out the claims of Christ and the accusations of the Jews. His response shows a fatal pattern repeated by those who try to sit on the fence and assume a position of neutrality with respect to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Rejection comes at the end with a high price associated.

We see Pilate from 4 different Perspectives:

I. (18:28-32) RELUCTANT BUT OBLIGATED TO CONSIDER THE CASE

A. (:28) Change of Venue: Bringing the Case to Pilate --

Legalistic Hypocrisy on the Part of the Jewish Religious Leaders

“They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.”

Talk about straining at a gnat but swallowing a camel!

Ryrie: The Roman headquarters, the barracks (also in v. 33). As a dwelling place of Gentiles it was unclean. Thus the Jewish authorities would not enter, lest they be defiled for the Passover. They were willing, however, to see the murder of Jesus committed without fearing defilement!

Stedman: John draws a clear contrast between their sanctimonious piousness over ceremonial defilement when they were totally unconcerned about the moral guilt of delivering an innocent man up to die.

B. (:29-30) No Legal Basis for Any Legitimate Case

should have been thrown out immediately without any further adjudication

1. (:29) No Formal Accusation

“Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’”

No formal warrant had been sworn out; more like a lynching mob than a legal proceeding. The Jews did not want a fair trial and consideration of the evidence; they simply wanted a rubber stamp on the execution papers.

2. (:30) Unsubstantiated Assumption of Guilt

“They answered and said to him, ‘If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.’”

Just take our word for it; Trust us on this one; No need for facts or evidence.

Everett F. Harrison: The Sanhedrin had not prepared a formal indictment against Jesus to submit to Pilate. They expected the governor to take their word for it that this man was a *malefactor*, i.e. a doer of evil. The answer was flippant. Pilate was disliked by the Jews.

C. (:31a) Gutless Attempt to Sidestep Responsibility

“Pilate therefore said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.’”

D. (:31b-32) Constrained by the Letter of the Law and the Prophetic Plan of a Sovereign God

“The Jews said to him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death,’ that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.”

II. (18:33-40) INQUISITIVE BUT SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE KEY ISSUES

Pilate ends up asking the Key Questions ... but he is not honest; not genuinely seeking the truth; but operating from a depraved heart of a confirmed skeptic

A. (:33-35a) *“Are You the King of the Jews?”* – Question of Lordship / Authority

1. Primary Question

“Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’”

2. Rebuttal Question: What is Your Motivation in Asking?

“Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’”

Deffinbaugh: In other words, is Pilate asking for himself, personally, or is he merely interrogating Him? Does Pilate really have an interest in Jesus’ identity? Does he care about such things? It would surely appear that Jesus was gently probing Pilate, testing for any spiritual interest on his part. Our Lord knew who His sheep were (John 10:14, 26-27; 13:18), but even so He sought to encourage Pilate to seek Him.

3. Base Assumption: You must be Guilty

“Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me’”

B. (:35b-36) *“What have You done?”* – Question of Righteousness and Mission

1. Looking for Evidence of Political Rebellion

“What have you done?”

2. Confronted with the Uniqueness of the Spiritual Kingdom

“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’”

MacArthur: Now, what does He mean when He says, "My kingdom is not of this world..."? Some people say, "Well, that proves there will never be a Millennium. That proves there will never be a Kingdom. That proves that Jesus is never going to come back and give Israel a thousand-year Kingdom." That doesn't prove that at all. When Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of [Gk. ek = `out of] this world...," He means that it didn't grow out of the world's system. Jesus wasn't a King because men elected Him King. In John 6:15 the people tried to make Him a King, and He went out of their midst. He didn't want to be made a King by men, He already was a King. But His Kingdom was spiritual. So when He says that His Kingdom was not out of this world, He doesn't mean that it won't come into the world. We believe there will be a literal Kingdom for Israel -- a literal millennial reign of Jesus on earth. He is not saying that isn't true; He is simply saying that His Kingdom does not have its origin in the human system.

C. (:37) *“So You are a king?”* Question of Blindness and Confusion

Blinded Hearts and Minds always miss the spiritual point

1. Confused and Befuddled

“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’”

2. Understanding of the Truth Limited to the Elect

“Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’”

Interesting way to put things; implies His pre-existence as eternal God.

Also points to the humility of the kenosis, the emptying of Himself in His incarnation.

Piper: Jesus was not born to keep secret the truth of God. He was born and came into the world to bear witness to the truth, the unchanging absolute truth of God. Realize how much is at stake. Take up the gospel and read. And you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

D. (:38a) *“What is truth?”* Question of a Frustrated, Defeated, Cynical Agnostic

Stedman: It is a cynical, weary answer, the response of someone who has been trying to find a way out of his troubles, but has lost all confidence in religion or any other guide.

E. (:38b-40) “Do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews” Question of Compromise and Worldly Options

1. (:38b) No Grounds for Finding Fault

“And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, ‘I find no guilt in Him.’”

MacArthur: There was no accusation against Jesus -- the proven faultless. There was no indictment at the beginning and no conviction at the end. The King of truth was maligned and hated, but remained perfect and proven faultless. Jesus was as pure at the end as He was at the beginning. There was nothing to hold against Him. He is The Perfect Man, The Prophetic God, The Preternatural King, The Preincarnate One, The Proclaimer of Truth, The Personal Savior, and The Proven Faultless. I hope that you see Him in this way, and I hope you respond to Him differently than Pilate did.

2. (:39) Alternative Proposal as Humanistic Work Around

“But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”

3. (:40) No Way Out – Depravity at its Worst

“Therefore they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas.’ Now Barabbas was a robber.”

III. (19:1-9) PRESSURED BY POPULAR OPINION BUT VACILLATING AND WILLING TO COMPROMISE

A. (:1) Cruel But Restrained

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him.”

B. (:2-5) Mocking But Willing to Compromise

1. (:2a) Crown of Thorns

“And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head”

2. (:2b) Kingly Robe

“and arrayed Him in a purple robe”

3. (:3) Mocking Tribute

“and they began to come up to Him, and say, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’”

4. (:3b) Humiliating Suffering

“and to give Him blows in the face.”

5. (:4) Seeking Closure

“And Pilate came out again, and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.’”

6. (:5) Mocking Summary

“Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’”

Tasker: Tone is contemptuous. Pilate is saying in effect “Here he is – the poor fellow. Can you really think that such a caricature of a king is really a danger either to Israel or Rome?”

C. (:6) Pressured And Desperate to Pass the Buck

“When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out

saying, ‘Crucify, crucify!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.’”

D. (:7-9) Fearful And Looking for A Way Out

1. (:7) Jewish Charge of Blasphemy

“The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.’”

2. (:8) Intensified Panic of Pilate

“When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid.”

3. (:9) Final Attempt at a Bail Out

“and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ but Jesus gave him no answer.”

IV. (19:10-16) FINALLY WE SEE PILATE AS COWARDLY AND CAPITULATING IN DELIVERING CHRIST OVER TO BE CRUCIFIED

A. (:10-11) Caution: Divine Authority Supercedes Delegated Authority

1. (:10) Pilate Foolishly Claims Ultimate Authority

“Pilate therefore said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?”

You don’t know whom you’re messing with here!

Deffinbaugh: Pilate is trying to frighten Jesus into speaking. “Don’t you know who I am, and the power I possess? Don’t you know what I can do to you if you don’t cooperate? Your fate is in my hands.” Our Lord’s answer might be paraphrased this way: “I understand that you have certain power and authority, but you should understand that yours is a God-given authority. If you are trying to instill fear in Me, it won’t work, because you do not have the power to harm Me unless it is the will of God for Me, as indeed it is.” Pilate is issuing a threat, and Jesus’ response informs Pilate that his threat is an empty one. Pilate cannot do anything to Jesus that he wants; he can only do to Jesus what God wants. Pilate is not free to harm our Lord unless this is God’s

will. And since it is God's will, Pilate is surely not sovereign, as he wishes to imply. He cannot do whatever he chooses to Jesus.

2. (:11) Jesus Rebukes By Pointing to the Ultimate Divine Authority

“Jesus answered, ‘You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin.’”

(Or is Jesus mainly referring to the authority of Caiaphas here?? What is the connection between the first half of verse 11 and the second half?)

Tasker: Pilate's sin in bringing about the crucifixion is therefore less, Jesus asserts, than that of the high priest, for Pilate, however wrongly he may be destined to use the power vested in him, is exercising a power legitimately entrusted to him, while the person who handed Jesus over to him is illegally using the secular power of Rome to obtain an unjust sentence against Jesus.

B. (:12) Conflict: Pilate Torn Between the Fear of God and the Fear of Man

“As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.’”

Strong political peer pressure brought to bear

C. (:13-16) Capitulation: The Reluctant Act of Judgment

1. (:13) Formal stage for judgment

“When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.”

2. (:14) Final Attempt at Sarcastic Resolution

“Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’”

3. (:15) Frenzied Voice of the Jewish Religious Leaders

“They therefore 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.’”

4. (:16) Fatal Act of Cowardice

“So he then delivered Him to them to be crucified.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was Pilate trying to accomplish by having Jesus humiliated and beaten and mocked?
- 2) What is the implication of verse 36 (“*My kingdom is not of this realm*”) on the efforts by the theonomists and postmill advocates to try to bring in the kingdom by reforming every area of political government, economics, etc.? How do we live in such a way that it is evident our citizenship is primarily spiritual?
- 3) Why was it so important that Jesus be executed by the Roman method of crucifixion rather than suffer the type of stoning that was the capital punishment exacted by Jews?
- 4) When have we gone against our convictions and acted like a coward rather than pay the price to stand up for the truth?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: John clearly establishes the fact that Pilate was anxious to release Jesus if he could. Twice in this very paragraph he declares that he has found no crime in him. A comparison of all the gospel accounts reveals that seven times during the trial of Jesus Pilate has pronounced him guiltless. He obviously is trying to find a way to release him and sidestep the determination of the priests to crucify him. The problem is, he only will do so if it can be done at no cost to himself. John indicates that, although Pilate is trying to release Jesus, he is unwilling to pay any price to do so.

