Christ's Teachings *Against*

the Modern American Gospel

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> May the grace of spiritual discernment be given the reader to see whether his Christian profession be real or a sham, whether his hope is built upon the Rock of Ages or the quicksands of human resolutions, efforts, decisions, or feelings; whether, in short, his salvation is "of The Lord" or the vain imaginations of his own deceitful heart. [Arthur Pink; Experimental Salvation].
>
> So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. [Hos 6:3a NASB].

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- WH denotes commentary by William Hendriksen New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel According to John, two volumes complete in one (1953, 1972; paged by volume, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI).
- JFB denotes commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary (1871). No page references are given as the resource used was the parallel version in the Olive Tree reference library. Unless noted otherwise, the commentary reference is parallel to the Scripture passage.

NOTES

- References to passages are in parenthesis ().
- References to direct quotes and quotes of passages are in brackets [].
- Brackets used within a quote signify editorial changes.
- All references with numbers only and no book, reflect a location in the Gospel of John.

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You Should Always Read The Introduction First

> Ours is not an age of thinking or reading to the great detriment of the church and the souls of men. Unless professing Christians wake up, most will live out their lives believing falsehoods and when they die will wake up in hell for all eternity. [Arthur Pink; The Broad Way and the Narrow Way].

The purpose of this book is to wake up those who believe they are saved, but are not and to help those who are saved to understand discernment, develop a love for the teachings of Christ and grow in sound doctrine. This commentary on the book or gospel of John is intended to expose the difference between what the modern American gospel commonly preaches and what the Bible actually says.

The Apostle Paul warned in latter times people will gather under preachers who satisfy their itching ears. Many professing Christians reiterate this warning, totally unaware they are in this camp. The average professing Christian is not in the Word; they "feel" their faith and most ministers teach psychology or morality and throw a little Scripture in to back up their points. People mistake this for preaching the Word.

To reveal this disparity between the modern American gospel and the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is befitting to begin with the Gospel of John, because the apostle made clear many of the doctrines professing Christians consider to be controversial. Controversy arises when professing believers accept the word of men rather than study the Word of God.

It is widely understood among historians, commentators and theologians the Apostle John wrote this Gospel and his first two epistles to combat heresy. Specifically the heresy of Cerinthus, the "enemy of the truth," as he called him.

The false teachings of Cerinthus were:

1) Jesus was merely human and is not the Christ and

2) God has not come in the flesh.

Most evangelical preachers would deny they consider Christ as merely human and not divinity. Yet, they bring Christ down to mans' level and they preach the Gospel as something to add to or improve your life. They compromise the Gospel to maintain relevance with unbelievers; shying away from a Christ who is offensive to the world.

A recent survey revealed the majority of professing Christians believe Jesus Christ was the first created being. This idea used to be limited to the realm of Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults, but this blasphemous understanding has crept into the evangelical visible church.

Most professing Christians believe Jesus was a good teacher and by going to church, they can learn to turn their lives around, they can have successful social lives, families and careers. Most professing Christians are not in the Word; they do not know Christ. Faith in Christ has become a religion of feeling good about themselves and practicing kindness, but they do not honor God with their lives.

While the majority of professing Christians may deny Cerinthus' theology on its face, they have accepted his heresy in practice.

SIDENOTE: Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp and Polycarp was a student of the Apostle John. According to Irenaeus, Polycarp told the story that John so detested Cerinthus, he once fled a public bathhouse when he learned the false teacher was inside, yelling "Let us flee, lest even the bathhouse fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within!" [WH vol 1, pg 33, quoting Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies), book III, chapter 3]. In this story, we have a glimpse of the humanity of John and the extent of his disdain for false doctrine and those who preach it.

The Apostle John began his presentation of the Gospel with commentary. One of the best and most beautiful narrative commentaries can be found within the first eighteen verses of the first chapter. In his commentary, John made clear Jesus Christ is God, who has come in the flesh. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Here is a summary of the Apostle John's descriptive account of God coming to earth as a man, but fully God:

> Christ, the Word, was with God and was God from the beginning of time; He was the Creator of the world and nothing was made without Him. He is life and light. He brought this eternal light into a dark world and the darkness was powerless to stop Him.
>
> He sent a witness to announce His coming; the True Light was coming into the world. Though the Light was proclaimed and although He made the world, the world did not know Him. He set aside a nation for Himself, but they did not receive Him.
>
> But those who do believe, who receive the Christ, He gives the right to become children of God, for they are not born

> of their own freewill, desire or decision, they are born of the will of God.
>
> The Word, God Himself, became flesh and dwelt among man. John and the disciples saw His glory; glory full of grace and truth.
>
> Though truly and fully a man (yet without sin), He is fully God and He brought to us grace upon grace. For Moses brought the Law (though our works could not save us), but Christ brought grace and truth (that obedience to the Law is the work of God). He revealed to us the mysteries of God; He revealed the Father to us. He is the only One who could do this, because He is the only One who has seen the Father and He is at the Father's side. Glory be to God! [1:1-18 restated].

Jesus Christ is eternally God; God the Son. And, this passage is a beautiful account of the Son of God coming to the world as the Son of Man; God in the flesh; the Creator became as the created. As 1:18 says, He came to make the Father known. The Son of God, fully God and now also fully man, working to fulfill the eternal covenant with the Father.

Much study is made of the covenants of the Scriptures, but there is not much talk about the eternal covenant. God has expressed His purposes through the Old Testament covenants and has shown the path for the Redeemer to come to man. But there is one covenant which transcends all covenants: the eternal covenant.

The Bible is a book of covenants. The Old and New Testaments are two covenants, containing God's covenants to man. The Old Testament is a covenant revealing God's promise to send a Redeemer for His people. The New Testament is the account of this covenant fulfilled by Christ and it contains instructions to follow Him and the promise or covenant we who follow Him will reign with the King of kings. Throughout the ages, God has revealed His purposes through His Word, which is His covenant with man.

Let us take a few minutes and briefly look at the major Old Testament covenants. The first covenant began with the first man, Adam. Some theologians will argue God made no covenant with Adam, because the first mention of "covenant" was with Noah. However, the Scriptures disagree. The Prophet Hosea said Adam transgressed the covenant (Hos 6:7). Though it is not recorded God calling His words to Adam a "covenant," this is what they were. So, we will start with an overview of God's covenants, beginning with Adam.

1. **The covenant of God with Adam** was a call to be God's spokesman upon the earth; to practice the image of God in which he was created. To populate the earth and be productive by taking dominion over its resources (Gen 1:26-30). He was called to reign. This was a covenant of works, and the sign of this covenant was the Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3), the day of rest from works. There was given a warning: of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he shall not eat (Gen 2:17). Nonetheless, though surrounded by perfection and purity, the first living man sinned, ruined the perfect and brought death upon all mankind. Therefore, God cursed the earth with decay, man with hardship and Satan with defeat, but God also brought grace. He promised to send a Redeemer (Gen 3:14-19). Adam's sin brought death, but God's grace restored life (Rom 5:19-21).

This was Plan A. Many professing Christians believe it was because man sinned that God switched to "Plan B" to send a Redeemer, but it was God's intention from before the creation of the world to proclaim His glory by showing His mercy to man; by crushing His Son to redeem a rebellious people (Rom 9:22-23). Many professing Christians believe they can glorify God by cleaning up or bringing perfection to this fallen world, but God's plan is to receive glory for His holiness: the Light shining in the darkness.

2. **The covenant of Noah** (Gen 8:20-9:17). God will never again destroy all mankind with a flood. God set the rainbow in the sky as a sign of this covenant and a reminder between God and man. Built upon the covenant with Adam, God reiterated to man the command to be fruitful and multiply upon the Earth. To be fruitful is to make profitable use of the resources God has provided. To multiply is to cover the Earth with people. Not to worry, all you professing Christians who worship the Earth: in this command to use the resources and populate the world, God promised man cannot destroy the Earth: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." [Gen 8:22 ESV]. Nonetheless, despite God's expression of grace, man continues to defy Him, even many who profess faith in Christ. Instead of filling the Earth, man destroys unborn babies in the womb and builds cities to increase his power. Instead of producing, man creates laws hindering production upon the earth. Instead of repenting, man uses the sign of God's grace, the rainbow, as a banner for perversion. And we can see, defiance against God produces tyrants among men, even professing Christian bureaucrats.

The Flood was necessary to make a way for the Redeemer to come. God destroyed the earth because man's blood was tainted with demonic blood. The Bible says, "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown." [Gen 6:4 NASB]. There were giants; and there were likely other deformities, as well. Satan used this means in his attempt to prevent God from bringing salvation through the promised Redeemer. Or, at worst, if God produced the Redeemer through tainted blood, He would have to extend salvation to the demons themselves. This would be an abomination that Heaven could not hold. The Apostle Peter affirmed this account, when he wrote Christ proclaimed victory to the spirits in chains. This was when He was in Sheol and these were the spirits whom had left their station to mix the blood of man with demons in order to prevent the Christ from redeeming man (1Pe 3:19-20; cf 2Pe 2:4-5; Jud 6).

3. **God's covenant with Abraham** is in four parts (Gen 12:1-7; 13:14-17; 17:1-5; 22:15-18). The first part of the covenant, God promised to make Abraham a great nation and a people set apart for God. Then, God supplemented the covenant by promising Abraham, for this nation He would give all the land he could see. In the third passage, God promised this man, who had not yet received the son of promise and who was ninety-nine years old, he would be a father of many nations. God changed Abram's name to Abraham and the sign of this covenant was circumcision. Finally, after Abraham's faith was proved by his obedience, in that he was willing to sacrifice his only promised son, Isaac, God sent a substitute sacrifice to spare his son and He promised Abraham through him all the nations on earth will be blessed. This final promise was the promise of the Redeemer, God's Son (Gal 3:16). This Redeemer, two thousand years later, became the substitute sacrifice to restore man back to God through the blood of the eternal covenant (Heb 13:20), and He will one day rule the nations from Jerusalem (Zec 14:16; Rev 20:1-6).

Through Abraham, God made a nation through which to bring about His Redeemer. In all things, God accomplishes His purposes. Through Abraham, God showed the Redeemer was not a random happenstance. Just as the Redeemer was chosen, so was the nation or people through whom the Redeemer would come. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote God hated Esau, but loved Jacob, so that His purpose of election would stand or continue (Rom 9:11-13, quoting the Prophet Malachi). Paul also wrote those chosen by God were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). The Redeemer and those who are redeemed were purposed and chosen before God created the world; there was no Plan B.

4. **The covenant of Moses** (Exo 19:1-20:20; cf Deu 10:12-11:32). God claimed the nation of Israel as His own. God gave them the charge to fear Him and Him alone; to be in awe of His deeds and obey His commands. The sign of this covenant was the Ten Commandments. The people through whom the Redeemer would come were set aside to be a peculiar or unique people, for they represented the Holy God, but they, like all men, would rebel against God. Nonetheless, God would see His covenant through to the end.

Many claim God is done with Israel and has replaced her with the Church, but they have wrongly interpreted the Scriptures and do not see God's purposes for Israel as expressed in the books of the prophets, especially specific references to Israel in the last days by Zechariah and the prophecies in Revelation. Furthermore, Isaiah prophesied God will bring the dispersed back to Israel a second time and this has not yet happened (Isa 11:10-11). Through Israel came the Redeemer and through Israel will come the King of kings. The nation of Israel is still in the plan of God and He will fulfill His covenant.

5. **The covenant of David** (2Sa 7:4-17; cf Psa 89). God raised David up and cut off his enemies so he would rule over Israel. His throne will be established forever. David is a type of Christ; a foreshadow. Christ has fulfilled this promise to David. He is the descendant who will reign and keep God's law and God has promised Christ's reign in Jerusalem (Psa 2; Isa 9:6-7; Zec 8:22; Rev 19:11-21).

These covenants prepared the world for the Redeemer and the New Covenant revealed in the Gospel. Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the eternal covenant and He will reign as King of kings.

All the covenants between God and man find their foundation in the eternal covenant; the covenant God made with Himself. Hebrews 13:20 speaks of the blood of the eternal covenant. The Bible does not outline the covenant in the same way as it does the Adamic, Noahic and such, but it does tell us, in Jesus' own words, "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" [Luk 24:26 NASB]. The necessity implies there was a covenant, a purpose, a directive. Of this covenant, here is what we know from Scripture:

1. The Son would become a man, dwell among men and He would forever be fully God and fully man (1:1; Col 1:19; 2:9; Heb 2:14-18; Rev 1:12-18); and men would be adopted to be co-heirs with Him (Rom 8:14-17; Tit 3:7) and He will be their high priest forever (Heb 5:6, 6:17-7:4, 7:20-28).

2. The Father promised the Son a dominion (Psa 45:6-7; 110:1-7; Isa 9:6-7; Dan 7:13-14; 1Co 15:24-28; Heb 1:8-13), but first the Son would face the ridicule of those whom He would rule (Psa 2) and He would die at the hands of those who ruled in Jerusalem (Mat 23:37-39).

3. The Father promised the Son a bride (3:29; Rev 19:6-9), but first the Son would die for His bride (Eph 5:25).

> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all. [1Co 15:28 NASB].

God's full intention or purpose is for His glory. God made an eternal covenant with Himself, for the sake of His glory. Creation, salvation, justification and sanctification all hinge upon this covenant, for His glory.

When Moses and Israel were confirming the covenant between the people and God, Moses threw the blood of the sacrifice on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." [Exo 24:8b ESV]. This blood was a typology of the blood of the Redeemer, which was to come.

> without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. [Heb 9:22b ESV].

Through the prophets, God gave promise of a New Covenant between Him and man (Jer 31:31-34; Eze 36:22-32). Jesus, our Redeemer, said the sign of this covenant is His death and resurrection. We memorialize his death by partaking of Communion. Specifically, Jesus mentioned the drink is a symbol of the blood of the covenant; a new covenant in His blood (Mat 26:28; Mar 14:24; Luk 22:20; 1Co 11:25).

The promise in Jeremiah was God's new covenant would put His Law in their hearts (Jer 31:31-34). This indicates the work of the Holy Spirit within man, which had not been given until Christ ascended (14:15-26).

Through Ezekiel, God promised to return His hardened people to the land of the covenant (Eze 36:22-32). He would sprinkle them with clean water, that is, they would be born again or regenerated. He would give them a new heart and a new spirit; the Holy Spirit would dwell in them. They will walk in His commands, which is the work of regeneration and sanctification, which is the work of the Spirit within man. This is the promise His people will be hardened no longer.

These Old Testament covenants call man to worship God, because the Law exposed man's sin and made him the subject of God's wrath. The Gospel is the good news Jesus Christ satisfied God's wrath for man and established a

new covenant, fulfilling the promises and the requirements of the old covenants. Hebrews chapters 8 though 10 explain how Christ is the mediator of this new covenant. The new covenant calls men to worship Him, for He, Himself, has saved us from His wrath. Fear the Lord, for He is holy, holy, holy.

> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Your glory above all the earth. [Psa 108:5 NASB].

The Bible tells us the Father was willing to crush the Son, to put Him to grief, so that through His agony many will be made righteous (Isa 53:10-11). He paid our debt, nailing our sins to the cross (Col 2:14), so God would see us as righteous through His blood (2Co 5:21). The Gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. It is the good news of the incredible work He has done to redeem those chosen by the Father to become part of the eternal covenant.

> because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin, but now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. [Rom 3:20-26 NASB].

Now, this discussion of the eternal covenant and the Old Testament covenants is not a rabbit trail. It is foundational to understanding the Bible is about the Redeemer. First to last, the Bible is a book about Jesus Christ. If reading through the Scriptures, you get the idea some of it is history of people and the nation of Israel, then Jesus Christ comes along and then the Apostle Paul tells us how to live a Christian life and the Apostle John tells us the fantastic story of future events, then you have missed the point.

The Bible is a record of the Redeemer, from promise to fruition. In a nutshell, it is the record how God used fallen man to pave the way for the perfect Man; the Man who would sacrifice His life to redeem those given Him by the Father. The Scriptures tell us how to honor Him and how He

will come again to rule and reign and how those adopted into His family will reign with Him, because He is the King of kings. The understanding of the covenants is foundational to understanding the message of the Bible and the Person of the Scriptures, the Word. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [1:1 NASB].

The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) are narratives with some, but little commentary. The Apostle John, however, gave extensive comment throughout his writing; including much commentary on doctrine. Many professing Christians have a loose idea of doctrine; they do not hold doctrine to be important. Some stay away from doctrine, declaring it to be divisive. Pay attention to John: not only because he points out the importance of doctrine, but he also clears up a lot of doctrinal controversies; arguments which continue today and should not exist among a Biblically literate people. Sound doctrine is important to have a proper understanding of God. To have almost sound doctrine, which is false doctrine, is to bring God down to man, to make Him into our own image.

> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. [2Ti 2:15 NASB].

> Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. [1Ti 4:16 NASB].

The purpose of the writing of the Gospel of John is found in 20:31, "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." The Gospel of John contains the path to eternal life. Study it.

There is a dangerous false doctrine out in Christendom which says God was lonely, so He made man. I have heard many preachers declare God needs us more than we need Him; as if to woo us to God through sympathy. Blasphemy! God is not a victim; He has no need; He lacks nothing because He is perfect in every way. From eternity past, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit were in perfect fellowship; perfect union; perfect love; perfect in glory. They needed nothing.

According to this modern American gospel, the reason God was willing to sacrifice His own Son was because of our personal incredible great worth. "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Do not be deceived by this self-esteem gospel; it is blasphemy.

The truth is, we were created and our Creator made us from dirt. And, this dirt has rebelled against the Almighty One who made him and this dirt deserves eternal destruction. The Bible is clear, we were born in sin (Psa 51:5); we were enemies of God (Rom 5:10). How valuable is that? Zero.

God saved us for His own purposes (Eph 1:11); He saved us for His eternal covenant, to display His glory. Believers benefit, but all glory belongs to God.

There is only one reason God, Himself, had to die for our sin: because our sin is so great, no man could redeem another; no man could even redeem himself. When we elevate man through self esteem or by any other means, we bring God down. It is a dangerous thing to bring God down to man's level (Mat 16:24; Job 40:1-4); to make Him into our image as if He is one of us. There is no man nor god like Almighty God (1Ki 8:23; 2Ch 14:11; Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8). God alone is holy (Rev 15:4). He is holy, holy, holy (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8). To deny this was the error of Cerinthus.

> You thought that I was just like you. [Psa 50:21b NASB].

God does everything for His glory (Isa 43:7; 48:9-11). Man was made in the image of God (Gen 1:26; cf Jam 3:9) and this was for His purposes. For those who are saved, God chose us in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world for His purposes, His glory (Eph 1:4-11). And it is for His glory, not our worth, that He blots out our sins (Psa 25:11; Isa 43:25). Lest any man should boast (Eph 2:9).

The focus of the Gospel is not man. The Gospel is not a message of power for this life; it is not a message of making you a better person or helping you feel better about yourself; nor is it a message of how you can get yourself saved. Salvation is of God from beginning to end; He draws us (6:44); He authorizes our salvation (6:65); He opens our hearts to receive Him: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all." [6:63a ESV]. Nonetheless, there is a false gospel, to which most professing Christians subscribe: It is the modern American gospel, which preaches a gospel centered around man; man's work or man's decision; mans' value and mans' benefits.

The modern American gospel or easy-believism says you are saved by saying the sinner's prayer. It is something you do; a decision you make. Furthermore, it says as long as you were sincere when you said it, you cannot lose your salvation. It matters not how you live; all that matters is your sincerity at the time you said the prayer. This is known as fire insurance, but fire insurance is a false gospel and this false hope is leading many people to Hell.

The modern American gospel says we are saved by grace, not by works: true, so far, but it declares a false "therefore"; and this therefore says we are saved regardless of our works. This false gospel says God loves us the way we are; He does not require us to change. This, too, is blasphemy.

Jesus said we must take up our cross and follow Him (Mat 16:24-26; Luk 9:23; 14:27); Jesus talked about abiding in Him, being in the Word; He talked about bearing fruit (8:31-32; 15:1-6; Mat 7:16-20), but, according to the modern American gospel, these things are optional; they are for those who want to go to the next level; those who want to reap the rewards of a closer walk with Christ. And, according to this false gospel, if you don't get to this level, you are still saved. This false gospel declares a carnal Christian will still get to Heaven, albeit with fewer rewards; "skin of the teeth," but you made it. This is the lie of the devil.

Jesus warned, many who think they are saved are going to Hell (Mat 7:21-23). Many who work in the church; many preachers and Sunday School teachers; many who went on missions trips; many who did "great things for God," are on their way to Hell. Jesus proclaimed this warning. Beware you are not deceived by the modern American gospel and its partner, easy-believism. The modern American gospel has deceived many and those who preach or teach it are patting sinners on the back on their way to Hell.

WARNING: The Word of God equates believing with following Christ and living obedient lives (3:36; Heb 3:18-19).

> Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. [1Sa 15:22b NASB, ESV].

The Apostle James said if believing is just knowing a truth and accepting it as truth, the demons do this: they believe in Jesus Christ, in fact they have met Him and they have declared His name to man, but they cannot be saved (Jam 2:19; cf Mar 1:24, Luk 4:34). Unless you take up your cross and follow Christ; unless you obey Him as King, Lord and Master, you cannot be saved. The words of Jesus in the Gospel of John are clear, your works cannot save you, but He will produce good works in those who abide in Him, and you cannot be saved without them (15:1-6; cf Eph 2:8-10).

Feeling good about God is not the pathway to eternal life. Do not cling to your feelings; do not trust your heart; repent and follow Christ.

> And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." [Luk 13:23-24 NASB].

May God add His blessing to the Scripture and the commentary in this book. This book is written with the hope to open the eyes of those who believe they are saved, but are not; so they will repent. It is written for those who are saved so they will study the Word more earnestly, grow in sound doctrine and preach repentance. This is my feeble attempt to give glory to God. Keep the faith.