All of us at one time or another have acted similarly. We want to stand up for Jesus and show our loyalty to him up to the point when that will result in some momentary loss for us; then we remain silent. It is frightening to recognize how easily we can slip into the weakness of Pilate.

MacArthur: Now when we use the term Jews as John does, we are not referring to the Jewish populace who, for example, shouted hosannas and acknowledged Jesus to be King (Jn. 12:13). But John uses the term Jews in reference to the angry, hostile, anti-Christ Jewish leaders, made up predominantly of the Pharisees and the chief priests. In John's mind, the term Jews is primarily reserved for the Hebrews who are hostile to Christ, whereas there were many Hebrews who were not hostile to Him. In order to understand the scene of the trial, we must understand the Jews -- the leaders.

During the Jewish period of history in which Jesus lived, all of the people of Israel were under the bondage of Rome. The Jewish leaders chafed under this bondage. Although Rome was wise, and the peace, called Pax Romana, which they set in the world was very wise in that it allowed a certain degree of self-government for the subjects, they

still restricted the right of execution for Rome. So, although the people of Israel were autonomous in the sense that they could operate in their own courts, they could not execute in terms of capital punishment. . .

Since they were unable to execute Jesus legally, they had to bring Jesus to the Romans because the right of the sword (the *ius gladii*) belonged only to them. So even though the Jews had carried out their mock trial and come to the conclusion that He had to die because He claimed to be equal with God, never considering that it was true, they now seek Pilate because they need him to have Jesus executed. . .

All the way through the trial Pilate keeps trying to get out of the situation because he knows Jesus is innocent and he doesn't want the blood of this just man on his hands. It is almost as if Jesus isn't the One on trial, but Pilate is. Will Pilate do what's right or not? Naturally, since John wants to exalt Jesus, he picks the aspects of the trial which reveal the innocence of Jesus. So, by the time you have studied through the entire trial, you will have seen the magnificence of Jesus Christ and the stupidity of Pilate. Jesus is in total control of the situation.

Deffinbaugh: For the last 2,000 years, the question has not changed; only those who must decide have changed. John's Gospel puts before us the assertion that Jesus is indeed who He claimed to be—the Son of God, who came to this earth as the God-man, by adding perfect humanity to His undiminished deity. He came to reveal God to men, and to be rejected by His own people, the Jews, and also by the Gentiles. He was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. He shed His blood for the salvation of all who trust in Him. And so as you read the words of our text, the decision you must make is virtually the same as that which faced Pilate: Who do you believe Jesus to be, and what will you do with Him? The answer of the Bible is this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Goettsche: (quoting **Chuck Colson**): Charles Colson in his book, *BODY LIFE* describes characteristics of the contemporary approach to truth,

- **Contemporary Society is Secular.** It has no thought about things eternal . . the focus is only on the "here and now". Even our religion is focused on what it can do for me NOW. R.C. Sproul says, "Contemporary people are betting everything on the fact that this life is the only thing there is....that there is no judgment."
- **Prevailing Society believes all nature is equal in value.** The animals should have the same "rights" as humans. Earth Day gets more attention than Easter. The result is that we live in a world where people are poisoned to protest the alleged inhumane treatment of rats. And ecological terrorists booby trap loggers in the Northwest to protect the owl. The idea that man alone is created in God's image is dismissed.
- **Our contemporary Society believes in the basic innocence of mankind.** They believe man is good and in time is only getting better. The problem, of course is "how do we explain the evil things that are done." The answers are simple: 1)

deny that those things are really wrong; (immoral sexual mores are not really wrong....those standards are imposed on us by a less "enlightened" time. 2) or . . . we blame them on some outside source (sickness or someone else's influence). The result is a society filled with victims. The murderer is no longer guilty of a crime . . .they are a victim of a bad home life. The drug dealer is not guilty of peddling death for profit, he is a victim of an oppressive government. The chorus is familiar . . . it's somebody else's fault. What's needed is not repentance or discipline but more government handouts as a corrective for evil society.

- The **prevailing Society is Pragmatic.** Today we would love to hear someone honestly ask, "What is truth?" But today the only question is: "Does it work?" Does it make me feel good? Does it get me what I want? Do you see how Christians are beginning to buy into this mentality? The Promise Keeper Rally in Washington is an example. Some will say, anything that can get that many men together to think about their responsibilities has to be a good thing. NO, NO, NO! The rally in the mall is a good thing because it was based on Biblical truth . . . not because of the number of people that showed up. A church is a good church not because of the "feelings it produces" or the "people that show up", a truth is "good" because it proclaims and stands on the truth.

The standard of truth (God's Word) has been replaced by the standard of personal preference and whim. The result is an entire generation of people chasing the wind. If you want to stand in the storms you must have an anchor . . . that anchor is unchanging truth.

Goettsche : (quoting **Max Lucado**): Max Lucado, as he often does, says it well:

Perhaps you, like Pilate, are curious about this one called Jesus. You, like Pilate, are puzzled by his claims and stirred by his passions. You have heard the stories: God descending the stars, cocooning in flesh, placing a stake of truth in the globe. You, like Pilate, have heard the others speak, now you would like for him to speak.

What do you do with a man who claims to be God, yet hates religion? What do you do with a man who calls himself the Savior, yet condemns systems? What do you do with a man who knows the place and time of his death, yet goes there anyway?

Pilate's question is yours. "What will I do with this man, Jesus?"

You have two choices.

You can reject him. That is an option. You can, as have many, decide that the idea of God becoming a carpenter is too bizarre - and walk away.

Or you can accept him. You can journey with him. You can listen for his voice amidst the hundreds of voices and follow him.

Pilate could have. He heard many voices that day-he could have heard Christ's. Had Pilate chosen to respond to this bruised Messiah his story would have been different.

Pilate vacillates. He is a puppy hearing two voices. He steps toward one, then stops, and steps toward the other.

So many voices. The voice of compromise. The voice of expedience. The voice of politics. The voice of conscience.

Jesus' voice is distinct. Unique. He doesn't cajole or plead. He just states the case. Pilate thought He could avoid making a choice. He washed his hands of Jesus. He climbed on the fence and sat down.

But in not making a choice, Pilate made a choice. Rather than ask for God's grace, he asked for a bowl. Rather than invite Jesus to stay, he sent him away. Rather than hear Christ's voice, he heard the voice of the people. [And the Angels Were Silent p. 161,162]

But in truth, the story today is not at all about Pilate His story is written. . . . it's your story that hangs in the balance. The question Pilate struggled with is the one you must address as well. What will YOU do with Jesus?

TEXT: John 19:17-30

TITLE: THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS

BIG IDEA:

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS FULFILLED EVERY OT PROPHECY DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL AND DEMONSTRATED THE ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

(:17-18) INTRODUCTION / SUMMARY: SUFFERING AND HUMILIATION

A. (:17) The Final Suffering Steps on the Road to Golgotha (Via Delorosa)

“They took Jesus therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha.”

Who is in control throughout this entire scene? Yes, they “took Jesus”, but “He went out” fully under the sovereign control of God.

Everett F. Harrison: All the Synoptics state that Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear the cross. John alone states that Jesus carried it. Luke’s account makes room for both. Jesus started, but could not carry it all the way.

B. (:18) The Ultimate Humiliation: Crucifixion as a Common Criminal

“There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.”

I. (:19-22) THE INSCRIPTION ON THE CROSS WAS UNDER GOD’S SOVEREIGN CONTROL:

JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS

A. (:19) The Inscription (written by Pilate) Highlights the Irony of the Tragedy

“And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, ‘JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”

B. (:20) The Inscription Reached a Wide Audience

“Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek.”

C. (:21) The Inscription Was Distasteful to the Jewish Religious Leaders

“And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, ‘Do not write, The King of the Jews, but that He said, I am King of the Jews.’”

D. (:22) The Inscription was Under God’s Sovereign Control

“Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written.’”

II. (:23-25a) THE DIVIDING OF HIS GARMENTS WAS UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL (down to the smallest detail of prophecy)

- A. (:23) The Prophetically Guided Equal Division of the Outer Garments
"The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier"
- B. (:24) The Prophetically Guided Single Distribution of the One Seamless Tunic
"and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. They said therefore to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be'; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.'"

On the surface, this prophecy seemed like a contradictory puzzle – how could both parts be true – either the clothes would be divided among several or lots would be cast to determine the recipient.

- C. (:25a) The Soldiers Performed the Actions, But God Ruled Behind the Scenes
"Therefore the soldiers did these things."

III. (:25b-27) THE TRANSITION OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES WAS UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL

- A. (:25b) Family and Friends Left Behind – Four Women (contrasted with four soldiers administering the crucifixion) – Three Marys (and possibly Salome)
"But there were standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."
- B. (:26) Jesus' Loving Charge to His Mother
"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!'"
- C. (:27a) Jesus' Loving Charge to John
"Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!'"
- D. (:27b) The Faithful Performance of These Family Relationship Responsibilities
"And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household."

IV. (:28-30) THE CLIMACTIC SURRENDERING OF HIS SPIRIT WAS UNDER GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL

- A. (:28-29) Fulfillment of Prophecy to the Last Detail
- (:28) The Prophetic Thirst
"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I am thirsty.'"

2. (:29) The Prophetic Sips of Sour Wine

“A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth.”