Brief Outline Of The Gospel Of John

1) The revelation of Jesus Christ, Son of God made flesh
    a) Prologue; God coming to the world as a man (1:1-18)
    b) Revealing the Son of God (1:19 - chapter 4)
        i. covering a period of approx two years and four months (Dec 26 to Passover 29)
    c) Rejection in Judea (chapter 5)
    d) Rejection in Galilee (chapter 6)
2) Public Teachings of Jesus Christ
    a) Retirement ministry (7:1 see the Synoptic Gospels)
        i. covers Passover - October 29
    b) Preaching among His adversaries (7:2-10:39)
        i. covers Feast of Tabernacles to Feast of Dedication year 29 (October to December)
    c) Call to sinners (10:40-42)
    d) Raising the dead - Lazarus (chapter 11)
    e) Triumphal entry and final public exhortations (chapter 12)
3) Final Instructions to the Disciples, Death and Resurrection
    a) The Last Supper Discourses (chapters 13-16)
    b) The prayer to the Father, or high priestly prayer (chapter 17)
    c) Trial, execution and burial (chapters 18 and 19)
    d) The Resurrection and appearances (chapter 20 and 21)

Dates and times for this outline came from William Hendriksen's New Testament Commentaries. This is an adaptation of their outline (WH vol 1, pp 64-65).

> The plan of John's Gospel is, indeed, beautiful. The arrangement is superb. We see the Word in His pre-incarnate glory, so that we may appreciate His condescending love in coming to earth in order to save sinners. In His earthly ministry He reveals Himself to ever-widening circles, but is rejected both in Judea and Galilee. Nevertheless, He does not at once destroy those who have rejected Him, but instead He makes His tender appeal to

> sinners, that they may accept Him by faith. Meanwhile opposition becomes active and bitter resistance. By two mighty deeds He now manifests Himself clearly as the Messiah, but though Greeks seek Him, the Jews, who have seen such clear tokens of His character, love and power, repulse Him. So He turns to the inner circle, tenderly instructs them in the Upper Room, and just before His final suffering and death commits them to the Father's care. In His very death He overcomes the world and by means of His resurrection He reveals the meaning of the cross. [WH vol 1, pg 66].

The Gospel of John was written approximately 85 AD.

John 1:1-3 Christ Is The Word From The Beginning

The Bible proclaims the message of Christ, from first to last. He is first introduced as the Redeemer after the fall of man in Genesis 3:15. The Old Testament anticipated the arrival of the Messiah; Son of God, Son of Man. The Apostle John announced the Redeemer had come and he had seen His glory. God became flesh to save His people from His wrath.

"In the beginning." These are the first three words of the Bible, from the Book of Genesis; and these are the first three words of the Gospel of John.

- Genesis begins with the creation of the world;
- The book of John begins with the Creator of the world.

Read John 1:1-3.

CHRIST IN THE BEGINNING

The word "beginning" refers to the beginning of time. God created time when He created the world. Paul wrote Christ was before all things (Col 1:17) and Jesus, Himself, said He was with the Father before the creation (17:5). He was before time began; when nothing existed, but God alone.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit had perfect fellowship, perfect unity and perfect love among themselves. Man would try to bring God down to his own level and many blasphemously proclaim God created man because He was lonely, but "with God. . . was God" (v1) speaks of fulfilled glory and His glory reveals God was in need of nothing.

When John said Christ was with God and was God from the beginning, this does not imply there was a moment when He came into existence. God is eternal; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have no beginning. Everything else has a beginning or a starting point, because they are created. God was eternally pre-existent before He brought any creation into being. God is the I AM (8:58; cf Exo 3:14). When time began, He was already there.

How do you explain time before time began? It is hard for man to understand eternity; it is one thing to grasp no end of time going forward, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp eternity going backward. Time is measured; eternity is not. We think of eternity in relation to time, but time is a creation of God, while eternity is an attribute of God. The best John could say with human understanding was Christ was with God and Christ was God in the beginning.

Once again, the Gospel does not say He was FROM the beginning. The Gospel says He was IN the beginning. When all things began, He was there. His life transcends time.

> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." [Rev 1:8 NASB, ESV].
>
> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. [Rev 21:6b NASB, ESV].

CHRIST IS THE WORD

John's account tells us the Word was in the beginning. The Word was not a written document; John was talking about the Author of the written document, the Scriptures. The name for the incarnate Son of God is the Word of God.

> His name is called The Word of God. [Rev 19:13b NASB].

In 1:2 John refers to the Word as "He." This tells us two things:

1. The Word is a person, Jesus Christ; and
2. God is not a "she."

In Genesis, the Bible accounts God's creation to His Word. For every act of creation, the Bible says, "And God said. . . " (Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24, 26). Furthermore, Hebrews 11:3 tells us the universe was created by the Word of God. Scripture tells us, He upholds all creation by His word.

> God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. [Heb 1:1-3a NASB].

God created the world through His Son, Jesus Christ, and it is through His Son the universe is sustained, to this day. Therefore, if you believe man can destroy the Earth, you do not believe in the Son of God.

> Worship the LORD in holy array. Tremble before Him, all the earth; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. [1Ch 16:29b-30 NASB].

According to John's account, the Word is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Bible is also called the Word, and rightly so because the Scriptures are

about Jesus Christ; He is the central theme. Christ is the Word; the physical representation of God. The Bible is the Word, the written account of the Son of God.

> He is the image of the invisible God. [Col 1:15a NASB].

In the Old Testament, the theme is the coming Redeemer or Messiah, with histories, pictures, types and prophecies of Christ. The New Testament gives four accounts of Christ's life, death and resurrection and it looks forward to His coming again to reign as the King of kings.

Christ is the Word of God because He came to make God the Father known. In the first chapter of Hebrews, the Bible says God the Father has spoken to us through His Son (Heb 1:2). The Apostle John wrote:

> No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. [v18 NASB].

And Jesus said He came to make the Father known to man, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15,18:

> 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. [5:30 NASB].
>
> My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. [7:16b NASB].
>
> If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.. [14:7 NASB].
>
> 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. [14:10 NASB].

Christ came to make the Father known (1:18). In the fullness of the Scriptures we see clearly the Son of God and the plan of the Father. God, our Creator, came to earth in physical form, as a man, to dwell among men, making Himself known. He is the Word.

CHRIST IS THE CREATOR

Everything was made through Christ; space, time, matter. This includes everything we can see and everything we cannot see; everything too small

for the microscope and everything too far or vast for the most powerful of telescopes. All things physical and all things spiritual were made by Christ.

> By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. [Psa 33:6 NASB].

> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. [Col 1:16-17 NASB].

> Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. [Rev 4:11 NASB].

In Colossians 1:16-17 (quoted above), rather than describe this creation as animals, trees, mountains and such, Paul expressed this as thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities. All these world rulers and every kind of authority among man and the principalities of the heavens were made by and for the glory of Christ. Though they rage against Him, as written in the second chapter of Psalms, Christ is the Creator and all authority rests in Him. From the highest to the lowest, He will be glorified among all men. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess He is Lord (Php 2:10-11; Isa 45:23-24).

> All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations. [Mat 28:18b-19a NASB].

This is the problem for the atheist: they profess not to believe in God or His creative work, but the fact is they despise His authority. If someone truly did not believe in God, they would treat the subject like the Easter Bunny or Santa Claus. They would not waste their time trying to disprove His existence, would they? However, most atheists are consumed with proving God does not exist, lest they should have to answer to Him.

> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [Rom 1:19-21 NASB].

This is the nut: if Christ is the Creator, then He is the highest authority; He owns everything and He makes the rules. All men are merely created beings, no matter the vastness of their wealth or intelligence. As created beings, they have an obligation to give God the honor due to Him. If they refuse to honor Him now, they will bow and confess He is Lord at the judgment (Php 2:10-11).

All things were made through Him and nothing was made without Him. This is why you cannot deny the Creator by professing evolution and be saved: the Apostle John makes clear the Savior is the Creator. Even the attempt to bring creation in favor with the world, including this blasphemy called Theistic Evolution, is a denial of God's authority. God created. He spoke everything into existence (4:17; Psa 33:9; Heb 11:3). He upholds His creation by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). He owns all things and is the highest authority (Col 2:9-10).

> From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised. [Psa 113:3 ESV].

It seems God anticipated this false science of evolution and theistic evolution by writing creation as "the evening and the morning were the [first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth] day," in Genesis chapter 1. To drag on the length of days and try to portray the Creator as a mere guide while the Earth did its thing, is to deny God for the sake of winning favor with man. Jesus asked the question, if you work to please man rather than seek God's glory, how can you be saved? (5:44).

If you deny Him as the Creator, in full or in part, you deny His authority. You have made God into your own image and have betrayed the God of the Bible. You may profess Christ as your savior while rejecting His authority, but you cannot be saved.

> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. [Heb 1:2-3a NASB].

> By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. [Heb 11:3 NASB].

God's authority is a stumbling block, even to many professing Christians. The heart of man has a natural tendency to elevate himself and bring God's authority down to mans' level. Yet it remains, God rules over all His creation, for He created the universe by His Word and He upholds all things by the Word of His power. All creation is for His glory.

If we are following Christ, we must always be mindful we exist through Christ and we exist for God's glory.

IN CLOSING

The Bible begins with the story of Creation. The Gospel of John begins with the story of the Creator.

Christ is called the Word. He came to reveal the Father to man. In the same way, the Scriptures reveal the Word to man. All things were made through Him; through His Word. He is the Creator and He has come to earth as a man. Fully God and fully man.

Those who claim man can destroy the Earth, which Christ upholds by the word of His power (Heb 1:3), blasphemously bring God down to mans' level. Those who claim God used evolution to create the world, blasphemously reject the written Word of God. God is jealous for His glory (Exo 34:14; Isa 42:8; 48:11; Eze 20:14). You cannot deny the glory and power of God and be saved.

All authority belongs to Him and "so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Php 2:10-11 NASB].

> So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. [Psa 66:3b ESV].
>
> Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. [Psa 81:15 ESV].

The Bible proclaims the message of Christ; God incarnate. Fully man and fully God, the Redeemer of those who belong to Him.

John 1:4-5 Jesus Christ, The Light And The Life

Christ, the Word, was with the Father from the beginning. The Father created all things through Him and has given Him the highest authority. Through creation He gave life to all things.

Read John 1:4-5.

Light and life are central themes throughout the Gospel of John.

CHRIST IS LIFE

Christ is the Creator. He is the author and source of life. Man brought death upon this perfect creation, so now we live in a fallen world. Christ came to redeem His people and He gives life to all who come to Him.

1) 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.
2) 3:15-16, 36 Whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.
3) 5:21 The Son also gives life to whom He wishes.
4) 5:24 He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life.
5) 5:40 You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.
6) 6:33 For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.
7) 6:40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life.
8) 6:47 He who believes has eternal life.
9) 6:48,51,54 I am the bread of life. . .I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. . .he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life.
10) 10:10 I came that they may have life.
11) 10:28 I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish.
12) 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.
13) 14:6 Jesus said, I am . . . the life.
14) 17:2-3 Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is

> eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

CHRIST IS LIGHT

1) 1:4-5 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
2) 1:9-10 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
3) 3:19-21 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed, but he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.
4) 8:12 I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.
5) 9:5 While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.
6) 11:9-10 Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world, but if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.
7) 12:35-36 For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.
8) 12:46 I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.

Before the creation, the earth was full of darkness. The way Moses described it in Genesis was to say there was deep darkness ("over the surface of the deep"). This must have been an incredible darkness; no light, no sun, moon or stars. The first thing God brought to creation was light (Gen 1:3). God brought creation out of the deep darkness by bringing light.

> He reveals mysteries from the darkness and brings the deep darkness into light. [Job 12:22 NASB].

However, this utopia would be short lived as man quickly chose to serve the darkness rather than the Light.

How did the first man, Adam, sin? We know from the Genesis account, the woman was seduced by the snake to believe she could be as wise as God (Gen 3:5-6). It seems Adam was with her at that time and he did not intervene. They both knew good, but it was tempting to know evil; Satan convinced them they could be like God and it looked so good.

Eve took the forbidden fruit and she gave some to Adam. He did not heed God's warning. Adam relied upon his own wisdom and the result was death and darkness for himself and all his posterity. Jesus warned us if we rely upon our own wisdom, it is deep darkness. It may seem like light to us; the world's wisdom may seem to be positive and uplifting, but it is darkness. God has given us His Word. To rely upon anything else is darkness.

> If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! [Mat 6:23b NASB].

In verse 14, the Apostle John wrote Christ "became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory." God's Light came down to bring man out of darkness. In his later epistle, John gave a similar introduction to Christ. In this introduction, he described His manifest glory as "life," the eternal life.

> What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. [1Jo 1:1-3 NASB].

THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS

Referring to Christ as the Light speaks to God's holiness. The world is dark; it is common and sinful. Christ is light; He is holy. His life stands in stark contrast to the world. He brought light to save man from darkness.

Most professing Christians cannot see this Light. They have made Christ into their own image or bias. They want to see Christ as kind and gentle, never accusing nor convicting, but the truth is, light exposes darkness. If it does not "convict," it does nothing. While Christ hung around with sinners, He called them to come out of their sin and follow Him. This is convicting. Most professing Christians find comfort in a god who loves them as they are and continues to love them in their sin. This is not convicting; this is not light; this is darkness.

The natural man hates God's holiness. This is why man killed Christ and when they did so, the sky was full of darkness in the middle of the day and it appeared the darkness would overcome the Light. Nonetheless, Christ overcame death and crushed the powers of evil (Col 2:15) and has given life and light to all who believe and follow Him in holiness.

When the Messiah was born, the world was especially dark. Throughout the Old Testament, God had spoken to Israel through judges and prophets. As the Old Testament came to a close, God would be silent for 400 years; equal in span to the time of slavery in Egypt. As the Prophet Isaiah foretold, the people walked in darkness; deep darkness. Then, into this darkness the Messiah was born, bringing light to man (Isa 9:2).

John described Christ as the light of men and he said the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot grasp it or overcome it (v4-5). The vileness of men, even the cumulative evil of all men cannot overcome the light of Christ. Though they try to kill all the saints and choke the message of the Gospel, the Light will always shine (Rev 22:5).

In John chapter 3, Jesus told Nicodemus men love darkness because their deeds are evil (3:19). The evil heart of man has not changed over time. For two thousand years man has tried to suppress the truth of Jesus Christ, but wherever His truth is brought forth, the darkness is driven away. The darkness is unable to overcome the Light.

Christ has promised to deliver us out of this darkness, if we believe in Him.

> I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. [12:46 NASB].
>
> For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world —our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? [1Jo 5:4-5 ESV].

THE DARKNESS OF PSYCHOLOGY

Overcoming the darkness is opposite of the psychology preached by the modern American gospel, where people are placed into victim groups in need of recovery. When a professing Christian appears to be trapped in a life of addiction, or other such sin, instead of calling them to repentance, people apologize for them and encourage them in psychological counseling or in self-help groups, but the Bible says those who remain in sin, their faith has not taken root and they are not saved.

The parable of the Seed and the Sower, in Luke chapter 8, explains this. If the seed does not take root, the person is not saved. If the person is saved, the Bible says this person is delivered from darkness. They are NOT on the road to recovery; they are delivered.

> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [Col 1:13-14 NASB].

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [2Co 5:17 ESV].

> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ. [Eph 2:4-5a NASB].

If we are saved, Jesus said we are born again (3:3). Recovery groups will keep you focused on the old life and deceive you to think you can work your way out of sin. This is an evil which traps men in their sin and no one ever graduates out of the group.

> there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it. [Ecc 8:8b NASB].

Getting into the Word is the only way to "recover" from the old life. If Christ has delivered us, why do we deny His authority by seeking to recover by our own efforts? If we believe God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and placed us in the kingdom of His Son, we must walk as children of Light.

> for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light. [Eph 5:8 NASB].

Christ promised if we are in the Word, He will produce good works or good fruit in us (15:1-6). Jesus said if we follow Him, we will not walk in darkness (8:12). We must be in the Word daily. If we need more help, get into the Word more often and seek out a doctrinally sound church for good counsel and discipling.

> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:6-7 NASB].

It is impossible to have fellowship with God while chasing after the world (Jam 4:4). The pursuit of worldly wisdom and the praise of man is all darkness (5:44; 1Co 3:18-19). Many professing Christians are walking in darkness and they are not saved.

Some sins are obvious: thieving, adultery and the like, but other sin is less obvious. When I was a young man, I left the faith because I had become indoctrinated by positive mental attitude books. These books spoke some truth and seemed to be uplifting, but they are darkness; they lead the reader away from Christ and center man's thoughts around himself and how to help himself. This sin is not as obvious as some sins, because there appears to be some goodness in it, but it is just as dark as the darkest sin.

> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
>
> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [Col 2:6-8 NASB].

Any time we look for truth outside of God's Word, we are looking for truth via darkness, or, as John said, we are walking in darkness. If we are walking in darkness, we cannot be saved: no man can serve two masters.

> The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. [Mat 6:22-24a NASB].

The healthy eye is concentrated upon the Word of God, which is the source of true light. The bad eye follows the world's wisdom which may appear to have truth and may even be encouraging, but the darkness is very great. In the first three chapters of 1Corinthians, Paul wrote the wisdom of the Word of God is foolishness to the world, but we who believe have the mind of Christ.

The Light shines in the darkness. Seek the Light.

IN CLOSING

Christ came to bring life and in this life is light. As Creator, He is the author of life. Just as He brought light to His creation, He came to bring light to the darkness of mans' sin.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness. The Light shines in the darkness and though man tries to extinguish this Light, the darkness is not able to overcome it. The world assaults the Church from the outside and works deception from the inside, yet the light of Christ cannot be quenched.

Though we live in this world of darkness, we can be confident Christ is our light and our life. He has promised us eternal life if we believe and walk in obedience to Him. Since Christ has brought this light to us, we should strive to live in the fear of God and bring this light to others.

> among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life. [Php 2:15b-16a NASB].

John 1:6-8 God Sent A Witness To The Light

Isaiah prophesied Light would come into this world of darkness (Isa 9:2). He also prophesied God would send a witness to proclaim this message (Isa 40:3).

Read John 1:6-8.

John the Apostle wrote this Gospel, but never referred to himself by name. In this passage, He referred to John the Baptist as "John." So, when we read of John in the Gospel of John, the person referred to is John the Baptist.

- a man sent from God
- a witness (to testify of the Light so all might believe)
- was NOT the Light

JOHN THE BAPTIST: SENT FROM GOD

The voice of John the Baptist crying out in the wilderness was prophesied by Isaiah 700 years before the birth of Christ. The Prophet Malachi also prophesied God would send a witness to prepare the way for the Messiah.

> A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. [Isa 40:3 NASB].
>
> Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple. [Mal 3:1-2 NASB].

Malachi prophesied a second time regarding John the Baptist. In the last two verses in the book, which are the last two verses of the Old Testament, Malachi prophesied of an Elijah to come.

> Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse. [Mal 4:5-6 NASB].

After this prophecy, there was a 400 year gap of silence from God's voice. Then an angel came and prophesied the birth and the life of John the Baptist to Zechariah, his father. In this prophecy, the angel reiterated the words of Malachi, affirming his son would be the Elijah to come.

> It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. [Luk 1:17 NASB].

Later, Jesus confirmed John the Baptist was the Elijah who was prophesied:

> And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. [Mat 11:14 NASB].

> Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt?, but I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him. [Mar 9:12-13 NASB].

JOHN THE BAPTIST: A WITNESS

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ to testify He was the Messiah and the Son of God. He preached a message of repentance to prepare the people to follow the Messiah.

> Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." [Act 19:4 NASB].

The purpose of his witness was so "all might believe" (v7). Who are these "all"? Five verses later, the Apostle John said "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." [1:12 NASB]. It is clear in the Scriptures not everyone accepted the words of John the Baptist. Nonetheless, John was faithful to proclaim the message and leave the results to God.

JOHN THE BAPTIST: NOT THE LIGHT

When a man becomes famous and people throng to see him, as in the case of John the Baptist, it is common for pride to get the better of him. He begins to think of himself more highly than he ought. We have seen leaders and rulers believe they are above the law; we have seen televangelists and preachers lives taken down by egregious and prideful sin, but John lived a life of self denial. He never claimed to be the Christ and he never elevated himself to the height of his fame. He was faithful to his duty as a witness.

> He must increase, but I must decrease. [3:30 NASB, ESV].

Christ is described as the Light. Jesus described John the Baptist as a lamp (5:35). John was a small light bearing witness to the great light. John was not the Messiah and he faithfully testified he was not.

> You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent ahead of Him." [3:28 NASB].

JESUS' TRIBUTE TO JOHN THE BAPTIST

In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus Christ gave tribute to the life of John the Baptist, while he was still alive and in prison:

> What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?, but what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!, but what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,
>
> "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU."
>
> Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
>
> But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, and say, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon!" The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. [Mat 11:7-19 NASB].

An examination of the words of Jesus Christ regarding John the Baptist will reveal these points:

1) John the Baptist was not of an unstable mind, providing entertainment in the wilderness. He was a competent witness.

2) He did not wear fancy clothes or fill his life with luxury. He lived a life of self-denial. Though he was famous, he did not try to impress the crowds.

3) He was a prophet and a special one at that. For he proclaimed the coming of the Messiah and prepared the hearts of the people to receive Him.

4) No man was ever greater than John the Baptist, but his greatness had nothing to do with his own strength or power; he looked at himself as unworthy (Mat 3:11,13-14). His greatness had to do with opportunity, the commission, the call God had given him; to be the proclaimer and forerunner of the Messiah.

5) The least in the kingdom of heaven are those of transformed bodies and minds. They spend their days, if you will, proclaiming the glory of God. John the Baptist was still in the flesh. Although he proclaimed the Christ, he was shackled by his sin nature and doubt. This is why Jesus said the least in the kingdom of heaven are greater than John the Baptist.

6) "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." Some take this clause to mean violence against the kingdom of God. They get this from the word "suffer," which can mean experiencing oppression, but it can also mean to tolerate or allow and this can be from within or without. Jesus was speaking about John the Baptist, who was locked up in prison by King Herod. So, from this, some interpret "suffer" as being from without. However, we know Satan's kingdom has never defeated God's kingdom and never will; so "take it by force" has to mean something different from oppressing and conquering Christ's kingdom. Jesus said from the days of John til now: this is a span of time in days, weeks, months, but not even years. John and the Messiah were both recent to the scene. If Christ meant violence against the kingdom, would He not have said "since the beginning of time" or "beginning with Abel" or "since the Law and the Prophets" or such?, but He said since the days of John the Baptist; which means, since the days of the proclamation, "repent for the Messiah has come." During the time of the ministries of John the Baptist and of Christ, after He was revealed by John, people were crushing or forcing their way upon them as an army upon a city; this is violence. This had not happened with the other prophets. The former prophets were

rejected by the people around them. But in the time of John and Jesus, people heard the message and were seeking to understand this and the kingdom of heaven was advancing, forcefully or violently against the darkness of the world. Some translations include the wording the kingdom "has been forcefully advancing" or "led by force" or other such. With this interpretation, the violence spoken of is not malicious, but is a violation of the darkness that once held the people captive to sin; and the world was very dark to the Jew at the time of Christ, because God had not spoken by prophet nor revelation in over 400 years. This goes along with the idea light violates or intrudes upon darkness. The light advances and darkness cannot overcome it, said the Apostle John (1:5). People who have heard the Gospel and understand it are willing to leave the wisdom of the world behind (violence against the darkness) and cling desperately to the Word (take it by force). It is true, the kingdom does suffer violence from outside resistance, but the reason we know this is not what Christ was talking about are two key phrases: 1) from the days of John the Baptist; and 2) the violent take it by force. Jesus was describing something new or recent was happening here and we know God's kingdom will never be defeated. What we learn is this: there is no such thing as a casual Christian or a Christian of "private faith." We do not merely say the sinner's prayer and lock in our eternal security. If we are truly saved, we take this new faith by force; we consume it (6:53-58); we speak this Word, which is light, into the darkness of this world. When the world assails against it, we stand firm in and for the Word of God. This is the violence.

7) The Law and the Prophets prophesied of the Messiah to come. John proclaimed, "Repent for He is here." Jesus affirmed John the Baptist was the Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6 and elsewhere.

8) Those who are called will hear, but the unbelieving world is deaf. They have declared John the Baptist to be a demon; they have declared the Christ to be a glutton and a consort of sinners. The wisdom of God is foolishness to the world.

WHY THE INTERLUDE?

When accounting for the coming of Christ and describing Him as the Word, the Life and the Light, why did the apostle include this interlude, this seeming parenthesis about John the Baptist? After this apparent interruption, the apostle seems to continue on about Christ right where he left off. Here is 1:4-10, without verses 6-8 (the interlude):

> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. [. . .6-8. . .]. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. [NASB].

This conversation seems to make sense without the interlude announcing John the Baptist. So why is it there? One reasonable explanation could be some people were elevating John the Baptist or confusing him as the Messiah and John the Apostle wanted to set the record straight.

Luke wrote about this happening in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He gave the account when Paul first arrived in Ephesus there were believers who were baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist. Paul told them, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." [Act 19:4 NASB]. These people did not know about Christ and had mistaken the Baptist for the Messiah.

We know the Gospel of John was written to correct error and false teaching. The Apostle John may have inserted this to correct this common error. If so, the question remains: why insert this announcement of John at this place? Why not bring up this subject at the end of the description of Christ's incarnation, where the Apostle speaks more deeply of John's ministry?

To understand why John put this interlude about the Baptist, within this text, we need to look at the flow of the message. Look again at verses 1 through 12:

- (1-5) Christ the Messiah had come. He is God, He created all things and He brought light to the darkness.
- (6-8; interlude) God sent a witness to prepare the way, who proclaimed the Messiah was here.
- (9-12) The Messiah brought the light to this dark world; and, though He made the world, the world did not know Him. Though He came to His chosen people, they did not receive Him, but some did receive Him.

Before the interlude, the Apostle declared the Word of God had come to bring light and life to the world. After the interlude, the Apostle continued to build upon the idea the Messiah brought light to all men. Then, he added, though He was the Creator, nobody recognized or acknowledged Him;

though He came to His chosen people, they did not receive Him. As the Prophet Isaiah prophesied,

> O LORD, Your hand is lifted up yet they do not see it. [Isa 26:11a NASB].

What did the prophecy say regarding John the Baptist? It said he would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared, lest God come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction (Mal 4:5-6; Luk 1:17). God sent a witness so He could rightly judge His people for rejecting the Messiah. Because God sent a witness, there is no excuse. For the nation of Israel and this destruction came to Jerusalem in year 70AD.

Therefore, verses 1 through 11 tell us the Messiah came into the world bringing life and light. Though He came as light in the darkness and though a witness in the wilderness declared He had come, yet the world, even His chosen nation, did not acknowledge Him.

The interlude reinforces the fact God not only sent the Messiah as promised, but He sent a witness to declare Him. Before God would judge the world and His people for rejecting the Messiah, He had given them every opportunity to receive Him, but He came to His own and His own did not receive Him.

We just examined one purpose for a witness: to leave people without an excuse. This is the negative side. Let us look at another purpose for a witness, a positive purpose: Though God sent a witness, and though the world and His people rejected the Messiah, some did believe. 1:12 says some did believe and to those He gave the right to become children of God. The Bible tells us for people to believe, there must be a witness.

> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? [Rom 10:14 NASB].

Jesus Christ gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, commanding us to teach all people to walk by faith in Jesus Christ. They cannot believe unless they hear and they cannot hear unless the Gospel is proclaimed. This proclamation comes through a witness.

It is our duty to obey and profess Christ, whether we think anyone will believe or not. Most will not (Rom 10:16), but we speak because God commands and we speak for the sake of those who will hear.

Our example is the Prophet Jeremiah. God told him to speak though the people will not listen. The people, in turn, confirmed the words of God: they would not listen.

> You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall call to them, but they will not answer you. [Jer 7:27 NASB].
>
> As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we are not going to listen to you! [Jer 44:16 NASB].

Here is the example of John the Baptist: If we follow Christ, we are called to profess Him and teach His commands according to the Scripture. So we speak and leave the results to God. We can be confident His purposes will be accomplished, for He has promised His Word will never return empty.

> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. [Isa 55:11 NASB].

IN CLOSING

John the Baptist was sent from God to proclaim the Messiah had come. He was a witness. He bore witness to the Light so men might believe. The prophet Isaiah described him as the voice calling out in the wilderness (Isa 40:3). He preached so people could hear; so some could believe.

Though he was engulfed with fame, he was not the Light, nor did he claim to be. He said, "I am not the Christ." [v20].

John the Baptist is our example of living a life of self-denial. Though we are not commanded to live in the wilderness and wear animal skin clothes, we are called to be witnesses, to seek God's glory and not our own. Are we, like John, a faithful witness, proclaiming the Light to this dark world?

John 1:9-13 What It Means To Receive Jesus Christ

The Light had come into the world and He came to His people and God sent a witness to proclaim Him. Though He was rejected by the world and His own people, God always has a remnant who will believe.

Read John 1:9-13.

THE WORLD DID NOT KNOW HIM

The True Light had come into the world, enlightening everyone. That is, the Creator, whom the world had never seen, had now come to live among men. Nonetheless, His existence was evident before He came in human form. The Apostle Paul wrote what is known about God has been evident to all men.

> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. [Rom 1:19-20 NASB].

Prior to Christ's incarnation, God had revealed Himself solely to Israel or the remnant known as Jews. In this passage, the Apostle John said Christ came to reveal Himself to all men (v9). This is the Light prophesied by Isaiah and, just as Jesus said in 3:16, salvation will extend throughout the world and no longer be confined to Israel.

> I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth. [Isa 49:6b NASB].

Christ declared He was the Light come into the world. Christ is the Light for the nations and He still reaches to the ends of the earth.

> I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. [12:46 NASB].

Christ, the Creator of the world, the True Light, has revealed Himself to man by Word and by works, since the beginning. The Bible says, "So they are without excuse." [Rom 1:20]. The true Light, who had revealed Himself to man, had now come in the flesh; He was in the world. We know this to be a historical fact: Jesus Christ was physically a man and lived among men.

This is a beautiful picture. The Creator came to live among His creation. He was born to a woman whom He made; that is, He created His mother. His body walked upon the ground He made and depended upon the air He created. He experienced the beauty of His creation. Yet, He also experienced the agonizing consequences of the fall. While He was here, He had compassion on the sick, the lame, the deaf and the blind. The true Light brought healing to a broken world.

The Apostle Paul wrote all things were made by Him, through Him and for Him. He listed thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities (Col 1:16). Christ, the owner and ruler of all things, throughout the vast universe, walked among man and the thrones, dominions, rulers and authorities paid Him no honor, but continued their dark deeds as if there was no one to account to, but in His death He "disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." [Col 2:15 NASB].

God was on earth, in the flesh, but the world did not know Him or acknowledge Him. You could say, they did not even tip their hat to Him. His own creation, the people He made, disregarded Him. Even today, the world tries to minimize who Christ was; they discredit what He did while He was among men. People live their lives and go about their days with little or no consideration for the things of God.

> Their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; but they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, nor do they consider the work of His hands. [Isa 5:12 NASB].
>
> O LORD, Your hand is lifted up yet they do not see it. [Isa 26:11a NASB].

Why the darkness? Why did the world not turn to the Light while Christ was living among men? The people did not know Him or acknowledge Him because they clung to their sin.

> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [3:19 NASB].

The world is dark and oppressive, but the Light has come into the world. Light dispels darkness and brings hope. Yet the world clings to darkness because the people love their evil deeds. They refuse to turn to the Light, but for those who believe, "the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining." [1Jo 2:8 NASB].

HIS OWN DID NOT RECEIVE HIM

John the Baptist said no one receives the testimony of the Messiah (3:32). Isaiah told us the world does not seek after God; no one calls upon His name (Isa 64:7). The Apostle Paul said, "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD." [Rom 3:11 NASB].

Men were not looking for the Christ; the Jews, who carried the oracles of God, were not looking for the Christ. So it can be no surprise they did not recognize Him when He came.

Christ owns the world, but the world did not know Him when He came nor does it want to know Him today. In the Book of Isaiah, God said He set aside a people for Himself so they might declare His praise, but they did not call upon Him. He came to His own people; the nation of Israel, but they did not receive Him.

> The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise. Yet you have not called on Me, O Jacob; but you have become weary of Me, O Israel. [Isa 43:21-22 NASB].

A case in point: The story of the visit of the Wise Men, in Matthew 2. The magi inquired of the priests in Jerusalem as to where the Messiah child was living. The priests were able to figure the times and locations given in the Scriptures and sent the magi on their way to Bethlehem. Nonetheless, even when the birth of the Christ was brought to their attention by the Magi, the Jews did not seek out the child because they were not interested in the promised Messiah.

No one seeks after God (Rom 3:11). Seeker friendly churches are a false doctrine and a compromise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a man-centered gospel; a religion to please man. It is a method to get man churched, but it does not get man saved.

Jesus said no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him (6:44). Man thinks he can come to God via his own freewill, but even when Christ was dwelling among man, freewill kept man chained to sin. Therefore, He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him.

BUT TO THOSE WHO DID RECEIVE HIM

A popular Christian term is, "I accepted Jesus in my heart." This phrase is improperly used because the Bible speaks nothing of accepting Christ. He does not need our acceptance. Furthermore, this passage, speaking of receiving Christ, does not say "receiving into their hearts." We do not put Him into our heart or lives. He comes to us; He draws us; He regenerates us; and we are born again. It is God's work. We do not "open our hearts" to

the Lord. He opens our hearts so we can hear, understand and receive. This is all of God.

> the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. [Act 16:14b NASB].

The idea behind accepting Jesus, opening our hearts and making Him Lord is that we own and control our lives; we are sovereign and God is holding back His sovereignty until we are willing to submit to Him. Some preachers claim He is a gentleman and would never force Himself upon us. This is NOT Biblical.

Likewise, we do not "make a decision for Christ." 1:12 says we receive Him, but verse 13 says we receive Him through God's will, God's decision. The verse says this receiving had nothing to do with a man's will. God chose us in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). He made the decision; we had nothing to do with it. God has decided, we receive.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says we are saved by grace through faith which is the gift of God. This means God's grace and our faith, our ability to believe, are gifts from God. Our faith is not of our own doing. This means our salvation, God's grace and our faith are not the result of our own efforts; God did not give these gifts to us as a reward or something earned for anything we did; no decision of our own, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST.

All these claims that our salvation was facilitated by something we did, which are common Christian phrases, are boasting. We have accepted these phrases, but they are not Biblical. They come from false doctrine and have been used to motivate man to come to Christ, but Jesus said no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him (6:44). According to the words of Jesus Christ, to motivate man to come to Him is the work of the Spirit (3:8).

Are we splitting hairs? or is this an important issue? It is important because our view on these claims expose whether we believe God is sovereign or whether we believe man is sovereign. Does God subordinate His sovereignty to a man's will? God forbid.

Beware, lest you bring God down to man and create Him in your own image.

If God chose us before the creation of the world, He is sovereign; we are not. Why does Ephesians 2:8-9 end with "lest any man should boast"? It says so because it is God who is glorified in our salvation; when we claim we are saved because of something we have done, we rob God of His glory. God says, "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to

another." [Isa 42:8a NASB]. Therefore, this is an important matter, not a mere technicality.

> Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory. [Isa 43:7a NASB].

God has no desire to share His glory with us. All praise goes to Him, alone; we earn not even a little slice of this praise. So, when we say, "I accepted Jesus" or "I opened my heart to Him" or "I made Christ to be Lord of my life" or "I made a decision for Christ" or any such thing, we are boasting; we are robbing God of His glory and taking praise upon ourselves for something accomplished by God.

Where in the Bible does God congratulate any who follow Him? When the majority of disciples left Him, Christ asked the twelve if they were leaving also. They responded, saying only He had the words of life. To this, Jesus did not thank them nor praise them, but He reminded them that He chose them (6:66-70).

> Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come immediately and sit down to eat"?, but will he not say to him, "Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink"? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done." [Luk 17:7-10 NASB]

Here is the dichotomy: The Bible is clear, we cannot come to God unless He chooses us, but all men are responsible to come to Him, because He has commanded all men to repent (Act 17:30).

> I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O LORD, but with justice; not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing. [Jer 10:23-24 NASB].

Those who refuse to believe cannot become children of God and will rot in Hell for eternity, but if we believe, if we repent, this is something to praise God for. We can take no praise for it. Ephesians 2:8-9 confirms our faith, our ability to believe, is a gift from God.

The Bible says we come to Christ, we receive Him and we believe in Him, but it also says all this is of God. Our salvation is the work of God, alone.

All praise and glory belong to Him. Let us be careful not to rob even a little piece of this glory for ourselves.

> for you have indeed done for us all our works. [Isa 26:12b ESV].

WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME

Judging by the sentence structure, we see receiving Christ and believing in Him are the same. If we do not receive Him, we cannot believe and if we do not believe in Him, we did not receive Him.

Those who receive Him, believe in His name. What does it mean to believe in His name?

To answer this question, we must first understand what is His name. This will be a simple example, for the study of Christ's name could take book upon book to bring understanding.

> Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. [Isa 7:14b ESV].

> you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. [Mat 1:21b NASB].

Immanuel or Emmanuel means "God is with us." The Hebrew word for Jesus is Yeshua, which is a variation of Joshua. Yeshua means "Yahweh is salvation" or "Salvation is of the Lord."

The name Jesus Christ is not a first and last name, as in American names; a given name and a surname. Jesus is His name among men and Christ is His title. Christ means "Messiah." His name is Jesus, the Messiah; God with man; God is our salvation.

To believe in the name of Jesus Christ is to believe He is the promised Messiah, He is God and He dwelt among men. To believe in the name of Jesus Christ is to confess He is God incarnate and salvation comes from Him. So, when we say "to believe," we are not talking about a mere knowledge and agreement with the facts.

Many claim to believe and they think "making a decision for Christ" at some time in their life will give them fire insurance from Hell. They believe saying the sinner's prayer is evidence of salvation, but the Bible tells us the demons believe and tremble (Jam 2:19). The demons know God and acknowledge Him, but they cannot be saved (Mat 8:29; Mar 1:24; Luk 4:34). Therefore, receiving and believing must be more than mere head knowledge and a tipping of our hat to God.

> He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him [3:36 NASB].

> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. [Heb 3:18-19 NASB].

Believing is not merely knowing Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died for our sins and rose again. Believing describes the person who is obedient to God's commands.

Every man believes in something foundational for their life and what they believe affects the way they live their life. Paul wrote about those destined to perish: they refuse to believe the truth, so God sends them a strong delusion; God sends them something to believe, but it is not the truth (2Th 2:9-12). This delusion takes shape in the form of false religions and cults, positive motivation, self-helps, psychology, psychosis, materialism, hedonism and other worldly wisdoms.

So we see all people have faith; we all believe in something. Faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from God, which results in following Him and obeying Him. Some people speak of faith, but it is merely faith in faith. There is no substance, but it sounds positive. About having faith in faith, A.W. Tozer (1897-1963) wrote:

> I do not recall another period when 'faith' was as popular as it is today. If only we believe hard enough we'll make it somehow. So goes the popular chant. What you believe is not important. Only believe. . . What is overlooked in all this is that faith is good only when it engages truth; when it is made to rest upon falsehood it can and often does lead to eternal tragedy. For it is not enough that we believe; we must believe the right thing about the right One.

C.S. Lewis wrote,

> The state of mind which desperate desire working on a strong imagination can manufacture is not faith in the Christian sense. It is a feat of psychological gymnastics.

The Prophet Ezekiel wrote,

> They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the LORD,' when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect Him to fulfill their word. [Eze 13:6 NASB].

Once again, faith in Jesus Christ is a gift from God (Eph 2:8). Faith in Jesus Christ is not something we get through our own efforts; we cannot conjure this up nor can we "exercise" and build up this "muscle." Those who believe in Christ are born NOT of the will of man, but of the will of God (v13). We are God's workmanship (Eph 2:10).

> God-made Christians are a miracle of grace, the products of Divine workmanship (Eph 2:10). They are a Divine creation, brought into existence by supernatural operations. The new birth is "not of blood (by natural descent), nor of the will of the flesh (his own 'free-will'), nor of the will of man (the preacher's persuasion), but of God." [Arthur Pink; Spiritual Growth].

To truly believe, to believe in Jesus Christ with a saving faith is given to those who have been regenerated by God. They will believe and because of their true faith, they will follow Jesus Christ and live in obedience. This is something the natural man rejects, because he has not been regenerated or born again.

CHILDREN OF GOD

It is commonly said, "we are all children of God," but this is not Biblical. It is true, man is made in the image of God (Gen 1:26; cf Jam 3:9), but this passage makes clear, only those who receive Christ are children of God.

Christ came into the world and the world did not know Him; He came to His own, but they did not receive Him. Though man rejects God, for some incomprehensible reason, he wants claim to being a child of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote we are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:26) and those who follow Christ are sons of God (Rom 8:14). Furthermore, Romans chapter 8 explains those who follow Christ are adopted as sons into God's family and are fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:15-17). Therefore, those who do not follow Christ, are not children of God.

> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. . .if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. [Rom 8:7a, 9b NASB].

The Apostle Paul wrote we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons (Rom 8:23).

> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [Rom 8:19 ESV].

Those who believe, God gave the right to become children or sons of God (v12). Our receiving and believing cannot be of our own efforts. This passage says we are born of the will of God (v13). Romans chapter 8 tells us a child of God is adopted and they do not walk in the flesh, but walk in obedience to the Spirit are sons of God.

SIDENOTE: An interesting aside is these two verses sum up the eighth and ninth chapters of Romans:

1) v12. Those who received and believed, He gave the right to be children of God. Romans chapter 8 speaks of our adoption as sons of God and what this looks like: we will no longer walk in the flesh, but live in obedience to the Spirit. "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." [Rom 8:16 NASB].

2) v13. This adoption did not come by our will or even our decision, but by the will of God. Romans chapter 9 says God chooses some, but not others. He will have mercy on whom He wills. "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." [Rom 9:16 NASB].

IN CLOSING

The world did not know Him; His own people rejected Him, but those who received Him became children of God. You cannot get to heaven by your own works or even by your own decision. To be saved, you must be born of the will of God. Repent and believe.

John 1:14-18 Jesus Christ Came To Dwell Among Man

Christ came into the world and the world would not acknowledge Him. Those whom He created were content in their estrangement from Him. So this is a great mystery: how that the God who created man would 1) reduce Himself to become a man; and 2) that He would dwell among apostate men without destroying them.

The Apostle Paul told us, even though Christ was God, He did not cling to His status, but made Himself nothing; taking on the nature and likeness of man and He was obedient, even to His own death (Php 2:5-8). Christ did not come to destroy, or condemn the world He came to die so His people could be saved (3:17). This was His reason for living among men.

Read John 1:14-18.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Christ became flesh. He was fully God and He became fully man. God the Son, God of all eternity took upon Himself the finite flesh of man, a body formed from water and dirt, to walk as man and live among His creation. The Scriptures declare the two natures of Christ: that He is fully God and fully man, revealing His glory and His flesh.

> For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. [Isa 9:6 NASB].

> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. [Col 2:9 NASB].

The first chapter of Genesis tells us God made man in His own image and everything God made was good, but man fell to sin and brought darkness and death upon God's creation. Man defiled the glory God had given him and the Bible describes mans' life as grass, a breath, a vapor, a mist or a shadow (Job 8:9; 14:2; Psa 39:5,11; 144:4; Jam 4:14).

> The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever. [Isa 40:8 NASB].

Despite all mans' rebellion and apostasy, the Creator took upon Himself the likeness of man in all its frailness, but without the sin nature. In living the perfect life, perfect obedience to the Law, He would restore the image of God in man.

> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. [Heb 4:15 NASB].

In his epistles, John argued against those who denied Christ had come in the flesh. He wrote, "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God." [1Jo 4:2b-3a NASB]. He called those who denied Christ coming in the flesh as deceivers.

> For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. [2Jo 7 NASB].

Christ has forever taken upon Himself the flesh of man. He is and always will be fully God and fully man (Col 1:15-20; Heb 2:5-18). This is called the hypostatic union. Though He is fully God, when He became man, the Bible says He had to be made perfect and He learned obedience.

> For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. [Heb 2:10 NASB].

> Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation. [Heb 5:8-9 NASB].

The writer of Hebrews said God had to make Him perfect through suffering and He learned obedience. What does this mean? Isn't God perfect, sinless and doesn't He know everything?

We need to consider, while He was on the earth, He was in the flesh of man, with all its frailness, but not its sin. He was forever God, but only recently man. Though He created man, He had never experienced this state. When in this state, He suffered. When suffering, He was tested. When tested, He proved perfect and obedient. Therefore, where the Scriptures say He "learned" obedience, the meaning is, although He was new to this nature, Christ proved obedient.

There had to be a perfect man to be the flawless sacrifice to settle God's wrath against man. The man Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Law with perfect obedience. He was the spotless lamb of God; thus He was proven to be the perfect sacrifice for the sin of man.

The Law cannot not save man because we all fall short (Rom 3:23). The Law announced God's standard, but it was weak in giving eternal life. This is why God sent His Son.

> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. [Rom 8:3-4 NASB].

God sent His Son, born in human flesh. He was born under the Law to redeem sinners who were under the Law, that is, condemned by the Law. So we might be adopted as sons, fellow heirs with Christ. For this, we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:4-5).

WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY

The Apostle Paul told us the fullness of Deity dwells bodily in Christ (Col 2:9). In other words, Christ is the full representation of the Godhead, in that, He is the physical form of God; God dwells in Him (Col 1:15-19). When the Bible talks about the fullness of Christ it refers to His fullness of the Godhead; Christ is filled with God to capacity, because He is God. In Him, Deity lives in bodily form (Col 2:9).

Can you imagine following a man who was sinless. For three years, the disciples followed Jesus. It did not slip by unnoticed that, not only did this man have such superior wisdom and extraordinary powers, but He did not sin. Not in word nor in deed. He never whined or complained; He never sought pity; He never sought His own gain; He never said a derogatory word. There was never a time the disciples needed to encourage Him out of His slump. He always spoke for God and He always pointed the disciples and His hearers toward God. This was no ordinary man.

When John wrote "we have seen His glory," he was not merely stating a fact; this was an exciting proclamation. He, along with the disciples and others saw the Christ, the Son of God with their own eyes. He dwelt with them; they touched Him and talked with Him. They saw the glory of God manifest in Him.

> What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— what we have seen and

> heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. [1Jo 1:1-4 NASB].

The Apostle John saw the miracles Christ performed. He saw God's glory upon Jesus at His baptism (v32) and the Transfiguration (Luk 9:28-36). He heard when God the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." [Mat 3:17; 17:5 NASB]. These must have been glorious and terrible things to behold: God speaking to man and pouring His approval upon His Son, confirming He was whom He claimed to be, the only Son of God. This is why John could positively say, "glory as of the only begotten from the Father." [v14 NASB].

FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

His glory was full of grace and truth. Though God is righteous and just and cannot tolerate sin (Psa 7:11; Hab 1:13), He sent His Son to satisfy His wrath (Rom 3:25; 1Jo 4:10). While His Son was on earth, rather than destroy the world, God allowed the world to destroy His Son's flesh. This is grace! In explaining 3:16, some commentators explain the verse to mean, "This is how God showed His love for the world, by sending His Son."

Grace, in that:

1) He dwelt among man without destroying him (Rom 3:26; 1Ti 1:15);
2) He came as a servant (Mat 20:28; Php 2:7);
3) He was the final sacrifice for mans' sins (1Co 5:7; Heb 10:12);
4) He came to destroy the dominion of death (1Co 15:25-26; Col 2:15; 2Ti 1:10; Heb 2:14);
5) He came to die so we might have life (10:10; Rom 5:8; 6:23).

Truth, in that:

1) He came to make God the Father known to man (1:18).
2) Christ told us He is the way, the truth and the life (14:6).
3) Christ is the only way to the Father (Act 4:12; 1Ti 2:5).
4) God's grace comes by way of truth (Col 1:6).

John and the disciples had no doubt Jesus was the Christ, for they had seen His glory. There never was a man like Jesus Christ.

God's grace is worked out in our lives as we abide in Christ (15:4-5). Christ promised if we abide in Him, we will know the truth (8:31-32).

A PARENTHESIS

Just after "full of grace and truth" and just before "grace upon grace," the Apostle John slipped in this apparent parenthesis:

> **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.'" [v15 NASB].**

The Jews clung to their "obedience" to the Law for their hope of salvation. Then there were another group who left the Law behind for John's baptism. The Apostle John was reminding these people of the eternality of the grace and truth through Jesus Christ: John was finite; Christ is infinite. He reminded them, even the Baptist himself, subjected himself to this truth of the Christ.

The man, Christ, was born after John the Baptist and Christ's ministry began after the Baptist's. So, many saw the Christ as a newcomer, if you will, but Christ ranks ahead of the Baptist because He was before him, from eternity. John was merely the forerunner, the messenger, the witness. He came to announce the Christ. By the Baptist's own words, he pointed people to Christ because Christ is from eternity.

The Apostle John wrote this to affirm Christ's grace and truth and that it was greater than the baptism preached by John the Baptist. This baptism was intended to lead people to repentance and faith in the eternal Messiah, of whom John preached. John was in part, Christ is in full. Christ's Gospel is the fullness of grace and truth.

WE HAVE RECEIVED GRACE UPON GRACE

What is the meaning of "grace upon grace"? The term is not "grace upon works" nor "works upon grace." The term John used is "grace upon grace." Grace is a gift of God; not of works nor do we obtain grace of our own decision or choosing (Eph 2:8-9). Bountiful grace. God gives grace and adds grace to it.

Some commentators say John was pointing to the grace God gave through the Law of the Old Testament and the grace of the New Testament was built upon this former grace.

> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of

> sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. [Rom 8:3-4 NASB].

In Ephesians 1:4-8, the Apostle Paul tells us of this grace:

1) God chose us in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world.
2) He chose us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ.
3) Through Christ, He redeemed us.
4) He lavished His grace upon us.

In Ephesians 2:4-8, he tells us more of this grace:

1) He made us alive in Christ, while we were dead in our sins.
2) By grace you have been saved.
3) He has raised us up with Christ and seated us with Christ in the heavenly places.
4) In the coming ages He will show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
5) For by grace you have been saved through faith.

Grace upon grace: God's grace is "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." [Eph 3:20b NASB]. Grace immeasurable in this life and grace immeasurable in the life to come.

The Apostle Paul said if it had not been for the Law, he would not have known sin (Rom 7:7). In Galatians 3:24, he wrote that the Law was our guardian to to keep our eyes upon God. Though we are condemned by the Law, the Law is not without grace. The fact God would direct man to live Godly lives and the fact He gave the Law to make man conscious of sin so he can repent, is evidence of His grace. This is grace upon grace.

The Law came through Moses. The Jews clung to Moses and the Law. Though they could never keep the Law, they falsely believed they did keep the Law by their own works. But Scripture tells us all have sinned and fall short of God's glory (Rom 3:23). The Law revealed God's righteousness and exposed mans' sinfulness (Rom 3:20).

- Jesus said everyone who sins is a slave to sin (8:32).
- The Apostle Paul wrote we are slaves to the one we obey; either of sin, which leads to death, or of Christ which leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16).

Jesus Christ brought grace and truth. If we follow Him we are no longer under God's judgment, but we have the gift of eternal life (Rom 6:23). Christ promised we will know the truth and be set free if we abide in Him (8:31-32). Paul wrote we are released from the Law which held us captive, so we serve by the Spirit rather than an adhere to the Law.

> But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter. [Rom 7:6 NASB].

Moses gave the Law, by which no man could live; but Christ satisfied the Law though perfect obedience. Martin Luther said, "The Law discovers the disease; the Gospel gives the remedy."

> The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [Rom 5:20-21 NASB].

Here is the Gospel of grace in a nutshell:

> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:21 NASB].

We do not have the ability to be righteous, so good works cannot get us to heaven. Knowing we cannot satisfy God's righteous requirements should lead us to repentance. For those who repent and receive Christ, He took our sin and He gave us His righteousness.

By saying the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, the Apostle John announced one greater than Moses was here. Trying to follow Moses, the Jew relied upon his own works. Christ has come so we can rely upon Him and what He has done for us. Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ; grace upon grace.

HE HAS MADE GOD KNOWN

Christ was with God from the beginning, because He is God (1:1). He came to man to make the Father known (1:18). This demonstrates the love between the Father and the Son. It is evidence of Christ's obedience. He left His glory and took the form of a servant (Php 2:7). In taking on human flesh, He served both the Father and man; reconciling man to God (2Co 5:19).

Prior to the incarnation of Christ, God was revealed in His creation (Rom 1:19-20); He was revealed in the Law and the Prophets (Rom 3:21). Through Jesus Christ, God has revealed Himself to man in the flesh (Heb 1:1-3). While Christ was among man, He revealed God to man.

> Jesus Christ, the faithful witness... [Rev 1:5 NASB].

Here are some examples from the Gospel of John where Christ made the Father known to the people:

- 3:11 Jesus told Nicodemus, He spoke of what He received and saw in Heaven.
- 4:23 Jesus explained to the woman at the well, the Father is seeking those who will worship in spirit and in truth.
- 5:19 Jesus said He could do nothing of His own, but only what He saw His Father doing, for the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing.
- 5:36 Jesus said the works He is doing are the works the Father sent Him to do and these works bear witness the Father sent Him.
- 6:38 Jesus said He came to do the will of the Father who sent Him.
- 6:40 Jesus said the will of the Father is everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life.
- 6:44 Jesus said nobody comes to Him unless the Father draws him.
- 14:10 Jesus said He is in the Father and spoke what He saw the Father doing.
- 17:25-26 Jesus showed us what the Father is like.

AD HOC OUTLINE JOHN 1:1-18

1) Jesus Christ is God;
2) He became flesh and dwelt among man; and
3) He revealed the Father to man.

IN CLOSING

The Word became flesh. He left His Godly state to become a man and He lived among men. John said, "we have seen His glory." His life was a real event and He is the Son of the Father.

Because Christ is God, we have received grace upon grace. This is the grace of the New Covenant built upon the grace of the Old Covenant. This is the immeasurable grace to stand blameless before the Judge of all creation and all righteousness, standing upon the grace of our redemption from sin and death.

The Law was given through Moses. It revealed the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of man. The Law will lead the repentant heart to Christ. Grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. Christ, alone, fulfilled the Law. For us who are repentant, He took our sin and gave us His righteousness.

No one has seen God. In the past, God was revealed through creation, the Law and the Prophets. Now, His Son has come and made God known. Light has come into the darkness.

> God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. [Heb 1:1-3 NASB].

John 1:19-34 The Faithful Witness Of John The Baptist

Up to this point, twice in this chapter the Apostle John sprinkled the text with the witness of John the Baptist. The Baptist testified of the Messiah, but many in his day believed he was the Messiah. So, the Apostle wanted to make clear to the reader, John the Baptist was not the Messiah; he even said so himself. In this passage, the Apostle John explained the witness of John the Baptist.

Read John 1:19-34.

THE INTERVIEW OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

When asked whom he was, right away John the Baptist denied he was the Christ.

These were heady days. Large crowds were following him and it would have been so easy to get caught up in the excitement and the fame. This day, he was being interviewed by important people. The temptation to be famous can be strong. Today, we see ministers and televangelists hogging the limelight, going for the glory, while tipping their hats to Christ; but John the Baptist was steadfast in his resolve to proclaim Christ alone. He did not cling to his fame and even among his own followers he declared Christ must increase, but he must decrease (3:30).

John the Baptist was so focused on proclaiming Christ alone; he grasped at nothing and even denied being Elijah (v21). However, Malachi described the coming of Elijah and when the angel visited Zechariah, before the birth of his son John, he used the same language to affirm his son would be the "Elijah."

> Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. . .Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. [Mal 3:1a, 4:5-6a NASB].

> It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. [Luk 1:17 NASB].

When the Baptist was in prison and after his death, Jesus, spoke of John the Baptist and affirmed he was the Elijah who had come, but he was not

recognized as such and they killed him (Mat 11:14; 17:12). From Old Testament prophecy, from the angel and from Jesus' testimony, it is clear John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come at the time of Christ. Although he was the man prophesied to be the Elijah, he denied being the Elijah because he was not willing to take any glory for himself.

So now these men pressed John further, asking if he was the Prophet (v21). In one respect, you could say John was a prophet, but this question was not about just any prophet and, once again, John would not take the glory for himself, for this prophecy of the Prophet belonged to Christ. Christ was the Prophet about whom Moses had spoken.

> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. . . [Now quoting God] and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. [Deu 18:15,18b-19 NASB].

Jesus said He, Himself, was the long awaited Prophet and He did nothing on His own authority, but spoke what the Father told Him (8:28). At another encounter, Jesus Christ told the Pharisees, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." [5:46 NASB].

John's answer to being the Prophet was a simple, "No." [v21].

The interview was almost over and they pressed John for a satisfactory answer, for they could not return to the Pharisees with nothing. John told them he was the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah had said (v23; quoting Isa 40:3).

So, the interviewers were now confused: If John was not the Christ, the Elijah or the Prophet, why was he baptizing? John answered by pointing them to the Messiah, saying he was not worthy to untie His sandals (v27).

The Gospel of Matthew accounts John's words like this:

> As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. [Mat 3:11-12 NASB].

The Apostle Paul gave this account of John the Baptist:

> after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And while John was completing his course, he kept saying, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not He, but behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie." [Act 13:24-25 NASB].

Each time John was pressed, he pointed his interviewers back to the Christ:

1) I am not worthy to untie His sandals or carry His sandals;
2) He will baptize with Holy Spirit and fire;
3) He will separate those who will live with Him from those who will suffer the judgment of eternal fire.

John said Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. The Holy Spirit is a seal, given to those who believe (2Co 1:22). The fire is the condemnation of those who do not believe (Rev 20:15). John preached repentance to escape God's judgment to prepare the hearts of the people to receive the Messiah.

WHERE THIS INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE

In Jesus' time, there were two towns called Bethany. The more commonly known Bethany, the Bethany of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, was two miles to the Southeast of Jerusalem (11:18); which was West of the Jordan River. The minions of the Pharisees interviewed John the Baptist at another Bethany beyond the River Jordan, that is, on the East bank (v28).

There has been much controversy related to the location of this Bethany where the interview took place. Some place it up north, in the region of Galilee. Others say the most likely location is just opposite Jericho. Some translations have identified the city to be Bethabara and the name refers to fords in the river. During this time, there were near Gilead the fords of Abarah. This would place the location south of the River Jabbock and north of the Dead Sea, on the East side of the Jordan River.

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

John the Baptist proclaimed Christ to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (v29). What is the significance of the Lamb of God?

- Since the Fall of Adam, God commanded man to sacrifice an animal as the temporary offering for sin (Lev 17:11; Gen 3:21). Abel, the first martyr, bred sheep for these sacrifices (Gen 4:2).

- During the captivity of Israel in the land of Egypt, God commanded the people to take a Passover lamb and spread the blood on the lintels and door posts of their homes. This was to protect them from the coming judgment; the death of the firstborn (Exo 12).
- Sacrificing a lamb at the Passover would be a continuing celebration reminding them of their sin and commemorating how God delivered them, saving them from the plague of death upon the firstborn and rejoicing for the Redeemer to come.
- When John the Baptist called Christ the Lamb of God, he was proclaiming Christ to be the final Passover lamb. And, in fact, Christ died for mans' sin at the Passover on the day of Preparation (19:31-34).

Christ was the perfect sacrifice; the perfect Lamb of God. All the previous animal sacrifices were a type or a picture of the Redeemer who was to come and be the final sacrifice for mans' sin.

> For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. [1Co 5:7b NASB].

> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. [1Pe 1:18-19 NASB].

HE EXISTED BEFORE ME

As to physical birth, John the Baptist was six months older than Christ (Luk 1:24-45). Yet the Baptist proclaimed "He was before me" or "He existed before me" (v30). He knew Jesus Christ existed before all time.

In saying Christ was before him, he could also have been speaking to rank or status. Christ is exalted, He is the King; John was the herald.

The day after the interview, Christ was walking to meet John the Baptist, to be baptized by Him. It seems before this day, John had not met Christ apart from the time their mothers met, when they were both in the womb (Luk 1:41). In this passage, John the Baptist stated he did not know the Christ, but his sole purpose was to reveal Him. This is why he baptized: to reveal the Christ; to proclaim repentance so people would follow Jesus.

God told the Baptist, He would send the Christ and described how he would know Him. The Spirit would descend as a dove and remain upon Him. According to this passage, John trusted God to reveal the Christ to

him. When John was in the womb, he recognized Christ immediately (Luk 1:41), but this day, he would not know Him until He arrived.

> Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him, but John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" but Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." [Mat 3:13-17 NASB].

Many commentators and critiques have pointed out the alleged contradiction between the account in Matthew and John. In Matthew's account, John appeared to know Christ when he arrived; and in the Apostle John's account, the Baptist did not know him and Christ was not revealed to him until He was baptized.

The whole story lies within both accounts. God had given John the Baptist a unique tie to his Lord and, just as he recognized the Christ while in the womb, so too, he knew the Christ when He appeared at the river. This is not at all contradictory with John's account. The point of John's account is that the Baptist trusted God to reveal His Son to him, just as God had promised He would. And he testified Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is the Son of God.

THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT

All four Gospels have the account of Christ's baptism. Three of them give the account of the heavens opening, the Spirit descending like a dove and the voice of the Father rendering His approval and affirming Jesus to be His Son (Mat 3:16-17; Mar 1:10-11; Luk 3:21-22). Typically, the Apostle John did not repeat the Synoptics unless there was something to clarify; which may be the reason he did not have this in his account of the event.

It may have been awesome to witness the heavens opening and the Spirit descending like a dove and the voice of the Father, but it was likely a fearful experience as well. For it is certain the voice of the Father thundered (2Sa 22:14; Psa 18:13) and you can be sure the heavens opening were terrible or frightening to see and hear. John the Baptist could only proclaim, "this is the Son of God." [v34].

> the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. [Isa 11:2-3a ESV].

So, here at Christ's baptism, we have the witness of the three: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son came to be baptized; the Holy Spirit announced by rending the skies and descending upon Him like a dove; and the Father audibly voicing His approval and affirming Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The witness of the Father and the Holy Spirit upon the Son marked the beginning of Christ's ministry.

SON OF GOD IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1) 1:34 John the Baptist testimony Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
2) 1:49 Nathanael's declaration Jesus is the Son of God.
3) 3:18 Those who do not believe in the name of the Son of God will be judged.
4) 5:25 Those who hear the voice of the Son of God will live.
5) 10:36 Can the Son of God blaspheme by claiming to be the Son of God?
6) 11:4 The Son of God will be glorified when God raises Lazarus from the dead.
7) 11:27 Mary, the sister of Lazarus, declared Jesus is the Son of God.
8) 19:7 The Pharisees charge Pilate that Christ should die for claiming to be the Son of God.
9) 20:31 John wrote the book so we might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and by believing we shall have life in His name.

IN CLOSING

John the Baptist used every opportunity to point people to Christ and took no glory for himself. Some thought he was the Prophet or the Messiah, but he denied it. He was preparing the way for the true Messiah. He took no glory for himself; even denying he was the prophesied Elijah.

The day after the interview, Christ came to him to be baptized. At this event, Christ was revealed and John confirmed Jesus was the Christ or the

Messiah. "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." [v34 NASB].

When faced with the popularity John experienced, he did not cling to the glory nor make the most of it. We see preachers become famous and lose sight of their calling, if they were ever called at all. Their ministry becomes about themselves rather than turning hearts to the Lord. John the Baptist, however, remained faithful to his calling and continued to point people to Christ.

John preached repentance to prepare the way for the Messiah. He preached repentance so people would receive the words of Jesus Christ and escape the wrath of God. The true Gospel is not "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." The Gospel is the message of John the Baptist and this was also preached by Jesus Christ: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven [judgment of God] is at hand." [Mat 3:2; 4:17 NASB].

True repentance is to confess and turn away from our sin. We cannot follow Christ unless we repent of our sin. We cannot preach the true Gospel of Christ without preaching repentance.

John 1:35-51 How Christ Chose The First Five Disciples

A QUICK SUMMARY OF THE FIRST FIVE CHOSEN

1. The Apostle John and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist. When the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God." John and Andrew followed Christ (v35-37).
2. Andrew was the brother of Simon. He brought Simon to Jesus, who renamed him Peter (v40-42).
3. The next day, Jesus found Philip and said, "Follow Me" (v43).
4. Philip was from the same town as Andrew and Peter. He found Nathaniel and brought him to Christ (v44-48).

   Read John 1:35-51.

BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

Proclaiming the Messiah was completely in character with the nature of John the Baptist. For we read in the account of Luke, when Mary was with child and she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of John, he jumped in the womb (Luk 1:41). Even as a six-month unborn child he recognized and celebrated a visit from the Lord.

Two days in a row, Jesus was walking near John the Baptist and both times John's response was, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" [v29,36].

The second time his reward for declaring the truth about the Son of God was to lose two of his disciples; they left to follow the Messiah. John the Baptist declared Jesus was the Lamb of God. The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary (JFB) suggests this, the second declaration by John, was a hint to his disciples to follow Christ. Andrew and John left John the Baptist to follow Jesus.

We know John was one of the two, because had it been another, John would have mentioned him by name. In this gospel account of the life of Jesus, the Apostle John spoke of himself in the third person, as if he were the narrator of the story, if you will. He never disclosed his name when he, himself, was a part of this story, instead giving himself anonymous or affectionate descriptions.

Jesus asked John and Andrew what they were seeking. They called Him Rabbi, or Teacher and asked Him where He stayed (v38). To ask someone where he stayed was a request for audience; this was an appeal to talk with

Him. Jesus accepted their entreaty, "Come, and you will see." [v39]. It was late in the day, around 4pm, so they hung around the rest of the day. They remained with Him, asking and listening.

> How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! [Psa 119:103 NASB].

They called Him "Rabbi" and wanted to spend time with Him learning of Him and from Him. Contrast this with the modern American gospel: We want to get saved and integrate our Savior into our lifestyle; fitting Him in around our work and entertainment. After all, He is our best friend, as the blasphemous expression goes. Let us examine our lives and see if we truly desire to spend time with Him; learning from Him and learning of Him. This is the example of the disciples in the Gospel of John.