B. (:30) Final Departure Under God’s Sovereign Control

1. Final Act of His Humanity

“When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine,”

2. Final Completion of His Earthly Mission of Atonement

“He said, ‘It is finished!’”

3. Final Act of Sacrificial Spiritual Worship

“And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How does it become easier for us to bear our cross daily (as we have been commanded to do as disciples of Christ) when we meditate on how the Master bore His cross and suffered and laid down His life for us?

2) What was so special about this inscription that God wanted it written this way despite the protestations of the Jewish religious leaders?

3) If Jesus was able to still carry out His fundamental family responsibilities while performing the ultimate spiritual sacrifice, how can we ever use spiritual ministry as an excuse to exempt ourselves in different areas?

4) Why do we remain so “accomplishment driven” when Jesus wants us to see that He accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation and we need to rely on His grace rather than on our works?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Tasker: This garment is described as *without seam, woven from the top throughout* (23). It is as the great High Priest offering the perfect sacrifice that Jesus is dying; and it is stated in the Jewish law that the robe of the priest’s ephod shall be of woven work and so constructed that it be not rent (Ex. xxviii. 31, 32).

Part of the work of Jesus the great High Priest is to create a new fellowship of the redeemed, and to unite human beings one with another by virtue of their common

loyalty to Himself. So while He hangs on the cross He bids His mother and the beloved disciple find in their attachment to Himself the basis of a new spiritual relationship to one another (26, 27). Beneath the cross Christian fellowship is born, a fellowship wholly different from all purely human fellowship based on natural kinship, mutual sympathy, or a common outlook upon human affairs. The great and distinctive characteristic of this new fellowship is that all who enjoy it are drawn to one another by the consciousness that they are all brothers for whom Christ died.

Deffinbaugh: (:23-27) Loyalty and Lottery or Four Soldiers and Four Saints – It almost sounds as if these soldiers were bored. Perhaps they had carried out this duty so many times they were just mechanically doing their job. There was nothing new or unexpected here, not yet, that is.¹⁷⁵ From experience, these soldiers must have felt they knew almost exactly what would happen over the next few hours. Their ears very likely tuned out every moan and cry. They may have learned not to even look at their victims. If there is going to be any excitement for them at all, it will be in the casting of lots to see who wins the garments the dying men will leave behind. I cannot think of any way John could have better captured the cold-heartedness of these four men than by seizing upon this moment in time as they huddle together on the ground, casting lots for our Lord's garments. They see nothing to gain from Jesus but some item of clothing. In today's terms, they would look upon Jesus as the source of a baseball cap, an Izod shirt, a pair of Haggar slacks, or maybe—if they are lucky—a pair of Nike shoes. That's all Jesus was to them—a chance to win a piece of clothing. As He hung there on that cross, shedding His precious blood for guilty sinners, all they could think about was our Lord's tunic. When Jesus was "rolling away the burden of our sins" (as the hymn celebrates), they were rolling the dice. . .

While there is considerable discussion about John's reference to the "branch of hyssop" that was used to lift the sponge to our Lord's lips,¹⁸² we can hardly fail to see the significance of the hyssop in relation to the blood of the Passover lamb: "And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning" (Exodus 12:22, NKJV).

Second, it would seem as though the vinegar-like wine served to help clear the throat of our Lord, so that He could end His life triumphantly, with a shout. So far as John informs us, the "shout" is not, "It is completed," but rather as Luke informs us, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). These two statements must have come in close proximity to each other, however. The words that John records were no doubt spoken first, and then were followed by the words that Luke records. John simply tells us that Jesus "said," "It is completed." Jesus declares that His work is completed, and then He gives up His Spirit.

MacArthur: John selects the events at the cross that lend themselves to the majesty and the deity of Jesus. He picks out four features of the cross that speak of the deity of Christ, and which exalt Him to the skies: The Specific Fulfillments, The Superscription, The Selfless Love, and The Supernatural Knowledge and Control. John, true to his

purpose, through the Holy Spirit, glorifies Christ again. Whereas some of the other Gospel accounts (Mark and Luke) emphasize more of the humanity of Jesus, the point of this Gospel is the deity of Christ. So, as we discuss the crucifixion, I do not want to paint a vivid picture of the agony, or emphasize the drama and try to stir your emotions; I want to do just what John did: present to you the glorious portrait of Jesus' majesty in death, and of Jesus as God. I hope it will give your faith a solid foundation, more solid than you have ever experienced in terms of the truths of the Word of God, and the knowledge of Christ.

Stedman: In this account we can see how the priests wish to appear righteous and just men, zealous for God's glory, and loyal to his government. But, in the struggle with Pilate, they are driven to reveal themselves as jealous, petty schemers who are willing to commit murder to protect their own interests. They are forced at last to deny their loyalty to God and to openly acknowledge the rule of the hated Roman Caesar. John wants us to see that, as we draw near the cross, it is impossible to remain a deceiver. Jesus had said earlier that there would come a time when "nothing that is hidden shall remain hidden, but everything shall be revealed, that which is spoken in secret shall be shouted from the housetops." God will strip away all pretense and fantasy and reveal us for what we really are.

TEXT: John 19:31-42

TITLE: THE BURIAL

BIG IDEA:

PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT AND DEDICATED DEVOTION CONTINUES AS JESUS' BODY IS PREPARED FOR BURIAL

(:31) INTRODUCTION: URGENCY OF BURIAL

“The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day) asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

Ryrie: “The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread fell that year on a Sabbath, making it a ‘high’ festival (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:7). They were anxious that the body not remain on the cross.

‘their legs might be broken’ – This was done to hasten death, since the victim could no longer raise himself up on the nail through his feet in order to allow himself to breathe.”

I. (:32-37) PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT CONTINUES AS JESUS' BODY IS PREPARED FOR BURIAL – Two very specific Prophecies

A. (:32-34) The Fulfillment of the Two Prophecies

1. (:32-33) No Bones Broken

a. Expected that Death would need to be Hastened

“The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him;”

b. Extraordinary that Jesus (the Strongest of all Men) would Die First

“but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs”

2. (:34) Pierced for Confirmation of Death

“but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.”

B. (:35-37) The Resulting Testimony to the Truth Designed to Elicit Faith

1. (:35) The Credibility of John's Testimony

“And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.”

2. (:36) Fulfillment of the Prophecy of No Bones Broken

“For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, ‘Not a bone of Him shall be broken.’”

Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12; Ps.34:20

3. (:37) Fulfillment of the Prophecy of the Piercing

“And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’”

Zech. 12:10

II. (:38-42) DEDICATED DEVOTION CONTINUES AS JESUS’ BODY IS PREPARED FOR BURIAL – Two very dedicated and devoted Disciples – both members of the Sanhedrin

A. (:38) Dedicated Devotion on the Part of Joseph of Arimathea

“And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore, and took away His body.”

B. (:39-40) Dedicated Devotion on the Part of Nicodemus

“And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.”

C. (:41-42) Jesus’ Body Laid in New Tomb

“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. Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”

“*day of preparation*” – this phrase serves as bookends for beginning and end of this section (vs. 31)

Pink: Here was the third conclusive proof that the Lord Jesus actually died—He was buried. He who had been born of a virgin mother, was laid in a virgin grave; there to remain for three days when He came forth as the mighty Victor

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we be sure that Jesus voluntarily laid down His life for us on the cross (rather than being forced against His will to give up His life)?

2) How can we be sure that Jesus was actually dead ... so that the resurrection was a miraculous reality (rather than just the reawakening out of a coma)?

3) How much courage did it take for Joseph and Nicodemus to step forward at this time? Where were the other disciples? Where would we have been?

4) What was the significance of Jesus being laid in a new tomb? What would have been done with the body of Jesus if it had been left up to the Roman soldiers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Everett F. Harrison: In the hour of Jesus' death two secret disciples found a courage they had not possessed before. Joseph gained from Pilate permission to take down the body from the cross; then Nicodemus came forward to provide the spices and linen for preparing the body for burial.

Hendriksen: This tomb was *new*. It was new in the sense that it had never been used. Decay and decomposition had never entered it. This was a fit resting-place for the body of the Lord. Cf. Ps. 16:10. According to Matt. 27:60 it was Joseph's own tomb. And Joseph was a rich man. Hence, Is. 53:9 occurs to the mind immediately, "*And (he was) with a rich man in his death.*"

Deffinbaugh: Already in John's day, there were those seeking sophisticated alternative explanations for the death and resurrection of our Lord. One of these was known as docetism, the view that Jesus did not come in "flesh and blood," but as some kind of spirit being. John's description of our Lord's death, especially of the "blood and water," shows the folly of denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (see 1 John 4:2). There were also those who contended that, although Jesus was truly "flesh and blood," He did not actually die; He just "swooned" and was revived by the cool temperature in the tomb. This account of the spear thrust into the side of our Lord deals a death blow to swoon theories and to docetism.

Goettsche: Some of the Greatest Followers are some of the Least Known. Joseph of Arimathea is not a man we have met before. Luke 23 tells us, "*Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God.*" He was not popular like the other disciples, no letter was written with His name on it. Yet, He was a follower...He was "waiting for the Kingdom". He was unknown but not insignificant. Notice:

- He honored Christ when everyone else had deserted Him

- He honored Christ even when it was personally dangerous

- He honored Him when it was personally costly (his own tomb...and he would be defiled for the Passover celebration)

- He honored Christ when, to all appearances, there was nothing Christ could give in return.

Joseph wasn't popular but He was faithful. I know there are many of you who labor in the shadows. You feel that your contribution is insignificant because you aren't in the spotlight. I feel that way every time I go to a conference or read a great book. I feel small, insignificant. However, this account reminds us that God does not judge our faithfulness on the basis of press clippings but on the bent of our heart. God sees the deeds that are done in secret. You wonder if anyone notices God does. There are lots of people in this church who serve in the shadows. They are the ones visiting the sick, sending notes of encouragement, doing little things around the church. Many who served at the craft sale yesterday labored hard for the Lord in making their crafts no public accolades . . . but they were acting in faithfulness. No one notices them but God.