After this, Andrew ran off and found his brother, Simon. He declared, "We have found the Messiah." [v41]. And he brought his brother to Jesus. When Simon arrived, Christ changed his name to Cephas, or Peter. Cephas is the Aramaic word for stone and Peter (Petros) is the Greek word for small rock. Simon means "he has heard." Simon Peter acted on what he heard and he became a rock, so to speak.

FOLLOW ME

Jesus went up to Galilee and found Philip. Besides saying, "Follow Me" [v44], we have no account of what else Jesus revealed to Philip, but it was enough to impress him so that he went to find Nathanael and declared he had found the Messiah.

Neither Andrew nor Philip kept their discovery to themself. If we are convinced Jesus is the Messiah, it should move us to seek out others to follow Him.

The synoptic Gospels record Philip as one of the twelve; they say nothing else of him. The Apostle John, however, recorded four interactions between Philip and Christ:

1) When Christ sought out Philip (1:43f);
2) When Christ asked Philip where they would get the food for the five thousand (6:5f);
3) When Philip lobbied Christ on behalf of the Greek men from Bethsaida (12:21f); and
4) When Philip asked Christ to show them the Father (14:8f).

Philip's declaration to Nathanael that Jesus was the Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets wrote is consistent with what Christ revealed of Himself with the two men on the road to Emmaus. "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." [Luk 24:27 NASB].

Philip's response to Christ's command to follow Him, was to find Nathaniel and bring him to follow Christ also.

NATHANIEL'S SKEPTICISM

Nathanael asked the question, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" [v46 NASB]. He was hesitant to accept Philip's claim at face value. He must have remembered the prophecies that Christ would come out of Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; Mat 2:5-6). Details mattered to Nathanael, but apparently he was not familiar with Isaiah's prophecy the region of Galilee would be glorified by the presence of the Messiah (Isa 9:1-2). The Pharisees missed this, as well (7:45-52).

According to the recorded conversation of Philip, we can assume he and Nathanael had been looking for the Messiah and had discussed this before. However, Nathanael was not looking for a bandwagon. He was not one to rush off to every "sighting" of a messiah, he was looking for the truth.

> How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! [Psa 32:2 NASB].

When Christ described Nathanael as a man without deceit (v47), he wanted to know how Christ knew this. He may have been wondering if this was mere flattery or had his reputation got around, but Christ told him He saw him under the fig tree before Philip came to talk to him. Christ said this to demonstrate to Nathanael He knew all things.

When Nathanael proclaimed Christ to be the Son of God, the King of Israel (v49), he declared Christ's authority:

1) Son of God is Christ's personhood and King of Israel is His position (JFB).

2) By declaring Christ is the Son of God, he professed Him to be the Messiah (11:27).

3) By declaring Christ is the King of Israel, he professed the LORD, God Himself, had come down to them to dwell in their midst (Zep 3:15-17; Zec 9:9).

4) By calling Christ "Rabbi," he submitted himself under Christ's teaching. He declared he wanted to be taught by Christ.

Daniel prophesied through a vision the Son of Man would be given dominion, glory and a kingdom; all peoples, nations and languages would serve Him; His dominion will be an everlasting dominion which shall never pass away (Dan 7:13-14). The Son of Man came first as the Messiah to die for His people, but He will come again as the King of kings to rule over all and Daniel's vision will be proved true.

Many want to reduce His authority by claiming Christ does not now reign. The truth of the matter is Christ conquered death and defeated all authority and power (Col 2:15); He was given all authority and power and all people are commanded to obey Him (Mat 28:18-20). He sits at the right hand of the Father (Eph 1:20-22; Heb 8:1, 12:2). Even His enemies are subject to Him (Psa 110:1; 1Co 15:25-27). It is blasphemy to deny or reduce Christ's authority, as if this is reserved for some future event. Though His kingdom or millennial reign is not now established on earth, He reigns on high and all people, tribes and nations are obligated to worship Him and keep His commands (Act 17:30-31).

Jesus' answer to Nathanael's praise was he would see greater things than this. He would see heaven opened "and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." [v51]. This is a direct reference to Jacob's vision of the ladder in Genesis 28. While Christ was upon the earth, all of heaven was attending to His needs. His business and the communication between the Father and the Son was revealed to the disciples.

CALLING DISCIPLES FROM A HARDENED WORLD

Philip was from the town of Bethsaida (v44), which is on the North shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was the town of Andrew and Peter, however, by the account of Matthew, in chapter 8, it appears Peter may have moved on to nearby Capernaum. Nonetheless, according to 21:2, Nathanael's home town was Cana in Galilee. So, here we have four believers living in or previously from the area around Bethsaida.

Matthew and Luke recorded in their gospels, Bethsaida was hardened against the witness of the Lord and Christ condemned the people therein (Mat 11:21; Luk 10:13). Regardless, Christ did heal a blind man from this town (Mar 8:22f) and He called four disciples.

There was a time Elijah was depressed because of the hardness of the nation of Israel. He complained to the Lord he was the only one left, but God assured him He had reserved seven thousand who revered Him and did not bow the knee to Baal (1Ki 19:9-18). So too, though Christ rejected

Bethsaida, He was compassionate to a blind man who believed. Though the whole world refused to believe in Him, God retained a remnant and from Bethsaida and called out four disciples. This is a continuing picture of God's grace and His election.

> For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD will perform this. [2Ki 19:31 NASB].
>
> Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. [Isa 10:20 NASB; cf Isa 37:31-32; Jer 23:3].
>
> Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED." [Rom 9:27 NASB].
>
> In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. [Rom 11:5 NASB].

SON OF MAN IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1) 1:51 Christ declared the disciples would see the angels attending to the Son of Man.
2) 3:13 The Son of Man has been in heaven and has come down from heaven.
3) 3:14 The Son of Man will be lifted up on a cross just as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness.
4) 5:27 The Son of Man has been given authority from the Father to execute judgment.
5) 6:27 The Father has set His seal on the Son of Man and He will give you the food worth laboring for.
6) 6:53 You have no life without the flesh and blood of the Son of Man.
7) 6:62 The Son of Man will ascend to where He was before, demonstrating His authority to say the things He said.
8) 8:28 When the Son of Man is lifted to the cross you will know He spoke on His Father's authority.

9) 9:35 Jesus asked the man born blind after demonstrating before the Pharisees he believed Christ came from God, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

10) 12:23 The hour had come to glorify the Son of Man (death and resurrection).

11) 12:34 The crowd asked how the Son of Man could suffer death and who was this man.

12) 13:31 Speaking of His death and resurrection, He said the Son of Man will be glorified and the Father through Him.

AD HOC OUTLINE JOHN 1:31-2:1

1) Christ was baptized;

2) The next day: Andrew, John and Peter followed Jesus;

3) The next day: Philip and Nathaniel followed Jesus.

IN CLOSING

The day after John the Baptist baptized Jesus, Christ passed by again and John declared Him to be the Lamb of God. The Apostle John and Andrew heard him and followed Christ. They wanted to know more about Him and learn from Him. They called Him, "Rabbi."

Andrew brought his brother, Simon; Philip brought Nathaniel.

Do we, like the disciples, want to know more about Christ and do we spend time with Him to learn of Him?

Do we follow the disciples' example telling others and bringing them to meet Christ?

John 2:1-12 The Third Day And The First Miracle

In the first chapter, John described the glory of Christ's appearing and His dwelling among men. He wrote of the witness of John the Baptist and the calling of Christ's first five disciples. Christ told Nathaniel he would see greater miracles and the story is about to begin.

The first twelve verses of the second chapter of John begin and end with a picture of Christ's humanity.

1) It begins with Christ, His disciples and His mother at a wedding. There is much work to do.

2) It ends with Christ, His disciples and His mother getting away for refreshment; taking a vacation, relaxing on the beach, if you will.

Read John 2:1-12.

THE THIRD DAY

This is the third day after the last recorded event, according to the MacArthur Study Bible. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist, the third day (the next day...the next day), He called Philip and Nathaniel. The next third day (day plus two days), was the wedding at Cana.

Though John did not record the details of Christ's baptism, he did record the Father and the Holy Spirit were there giving their approval (1:32-34), as do the synoptics (Mat 3:13-17; Mar 1:9-11; Luk 3:21-22).

The synoptic gospels place Jesus in the wilderness after His Baptism (Mat 4:1; Mar 1:12; Luk 4:1). The Book of Mark uses the word "immediately." However, it is likely the chronology of the synoptics are not precise, even "immediately," as Mark was writing from conversations he had with Peter. John, on the other hand, is marking out the days as if to make the timetable clear, as the synoptics had already been written.

The third day is a significant phrase. Christ rose from the dead on the third day (Act 10:40; 1Co 15:4). Jesus foretold His resurrection to His disciples, saying He would be raised the third day (Mat 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17; Luk 9:22, 18:33, 24:6-7). When Abraham was traveling to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son, Isaac, it was a three day journey (Gen 22:4) and this event was a type of the crucifixion of Christ. There are Scriptures which mention the third day in relation to sacrifices (Lev 7:17-18, 19:6-7). It would be interesting to further study the third day in Scriptures.

THE WEDDING AT CANA

The five disciples had been with Jesus mere days before they were together at a wedding. Mary instructed the help (v5); she was likely organizing or helping with the management of the wedding. John recorded "Mary was there," but makes note Jesus and His disciples were "also invited."

Cana is to the West of the Sea of Galilee; North of Nazareth.

Two days before, Christ called Nathaniel and this wedding was in Nathaniel's home town (21:2). When Christ called John, Andrew and Peter, He was South of Nazareth, His home town. The next day, He traveled North to Galilee (1:43). He called Philip and Nathaniel on His way to Cana in Galilee. So, it appears Christ was on His way to this wedding at Cana when He called His first five disciples.

At the wedding, they ran out of wine. To this point, there is no mention in the Scriptures of Jesus performing any miracles. John said this was the first of His signs (v11). Prior to this, He may have performed miracles which were not public. Nonetheless, His mother knew He could do something about this problem, so she complained to Him. Several commentaries suggest Mary was hinting to her son this was a good time to begin His ministry. This could be the reason for Jesus' answer, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." [v4].

1) Woman: commentaries say this address is neither disrespectful nor endearing. This is the same term Jesus used to address His mother from the cross, in 19:26.

2) What to us: a rebuke for interfering between Him and the Father. In 5:19, He said He alone does what He sees His Father doing.

3) Hour not come: God alone would determine when His ministry would begin. See 17:1 where Christ said the hour had come at the end of His ministry. These words are bookends to Christ's ministry, if you will.

CHRIST'S HOUR IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1) 2:4 My hour has not yet come.

2) 7:30 they could not arrest Him because His hour had not yet come.

3) 8:20 they could not arrest Him because His hour had not yet come.

4) 12:23 Jesus told the crowd at the feast, the hour had come for the Son to be glorified by death and resurrection and the Father affirmed this with a voice from Heaven.

5) 12:27 for this purpose Christ came to this hour.

6) 13:1 Jesus knew His hour had come.

7) 17:1 the hour had come to glorify the Son that the Son might glorify the Father.

Except for Mark 14:41, the synoptic gospels do not speak directly to Christ's life as a timetable orchestrated by the Father nor His death as predetermined to a certain hour. John, alone, seems to bring out this point. Jesus said He only did what He saw the Father doing (5:19, 14:24) and in the Gospel of John is it emphasized Jesus was sent by the Father and is one with Him (5:23, 5:36-37, 6:44, 6:57, 8:16-18, 8:42, 10:36-38, 12:49, 17:21f, 20:21). The Apostle John made it clear Christ is God and the events of His life were orchestrated, or timed, because God is in full control and nothing happened to Him by chance.

DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU

After Jesus rebuked His mother for pushing Him to reveal Himself on her timetable, her response was to tell the servants to do whatever He told them (v5). This demonstrates:

1) she was rebuked, but not deterred;

2) she left the situation in Christ's hands;

3) she turned the servants over to His authority; and

4) she knew something was going to happen.

There were six stone jars available, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. According to verse 6, these jars were used for purification (cf Mat 15:1-2; Mar 7:4). Jesus told the servants to fill the jars. The servants filled the jars to the brim (v7). There was no room for Jesus to add anything else. Then Christ instructed the servants to draw some out and take it to the master of the feast (v8).

In every step, others did His bidding; Christ did not touch a thing. He created the world with the word of His mouth (Gen 1:3-31; Heb 11:3). In like manner, His first recorded miracle was spoken also, with instructions carried out by man.

The master of the feast tasted the water become wine. He did not know where it came from, but the servants knew (v9). We know two things from this:

1) The water was turned to wine; not a wine substitute. We know this because:

a) The master of the feast commended the bridegroom for saving the best wine for the last (v10).

b) This is reaffirmed in 4:46. The fact we are reminded a few chapters later affirms the water was turned to wine and not some imitation.

c) The Bible does not say the master thought it was wine; it says the water was turned to wine.

2) If wine is a bad thing, the Lord would not have turned the water into wine. We know wine, in and of itself, is not an evil because:

a) The Scriptures warn against allowing alcohol to get the best of you (Deu 32:33; Pro 20:1, 23:30-32; Isa 5:22; Eph 5:18).

b) But the Bible also says wine is a blessing (Deu 7:13; Pro 3:10; Ecc 10:19).

c) Paul instructed Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach (1Ti 5:23).

Many professing Christians have reinterpreted this miracle to be more acceptable to their bias. They claim the water was not turned to wine, but to grape juice or something similar. Some people choose not to drink because the drink makes them vulnerable to sin and others cannot drink for health reasons. The important thing is we do not use God's blessings nor our freedom in a way that would be a bad example or cause others to sin (Rom 14:20-21), but in no event do we change the interpretation of the Scriptures to satisfy the sensitivities of others.

The master of the feast commended the bridegroom for saving the best wine for the last. The general practice was to serve the best wine while everyone still had their senses. After a bit of drinking, not necessarily getting drunk, the senses were dulled and the cheaper wines could be served with little notice the quality had been reduced.

The miracle-working Christ did not produce the minimum. Even in this social gathering where poor quality would have gone unnoticed, He presented His best. The Bible tells us at creation God saw everything He had made and it was very good (Gen 1:31). So if we learn a lesson from this first recorded miracle, the lesson is: God is a God of excellence; everything He makes is good. James affirmed this when he wrote every good and perfect gift is from above (Jam 1:17).

The servants obeyed and were eyewitnesses to a miracle; Christ's first recorded miracle.

THE PURPOSE OF THE FIRST MIRACLE

This was the first of His signs, or miracles.

1) He did it at Cana of Galilee (v11).
2) He manifested His glory (v11).
3) His disciples believed in Him (v11).

His disciples believed after this one sign. Compare this to 12:37: though He had done so many signs among them, the people still did not believe in Him. Consider the significance of the disciple's belief against the unbelief of the people.

> the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me, but you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. [10:25b-27 NASB].

When they were at the wedding in Cana, Christ's ministry had not yet begun. His first act of His ministry would be to clear out the temple; a bold act indeed and it could be terrifying for the disciples. They would need to know they were following the Messiah. This miracle seems to be especially designed for them. Except for Mary and the servants who carried the water, no one else knew a miracle had taken place.

CHRIST'S HUMANITY IN REFRESH

John did not make clear whether this wedding had been one day or a full week, as was common. Nonetheless, Christ had been busy: He was baptized, He chose disciples and He turned the water to wine. His mother helped supervise the wedding event. It was time to refresh.

So Christ, His disciples and His mother went to Capernaum (v12), which is at the North end of the Sea of Galilee. It appears they took a vacation to spend a few days at the beach.

Jesus lived in Capernaum for a while, during His Galilean ministry (Mat 4:13; Luk 4:31). He performed many miracles there and condemned the city because the people would not take this to heart (Mat 11:23; Luk 10:15). He condemned several cities, but of Capernaum, He spoke of its arrogance and prophesied it would be brought down. This may indicate it was a resort town; in any event, it was an important town. It likely drew many of the rich and famous.

AD HOC OUTLINE JOHN 2:12-13

1) Down to Capernaum
2) Up to Jerusalem (coming up. . .)

IN CLOSING

This portion of the Scriptures begins and ends with Christ's humanity. One thing we learn from this is, it is good to be involved in other people's lives (rejoice with those who rejoice) and it is good to take time to refresh, but do not build a self-centered theology around these points.

We see Mary was a "take control" kind of person, but Christ was careful to respectfully seek His orders from the Father. Everything has its time because God is active in His creation and in bringing about His purposes.

Jesus' miracle was simply changing water into wine. The Bible does not say "wine-like." We do not accomplish any glory to God by toning down any portion of the Scriptures to satisfy human sensitivities.

The Bible tells us wine is good; it is a blessing from God. The Bible also tells not to be drunk on wine or spend our days drinking. If you are sensitive to alcohol; don't drink any. If you have a religious conviction against drinking; don't touch any, but in any case, do not satisfy yourself by changing what the Scriptures say; or, as in this case, minimizing the miracle Christ performed.

The Bible declares Jesus' miracle was excellent. The new wine was noticeably better than the first wine served. This was Jesus' first recorded miracle. The purpose was to declare His deity to His disciples and they believed in Him.

Christ's View Of Marriage Versus Mans' View

Changing the water into wine at the marriage in Cana was Christ's first recorded miracle and public appearance. Many commentaries note how conducting His first public appearance and first miracle at a wedding are nothing short of His endorsement of marriage. The Jamieson, Fausset and Brown commentary (JFB), as one of four points, described how Christ's mission of redemption was illustrated in His endorsement of marriage.

> As the miracle did not make bad good, but good better, so Christianity only redeems, sanctifies, and ennobles the beneficent, but abused institution of marriage. . . [JFB].

The institution of marriage has been abused since the beginning of time. In Jesus' time, the Pharisees, the leaders of the Jews, endorsed this tradition of abuse. In their defense of divorce, they claimed Moses authorized a man to put away his wife, but Christ set them straight, saying Moses allowed it only because of the hardness of their hearts. Jesus condemned divorce, calling it adultery. In both the Gospel accounts, Jesus also reaffirmed marriage is between a man and a woman and that they were put together by God (Mat 19:3-9; Mar 10:2-12).

One of the straw-man arguments supporting same-sex marriage is the long history of failure within the institution of marriage of the traditional type; as if to say it will not be abused by the same-sex type. Christian's must not fall for this argument; they must be faithful NOT to concede this battlefront because marriage between one man and one woman is given by God as a blessing and it is an institution representative of the relationship between Christ and His Church (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:22-33). The fact that fallen man has failed in marriage, is no reason to cede the institution to those who lead lives of perversion.

Christ taught that the man and the woman become one flesh, as designed by God (Mat 19:5; Mar 10:7). The New Testament writers reinforced Jesus' teaching, saying the two shall become one flesh and let the marriage bed be undefiled (Eph 5:31; Heb 13:4).

When I was young, I heard theories such that marriage is a 50/50 proposition; each spouse contributing fifty percent. Later, I heard theories proposing each party give fifty-one percent, then one hundred percent, then one hundred ten percent. Some have talked about how marriage is not for you, but is for the one you married. The premise is each spouse should wholly look to their spouse's interest, leaving their own interests behind. Some say love is about the person you love. The more love and joy you give, the more love and joy you receive. These ideas might sound all warm and good, but a closer look reveals very bad theology. These theories

express the idea your spouse, the person you love, should become the object of the marriage. They express the idea the reward for your unselfishness will become ultimate happiness for you, which makes this the goal.

How do we answer worldly wisdom? Is our goal, in marriage or any relationship, our own happiness or glory? The Bible tells us God claims the glory in marriage. In one Scripture, God tells us the purpose of marriage is so He might have Godly offspring (Mal 2:15). There are other examples, such as the Apostle Paul tells us marriage is a type of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:22-33). We are called to treat this relationship as sacred. If the goal is our happiness, we will lose sight of our mission and our relationship with God. The goal for the Christian is to please God in everything we do (Col 3:17).

> "the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant, but not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." [Mal 2:14b-16 NASB].

Does this passage mean a marriage without children is not blessed by or ordained by God? No. Some people are unable to have children and, this too, is from God. If you have chosen not to have children, this is between you and God, but you must understand God knows your heart and you do not (Jer 17:9). Nonetheless, in this Scripture, God is talking about the purpose of the institution of marriage. What this Scripture does affirm is:

1) Marriage is for God's glory;

2) Marriage is His idea and His creation;

3) God has blessed the institution of marriage and the union of husband and wife;

4) For these reasons, we are to guard against becoming unfaithful.

So, when you boil all this down, the happiness of our spouse is not the purpose of our marriage. The purpose of our marriage is to give glory to God.

- The reason we stay faithful to our spouse and seek their happiness is to give glory to God.
- The reason we have children and teach them the ways of the Lord is to give glory and pleasure to God.
- The reason we stand boldly for the institution of marriage is to give glory to God.

Using the tools of worldly wisdom, we can set up our spouse to become our idol. If we get off track in this matter, we can be deceived that God is glorified in our quest for ultimate happiness, which some blasphemously teach.

There was a man who fell into this trap, but after struggling to determine the purpose of life amid the seeming vanity of it all, Solomon concluded the end of the matter and the duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments (Ecc 12:13). We must keep our focus on glorifying God in our marriage and in every aspect of our life (Col 3:17).

And taking from the example of Christ in the miracle at Cana: everything He does is very good, excellent and perfect. Our duty as God's creation is to imitate Him (Gen 1:26-27). Thus, we should heed the Apostle Paul's exhortation: in everything we do to do it all for the glory of God (1Co 10:31). There is no exception: in everything we do, including our marriage, we imitate Christ's excellence for the glory of God.

John 2:13-22 Jesus' Zeal For His Father's Holy Name

After His miracle at the wedding, convincing His new disciples He is the Son of God and refreshing themselves at the beach, Jesus' ministry was about to begin. The first thing He did was clean up His Father's name and reputation.

Read John 2:13-22.

CHRIST'S MINISTRY BEGAN AND ENDED AT PASSOVER

The Passover was a celebration of the time God set apart the people of Israel from the people of Egypt. By the blood of the sacrificial lamb, the Israelites were protected from death when the Angel of God passed over, but of the Egyptians, the eldest son died in every household.

Using the Apostle John's timeline, Christ's first public act of ministry was at the Passover. His ministry began at the Passover, clearing the temple. His ministry ended at another Passover, and this, after He had cleared the temple again (Mat 21:12-13; Mar 11:15-17; Luk 19:45-46).

It is significant Christ's ministry began and ended at the Passover. The Passover lamb, by whose blood the inhabitants of the home were spared in ancient Egypt, was a substitutionary sacrifice for their sin. This was a type or precursor of the Lamb to come. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, died at the Passover to be the permanent sacrifice for sin, the final passover Lamb, to spare the lives of those who believe.

Some came to the Passover celebration in Jerusalem to worship God. Some came to make a show of religion. While others came to make a profit and network their enterprise. Christ's zeal for the holiness of His Father's name, brought forth His anger against those who were defiling the temple for profit. He cleared the temple of commerce.

If you want to talk about the love of God: this event sets forth the absolute love the Son has toward the Father, so that, He would clear His temple from the corruption of sin, to keep it holy. This was Jesus' first love and His love for the Father revealed His wrath toward man. Remember this, when you speak of the love of Christ. God's love is subject to His holiness.

CLEARING THE TEMPLE

Malachi prophesied Christ would come, clear the temple and would set about disciplining the priests who served there (Mal 3:1-3). While Jesus walked this earth, His greatest rebukes and judgments were against the scribes, the Levites, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They held the office

of service between God and man, but they preferred to serve themselves. Therefore, they did not take His discipline well and set about to kill Him.

The prophecy of Malachi speaks of His first and second coming, which can be confused to be one event; but this was common among Old Testament prophecies. The end of verse 3 says Christ will one day accomplish this discipline and the Levites will serve Him and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord (Mal 3:3b). This will be at the Second Coming; so this portion of the prophecy has yet to be accomplished. While Christ was on this earth, the refining began and one day, it will be completed.

SIDENOTE: this is further evidence God is not done with, nor has He abandoned, the nation of Israel.

We are God's temple; corporately as the Church and individually (1Co 3:16; 6:19; Heb 3:6). Peter wrote judgment begins at the house of God (1Pe 4:17). God seeks to clear His temple of anything which does not reflect His glory. The sufferings and persecutions God brings into our lives are meant to sanctify our walk; to make us more like Christ; to clear our lives of anything which does not reflect His glory (cf 15:1-6, Rom 8:29). God is jealous of His glory (Isa 42:8).

> For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another. [Isa 48:11 NASB].

In this situation at the temple, God's glory was being marred by the wholesale business enterprises being conducted in His house of worship. The purpose of the temple was for worship; it was to be a holy place.

To be sure, this enterprise offered a needed service. The animals were supplied for a convenience so the people did not have to travel to Jerusalem with the burden of herding their animal sacrifices. The money-changers were there for converting the common Roman coins into Jewish money, which was required by Old Testament Law (Exo 30:13, 38:26; cf Mat 17:24-27).

The problem was they were conducting business in the temple courts. The merchants who exercised their trade within the temple had the sanction of the priests; they had the prime location. This put their enterprise at a great advantage. However, the noise, the smells and doing business within the church was a distraction from the worship of God.

Many people go to church to network their business. This is a sin much like what the businessmen were doing when Jesus chased them out. The purpose of church is to worship God (4:23; Psa 34:3), encourage believers in the faith (Eph 4:15-16; Heb 10:24-25) and minister the Gospel to the lost

(Mat 28:19-20; Luk 24:47). We corrupt the Gospel when we use the church to seek personal gain or personal glory. Stop. Do your business outside the church walls. The purpose of the church is to exalt and glorify God.

> Is it not written, "MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS"? but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN. [Mar 11:17 NASB].

The whip Jesus used could have been fabricated from rushes and ropes used for bedding and tying the oxen and sheep. So, materials were close at hand, but, as Hugo Grotius noted, it was not the whip that drove out the sellers.

> Not by this slender whip, but by divine majesty was the ejection accomplished, the whip being, but a sign of the scourge of divine anger. [JFB citing Hugo Grotius (1583-1645)].

When Christ comes again to reign, there will be no traders in the temple.

> And the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the bowls before the altar. Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a [merchant] in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day. [Zec 14:20b-21 NASB]

ZEAL FOR HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

When Christ Jesus was twelve years old, He went with His parents to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. When the feast was over, He stayed behind, but His parents did not know this. When they discovered He was not in the group returning home, His parents returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. After three days they found Him in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking them questions. Everyone was amazed at His understanding, but His parents wanted an explanation for His actions. Jesus replied, "Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" [Luk 2:49b NASB].

The author of the Book of Hebrews wrote, "Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant. . .but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house" [Heb 3:5a,6a NASB]. This explains His zeal: as a Son, He had a vested interest in His Father's house. Christ Jesus is the Son of God. When He was on the earth, His love was for the house of His Father. The disciples remembered it was written, "Zeal for Your house has consumed me."

The rest of this verse is, "and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me." [Psa 69:9 NASB]. Among the things the incarnate

Christ accomplished was to reveal the Father and defend His honor, if you will. After driving out the traders, the contempt the Jews had shown toward God the Father now fell upon the Son and they sought to kill Him. He bore the reproaches of those who did not obey God.

The Jews professed a high regard for the Father, but it was they who treated the temple with contempt by trading for profit in God's house; the place of worship. They brought God down to their own level, treating His honor with contempt. Isaiah said they honored God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him (Isa 29:13).

> Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar!. . .For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations. [Mal 1:10a,11a NASB].

Christ's zeal was for the worship and honor of the Father. Do we hold God in high regard? Do we have an attitude of worship in the house of God or do we seek our own glory, social status and maybe a little business?

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

The temple of Solomon was built on the top of Mount Moriah (2Ch 3:1). This is where God provided the substitute ram for Abraham's sacrifice, in place of his son, Isaac (Gen 22:1-19).

When Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jerusalem and carried away the citizens as captive, he destroyed this temple (2Ki 25; 2Ch 36). Four hundred years before the Jews would return to Jerusalem, Isaiah prophesied by name, King Cyrus, who would allow a remnant to return and rebuild the temple (Isa 44:28, 45:1; Ezra 1; cf 2Ch 36:22-23). The rebuilt temple was not magnificent like the one built by Solomon, but the people rejoiced to have a temple again (Ezr 3:12).

This was the temple where the Jews were worshipping when Herod became king in Jerusalem. Herod was a builder of grand buildings and it was his desire to rebuild the temple and make it glorious. He convinced the Jews it would be a glorious building and rebuilt the temple with their permission. The approximate dates of construction were 19BC to 27AD. According to some historians, it was not complete when Christ was teaching in it. In this coming passage, the claim of the Jews was it took forty-six years to build the temple, but it was likely still under construction.

The temple was a relatively new structure when Christ was on the earth. And it was an impressive structure which explains why the disciples marveled at its construction (Mat 24:1; Mar 13:1; Luk 21:5).

The temple in Jerusalem was the central social structure for the people of Israel; both for worship and for community. The Biblical intent of the temple was to direct man toward God and provide a place of worship, but the temple had become the idol or the object of worship; so much so that men would swear by it, or invoke the temple in their vows (Mat 23:16-21). Professing faith in God, they profaned Him in their use of the temple (Mal 1:6-14).

DESTROY THIS TEMPLE

The Apostle John commented twice in this portion of Scripture, verses 13 to 22, "the disciples remembered." This whole episode at the temple may have been a very fearful adventure. They believed the Messiah was going to set up His rule in Jerusalem, but, here they were with Christ, confronting the very authorities they believed would serve the Messiah. These authorities challenged and reproached Him. After Christ died and rose again, all these things became more clear, as the disciples remembered.

Beginning with Moses confronting Pharaoh and up through the prophets of the Old Testament, God gave signs to His mouthpieces to prove their authority was from Him. After Jesus was successful in expelling the traders from the temple, the Jews wanted a sign or a miracle as proof of His authority (4:48; 6:30). However, no proof would satisfy, because man prefers preconceived ideas or bias rather than solid evidence from God. The Apostle John commented in another passage how, after Christ had done many marvelous signs in their presence, they still would not believe (12:37).

The Jews had the authority to arrest Jesus, but He cleared the temple and they were powerless to stop Him. They were unable to enforce their authority and were consigned to questioning His authority. They did not understand why they were powerless against Him. Had they fully understood to whom they were speaking, they would have been afraid. Rather than let their fear get the best of them, they scoffed.

Christ's answer to this request for authority was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." [v19 NASB]. Here we see Christ used His first act of ministry to proclaim His coming death and resurrection and He foretold who would kill Him. John explained in his commentary in verses 21 and 22, when Christ said He would raise up this temple, He was speaking of His body and His authority to rise from the dead.

At another time, Christ explained He laid His life down of His own accord and He had the authority to raise it up again (10:18). What greater miracle could Christ give to demonstrate His authority than to rise from the dead?

Missing the point of the three days, during the trial and crucifixion of Christ, the Jews used His claim to rebuild the temple against Him, ignorant of what was about to happen (Mat 26:61, 27:40; Mar 14:58, 15:29). They gave no thought to the significance of three days in the Old Testament and no thought to the sign of Jonah (Jon 1:17; cf Mat 12:38-40).

CHRIST'S MINISTRY BEGAN AND ENDED WITH CLEARING THE TEMPLE

The first time Jesus cleared the temple was soon after His first miracle of turning the water into wine at the wedding in Cana. He was at the temple in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. The last time He cleared the temple was just after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This was also during the celebration of the Passover and is recorded in Matthew 21:1-13. Soon after this last purging, He was arrested and crucified. Essentially, Christ began and ended His ministry clearing the temple, honoring His Father.

God desires holiness and cannot tolerate sin. The temple was God's representative dwelling on earth. Therefore, Christ had a zeal for God's temple and desired it to be holy. He made the temple holy in preparation for His ministry and, later, He made it holy in preparation for His sacrifice.

Jesus used this opportunity, at the start of His ministry, to prophecy of His death and resurrection; the reason He had come. When He arose from the grave, His disciples remembered He said this.

IN CLOSING

The Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jesus went up to celebrate with them. However, when He came to the temple, He found a large commotion, a distraction from the worship, as people were buying and selling in the temple. He made a whip and drove the sellers and the cattle out of the temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers. Zeal for the holiness of His Father's house had consumed Him as was prophesied in Scripture. His disciples remembered this.

Christ sanctified the temple by clearing out sinners who were defaming God. In the same way, He takes a sinner and sanctifies him. He drives out the sin and corruption in a believer's life. He sets him apart from the world and makes him holy.

It is the Holy Spirit who makes us born again so we can receive Christ (3:3-8). When we receive Christ, He makes us a new creation (2Co 5:17). The Father desires to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29). This is why He disciplines us (Heb 12:3-11). So, just as the temple was set apart

and declared holy, a child of God is set apart and declared holy. What belongs to God is holy.

> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." [1Pe 1:14-16 NASB].

We must be careful not to defame God's house by conducting business or networking at church. We come to church to worship God, not to give glory nor advantage to ourselves.

If you want to talk about the love of God: Jesus' act of clearing the temple sets forth the absolute love the Son has toward the Father, so that, He would clear His temple from the corruption of sin, to keep it holy. This is Jesus' first love and His love for the Father revealed His wrath toward man. Remember this, when you speak of the love of Christ. DO NOT BE DECEIVED by the mantra, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." And don't think it is enough to believe "with all my heart." If you are not living an obedient life in Christ, you REMAIN under God's wrath (3:36). Jesus said you are condemned already (3:18). Abide in Christ: this is the work of God (15:1-6; 6:29). Those who endure to the end will celebrate the love of Christ (Mat 24:13).

John 2:23-3:3 Professing Faith Is Not Being Born Again

Many are the professing Christians who know the plan of salvation according to the modern American gospel. They may even appear to love the people in their church, and they feel like they love Jesus with all their heart, but few believe unto salvation. In this passage, we are given a couple reasons why we should be sober and examine whether we truly believe or whether we are just doing church.

Read John 2:23-25 and 3:1-3.

MANY BELIEVED

The Apostle John wrote many believed in Christ when they saw the signs He was doing (v23). However, Christ's reluctance to rely upon them indicates they were not truly saved. In chapters 6 and 8, Jesus will tell the crowds of believers, they are not saved.

Mere belief does not bring salvation. Believing Jesus came to earth and that He died for mans' sin is not a saving faith, even believing this with all your heart. A profession of faith in Christ does not confirm salvation. I will say it again: A profession of faith in Christ does not confirm salvation.

The Apostle James wrote the demons believe and tremble (Jam 2:19). The Gospels record demons declaring Jesus is the Son of God (Mat 8:29; Mar 1:24, 5:7; Luk 4:34). Demons cannot be saved, yet they know without a doubt and with all their heart that Jesus is the Son of God. Therefore, merely knowing the facts, even holding to them quite strongly, cannot equate with a saving faith.

These people saw the signs and miracles which Christ performed and they believed He was the Messiah. Today, many people read the Bible, they hear sermons, and they believe Jesus Christ is the Messiah. They believe He came to earth, they believe He died for our sins and they believe He rose again. They believe all this to be true, and they even believe they believe unto salvation, but they are not saved.

There is more to being saved than tipping your hat toward God or stating a conviction. Even the profession "Jesus is my Lord and Savior" does not make it so. Many claim Jesus is Lord, but continue on in their sin; they do not live as slaves to Christ, they do not take instruction from His Word. If we cling to knowledge and professions, but bear no fruit, we are not saved.

Many people say, "God knows my heart," as a justification for remaining in their sin. It is true, God knows our hearts. He knows every heart, all the time. John said He did not entrust Himself to them because He knew them

(v24). He knew they loved their sin. In another passage, Christ said he could not accept the praise of man because He knew man.

> I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. [5:41-42 NASB].

If we claim to know our hearts, we deceive ourselves; for the Bible tells us our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, corrupt and incurable. We cannot know what is in it, except to know we lie to ourselves and our hearts are not trustworthy.

> The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. [Jer 17:9-10 NASB].

Many make their profession based upon how they think they feel. They are deceived by their hearts. How we feel about God or how we feel about our faith cannot save us. Here are some examples of Christ separating professing believers from true believers:

- 5:39-40 Christ challenged the Jews, saying they search the Scriptures thinking in them they find life. These were men who studied the Scriptures. Ironically, they refused to receive the truth of Christ from the Scriptures. Jesus told them they were not saved. Many who study the Scriptures are not saved. We need to be in the Word to learn of Christ, but merely being in the Word is no assurance of salvation.
- 5:44 The Jews claimed to serve God. Jesus said they could not believe the truth because they were seeking the praise of their peers rather than God's glory. Jesus asked them, "how can you be saved?"
- 6:26-29 Christ claimed the crowd of believers were following Him because He had given them food. They were not looking to follow Christ; they were looking for physical satisfaction; they were looking to add Christ to their lives. He told them they were not saved, because it was the work of God that they believe. In essence, He told these believers, they did not believe.
- 6:64 When Christ said He was the Bread of Life, many who believed in Him had a difficult time accepting what He said, but Jesus knew from the start those who would not believe and He told them they did not believe.

- 8:31-59 When Christ was speaking to His believers about truth, they had a difficult time accepting His teaching. He told these believers they could not believe because they served their father, the devil.
- 10:26-27 Jesus told skeptical Jews they could not believe because they were not of His sheep.

Never once did Christ proclaim, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." If ever there was a time the world could have been won to Christ, it was while He was on the Earth, dwelling among man, but it did not happen. Instead, Christ told the people they were not saved, even those who thought they believed. This was a call to repentance, but only His sheep would hear His voice.

Do you hear Christ's voice? Christ knows what is in man and He knows what is in you. Our assurance of salvation cannot be tested by what we feel. We must test ourselves according to the Scriptures.

> Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? [2Co 13:5 NASB].

NIGHT SCHOOL FOR NICODEMUS

Let us look at another believer: Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews (v1) and a teacher of the Law (v10); he was a member of the Sanhedrin (7:50). People called him "Rabbi." In his meeting with Christ, he called Jesus "Rabbi." He knew Jesus to be a teacher, but it is possible he used the term as flummery to gain a positive audience with Christ. After all, Jesus was not known to have pleasant conversations with religious leaders.

Nicodemus is spoken of three times in the Gospel of John.

1) The first time, in this chapter, having a conversation with Jesus;
2) the second time, he brought up a question of law to stall those who were plotting Christ's arrest (7:50); and
3) the third time, he collected the body of Jesus and prepared it for burial (19:39).

In this instance, he came to Jesus by night (v2). Here is how we find Nicodemus: he may have believed Christ had come from God and may have wanted confirmation of this. However, it appears he was afraid his association might become known and cost him his position of authority. So he visited at night.

As the Apostle John later wrote, "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." [12:42-43 NASB]. Nicodemus was among these of whom John wrote.

SIDENOTE: Can our quest for Christ be pursued in secret, as Nicodemus' was? or is it open and notorious? The Bible says we cannot keep our faith secret and know we are saved.

> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. [Psa 118:8 NASB, ESV].
>
> 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? [5:44 NASB].

Why did he come to meet Jesus?

1) Did he have questions of faith? Was it to ask Him, like the rich young ruler, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" [Mat 19:16 NASB].

2) Or was he concerned what Jesus did and said when He cleared the temple? Was he concerned how this looked to others?

3) Or did he simply want clarification of Christ's commission from God? Did he want to confirm Christ truly was the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15?

4) All of the above?

Nicodemus began the conversation, "we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." [v2b].

1) "We know. . . " Meaning he is not alone in this analysis. There were other Pharisees who considered Christ had come from God.

2) "… You are a teacher come from God." He may have been looking for Christ's confirmation of this.

3) "… for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." He knew Christ was from God, but he may not have been certain Christ was the Messiah.

He commended Christ for having won the favor of himself and many of the Jewish leaders. They believed Christ was a teacher come from God. This was likely the direction he intended this conversation would go. Although

Nicodemus showered Christ with praise, Jesus did not commit Himself to the man.

Jesus gave an unexpected response to Nicodemus' flowery introduction. Just as Christ often warned the crowd of believers they were not saved, He went directly to what Nicodemus needed most. He said a man must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. In other words, He told him his religion had failed and he was not saved.

YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Nicodemus was a religious man. He studied the Scriptures and he was a faithful, practicing Jew whose hope was in his own righteousness. Jesus told him, he was not saved; he needed to be born again.

Like Nicodemus, there are many in search of religion and learning; and they may be very successful at it and may even believe they have found eternal life, but they are not following Christ and they are not saved.

Christ prefaced His answer with "Truly, truly" meaning "you need to pay close attention to this." Three times Christ used "Truly, truly" or "Verily, verily" while talking with Nicodemus:

1) Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. [v3 NASB, ESV].

2) Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. [v5 NASB].

3) Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. [v11 NASB]

Nicodemus had no idea what this meant, to be born again. He was offended at this because he studied the Scriptures, he practiced the religion and obeyed all the rules. He was satisfied with his own righteousness, but Jesus said he needed something else; something out of his control. He may also have been offended, in that, he had opened the conversation by commending Jesus, but Jesus did not commend his good efforts at all. Instead, Jesus said he must be born again. This need to be born again was offensive to him.

Being born again is a new birth. It is not a physical birth; it is a spiritual birth. It is God's doing. Just as our being born into this world is God's doing, so too, being born again spiritually is God's doing. In the first chapter of John we read we receive this by the will of God rather than by our own will.

> 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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. [1:12-13 NASB].

The saved, the born again, are chosen by God. The Apostle Paul wrote God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world and He chose us according to His purposes (Eph 1:4-11). The psalmist wrote:

> How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near to You to dwell in Your courts. [Psa 65:4a].

Jesus said no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him (6:44). The Apostle Paul wrote we are saved by grace through faith; it is the gift of God and not accomplished by anything we do, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9). If we are born again, this is God's doing.

IN CLOSING

Many believed in Christ when they saw the signs He was doing, but they were not saved. There are several other Scriptures which speak about people believing in Christ, but not being saved. This gives us something to think about. Many people today believe they are saved, but they are not. Jesus warned about this, "Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord." [Mat 7:21 NASB]. The Apostle Paul warned us to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith (2Co 13:5).

Salvation is not head knowledge nor is it received by attesting to facts, nor by professing Christ is Lord. Demons have seen God and they believe, they declare His authority, but they are not saved. Jesus said we must be born again. To be born again means we are a new creation and this is the work of God. To be born again means God has regenerated us. He has taken away our desire to sin and to please the world, and we are walking in newness of life.

John 3:3-10 Salvation Is The Work Of The Spirit

Nicodemus began the conversation with affirmation and praise to Christ. Christ did not respond in kind, but got right to the root: the need of the man to be saved from sin. This was upsetting for Nicodemus. In essence, Jesus told him his whole understanding of salvation was wrong. He told him he was not saved. Let us look at the foundation Jesus laid.

Read John 3:3-10.

NICODEMUS WAS OFFENDED BY JESUS' WORDS

The idea of being born again, even the terminology, was offensive to Nicodemus. This is offensive to so many professing Christians, as well.

If salvation was the work of God and was not dependent upon the works of man, this would contradict what Nicodemus had spent a lifetime learning, practicing and teaching. He lived by the Law and he viewed salvation as credited to him for his works. So, he responded with a mocking question about entering again his mother's womb.

Jesus' answer to Nicodemus' sarcasm was to reveal the work of the Holy Spirit and the works by God which cannot be seen. He answered Nicodemus with four points; four clauses which describe the process of regeneration, in verses 5 to 8.

1) Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [v5 ESV].
2) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [v6 ESV].
3) Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' [v7 ESV].
4) The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. [v8 ESV].

In the first clause, Jesus said:

> **unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. [v5b NASB].**

The water represents cleansing; the Word of God cleanses. The Spirit of God regenerates. We must be regenerated by the Spirit and cleansed by the Word to be saved.

> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. [15:3 NASB].

> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. [Tit 3:5 NASB].