MacArthur: The myrrh and aloes were used to sprinkle the body. They were aromatic spices--the myrrh likely being liquid and the aloes a kind of ground-up wood powder. He had a hundred pound weight of this (seventy-two pounds in our measurements). This shows that Nicodemus was wealthy. He also thought greatly of Jesus because that much myrrh and aloes would normally be used to bury a king.

Here are two of the great leaders in the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus may have been the number-one teacher in Israel. These two men counted the cost and eliminated from their whole life all their friends, all their society, and the whole of Judaism to take their stand for Jesus Christ. And they took their stand publicly. They counted the cost, and they chose Christ.

Ryle: It is noteworthy that the penitent thief, even after his conversion, had more suffering to go through before he entered into Paradise. The grace of God and the pardon of sin did not deliver him from the agony of having his legs broken. When Christ undertakes to save our souls, He does not undertake to deliver from bodily pains and conflict with the last enemy. Penitence, as well as impenitence, must taste death (unless the Savior returns first, A.W.P.)" Yet it is blessed to know that these Roman soldiers were also the unwitting agents for fulfilling Christ's promise "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"!

TEXT: John 20:1-18

TITLE: THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

THE EMPTY TOMB IS A POWERFUL WITNESS TO THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF CHRIST – ESPECIALLY WHEN INTERPRETED BY THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST HIMSELF!

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: THE DISCOVERY OF THE EMPTY TOMB AT FIRST CAUSES CONFUSION AND PANIC TO THE SHOCKED DISCIPLES

(Note: It is important to read the Synoptic accounts to capture some of the other details that are omitted by John.)

A. (:1) Major Security Breakdown

“Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.”

Morris: Mary Magdalene came to the tomb very early on the first day of the week, for John tells us that it was “yet dark.” That it was still dark will perhaps explain why Mary did not see the things Peter and John saw later. . . It is not clear why John does not mention any woman other than Mary when all the other Gospels tell us that she was not alone.

Ryle: Let us note Mary’s courage, and zeal to honor her buried Lord. Not every woman would have dared to go outside the city while it was yet dark, to a grave, and specially during the Passover feast, when thousands of strangers were probably sleeping under any slight shelter near the walls of Jerusalem.

B. (:2) Good Data . . . Bad Conclusion

“And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’”

The reality of the bodily resurrection does not even seem to have been an option they considered. As of this point, despite Christ’s repeated attempts at teaching, they did not have an understanding of the resurrection.

Ryle: After all we must remember that true grace, and not head knowledge, is the one thing needful. We are in the hands of a merciful and compassionate Saviour, who passes by and pardons much ignorance, when He sees “a heart right in the sight of God.” Some things indeed we must know, and without knowing them we cannot be saved. . . But he that knows these things may, in other respects, be a very ignorant man. In fact, the extent to which one man may have grace together with much ignorance, and another may have much knowledge and yet no grace, is one of the greatest mysteries in religion, and one which the last day alone will unfold. Let us then

seek knowledge, and be ashamed of ignorance. But above all let us make sure that, like Peter and John, we have grace and right hearts.

Stedman: When the body of Abraham Lincoln was stolen some years after his death and held for ransom, our entire nation was shocked and dismayed. After the ransom was paid, the body was recovered, and buried again under tons of cement in Springfield, Illinois.

I. (:3-10) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EMPTY TOMB HITS HOME FOR JOHN AND PETER

A. (:3-4) The Rush to Check Things Out for Themselves

“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first.”

B. (:5-8) A Close Look at the Evidence Leaves No Other Explanation Than the Reality of the Bodily Resurrection

1. (:5) John Got the First Look

“and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.”

2. (:6-7) Peter Dashed In and Inspected Thoroughly

“Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth, which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.”

3. (:8) John Also Entered, Saw, and Immediately Believed

“So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed.”

Ryle: Concerning the true meaning of this word *“believed”* in this place, there has been some dispute, but without good cause. It cannot of course mean that John became a true believer now for the first time. Such an idea is absurd. Nor yet can it only mean, I think, that John at last believed that the body of our Lord was not there. Such an interpretation seems to me cold, tame, and shallow. I hold that it can only bear one meaning, and that is, that John, when he saw the state of the tomb, believed that Christ had really risen from the dead. In short, he was the first of all our Lord’s followers that believed His resurrection.

C. (:9) The Message of the Resurrection Was a Difficult One to Derive from OT Prophecy

“For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.”

- D. (:10) Still Uncertain How to Proceed – pondering many questions in their minds
“*So the disciples went away again to their own homes.*”

II. (:11-18) THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EMPTY TOMB IS REVEALED TO MARY MAGDALENE

A. (:11-13) True Significance Revealed by the Appearance of Angels

1. (:11) Mary was Heart Broken

“*But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb.*”

2. (:12-13) Angels Demonstrate Compassion

“*and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’*”

Carr: There were two angels at the tomb. Two is the number of witness. These angels have been dispatched from God to bear witness to the truth that Jesus is alive from the dead. Theirs is a message of absolute hope and perfect assurance - Matt. 28:5-6!

B. (:14-17) True Significance Revealed by the Personal Appearance of the Resurrected Jesus

1. (:14) No Immediate Recognition of Jesus

“*When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus.*”

2. (:15a) Two Probing Questions asked by Jesus

a. Why are You Grief Stricken Instead of Joy Filled?

“*Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’*”

b. Why are You Looking for the Living Among the Dead?

“*Whom are you seeking?’*”

3. (:15b) Still Searching

“*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.’*”

4. (:16) Finally, Resolution!

“*Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher)*”

5. (:17) Clear Marching Orders

“*Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to*

the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.”

C. (:18) Conclusion: Mary Carries the Good News to the Other Disciples

“Mary Magdalene came announcing to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord.’ and that He had said these things to her.”

Carr: We are still commanded to come and see, then go and tell. The world needs to hear from a people who have been to the tomb and know that Jesus is alive. The world needs to hear of the Savior you serve!

I serve a risen Savior;
He's in the world today;
I know that He is living;
Whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy;
I hear His voice of cheer;
And just the time I need Him;
He's always near!

He Lives! He Lives!
Christ Jesus lives today;
He walks with me and talks with me;
along life's narrow way.
He Lives! He Lives!
Salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives;
He Lives within my heart.

Rejoice, rejoice Oh Christian;
Lift up your voice and sing;
eternal hallelujah's;
To Jesus Christ the King.
The hope of all who seek Him;
The help of all who find;
None other is so loving;
So good and kind!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How appropriate that John should write this epistle encouraging faith in others when he was the first disciple to believe in the bodily resurrection of his Lord! What special experiences have you had that uniquely qualify you to testify in that area?

2) Why does John leave out so many details that the Synoptics included? What sort of order of events can you piece together that would harmonize these different accounts?

3) Why was it so difficult for the disciples to understand the significance of the OT prophecies relating to the resurrection as well as to grasp the Lord's personal instruction to them on this crucial matter?

4) What do we learn about Christ's resurrection body from the fact that Mary mistook Him for the gardener?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Morris: All four Gospels come to their climax in the resurrection narratives, but each does it in its own way. The accounts are very different. John, for example, has none of the stories that the others have. His account is peculiar to himself throughout. He agrees on the fact of the resurrection, and he speaks of the empty tomb as do the others. But he lacks the stories the others tell, and he tells stories that they do not. It is not easy to arrange the details given by the four Evangelists into a connected narrative. But it is not impossible, and Westcott, for example, has drawn up an approximate time table of the events on that first Easter Day with everything arranged in sequence. We cannot be certain that his account is correct, but it is certainly possible. The differences between the Gospels amount to no more than a demonstration that here we have the spontaneous evidence of witnesses, not the stereotyped repetition of an official story.

Stedman: "The Incredible Hope" --

But why does he not permit Mary to cling to him? He is saying to her, "Mary, a new relationship has come into being. I am no longer going to continue with you in a close physical relationship. Touching me gives you comfort, but it will no longer be that way. I am going to ascend to the Father." As we know from the Upper Room discourse, from there he would send the Spirit who would then make him available in a more wonderful and closer way than ever before. What he is saying is, "When I ascend to the Father, my nearness to you will be complete. Now go and tell my brothers (not "my disciples") that same truth."

(Quotes this contemporary chorus as the real impact of Christ's resurrection):

Because He lives,

I can face tomorrow,

Because He lives,

all fear is gone.

Because I know who holds the future,

that life is worth the living

Just because He lives.

Ryle: Re vs. 7

The object of this verse seems to be to show that Peter found in the empty tomb the clearest evidence of a deliberate, orderly, and calmly done transaction. The linen clothes, in which our Lord's body had been wrapped, were lying by themselves. The napkin which had been tied round his head was rolled up by itself in another place, separate from the linen clothes. There were no symptoms of hurry, haste, or fear. All had been done decently and in order. Everything that Peter saw contradicted the idea that the body had been stolen. No thief would have taken so much trouble about the clothes and napkin. In fact the person who had removed the body, whoever it was, must have entailed on himself needless labor, if he removed it as a dead corpse, by unwrapping the linen clothes in which the corpse was buried. The easiest plan would have been to carry away the body just as he found it, wrapped up in linen. Why were the linen clothes taken off and left behind? Why were the removers of the body so careful to take away nothing but the body? Questions like these must have sorely perplexed Peter's mind. The body, he saw plainly, was gone. But there was something in the whole appearance of things which he could not understand.

Hendriksen: They saw the things which the Lord had arranged in such a manner as to arouse and strengthen faith. Scripture also began to take on a new meaning now. Previously such beautiful passages as Ps. 16:10, 11; Ps. 110:1, 4; Ps. 118:22-24; and Is. 53:11, 12 – passages which referred to Christ's resurrection – had meant very little to them. Now these same passages were beginning to assume significance! They now understood that Christ's glorious resurrection was a divine must. Cf. Luke 24:26. On and after Pentecost all this would become even clearer.

Herries: Walk by Faith and our Weeping (Mary) Will Turn to Rejoicing in the Risen Lord

We see Mary Magdalene come to the tomb with a broken heart because of her great love for the Savior. When she saw the empty grave, why didn't her weeping immediately turn to rejoicing? Because she interpreted the physical facts in a physical way; she was walking by sight, not by faith in the resurrection of Christ.

TEXT: John 20:19-29

TITLE: HOW MUCH EVIDENCE IS ENOUGH TO STIMULATE FAITH?

BIG IDEA:

THE RISEN LORD OFFERS US THE OPPORTUNITY TO BELIEVE BEFORE WE SEE

INTRODUCTION:

Not talking about blind faith here; look at all of the evidence that has been presented to the Deity and Lordship of Christ throughout the Gospel of John. Significant that Thomas was absent when the Lord first appeared to His disciples. He did not have the same response to the testimony of Mary that the others did.

Goettsche: Over the course of time you have undoubtedly had a nickname or used a nickname for someone else. Some nicknames become so associated with someone that they are as well known by their nickname (or better) as by their real name. If we talked about "The Duke" you would think of John Wayne. In the music world if you talked about "the King" you would be referring to Elvis Presley. In sports if you talk about "His Air-ness" or "MJ" you are talking about Michael Jordan. "Magic" would refer to Earvin Johnson. "Sweetness" to Walter Payton., "Samurai" refers to Mike Singletary.

The Bible has several people we know by their nicknames. There is John "The Baptist", Peter "The Rock", John "The disciple Jesus Loved", Jeremiah the "weeping prophet", James and John...the "Sons of Thunder", the "Woman Caught in "Adultery", Judas "the traitor", and of course "Doubting Thomas".

I. (:19-23) THE DISCIPLES BELIEVED THE TESTIMONY OF MARY AND REJOICED WHEN THEY SAW THE PIERCED HANDS AND SIDE OF THEIR LORD

A. (:19-20) Jesus Showed Himself to His Hiding Disciples to Energize Them For Their Mission

1. (:19a) The Disciples Needed Encouragement for their Faith

“When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews”

- They did not have to wait long – that very evening
- They were believing, but still fearful
- From Luke 24 it would seem that the Lord gently rebukes them that their faith in the testimony of the eyewitnesses should have been stronger.

MacArthur: Now, the disciples were afraid. They were in the room shivering in terror, expecting that at any minute the Temple police would knock on the door and get them.

2. (:19b) Jesus' Initial Message is Always One of Peace and Reassurance
"Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"

3. (:20) Joy is Always the Response of Faith That Has Been Rewarded with Sight
"And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and his side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord."

B. (:21-23) Jesus Sent His Disciples Out Empowered by the Holy Spirit to Transact Eternal Business

1. (:21) The Great Commission Carries the Promise of God's Presence and Authority
"Jesus therefore said to them again, 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'"

2. (:22) The Divine Presence and the Divine Power is Mediated by the Gift of the Indwelling Holy Spirit
"And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit."

Was this merely symbolic and anticipatory of the actual coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?? (See note by **Deffinbaugh** below.)

3. (:23) What is at Stake = Forgiveness of Sins
"If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."

II. (:24-25) THOMAS DOUBTED THE ADDED TESTIMONY OF HIS SPIRITUAL BRETHREN AND REQUIRED SEEING AS A PREREQUISITE TO BELIEVING

A. (:24) Doubting Thomas was MIA (Missing in Action)

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

Should we attribute his absence to some deficiency of faith in comparison to the other disciples? Difficult to say.

Pink: The state of Thomas' soul coincided with his absence on that memorable evening. He resisted the blessedness of the resurrection, and therefore did not join his brethren, and thus share the joy of the Master's presence in their midst. Slow of heart to believe,

he remained for a whole week in darkness and gloom. One important lesson we may learn from this is, how much we lose by our failure to cultivate the fellowship of Christian brethren.

B. (:25a) Doubting Thomas Rejected the Testimony of His Spiritual Brethren
“The other disciples therefore were saying to him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’”

B. (:25b) Doubting Thomas Required Seeing as a Prerequisite to Believing
“But he said to them, ‘Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’”

Stedman: Thomas is more than a doubter, however. He is determined not to believe. Notice how he puts it, "Unless I see in his hands the prints of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not [not, I cannot] believe." He is stubbornly saying, in effect, "The evidence has to be what I decide it has to be, or I will not believe." This is characteristic of Thomas. He is a born pessimist, the type who would look at a glass half-filled with water and say it was half-empty. Later, when Jesus does appear, he rebukes Thomas for being faithless. By deliberate choice Thomas rejects the evidence. All his trusted brothers and sisters in the Lord tell him they have seen Jesus face to face -- they have even touched him and felt him -- but Thomas rejects this and refuses to believe until he personally examines the evidence.

III. (:26-29) JESUS PATIENTLY PROVIDES ABUNDANT EVIDENCE BUT PREFERS AN AGGRESSIVE FAITH (THAT BELIEVES BEFORE IT SEES)

A. (:26) Repeat Performance
“And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”

B. (:27) Patient Exhortation: See and Believe
“Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.’”

C. (:28) Appropriate Confession of Faith
“Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”

D. (:29) Praiseworthy Faith: Believe before Seeing
“Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Was Jesus expressing some level of exasperation with the delayed response of Thomas? Was Thomas embarrassed when Jesus presented Himself and invited to be checked out? Was Thomas' response really that different from the other disciples who also had opportunity to see before they found the full release of joy? Or did the other disciples have a quicker response of faith that caused them to be gathered together that first Easter evening when Thomas was not present?
- 2) How does the Lord encourage us in our fears and communicate the Peace of His presence and His power to us in our time of need?
- 3) Why were there no sign gifts expressed here at the receiving of the Holy Spirit?
- 4) How could Jesus give the disciples authority to "*forgive*" or "*retain*" sins? What did He mean by this statement? Why express Himself in a way that could be so easily misconstrued?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Stedman: Every morning, every day, a dozen times a day you can claim again this wonderful sense of the forgiveness of sin.

Not only can we claim it, but we can offer it to people. That is why Jesus said to these men, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." I have done this many times. This does not mean that we are given authority to say to one, "You are forgiven," and to another. You are not.

Some have interpreted it that way, saying that priests are empowered to forgive or retain sins. But Jesus is not saying that. What he is saying is, we are empowered to declare the forgiveness of sin when people believe in Jesus. If any man, woman or child who is conscious of sin and failure, confess it, and acknowledges their need before Jesus, and receives him, we have the authority to say to them, "Your sins are forgiven." I have done that.

Ritchie: Thomas did not need any more proof. In response to what Jesus said to him, he made two profound statements about him: "My Lord and my God!" he exclaimed. The first statement, "my Lord," denotes ownership and absolute control. Thomas, who had tried to lord it over Jesus, now fell at his feet in joyful submission. ". . . and my God . . ." The resurrection of Jesus had convinced him that not only was he Lord but that he was God, the one living and true God. Thomas needed no further word from Jesus. He should, of course, have believed in the resurrection sight unseen, on the word of the other witnesses. But now he could see that Jesus' resurrection was not the coming back to life of a mere man; the Lord's resurrection was one to eternal life and glory. Thomas

was looking at God's Son in the flesh. His resurrection made possible the forgiveness of sins and justification for all who would place their faith in him. And this forgiveness and justification, of course, is possible only because Jesus is alive. He is no longer dead, but has been raised again to life eternal!

Deffinbaugh: I believe that while our Lord prepared His disciples for the coming of the Spirit in the Upper Room Discourse, He did not intend to send the Spirit until after His ascension. In other words, the Holy Spirit would not come until Pentecost. Some suggest that in our text Jesus is temporarily bestowing the Spirit upon His disciples, until Pentecost comes. I don't agree.

In the first place, John does not report anything out of the ordinary happening as a result of our Lord's actions. The disciples are not transformed, as they will be at Pentecost. The gospel is not preached. In fact, the next thing to happen in John's Gospel is that some of the disciples go fishing. I do not believe that the Holy Spirit was immediately bestowed upon the disciples at this moment, as a result of what Jesus says and does. I believe Jesus is symbolically bestowing the Spirit upon His disciples, although it will not actually take place until Pentecost. Jesus will have ascended to the Father then, and so this gesture indicates to the disciples that when the Spirit comes at Pentecost, it will be as a result of what Jesus had promised earlier, and symbolically indicates here.

MacArthur: Jesus Christ has given the commission to all Christians to carry the gospel to the world. According to 2 Corinthians 5:20, we are ambassadors for Christ. As an ambassador, what is your strategy for reaching the world for Christ? When was the last time you shared the gospel with anyone? Perhaps you need to map out a strategy right now. Begin by making a list of those people you would like to see come to Christ. Start by praying that God would work in their hearts to make them open to the gospel. Next to each person's name, list some ideas for how you might share the gospel with them (e.g., witnessing one-on-one, giving them reading materials, taking them to a church service, etc.). But most important of all, examine your own life. Be sure of your own commitment to proclaim God's truth, and your purity to be able to be effective as an ambassador (2 Tim. 2:21).