"Not because of works done by us in righteousness." [Tit 3:5 ESV]. Right there, the Bible tells us if we depend upon our works, we cannot be saved. We cannot be saved by our works, because our works are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). The Jew saw salvation as given to those born of Abraham who followed the Law. They trusted in their works, which could not save them. Christ told Nicodemus, salvation is dependent upon the Spirit and we cannot see His works (3:8).

Nicodemus knew the writings of the prophets and he should have understood what Jesus was telling him, because the Old Testament prophets attested to salvation through the work of the Spirit. The old covenant called man to obedience, but testified salvation was the work of God.

> I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me. [Jer 33:8a].

> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. [Eze 36:25-27 NASB].

In the second clause, Jesus said:

> **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [v6 NASB].**

The Apostle Paul wrote flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable (1Co 15:50). In other words, the flesh is unclean and cannot produce life.

> Who can make the clean out of the unclean? [Job 14:4a NASB].

The life of the flesh and the Holy Spirit are incompatible (Rom 8:6-8). They cannot live together. God hates sin and will not live with it. As Paul explained in Romans chapter 7, the way of the flesh is corrupted by sinful passions which lead to death, but the way of the Spirit is life. Therefore, the heart of man has to be changed to be born of the Spirit.

Romans chapter 8 says the mind of those who live by the flesh is set upon the flesh, but those who live by the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Those who live by the Spirit have been born again and they no longer seek corruption. They are free from the bondage to decay.

> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. [6:63a NASB].
>
> No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [1Jo 3:9 NASB].

In the third clause, Jesus said:

> **Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' [v7 NASB].**
>
> Very often, in present-day preaching, this word "must" is misinterpreted. It should be clearly understood that, in harmony with the entire context, it does not refer to the realm of moral duty, but to that of divine decree. When Jesus says, "You must be born again," He does not mean, "By all means see to it that you are born again." On the contrary, He means, "Something has to happen to you: the Holy Spirit must plant in your hearts the life from above." [WH vol 1, pg 134].

Just as a person can do nothing about his own birth, this new birth, or being born again, is out of a man's control.

> 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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. [1:12-13 NASB].
>
> No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. [6:44a NASB].
>
> according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. [1Pe 1:3b NASB].

Those who believe they can help in their salvation by meeting God half-way or they believe their freewill contributed to their salvation, do not understand. Romans 5:6 tells us Christ died for us when we were helpless. We could do nothing for ourselves. The Bible is clear, it is God who chooses; it is God who draws; it is God who regenerates; it is God who saves.

When Jesus told His listener not to be amazed, this was a rebuke. For Nicodemus knew the words of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and the other prophets where God promised to soften the hardened heart and plant His Word within His people. This teacher knew the Scriptures and should have understood this. He could not perceive this because his preconceived bias was that salvation was through mans' effort. Jesus told Him to understand it is the work of God.

SIDENOTE: If you are saved, you are born again. The old life is gone. This doesn't mean you have lost your sin nature, but it does mean you have lost your desire to follow your sin nature. If you are saved, you do not need a recovery group, you only need the Word. Recovery groups are for people who want to cling to their sin or they want to define themselves by their sin. Recovery groups are for people who are not saved, but prefer to deceive themselves they are on their way to Heaven, facilitated by their works.

In the fourth clause, Jesus said:

> **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. [v8 NASB].**

To be born again is to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We are made new; our desire is no longer for this world, but for God's kingdom. The Apostle Paul wrote if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old life is gone; it is replaced by the new (2Co 5:17).

> Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [Rom 6:4 NASB].

The new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit; we are born again by the will of God, not by the will of man (1:13). He will accomplish His work in mans' lives and we can see the fruit of it.

> The great King, immortal, invisible, the Divine person, called the Holy Spirit: it is He that stimulates the soul, or

> else it would lie dead forever; it is He that makes it tender, or else it would never feel; it is He that imparts power to the Word preached, or else it could never reach further than the ear; it is He who breaks the heart, it is He who makes it whole; He, from first to last, is the great worker of Salvation in us, just as Jesus Christ was the author of Salvation for us. [Charles Spurgeon].

The four clauses or the four-part answer of Christ can be synopsed into one statement: "Man cannot be saved by his own efforts, it is solely the work of God." This was opposite to the teachings of the Jews. Their teachings were based upon a salvation by man's effort. The Pharisees taught man must keep the Law to be saved (Exo 12:48; Neh 10:28; Isa 56:3). They applied the Old Testament Scriptures in error (Mat 23:15).

Having tried to keep the Law, Nicodemus knew he was unable, but his bias would not admit this. Nonetheless, he should have understood when Jesus said this was the work of the Spirit, but the years of works teaching and practicing rule upon rule blinded him to the truth and he was not honest with himself.

Isaiah said the Messiah would become a "a rock to stumble over." [Isa 8:14]. And Paul said the Jews would not receive God's teaching by faith because they pursued salvation based upon works (Rom 9:32-33). Peter wrote of those who reject the living stone, "they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed." [1Pe 2:8b NASB].

The truth is hidden from those who do not believe, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart and repent and God would heal them (12:40; cf Isa 6:10; Mat 13:13-15; Luk 8:10). This is why Jesus called the Jewish leaders the blind leading the blind, because they were not of the Father (Mat 15:13-14); they were not of His sheep (10:26). They believed themselves wise, but they could not see.

STUMBLING OVER JESUS' TEACHING

Nicodemus was still offended and questioned the possibility of Christ's teaching (v9). All his life, he had done what he thought was good works; works which secured his salvation. He had done everything according to the letter of the Law. Now, Jesus told him everything he was doing, and teaching others to do, was wrong. Christ told him he was not saved and he must start over. This was not at all what he had come to discuss and this upset him greatly.

Here is the problem: Nicodemus knew the Law and the Prophets and committed these to memory. He knew God's Word, but did not understand the way of salvation. So, the Messiah rebuked him (v10). Christ had made several references to what was written by Ezekiel, but they were lost on Nicodemus.

- When Nicodemus first resisted, Christ's rebuke was "Do not marvel." [v7].
- The second time, Christ's reproach was more severe: "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?" [v10b].

Let us review and compare the four clauses we previously examined with the writings of the Prophet Ezekiel.

1) unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [v5b NASB].

    a) I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean. [Eze 36:25a NASB].

2) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [v6 NASB].

    a) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. [Eze 36:26a NASB].

3) Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' [v7 NASB].

    a) The story of the Prophet Ezekiel in the Valley of Dry Bones: "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'" [Eze 37:5-6 NASB].

4) 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. [v8 NASB].

    a) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. [Eze 36:27 NASB].

    b) Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life."'" [Eze 37:9b NASB].

Ezekiel prophesied God would bring new birth to His people. This and other words of the Law and the Prophets should also have come to Nicodemus' mind. For example, Moses wrote, "the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live." [Deu 30:6 NASB]. For even Moses spoke of the turning of a man's heart as the work of God.

Nicodemus and the Jews had their focus on the Law. They did not understand God's promises to make them new; to make them born again. They did not understand the Law revealed mans' sin and the sacrifices were pointing to God's provision of a Redeemer. They considered salvation to be from the works of man rather than the work of God.

Keeping the Law is impossible for man, but the Pharisees had deceived themselves by adding rule upon rule. Rather than repent and seek God, they built a religion based upon a rigid earning of salvation by man's works. And they deluded themselves to believe they kept all these rules.

> For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. [Rom 10:3-4 ESV].

Nicodemus was likely looking to Christ to seek encouragement or affirmation in his keeping of the Law. When Christ turned everything on its head, explaining how salvation is from above and not from the will of man. The light bulb should have come on, but it is hard for man to unlearn what he has been taught from his early years. When confronted with his lack of understanding, Nicodemus said no more, at least as recorded in John chapter 3.

Though Nicodemus sought Christ's wisdom, by his questions he revealed he was not ready to accept His teaching of salvation. Chapter 1 of the Gospel of John says He came to His own and His own did not receive Him (1:11). Now, in chapter 3, Christ said to Nicodemus, "you do not receive our testimony." [3:11 ESV]. Although Nicodemus sought out Christ as one having authority, he could not accept what Jesus taught him.

IN CLOSING

Nicodemus began the conversation with a complimentary greeting. Jesus returned the greeting by telling him he was not saved. Jesus said unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. To be born again is to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It is the work of God. Just as you

had no part in being born into this world, you have no part in being born again into God's kingdom. It is the work of the Spirit. We do not know how the Spirit works, but we see His fruit as He changes people and draws them to Christ.

Nicodemus was a teacher of the Law. He stumbled over these things because, rather than recognize man was unable to keep the Law and needed to come to God in repentance, the Jews built more laws upon more laws and strived to keep every one of them. They prided themselves in doing so and were blind to the fact they utterly failed.

Like the Pharisees, we can get caught up into thinking it is important we have a Christian appearance, while we neglect to be in the Word, growing in the Lord and fellowshipping with Him. The Word sanctifies or cleanses us (15:3; 17:17). This is the water of verse 5. Unless we are regenerated by the Spirit and cleansed by the Word, we are not saved. The message of the cross of Christ is that we must repent and follow Him.

SIDENOTE: Jesus said about the Spirit, "You hear the sound." When the Holy Spirit indwells in us, we no longer have a "private relationship" between us and God. Jesus said we do not hide the candle under a bushel and we are a city upon a hill. If we are of the Holy Spirit, we are the light of the world (Mat 5:14-16) and our public confession will be Jesus Christ is Lord (Rom 10:9-10). If we think our faith or our salvation is a private matter, if no one can hear the sound of our salvation, we are most likely not saved.

John 3:11-15 Heavenly Revelation Is God Died For Man

In the second verse of this chapter, Nicodemus began the conversation with, "We know," referring to his and his colleague's conviction Christ was a prophet from God. After Jesus confronted Nicodemus with his error, He supported His argument with "We speak. . .We know." [v11]. He was referring to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Mans' knowledge and authority does not hold a candle to God's.

Read John 3:11-15

Nicodemus listened to Christ's words as having the authority of a prophet, but he did not ask whether Christ was The Prophet (Deu 18:15). Jesus answered the question Nicodemus did not ask: He is the Messiah and He is God. Christ revealed His authority to be one with the Father.

EARTHLY THINGS VS ETERNAL

Up to this point, Jesus had explained the earthly thing: the way of salvation is to be born again. Regeneration is by God's will and by His Spirit. Therefore, it is error to believe man can be saved by obeying the Law.

What are the heavenly things Jesus revealed in this conversation?

1) v13: The Son of God came down from heaven. In times of old, God sent prophets to reveal Himself and call people to worship Him. Moses prophesied God would send the Prophet or the Messiah and warned man to listen and obey Him (Deu 18:15). For who can proclaim the glories of the eternal God, but the Christ who came down from Heaven.

2) v14-15: The Messiah came to die to redeem those who believe to eternal life.

3) v16: The Messiah would not come just for the Jew, but for the whole world.

4) v17: The Messiah would not come at this time to bring condemnation or judgment upon the nations as was believed by the Jews.

5) v18: Those who believe God sent the Son of God to die for their sins will not be condemned, but those who disbelieve are condemned already. Or, as John the Baptist said in verse 36, "they remain under God's wrath."

The Pharisees studied the Scriptures, but they held to their own tradition rather than seek God. They claimed to seek God, but they had made Him in their own image; an image which favored their bias. Jesus explained to Nicodemus He, the Messiah, did not come to raise up Israel and condemn the world. This was the false belief of the Jew. The truth, the heavenly revelation is that He came to die for the sins of those who believe; Jew and Gentile.

The modern American gospel has remade God according to the bias of man seeking a loving God, who abolishes all judgment on their behalf. So, in their claim to study the Word, they celebrate promises taken out of context, they cherish the audible voice of Jesus and they make claims of revealed glories from God. These glorious treasures they proclaim celebrate man and contradict the plain meaning of Scripture. They do not understand the earthly things explained in the Word, but cling to the heavenly things they invented. There will be a judgment.

THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP

In addition to this passage, the Apostle John recorded two other times Christ referred to His impending death as being lifted up.

1) When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. [8:28 NASB].

2) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. [12:32 NASB].

On the one hand, the term lifted up described the type of death, which was by crucifixion. On the other hand, the term lifted up referred to His death being a public display.

The serpent in the wilderness lifted up by Moses, described in this passage (v14), was the bronze snake of Numbers 21:1-9. This description is a picture of how Christ would bring salvation by His death on the cross. Just as those who looked upon the snake on the cross were healed, those who look to Christ's work on the cross and believe will be saved.

In the account of the bronze snake, the people of Israel were grumbling against God and Moses in the wilderness. God had just given them a tremendous victory over the King of Arad. Yet, instead of rejoicing, they began to complain, even calling the miraculous food God provided in the desert "worthless food." So God sent fiery snakes among the people and many died.

When they repented, God told Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." [Num 21:8 ESV]. Those who looked to the cross were delivered from death. This was a type and a forerunner of the Cross of Christ. Jesus said, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life." [6:40a NASB].

The snake on the cross had no power to deliver from sin and death. It was a representation or type of Christ, who was to come. Christ, on the other hand, does have the power to deliver man from sin and death.

Here are some similarities between Numbers 21 and John 3:

1) In both cases death was threatened as punishment for sin.
2) In both cases it is God Himself who, in His sovereign grace, provided a remedy.
3) In both cases this remedy consisted of something or someone being lifted up on a cross, in public view.
4) In both cases those who, with a believing heart, look to the one lifted up are saved.

[Numbered points from WH vol 1, pg 138].

Christ was lifted up in public view, but many will look and refuse to believe. Many will think they believe, but will not follow and obey. Few will look, believe and obey. So, to restate Christ's words (v14): "The Son of Man must be lifted up in public view so that those who look and believe will have eternal life."

Christ here says "must"; He must be lifted up. This "must" means the time, the place and the means have been predetermined by God the Father. As Paul wrote "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son." [Gal 4:4a NASB]. And, "at the right time Christ died for the ungodly." [Rom 5:6b NASB, ESV]. Christ came to die for mans' sin and He came at just the right time.

For verses on God's timing in reference to Christ, see also 2:4; 7:6,8; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1.

WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL BE SAVED

After describing the death He would suffer on the cross, Jesus said whoever believes in Him will be saved (v15), for it is in Him we have eternal life. Nicodemus was not saved, for he believed the Jewish tradition and teaching of works. Regeneration is not the work of man and cannot be accomplished

by keeping the Law nor anything we do. Jesus explained to him, there is only one way to be saved: to believe in Christ and the work He did to redeem man.

Leviticus 18:5 says if a person is to keep the Law, they must live by it, but how can man live by the Law? The Apostle James warned if you keep the Law, but fail in one point, you have broken the entire Law (Jam 2:10). This is why the Apostle Paul said no one is justified by the Law (Gal 3:11). Nonetheless, Nicodemus believed he was saved, because he foolishly believed he had kept the Law. The Law cannot regenerate a man; for it measures man by God's standard.

> Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. [Rom 3:19-20 NASB].

> What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law. [Rom 7:7a NASB].

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Law and the Prophets pointed to a Redeemer. Mans' inability to keep the Law, should have led Israel to repentance. Rather than repent of their sin, the Jew added man made laws to God's Law and became prideful in their law keeping. We cannot be saved by following the Law. This is why God sent His Son so He would take on our sin and clothe us in His righteousness. "that whoever believes in Him shall be saved."

> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:21 NASB].

The Heavenly Revelation is that God, Himself, died for the sin of man, to save man from the wrath of God, "so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life." [3:15 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Jesus rebuked Nicodemus for not understanding these things. Then He explained He had come down from heaven to bear witness of what He knew and what He had seen with the Father.

Just as surely as Christ came down from heaven, He must be lifted up. To be lifted up described the death He was going to die and that it would be a

public display. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent on the cross in the wilderness for people to look to and be healed, those who look to the cross of Christ will be forgiven and have eternal life.

Jesus, once again told Nicodemus he was not saved (v15), by stating that it it those who believe in Him who will have eternal life. Nicodemus trusted in his good works, but good works cannot save us. Whoever believes in Christ shall be saved.

John 3:16-18 The Context And The Four Common Errors

John 3:16 is America's favorite Bible verse. It is interpreted by most people, even most professing Christians, to mean God loves everyone in the world. This fits the image of the god, which the modern American gospel has created, but is this what the verse says?

Read John 3:16-18.

To understand the meaning of any Scripture, it is important to examine the context around it. An investigation of the context would begin with "who is talking?" and "to whom is the conversation directed?".

Here is an example of context with similar subject matter: at another event, Jesus said everyone who believes in Him will be saved.

> For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. [6:40 NASB].

This may sound like a potential for everyone to be saved, but four verses later, Christ put a limit upon whom this "everyone" can be. Only those whom the Father draws, can be saved.

> No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. [6:44 NASB].

Also, leading up to verse 40, Christ had defined "everyone" as "all the Father gives Me."

> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. [6:37 NASB].

In this conversation in chapter 6, Christ was talking to professing believers, who refused His claim to be the Bread of Life. He was explaining to the unbelieving believers why they could not be saved. These people could not be saved because the Father had not given them to the Son (6:37) and the Father had not drawn them (6:44). How do we know the Father had not drawn them? Because they did not look upon the Son and believe in Him (6:40).

So, you can see why it is very important, when examining Scripture, to keep the context. Upon a simple study of this passage in chapter 6, we can see when someone uses Christ's claim "everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life" to beg the masses to receive Him,

they have used the verse out of context. There was opportunity, but the context was a warning.

So, here we are at 3:16, the most favorite verse of the professing American Christian. Here is the verse in the most popular King James Version:

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

According to Hank Walker, a Reformed Baptist pastor from Alabama, the "so" and the "whosoever" are not in the original text. This was erroneously added by the translators of the King James Version and adopted by most translations thereafter. Therefore, a proper literal translation of the original language is:

> For God loved the world in this way: that He gave His only, uniquely born Son, in order that the believing ones, in Him should not perish, but should have eternal life.

We can see from this literal interpretation, the modern understanding of this verse is wrong. The wrong understanding of this verse has contributed to the easy believism of the modern American gospel. So we need to get this verse right. Let us look at some of the common errors of modern American gospel's interpretation of 3:16-18.

The first common error:

THE ERROR OF WHOM THE MESSIAH CAME TO SAVE

Jesus Christ was talking to Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee; a leader and a teacher of the Jews. In 3:16-17, Jesus cleared up a political error the Jews held regarding the Messiah. The Jews believed the Messiah would come to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and, from there, He would conquer, judge and rule the nations of the world; and Israel would be exalted.

Up to this time, the Jew believed salvation was for Israel alone. In all his Bible studies, Nicodemus never noticed that God declared He would bring salvation to the world through Israel (Isa 49:6). So, when Christ said, "God loved the world," He was explaining to Nicodemus He had now come to fulfill this prophecy and bring salvation to the world. No longer was salvation exclusive to the Israelite; it was now available to the world, to everyone who believed.

> A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Your people Israel. [Luk 2:32 NASB; quoting Isa 9:2; 42:6; 49:6].

We know Christ was clearing up this error because, in the next verse, He said He did not come to condemn the world. He was arguing against the theology proclaiming the Messiah would come to judge the nations and exalt Israel above her oppressors.

Even after Christ died and rose again, as late as the ascension of Christ, the disciples still held to this false theology. They asked, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" [Act 1:6 NASB]. The Messiah had to leave this world before the disciples finally understood Christ had not come to set up His kingdom to rule the nations at that time.

Look at this again, in the context of these verses. Let us start with verse 14, read through 18, while skipping 16 and 17:

> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. . .Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. [v14,15,18 ESV].

The Gospel message is here: Christ died on the cross so those who believe will have eternal life; they will not be judged or condemned; those who do not believe are condemned already. Therefore, His sacrifice is not available to everyone in the world.

Verses 16 and 17 seem to be a repeat of this message, except verse 17 says the Messiah did not come to judge or condemn. So, why would verse 17 say the Messiah did not come to judge, but verse 18 says those who reject Him are judged already. A common, yet false, explanation is Christ does not judge (v17), but the Father does (v18). This is error; for we know from Scripture, Christ is the judge (Act 17:30-31; *et al*). So which is it? Did the Messiah come to judge or not?

The key to understanding this are the words, in context:

- In verse 18, it is clear Jesus is talking about people; individuals. Whoever believes is saved, but whoever disbelieves will be judged. "Whoever does not believe is condemned already." Whoever. People.
- In verse 17, Jesus said the Father did not send Him to judge the world, but to save everyone who believes. The world which He was not here to judge was the nations. The world He was here to save was His people. So, those who disbelieve are judged already, but the Messiah did not come to judge the world, that is, the nations.

Jesus told Nicodemus the message of salvation is through faith in the One who died for our sins. Those who do not believe, will be condemned. Those who believe their works can save them are condemned already.

So, how do verses 16 and 17 fit, when, at first read, they appear to be a redundancy and partial contradiction? Let us look at verses 14 through 18 again, in sequence:

1. (v14) The Messiah had come to die for the sins of man. This was the antitype of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness.
2. (v15) Those who look to the One who died on the cross will be saved. Nicodemus and the Jews were wrong: The Law cannot save, nor can man's efforts; salvation is through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone.
3. (v16) This salvation was no longer for the Jew alone, but for everyone who believes. This whole idea of God loving the world was foreign to the Jew. In previous generations God had shown His favor exclusively to Israel, His chosen nation. Now, the Messiah had come to save His people from every tribe, nation, language and people. The "everyone who believes" extends to these, including the despised Gentiles who were chosen by God.
4. (v17) Christ did not come to condemn the nations. The Jews expected the Messiah to rule from Jerusalem and judge or condemn all the nations in the world and exalt Israel. Christ put this wrong interpretation of Scripture to rest.
5. (v18) However, every person who does not believe is condemned already. Or as John the Baptist put it in 3:36, those who disobey remain under God's wrath. Underline "already" in verse 18 and "remain" in verse 36.

Up to this point in the conversation, Jesus explained to Nicodemus, who was a church leader and instructor of the Scriptures, why he was wrong and why he was not saved. 3:16 is not a stand-alone verse of God's love for the world. It needs to be viewed in context. In this verse, Jesus corrected Jewish error; an error concerning the mission of the Messiah.