Goettsche: One of the wonderful benefits of the Bible's straightforward honesty in showing us the struggles as well as the successes of the main characters of Scripture, is that we often see that our experience is not unique. In reading of the struggle of Thomas with doubt we realize that we aren't the only ones to ever have doubts. In fact, there are many accounts of people doubting. Abraham doubted that Sarah was to be the Mother of the promised child; Moses doubted his ability to lead; Habakkuk (and Job...or at least Job's wife) doubted (for a season) God's justice; Elijah doubted whether God knew what He was doing; Peter doubted as he walked on the water. So you see, those who doubt are in good company.

Now it's important to understand, of course, that God wants us to trust Him. God wants us to be so convinced of His character and goodness that we will never waver in our trust. James reminds us: "he who doubts is like a wave of the seas, blown and tossed by

the wind. That man should not think that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does." (Jas. 1:6) We know that doubt stands as a barrier to effective faith. Doubt hinders our prayers. Doubt hinders our enjoyment of God's fellowship.

However, we are in the process of growth . . . so doubts do come. In order to grow in our faith, we must be honest about our doubts. Hiding doubt in the closet will only eat away at our faith like cancer. Doubt confessed is doubt that can be overcome.

TEXT: John 20:30-31

TITLE: THEME OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

BIG IDEA:

JESUS' SPECIAL SIGN MIRACLES POINT US TO FAITH IN HIM AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, THE SON OF GOD -- WHO ALONE CAN PROVIDE SPIRITUAL LIFE

INTRODUCTION:

Why did John write his gospel? What special emphasis did he have over the other gospel writers? Why did he select the specific miracles which he did? Explain the selective nature of God's Revelation – we are not told everything ... but everything that we are told has a special purpose

I. (:30) UNRECORDED SIGN MIRACLES WERE INTENDED FOR A LIMITED AUDIENCE

“Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book”

- A. Significant that Jesus performed an abundance of Sign Miracles
- B. Intended Audience / Intended Authenticators = Jews living with Christ / Immediate disciples
- C. Something Special about the Scriptures / intended for wider audience

II. (:31) RECORDED SIGN MIRACLES WERE INTENDED FOR A WIDER AUDIENCE AND A VERY SPECIAL PURPOSE

“but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF SIGN MIRACLES

Def. of a “sign” = an event or work (usually miraculous) which points to something else.

- 1. Great Periods in History where God uses Special Sign Miracles
 - a. Moses -- theocracy
 - b. Elijah / Elisha -- the Kings
 - c. Christ / the Apostles -- the Church
 - d. End Times
- 2. Importance of Written Revelation from God

3. Analysis of 7 Sign Miracles in Gospel of John
 - a. Changing water into wine at marriage feast at Cana (2:1-11)
 - b. Healing a nobleman's son (4:46-54)
 - c. Healing a sick man at the pool Bethesda (5:1-9)
 - d. Feeding the crowd of 5000 people (6:1-14)
 - e. Walking on water (6:16-21)
 - f. Healing the man born blind (9:1-12)
 - g. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-46)

Smokescreen: People often ask for additional signs or contemporary signs before they will believe; but if they reject these signs, more revelation will not help them.

B. THE PURPOSE OF REVELATION -- TO GENERATE FAITH

1. Concept of Faith -- Definitions
 - the hand of the heart receiving the blessings of God and relying on them
2. Illustrations
3. Contrasted with Works -- cf. swimming to Hawaii
4. Progression of faith

C. THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST

not the amount of faith, but the object of our faith is critical
sincerity alone will get you nowhere

1. Jesus is the Christ -- the Messiah
 - a. connection to OT prophecies
 - b. the Anointed One in OT
 - 1) Prophet

2) Priest

3) King

2. Jesus is the Son of God -- significance of "*I am*" sayings

a. Background -- Exodus 3:14

"*I am*" refers to the name God uses for Himself; Jehovah
Christ is often identified as the Jehovah of the OT

b. Conditions for this being a claim to Deity

1) person speaking must be Christ

2) Word order must be "I am" with nothing intervening

3) sentence structure --

no predicate

or with predicate consisting of a definite article and
a predicate nominative

c. Analysis of "*I am*" statements in Gospel of John

Background: Exod. 3:13-14

1) John 4:25-26 used in an absolute sense with reference to the Messiah

2) John 6:35, 48, 51 The Bread of Life

3) John 8:12 The Light of the World

4) John 8:18, 24, 28 The True Witness

5) John 8:58 Greater than Abraham

6) John 10:7,9 The Door of the Sheep

7) John 10:11,14 The Good Shepherd

8) John 11:25 The Resurrection and the Life

9) John 13:19 Used in an absolute sense with reference to fulfillment of
prophecy

10) John 14:6 The Way, The Truth, and The Life

11) John 15:1,5 The True Vine

12) John 17:14, 16 Not of the World

13) John 18:5,6,8 Used in an absolute sense with reference to Jesus the
Nazarene whom the Jews were seeking to put to death

D. BELIEF = SOLE CONDITION FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Personal Testimony

Physical Life

Spiritual Life

John 17:3

E. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

How do you know for sure you are a believer?

Importance of the message of 1 John

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does Jesus do special for us and our family that encourages our faith in Him? How effective is our testimony in impacting others? Why are not spectacular sign miracles commonplace throughout all of history?
- 2) What is the difference between writing a biography (a detailed history of the life and accomplishments of Jesus) and a Gospel account as John has done?
- 3) How is it that we have the same opportunity to experience faith in Christ as John did even though we have not been physically in the presence of Christ to witness His sign miracles? Do we have a high enough view of the Scriptures?
- 4) What is my relationship right now to Jesus as *the Messiah*? my relationship to Him as *the Son of God*?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Morris: “Faith is fundamental and John longs to see men believe. He has not tried to write an impartial history. He is avowedly out to secure converts. He is bearing his witness to those great events in which God has acted for man’s salvation. For he is sure that God has acted, and that His action is seen supremely in Jesus Christ. John does not think of faith as a vague trust, but as something with content ... Faith means believing that --. Here he singles out two things in faith’s content. The one is that Jesus is the Christ, i.e. the Messiah, the long expected One. The other is that he is the Son of God. We take these two as more or less identical, but Jews of the day did not. The Messiah was not expected to stand in that very close relationship to the Father of which John speaks. John’s conception of messiahship is fuller and richer than is that of contemporary Judaism ... The combination of terms indicates the very highest view of the Person of Jesus, and it must be taken in conjunction with the fact that John has just recorded the confession of Thomas which hails Jesus as *‘My Lord and my God.’* There cannot be any doubt but that John conceived of Jesus as the very incarnation of God.”

Hendriksen: “When the Church continues to accept Jesus as the divinely appointed and qualified (hence, as the divinely *anointed*) One, that is, as *the Christ*, the fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes and promises; when it continues to recognize him as the *Son of God*, in the most exalted sense of the term, it will continue to have life – everlasting life; ... in his name, that is, in and by means of the blessed acceptance of his revelation in the sphere of redemption.”

Jensen:

Selective Gospel: “*many other . . . but these*”
Attested Gospel: “*in the presence of his disciples*”
Apologetic Gospel: “*these are written, that ye might*”
Interpretative Gospel: “*that Jesus is the Christ*”
Definitive Gospel: “*the Son of God*”
Effective Gospel: “*ye might have life*”

Godet: “He aims, not at knowledge, but at faith, and through faith at life. He is not a philosopher, but a witness; his word as a historian forms a part of his apostolic ministry. In all times, those who have not seen will be able through his testimony to reach the same faith and the same life as himself. We are thus enlightened as to the method and the spirit of his book.”

TEXT: John 21:1-14

TITLE: FISHING LESSON – APPLICATION TO FISHING FOR MEN

BIG IDEA:

THE FINAL APPEARANCE OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST REINFORCES THE NECESSITY FOR TOTAL DEPENDENCE UPON THE MASTER FOR SUPERNATURAL RESULTS

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION: PERFECT SETTING FOR A FISHING EXPEDITION

A. (:1) Location of Manifestation

“After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He manifested Himself in this way.”

B. (:2) Seven Participants

“There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples.”

Final Chapter divides into two equally important sections summing up the mission that lies ahead for the disciples:

21:1-14	Fishing	Evangelism	Soul Winning	Catching
21:15-25	Feeding	Edification	Shepherding	Caring For

TWO DIFFERENT MATHEMATICAL EQUATIONS:

**I. (:3-5) DETERMINATION + TEAMWORK + HARD WORK = 0
(APART FROM DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST)**

A. Determination (but impatient)

“Simon Peter said to them, ‘I am going fishing.’”

B. Teamwork (but missing the key player)

“They said to him, ‘We will also come with you.’”

C. Hard Work

“They went out, and got into the boat”

spent all night working hard; had all the necessary equipment, skills, etc.
these were experienced fishermen; men’s men; using a big net (not just a hook)

D. Zero Results

“and that night they caught nothing.”

Stedman: Much of the fishing in the Sea of Galilee was done at night in those days as it is yet today. Fishermen used torches to attract the fish to the boat and then netted them. But although they were expert fishermen, the disciples had labored

throughout the night and had caught nothing. That must have been a rather unusual experience for them. Yet as this account makes clear, it was the Lord's intention that they catch nothing on this occasion.

E. Sad Report Because They Were Not Using Their Key Resource

“But when the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Children, you do not have any fish, do you?’ They answered Him, ‘No.’”

II. (:6-8) DEPENDENCE + OBEDIENCE = GRACE GIFT OF SUPERNATURAL RESULTS

A. Direction From the Master (although as yet unrecognized as such)

“And He said to them, ‘Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch.’”

Gracious initiative of the Master to provide direction coupled with a promise of success

Disciples were humble enough at this point to accept direction, even from a stranger.

B. Corporate Obedience / Human Responsibility

“They cast therefore”

Did not make a whole lot of natural sense; they were tired; they had tried everything; obviously they were not in a good location

Stedman: But notice that Jesus then invites the disciples to bring the fish they have caught. This beautifully suggests the way God works with man. As I read through the Scriptures I am continually astonished at the privilege given us by God of being co-laborers with him. Human labor was involved in almost all of the miracles of Jesus. For instance, our Lord multiplied the bread and fish which the boy had to feed the multitude, but he first sent the disciples searching through the crowd to see what they could supply. The wonder of this is that God, who could easily do it all himself, nevertheless gave them the great privilege of being co-workers with him.

C. Grace Gift of Supernatural Results

“and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish.”

D. Recognition of the Master

“That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord.’”

E. Reunion with the Master

1. (:7b) Haste of Peter

“And so when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on) for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea.”

2. (:8) Hard Work of the Other Disciples

“But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, dragging the net full of fish.”

III. (:9-13) THE MASTER PROVIDES FOR ALL OF OUR NEEDS ALONG THE WAY AS WE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM

A. (:9) God Can Provide Apart From Our Help

“And so when they got out upon the land, they saw a charcoal fire already laid, and fish placed on it, and bread.”

B. (:10-11) God Can Provide By Supernaturally Blessing Our Efforts

“Jesus said to them, ‘Bring some of the fish which you have now caught.’ Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.”

Another miracle: that the net did not break!

C. (:12-13) Invitation to Fellowship Around a Meal

“Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast.’ None of the disciples ventured to question Him, ‘Who are You?’ knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread, and gave them, and the fish likewise.”

(:14) CONCLUSION:

“This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after he was raised from the dead.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we enthusiastic about the Lord’s invitation to make us “fishers of men”? What type of preparation have we pursued? What type of effort do we put forth? Do we evangelize in dependence upon the Master?
- 2) Why is John so specific as to detail the exact count of the number of fish they hauled in?
- 3) How does Christ work in our lives to turn temporary failure into abundant success? Why does Christ let us exhaust ourselves in trying to succeed on our own?
- 4) How does Peter’s longing to be with Christ demonstrate that repentance and forgiveness and restoration of the relationship has already occurred (after the painful

series of denying His Lord)? What do we learn about forgiveness and putting the past behind us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Edward Morgan: 3 Lessons Taught by Lord to the Disciples

Introduction: disciples were men of very different characteristics

- John: Man of spiritual Vision – *“It is the Lord”*
 - Peter: Man of Action – jumped overboard and swam ashore
- cf. how they both acted at the empty tomb

I. The Lord’s Power

- A. Knowledge of where the fishes were
- B. Sovereign Control – bringing them into the nets

II. The Lord’s Love

Serving as cook and waiter

III. The Lord’s Purposes

Parable in action – teaching by means of it that they be *“fishers of men”*

Confessing weakness and helplessness: *“we haven’t caught anything by ourselves”*

Trust in God’s sovereignty: He knows where His elect are; He know who are His.

Ivan French: The Sufficient Supply in the Service of the Lord

I. (:1-3) The failure of the disciples without the Lord

II. (:4-8) The fruitfulness of the disciples with the Lord

III. (:9-14) The feasting of the disciples with the Lord

Hendriksen: (summarizing allegorical interpretations for the number 153 = how many fish caught that morning)

Among the strange and, for the most part, allegorical interpretations of this item of information I have found the following:

- a. The fish were not counted until the shore had been reached, in order to teach us that the exact number of the elect remains unknown until they have reached the shore of heaven.
- b. The ancients counted one hundred fifty-three varieties of fish!
- c. There is here a veiled reference to Matt. 13:47, 48, and an indication that all kinds of people are going to be saved.
- d. The reference is to an important date in Church History, namely, 153 A.D.
- e. The total represents the sum of all the numbers from 1 to 17. Well, what of it?
- f. In Hebrew characters the numerical equivalent of Simon Iona is one hundred fifty-three.
- g. The number one hundred fifty-three represents 100 for the Gentiles, 50 for the Jews, and 3 for the Trinity.

Carr: A Return To The Old Life –

Seven of our Lord's Disciples made a decision to return to the Sea to find that which

they needed. This is a picture of a life lived in the energy of the flesh. They were in Galilee because Jesus had told them that He would meet them there, Matt. 28:10. They were in the right place, but they were using the wrong methods. Instead of waiting on the Lord to come and give them direction, they began doing things their way, based on what and how they knew to do. . .

What a lesson for us in the church today! We have programs, procedures, policies, etc. We have all the organization and the well-oiled machinery that we can use and still we are not catching fish like we should. What is the problem? Perhaps it is the same problem that the Disciples had. Perhaps we are trusting everything instead of Jesus to get the job done. We can never expect to do the Lord's work until we go about it in the Lord's will! Perhaps the hour has arrived for us to chunk the junk and get back to what works. Perhaps it is time for the modern church to revisit the forsaken avenues of the protracted prayer meeting, old-fashioned preaching, door to door evangelism and genuine love among the brethren. When we learn to fish the Lord's way we will catch what we are after!

Ryle: Some worthy commentators have presumed to find fault with Peter for going a fishing. They say that he showed a disposition to return to the world, and to follow his worldly calling once more. From this view, I entirely dissent. I see no harm whatever in Peter's conduct on this occasion. He and his companions were poor men, and must needs work in order to provide for their subsistence. There was nothing wrong in the act of fishing, and it was only natural to take up the business with which they were most familiar. The great business of going out as our Lord's messengers to preach the Gospel, was not to begin until His ascension, and in the interval it was better to follow an honest calling than to be idle. Neither in Peter's proposal, nor in the simple frank consent of his companions, can I detect a jot of proof that anything wrong was done.

Deffinbaugh: There are some interesting differences in these accounts (Luke 5 earlier story and here) as well—and lessons to be learned from them. The most obvious (and probably the most important) difference is that in Luke 5, Jesus was in the boat. In John 21, Jesus is on the shore. You may think I am pressing the limits of this story, but there is a lesson here: "Jesus is able to guide, to provide for, and to watch over His disciples just as well (better?) from a distance, as He is able to care for them "up close and personal." From 100 yards away, Jesus knew they had caught no fish. From 100 yards away, Jesus could guide them to an abundance of fish. Even before they saw Him, Jesus was prepared to provide for their needs. He had breakfast "on the table," so to speak, when they arrived on shore. Were the disciples uneasy about Jesus going away, about Jesus leaving them to return to His Father? Such fears are unfounded. He is just as able to care for them when He is in heaven as He was to care for them while He was on earth. I think this was a significant part of the lesson He wanted them to learn.

Goettsche: We want to be self-sufficient. We feel this compulsion to "make it on our own". It's almost as if the Lord is saying to us . . ."why are you making this so difficult?" Whatever your area of "expertise" is probably the place where you are most likely to rely more on yourself than on the Lord. This story reminds us that such

practice is a mistake. The best of our wisdom does not come close to the wisdom of God.

Truth in Living: Most church growth advocates believe they must make Christianity attractive to unbelievers. To use a helpful term, the modern church growth movement is technocratic. Church growth is based on a technique. The specifics vary widely, but the method is the same. Some say modern music is the key to growth. Others say majestic music is the key. Some say the key is to have a happening youth group. Others believe church growth depends on adopting certain creeds and confessions. Some talk about gifted leadership. Others talk about programs for everyone from the toddler to the elderly. If you just follow this plan and do this technique, say the growth experts, you will have a successful church.

What is the obvious result? Modern churches are filled with self-centered people who would go somewhere else if the "show" is better. Churches have trained a generation of Christians who think in terms of fulfilling themselves instead of the obedience of faith. The disaster is this. It doesn't take people very long to figure out that Hollywood and Vegas put on better shows than churches. It's just a matter of time before those in the church, groomed for self-fulfillment, are tempted by the grand show unbelievers can put on as well. After all, what is the real difference? The sad reality is churches, Hollywood and Vegas all market for your dollar.

The modern church growth movement is a failure because it has traded biblical Christianity for the entertainment religion. People come to church to be entertained rather than to worship and be equipped for every good work. They come to church to escape the world rather than to change the world. There is a better way. There is a biblical view of the growth of Christ's church. Natural church development recognizes that church growth like fish and wheat, is something that no human can make. Principle one in natural church development is relying in the word of Jesus Christ and power of the Holy Spirit to work first.

<http://www.truthinliving.org/Sermons/Jn%2021%201-14.htm>

TEXT: John 21:15-25

TITLE: FEEDING LESSON – APPLICATION TO SHEPHERDING THE SHEEP

BIG IDEA:

EACH UNDERSHEPHERD MUST PASSIONATELY AND PERSONALLY FOLLOW THE GREAT SHEPHERD AND CARE FOR THE SHEEP

(:15A) INTRODUCTION

“So when they had finished breakfast”

Context: Peter has constantly been thrusting himself forward as the “most committed” and “most passionate” of the disciples. However, he had been humbled by succumbing to the threefold denial that Jesus had prophesied. Here Jesus asks Peter to reexamine his previous boastful claims (Deffinbaugh).

I. (:15-17) PASTORING THE LORD’S FLOCK IS THE ULTIMATE DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE FOR THE GREAT SHEPHERD (Proving our Love is an Individual rather than a Competitive Issue)

3 Challenges Relating to Peter’s Level of Love and Commitment

A. (:15b) Challenge #1 – Demonstrate Your Love by Your Shepherding

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love (agape) Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My lambs.’”

B. (:16) Challenge #2 – Demonstrate Your Love by Your Shepherding

“He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love (agape) Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love (phileo) You.’ He said to him, ‘Shepherd My sheep.’”

C. (:17) Challenge #3 – Demonstrate Your Love by Your Shepherding

“He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love (phileo) Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love (phileo) Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo) You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’”

Deffinbaugh: Caution should be exercised in making too much of the two different words for “love” which are employed in this text. The two verbs are *agapao* and *phileo*. The first two times Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him, the word for love is *agapao*. The third time Jesus asks, He employs the term *phileo*. Every time Peter responds to Jesus’ question, indicating his love, he employs the word *phileo*. The distinctions that some make between these two terms may hold true in some cases, and for some authors. They do not seem to hold true for John, who often uses different terms for the same concept.

When commentators do seek to emphasize the distinctions between the two Greek words John uses, they do not agree as to what the meaning and emphasis of these terms are. We should keep in mind that when Jesus spoke to Peter and asked him these three questions, He spoke not in Greek (the language in which the Gospel of John is written), but in Aramaic, the language spoken by the Jews of that day. The change in words may have some significance, but I hardly think it is the key to understanding the passage. . .

It was when Jesus asked the same question the third time that Peter was deeply grieved, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” It was not that Jesus changed from *agapao* to *phileo* that troubled Peter. Peter was grieved because Jesus found it necessary to ask virtually the same question three times. I do not like to be asked the same question repeatedly. I conclude that either the person asking the question wasn’t paying attention (this could not be the case with Jesus), or that my answer was not acceptable or credible. The three-fold repetition must have registered with Peter as being related to his three-fold denial. Peter was grieved because he realized that the bold and even arrogant claims he had made proved to be empty. Peter is not distressed with Jesus; he is grieved over his own sin. Jesus is not attempting to shame Peter; he is seeking to reaffirm his call to service. Did Jesus question Peter about his love for Him three times? Then note that three times Jesus instructed Peter to care for His sheep. Does Peter fear he has been cast aside as useless? Jesus tells him to return to His work, three times!

II. (:18-23) TRUE DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO FOLLOW THE LORD – EVEN TO THE POINT OF DEATH

A. (:18-19) Follow Me = Fundamental Discipleship Command – Even to the Point of Death

1. Prophecy of Peter’s Unpleasant Death

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.’ Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.”

2. Fundamental Discipleship Command

“And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’”

B. (:20-23) Follow Me = Fundamental Discipleship Command – with a Personal Rather than Competitive Focus

1. (:20-21) Wrong Focus – Peter comparing His lot to John

“Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; the one who also had leaned back on His breast at the supper, and said, ‘Lord, who is the one who betrays You?’ Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what about this man?’”

2. (:23) Fundamental Discipleship Command

“Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’”

3. (:24) Rumor Control

“This saying therefore went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?’”

(:24-25) EPILOGUE FOR THE WHOLE BOOK

A. (:24) Credible Author / Eyewitness

“This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.”

B. (:25) Selective Content / Vastness of Ministry of Christ

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Why did Jesus ask the same question three times? Why did Peter get visibly upset the third time? What was the main point Jesus was trying to make?

2) How does this passage show that we were not all created equal in terms of the conditions and circumstances of our lives? How do we react to these differences? Are we tempted to compare our lot with others? What is the remedy that Christ sets forth here for any type of spirit of rivalry or competition in the ministry?

3) How will we respond when God leads us into a situation that is not one of our choosing or liking? Will we be able to trust His providential leading and care?

4) How curious are you to learn of the *“many other things”* which Jesus did during His earthly ministry that were not recorded in Scripture for us? How credible should the testimony of John be to our friends and neighbors?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Edward Morgan: Final Instructions

Introduction:

40 Day Wait and the post resurrection appearances were necessary for:

- period of testing
- period of transition (from life of sight to life of faith)
- period of final instructions for the disciples. 4 Major Topics:

I. Love Me

Lord doesn't ask: "How active, How faithful are you?"

Greatest commandment involves personal affection for the Lord Jesus.

Ultimate test of love: John 14:145, 21, 23

II. Serve Me

The Lord has work for us to do – 1 Peter 5:2-3

Feed My lambs

Tend my flock

Note connection between love and service

III. Trust Me

Brief prophecy (:18-19) – the Lord knows all things and works all things according to His purposes

IV. Follow Me

A. Example – 1 Pet. 2:21 – What I did, you do

B. Submission – Mark 8:34

C. Fellowship – you can't follow someone unless you stay close enough

John 12:26 – "to walk in company with"; unbroken communion with the Lord

Dan Broadwater: (21:18-25) Thy Will for Me Be Done

Introduction:

What's going to happen to you as your future unfolds? Our future is already known in detail to Jesus Christ. Look at how Jesus has demonstrated His knowledge of the future:

- predicted 3 denials of Peter
- predicted betrayal by Judas
- predicted details concerning His own death (Mark 10:33; Is. 46:9)

I. What Did Jesus Know About Peter's Future?

The Time / Place / Manner / Painfulness of Peter's death

Historical tradition says that Peter was martyred in 65-70 AD in his old age; he was led to his death by someone else in a way he would not have chosen = crucifixion; he requested to die upside down because he was not worthy to die in the same way as Jesus

II. What Was Peter's Response?

He did not have the calm and peace of the Lord, but was troubled: "*What about him?*" Each of us ask the same question in different ways: "Why was I shortchanged?"

III. What is Our Main Purpose on Earth?

To Glorify God

v. 22 "*You follow Me*" – don't go around comparing yourself to others

Conclusion:

There was an old man who was always very cheerful. "How can you be this

way?", someone asked. "I just learned to cooperate with the inevitable!"
In our case, a personal, loving God directs all.

Ritchie: (Here is an example of a commentator who does see significance in the change in words from *agape* to *phileo*) --

"...Do you love Me more than these?" Some Bible students think that Jesus may have been referring to Peter's loving him more than he loved the boats, nets, and occupation of a fisherman. But the Lord is speaking of Peter's loving him more than the other disciples loved him. He was saying, "Peter, there was a time when you said you loved me more than the other disciples loved me. You said in the power of your flesh that you would even die for me [see Matthew 26:35], but you are the only one who denied me when the going got tough. Do you really love me more than the other disciples love me? Do you agapao me? Are you truly willing to give up your life for me? Do you have a self-sacrificing, wholehearted devotion to me? Can I depend on you to lead the new flock of believers into the age of the Spirit and remain faithful until I come again?"

Peter answered Jesus, "Lord, you know [oidas, you have divine or full knowledge] that I don't agapao you, but I have a heart filled with philia; I have tremendous affection for you. Peter knew that implicit in the word agapao was the willingness to lay down one's life for another, and he had already had to eat his words when he denied Christ at the trial. So he was saying, "Lord, I'm not going to put my foot in my mouth again." Jesus responded, "Then Peter, I am commissioning you to tend my spiritual lambs. Within a few days after the coming of the Holy Spirit there is going to be a large flock of new ones that I want you to protect and feed. They will be young, weak, and scared. Tend to their needs so that they will grow and become strong in my spiritual kingdom."

A second time Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me? Do you agapao me?" Peter answered, "Lord, you know [oidas] that I phileo you; I have affection for you, and that is as much as I am willing to say after all my boasting." Jesus replied, "Then shepherd my sheep by guiding them into green pastures." The disciples all knew about the good Shepherd of Psalm 23, which would become their model as now seen in Jesus relationship to them:

Jesus had in effect said to Simon, "You're not willing to lay down your life for me, and now you're finally saying it. Now, Simon, son of John, do you love me?" And at this point Jesus used the Greek term for love that Simon had been using, phileis. "Do you phileis me? Do you really have a tender affection for me?" At this point Peter was grieved because the risen Lord and good Shepherd was even challenging Peter's philia love. He was humbled by this question and responded, "Lord, you know [oidas] all things; you know [ginoskeis, you understand completely] everything that is, and one of the things you know is my heart and the degree of my love as well as my motives. I can't hide anything from you, and I really don't want to."

"Lord, you fully understand that I phileo you, and that is as far as I am going to commit myself. I cannot at this moment say to you honestly, 'I agapao you.' I'm not ready to say

that I have self-sacrificing love for you. I'm in the process of learning my lesson." Jesus said to Peter, based on that transparent statement, "Then tend my sheep."

But the final words of our Lord would also ring in Peter's ears: "'Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.' Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me!'" During the next thirty years, Peter continued in this process of humbling his heart and life to the good Shepherd. He struggled from time to time, as recorded in the book of Acts, yet he remained a faithful shepherd of the Lord's sheep until the end of his life. Under Nero's reign he was finally required to demonstrate his loyal agape love by giving up his life on a Roman cross because of his commitment to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our risen Lord lovingly and firmly moved in on the heart of Simon in order to cleanse the motives of his heart and to replace pride with humility. As a result of that painful but meaningful spiritual cleansing over breakfast, Peter was restored to ministry as an under-shepherd of our Lord's flock and proved faithful in his agape love by willingly laying down his life on behalf of Jesus and his sheep.

Goettsche: Putting the Past Behind

There are a lot of responses that Jesus could have had to Peter. He could have responded to him like we would have. He could have treated him with silence. He could have given him the cold shoulder. He could have made it crystal clear that He was angry at Peter and let him suffer.

He could have "punished" Peter. Every time Peter made a promise Jesus could have raised an eyebrow as if to say, "we should believe you?" Jesus could have said, "You know Peter, I usually would have asked you to do this but . . . I just don't trust you anymore." He could have brought up the denial in every conversation. You know, "remember that night when Peter denied me . . . ?" He could have excluded Peter from the things he invited others to do. He could have found subtle and not so subtle ways to punish this disciple. And if He ran out of ideas . . . he could have asked us! :-)

But this is not what Jesus chooses to do. Instead Jesus gets to the heart of the issue. He wants Peter to grow from the experience, not be shackled with it. What Jesus does is let Peter know that He believes in him and still trusts him.

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