The second common error:

THE MODERN ERROR CHRIST DOES NOT JUDGE

Many claim Christ is not a judge and will not judge. They base this claim upon 3:17. This fits the image they have created of Christ, that He is always kind and gentle. They argue if Christ didn't judge, we have no right to

judge. However, the Scripture does not say this. Looking at what He said in the Gospel of John, we see He came the first time to bring salvation, but He will judge on the Last Day.

1) 3:18 Christ said those who do not believe are condemned already;
2) 3:19 Christ said this is the judgment: the Light has come into the world, but the people loved darkness because their deeds were evil;
3) 5:22 Christ said the Father has given all judgment to the Son;
4) 5:24 Christ said whoever hears and believes will not come into judgment;
5) 5:27 Christ said the Father gave Him all authority to judge because He is the Son of Man;
6) 5:30 Christ said His judgment is just because He seeks the will of Him who sent Him;
7) 8:15-16 Christ said He judges not according to the flesh, but His judgment is true;
8) 8:50 Christ said He did not seek His own glory, but there is One who does and He is the judge;
9) 12:47-48 Christ said He did not come to judge the world, but those who reject Him will be judged by the words He has spoken.

The third common error:

THE ERROR OF THE WORTH OF MAN

Some preachers use 3:16 to proclaim the greatness or the value of man in the eyes of God. They say man is of infinite worth to God and Jesus died because man is so valuable. They preach a man-centered gospel; a self-esteem gospel. They are deceived to believe beings made from dirt, sinful and in rebellion to God, could command God's love. I have heard preachers claim God needs us more than we need Him. This gospel is nothing short of blasphemy.

The modern American gospel says "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." This is not supported by Scripture; in fact, the Bible says otherwise. It is true God holds a common grace or love for His creation, in that, the rain falls on the just and the unjust (Mat 5:45), but God does not love the world to the extent He would send His Son to die for those who do not believe; He would not die for those who refuse to repent.

> God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword. [Psa 7:11-12a NASB].

The purpose of Christ's death was to satisfy God's wrath (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17) and redeem those who are His (Mat 1:21; Luk 1:68). His wrath is never satisfied against those who do not believe (3:36).

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans chapter 5, while we were unable to save ourselves, while we were sinners and enemies of God, Christ died for us, but this does not refer to the whole world; this refers to those who have been justified by faith (Rom 5:1). We abuse the Scriptures when we use verses out of context.

The world and all the people in it are His creation. He made it all. The world holds no value that would draw God to it. He can make any world He wants: He could have made a world full of people who loved Him and adored Him, but this is not what He did. He destroyed this world once by water and He will destroy it again by fire (2Pe 3:5-7). Everything God does is for His glory. He does not share His glory with man (Isa 42:8). In sending His Son into the world, He demonstrated His greatness; the greatness of His love, not the greatness of mans' worth.

The fact that it took the blood of His sinless Son to redeem man to God, does not reflect upon mans' greatness. It reflects upon mans' depravity; the greatness of mans' sin. In other words, this is how bad man is, that only the blood of the sinless Son of God could satisfy the wrath of a Holy God. Some theologians properly explain the verse this way: "This is how God showed His love, by sending His Son into the world." The key to understanding 3:16 is the great value of God's love toward those who believe; not the value of the world nor the people in it.

The fourth common error:

THE ERROR THAT CHRIST DIED FOR EVERYONE

Consider this: If Jesus Christ came to save the whole world from the wrath of God, then why did John the Baptist say those who disobey Christ REMAIN under God's wrath (v36)? Why did Jesus say they are condemned ALREADY (v18)?

If Christ died for everyone in the world, then

1) either He failed, because most the people will not believe; or

2) all people are saved through His death and resurrection, regardless of faith.

Point 1): If "God loved the world" meant He died for everyone or that the whole world would believe, then God failed. Therefore, the "world" in context must be "everyone who believes in Him." We cannot receive this gift unless God draws us and Christ said all those given to Him by the Father, will come to Him (6:44,37). We know God did not fail; He cannot fail. The world which God loves is all those chosen by God, in Christ, before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4) from every people, tribe and nation (Rev 5:9).

Point 2): Certainly, the Bible does not teach universal salvation; the idea all men are saved. Even the Jews, in their limited view of redemption, knew not all the physical children of Abraham were saved.

Some will modify this idea of universal salvation by declaring salvation is a free gift, given to all, and man can choose to receive the gift or reject it. In other words, Christ died for the sins of the whole world and, by this, He put this gift of salvation out there, up for grabs, if you will, but only those who believe and accept this gift are saved. And, in the face of competing doctrines, this interpretation can appear to be less controversial, but it is wrong. This free gift argument used by modern preachers, sees God as offering salvation to all men as a gift for the taking, almost pleading with man to receive it. However, the fact is God has chosen His people, but He demands repentance of all.

> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 NASB].

Receiving Christ is not a simple matter of accepting a gift; it is repenting of our former life and following the Judge of all the earth. This can only be accomplished by God drawing men to Christ (6:44); because the slave to sin, will always choose sin, unless they are born again of the Spirit (3:3,8).

> But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Rom 6:22-23 NASB].

In the first chapter of Ephesians, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have a singleness of purpose for the elect. The Father chose us; Christ

redeemed us; the Spirit seals us. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one mind.

- Eph 1:4: The Father chose us in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world. Jesus said all those chosen by the Father will come to Him. The Father gives them to the Son; they are a gift (6:37).
- Eph 1:7-8: Christ has redeemed us through His blood. He has forgiven our sins and lavished His grace upon us.
- Eph 1:13-14: We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.

If the Father chose the elect for His Son and the Holy Spirit sealed them for their inheritance, why would Jesus die so unbelievers not chosen would have the opportunity of being saved? The fact is, Christ did not redeem the whole world. In His prayer to the Father, Christ said He was not praying for the world, but for those the Father gave Him (17:9).

So when 3:16 says "loved the world," either Christ died for everyone's sin and God is looking at the world as forgiven, or there must be some exclusions to the definition of the word "world." The verse must be understood in context. The verse, itself, suggests some exclusions, in that, Christ implied some cannot be saved when He said, "everyone who believes." This phrase leaves open some will not believe.

Here are a partial list of verses which also use "all" or "world" along with 3:16. When studied in context, it becomes clear the words "all" and "world" do not refer to everyone in the world. In most cases, the words refer to those who believe; those who follow Christ.

1) Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! [1:29b NASB, ESV].
2) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. [12:32 NASB].
3) Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [Rom 5:18 ESV].
4) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? [Rom 8:32 NASB].
5) and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. [2Co 5:15 NASB].

6) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. [2Co 5:19a ESV].

7) who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. [1Ti 2:6 NASB].

8) For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. [1Ti 4:10 NASB].

9) so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. [Heb 2:9b NASB].

10) He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. [1Jo 2:2 ESV].

11) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. [1Jo 4:14 ESV].

Not to forget, the word "world" is used with several different meanings in the New Testament and even in the Gospel of John. In this gospel, the word is used over fifty times with more than a half dozen different meanings. Therefore, we must conclude "the world" in 3:16 has a limited scope, and does not mean every person in the world.

The correct interpretation for 3:16 is: the Father sent His Son to save people, Jew and Gentile, chosen for His glory, not for any value intrinsic in man. We must look at the verse in context. Christ was talking to a teacher and leader of the Jews. The prevailing view was the Messiah would come to redeem the Jews and condemn the world. Jesus taught him God sent His Son to redeem His people from out of all the world, even Gentiles, and did not come to condemn the nations of the world at this time. Those who believe will have eternal life with God. Whoever does not believe is condemned already.

> For God loved the world in this way: that He gave His only, uniquely born Son, in order that the believing ones, in Him, should not perish, but should have eternal life.

IN CLOSING

Jesus corrected Nicodemus' worldview when He told him God's love and salvation were not limited to the Jew, but encompassed the world (v16). This included Gentiles, whom the Jews believed could not be saved (except under rigid exceptions). God so loved the world.

Contrary to what Nicodemus and the Jews believed, Jesus told him the Messiah did not come to judge the nations and establish Israel (v17), but

the judgment the Messiah did bring was upon the individuals who do not believe (v18). Those who do not believe are condemned already.

John 3:16 Three Scriptures To Help Understand The Meaning

Most professing Christians look at 3:16 as proof positive that God loves everyone in the world. They see Rom 5:8; Eph 2:4; 2Th 2:16; 1Jo 3:1 and such Scriptures as backing up this claim of God's love for the unregenerate, but these verses declare God's love exclusively to those who follow Christ. The fact remains, there is no verse in the Scriptures which declares God's love for the whole world; everyone in the world. Therefore, either 3:16 is a stand alone verse, or most people have understood it wrong.

Read John 3:16.

Anytime a verse appears to be a stand-alone, we must examine it in light of what the rest of the Scriptures say about this same subject. There are three Scriptures which are key when considering whom Jesus was referring to when He said, "God loved the world." As you examine this, keep in mind the angel's promise to Joseph regarding the child within Mary:

> you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. [Mat 1:21b NASB].

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. [Mar 10:45 NASB].

The first thing to consider in this is the ransom: A ransom is paid to redeem someone who belongs to you. It is neither generic nor does it have a broad application. No one pays a ransom for someone who does not belong to them.

The second thing to consider is the "many." Christ did not claim to ransom "all" or everyone in the world. He said His life was given as a ransom for many; the many who belong to Him. Christ ransomed those who are His.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, "this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." [Mat 26:28a NASB]. Christ did not claim His blood would be shed for the whole world. This idea of Christ redeeming "many" rather than the entire world is repeated several times in the Scriptures (Rom 5:15; Heb 2:10; 9:28).

REVELATION 5:9-10

> Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth. [Rev 5:9b-10 NASB].

The praise in this verse is Christ purchased or ransomed men from every tribe and nation. Here again is the concept of a ransom and the ransom is for people FROM the whole world; every portion of the world, but not everyone in the world.

We know Christ did not ransom everyone in the world because this text says He made those He ransomed a kingdom and priests to God. We know from Scriptures, the unbelievers will never be a kingdom and priests to God. They detest God; they are in rebellion to God; they will suffer eternal destruction.

This supports the definition of the "many." This supports understanding the word "world" in 3:16 as God's chosen from among the world. This also voids the argument which claims Christ died for everyone, but only those who receive Him are saved. This verse clearly says, those Christ died for, He made them a kingdom and priest to God. There is no wiggle room here. He ransomed people; people who belong to Him and those He ransomed, He regenerated.

ISAIAH 53

In verse 6, Isaiah wrote, "the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." [NASB]. Who are the "us all"? Later in the chapter, in verses 11 and 12, it is more clear, who is the "us all." In these two verses, the prophet reveals the Messiah "will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities."

> As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. [Isa 53:11-12 NASB].

Here again, is the "many." They are the ones who will "be accounted righteous" because, it is clear, it is for their sin Christ suffered. He did not suffer for anyone else's sin and He certainly did not suffer for sin of the

whole world. "He bore the sin of many"; the many to whom He imputes His righteousness.

THE MANY ARE SAVED

These three passages are key to identifying whom Christ died for; the quantity: not the entire world, but the many. Who are the many?

Here are some verses which help us understand who are the many. In each case, it is those who were chosen by God to believe.

> 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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. [1:12-13 NASB].
>
> No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. [6:44 ESV].
>
> He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. [Eph 1:4a NASB].

We see from these verses, it is by God's choice or God's will we are saved. Then there is the argument: if God alone decides, we are just robots; we have no freewill.

FREEWILL AND OTHER MISCONCEPTIONS

Another misinterpretation of 3:16 is the use of the word "whoever" or "whosoever," which is not in the original text. Many evangelists and preachers have used this verse and this word to enshrine freewill as a Christian sacrament. As if "whoever" can mean "anyone" and "everyone"; that God is just waiting for you to make the decision.

In 1:12-13 and 6:44 we find those who receive Christ are drawn by the Father and are saved by the will of God, not by the will of man. We are not saved because of our decision, but because of God's decision (1:13; Eph 1:4) and Christ confirmed this when He said no one comes to Him unless the Father draw him (6:44). Furthermore, Jesus said, "no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father." [6:65 NASB]. Paul said we are saved by God's grace alone; not by works or anything else we can do, we cannot even "make a decision," lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

Contrary to the modern American gospel, we do not "give our hearts to Jesus." We do not give God anything. God gives to us; salvation is a gift. He gives this gift to whom He chooses. Our only participation in the

Gospel of Salvation is that of recipient (1:12). We can only receive it; and even this ability and decision to receive is by the grace of God (1:13).

The Bible is clear we have all turned away from God. There is NO one who seeks after God (Psa 14:1-3; Isa 53:6; Rom 3:10-11). The natural bent of our hearts is rebellion toward God. Our natural freewill is to reject God. Only the heart regenerated by God can receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To summarize a quote from Charles Spurgeon arguing against the theology of freewill: a man's will is either held captive by sin or it is held in the blessed bonds of grace. Does man have freewill? Yes, but the Apostle Paul explained in Romans chapter 6, a slave to sin will always choose sin. Therefore, it is important to interpret 3:16 in the context of God's sovereignty, not mans' freewill or personal sovereignty. Our salvation is the work of God alone; it is for His glory alone.

It is not wrong to use (add) "whoever" as a call to repentance, but it is wrong to use the word to promote or exalt choice or freewill. Our sovereignty never trumps God's sovereignty; salvation is by God's choice and His drawing. It is His work, alone.

IN CLOSING

When faced with a verse which appears to be a stand alone proclamation, examine the verse in light of the rest of Scripture. The Bible tells us Christ did not die for the whole world. He died for those who are His: the many.

Jesus said salvation is given to everyone who believes. This "whoever," as first erroneously given by the King James Version, does not represent freewill, for our natural freewill is to choose sin. The literal translation is "everyone who believes" not "whoever" and this represents all those chosen in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). Jesus said all those given to Him will come to Him (6:37).

If you hear Christ calling you, repent and receive Him today.

John 3:18-21 Cling To Darkness And Be Condemned Already

Christ declared the Messiah had not come to condemn the nations of the world. Most professing Christians do not like to speak of the wrath of God and they have made Him into a god who is always kind and gentle. Somehow, they think verse 17 affirms this, but in the next verse, Jesus spoke of the condemnation of the individual who does not believe.

Read John 3:18-21.

CONDEMNED ALREADY

Immediately after Jesus told Nicodemus He did not come to condemn the world, He spoke of the condemnation of the unbeliever. He said the unbeliever is condemned ALREADY. John the Baptist explained this condemnation by saying God's wrath REMAINS on the unbeliever.

> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. [3:36 ESV].

The Gospel in the passage from verse 14 to 18 is Christ came to die for mans' sin. Those who believe will receive everlasting life; those who remain in their sin are condemned.

Christ has come to the world, and John wrote, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." [1:5 ESV]. In his later epistle he wrote, "the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining." [1Jo 2:8b NASB], but regarding those who have not believed in the name of the only Son of God, Christ said their judgment is due because they cling to darkness even after the Light has come (v19).

When we read this verse about judgment and evil deeds, we think of the evils of darkness in the context of bar rooms, prostitutes, pornography, drugs, thefts, murders and such things as this, but Jesus was talking to and accusing a "good" man; a man who lived by the Law. Already in this conversation, several times Christ told Nicodemus he was not saved by challenging the things he believed against the actual words of Scriptures. Now, He upped the ante by telling Nicodemus the works of "good" and "religious" men were evil because they preferred the darkness and rejected the light.

NONE WHO DO GOOD

There are many people who appear to be good who reject Christ and His plan of salvation. Many believe they have earned their salvation because they are good, but Jesus told us there is no one good, but God (Mar 10:18; Luke 18:19). And didn't Isaiah say all our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isa 64:6)? Every person is full of evil. God said our hearts are continually evil (Gen 8:21). There are none who do good (Psa 14:3).

Jesus said these good people do not want their deeds to be exposed. So they do not come to the light. The Apostle Paul wrote, "all things become visible when they are exposed by the light." [Eph 5:13a NASB]. The natural man does not want to be exposed, so he will avoid the light and cling to darkness.

In verses 19 and 20, Christ said:

1) Men love darkness rather than the Light;
2) They love darkness because their deeds are evil;
3) They do evil things because they hate the Light; and
4) They will not come to the Light, lest their evil deeds be exposed.

They will not come to the Light. You will not persuade them. Many who cling to the darkness are professing Christians. They believe their profession of faith will get them to heaven, but they harbor darkness and do not want to be exposed.

Many professing Christians, who appear to be good people, do not receive the authority of the Scriptures. They gnash their teeth against those who stand in opposition to the evils in our society, such as abortion, same-sex marriage and transgenderism. They call those who stand for truth hateful people and they hate them.

Many professing Christians look to the wisdom of the world, which is psychology, self-help, positive motivation, new age philosophy and such. They are offended when people call worldly wisdom foolishness. They do not understand what Jesus meant when He said, "If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" [Mat 6:23b]. Those who believe they are wise in the world are full of darkness.

> Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. [1Co 3:18-19a NASB].

A PROFESSION OF FAITH CANNOT SAVE

You see, it is not the profession of faith which determines what is in you; light or darkness. It is what you cling to. Do you cling to the Scriptures or do you cling to the wisdom and the fruitless deeds of this world? Do not be deceived by people who claim to be believers, but will not stand up for the truth of the Word of God. Rather, test the spirits to see if they are from God (1Jo 4:1).

> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. [1Jo 1:6 NASB].

Christ said those who come to the Light, those who do what is true, will also be exposed. And this is the difference: those who come to the Light, come in repentance; they want Christ's righteousness. They are not afraid to be exposed because they know there is nothing good in themselves and they want people to see how Christ has given them His righteousness and how every thing good in them is the work of God (v21).

The man in darkness wants credit for all the "good" he has done. The man in the Light wants the world to know his good deeds were the result of God working through him (v21).

> For You have done for us all our works. [Isa 26:12b ESV].

> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. [Eph 2:10 NASB].

So this turned out to be hard news for Nicodemus; as it is for anyone who believes they can work their way to salvation or believes they are capable of doing good works by their own efforts.

The good news is this: there is no one good, but God (Mar 10:18; Luk 18:19). We are sinful and fallen and incapable of good works on our own (Rom 3:23; 5:6,8,10). We cannot come to the Light unless we are drawn by the Father (6:44). Those who receive Christ are born of the will of God (1:13; 3:5-8). Christ has taken us out of the darkness and has taken our sin and nailed them to the cross and has given us His righteousness (Col 2:13-15; 2Co 5:21).

Everyone will be exposed: Those who do not follow Christ will be exposed to their condemnation (v18). Those who believe and follow Christ will be exposed, so it will be seen the good works done in them were not of themselves, but of God (3:21; 15:4-5).

IN CLOSING

Those who do not follow Christ, are condemned already. Those who love this world will cling to the darkness, believing they can prevent their deeds from being exposed, but everyones' deeds will be exposed.

Those who believe will come to the Light. Just as it was the work of God to make them born again, it will be seen the good works in this new life are the work of God.

The offer is given to leave the darkness and embrace the Light. If you profess Christ, but cling to some secret sin, you cannot be saved.

> He who has a small view of sin, cannot have a big view of God. [John Owen].

John 3:22-30 John The Baptist Directed Disciples To Christ

After Jesus had finished His conversation with Nicodemus, He went into the Judean countryside to teach the disciples and baptize. Whether to individuals, a small group of disciples or large crowds, Christ's purpose was to make the Father known.

Read John 3:22-30.

Though this account says Jesus was baptizing, in the next chapter, we read it was not Jesus, Himself, who baptized, but it was His disciples (4:2). Christ was giving his disciples hands on experience as witnesses calling for repentance, for baptism can only follow repentance.

TENSIONS BETWEEN DISCIPLES OF JOHN AND JESUS

John the Baptist was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim. Aenon and Salim were near the Jordan River, on the West side. Commentaries say there was probably a tributary flowing to the Jordan where he baptized.

In verse 24, the Apostle John cleared up a misunderstanding: According to the Gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark, one could get the impression John the Baptist was imprisoned about the time Christ began His ministry (Mat 4:11-12; Mar 1:13-14). By telling the reader the Baptist had not yet been imprisoned, the Apostle John clarified there was a period of time when Jesus and John the Baptist had parallel ministries.

At this time, Christ and John were baptizing in close proximity and tensions arose between their disciples. The Apostle John wrote an argument arose between a Jew and the disciples of John the Baptist (v25). Who was this Jew? Here are a couple opposing opinions:

> As John and Jesus were the only teachers who baptized Jews, discussions might easily arise between the Baptist's disciples and such Jews as declined to submit to that rite. [JFB].
>
> The parallel ministry of Jesus and John resulted in a dispute between admirers of the latter and a Jew who favored the former. [WH vol 1, pg 147].

So, you see there is some disagreement as to whom this Jew could have been. I think the latter opinion is on the right track here, because there is a clue in the text: The Apostle John always refers to himself in the third person, by description, rather than by name. This appears to be one of these

instances. He also wrote of the incident as one having first hand knowledge; one who was there throughout the entire conversation. Furthermore, when the disciples of the Baptist complained to him, the complaint was in reference to Christ. Therefore, the Jew they quarreled with must have been a disciple of Christ. If it was any other disciple of Christ, John would have named him.

Prior to following Christ, the Apostle John had been a disciple of John the Baptist. It is very likely he got into an argument with one or more of the Baptist's disciples about who had the better baptism or whether they should be following John the Baptist or following Christ.

Here we see some of the humanity of the Apostle John. He was known as one of the Sons of Thunder. He was competitive and had a temper. It is very characteristic he would take his fight with the disciples of the Baptist all the way back to their leader.

HE MUST INCREASE; I MUST DECREASE

When the quarreling band came to John the Baptist, his disciples complained about the man the Baptist had praised and promoted, "now He is getting all the business" (v26).

This may have been a complaint, but it could just as likely have been a rebuke and admonition for the Baptist to step up his marketing or expose Christ as an imposter. In either case, these men were jealous of Jesus' ministry; so jealous, they did not even mention Him by name.

1) "To whom you bore witness" [v26]. This is the blame his disciples put upon John the Baptist. John was guilty of promoting Christ, whom they saw as the competition. Here is an account of his promotion of Christ, leading up to this dispute.

    a) There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. [1:6-8 NASB].

    b) John bore witness about Him, and cried out, 'This was He of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because He was before me.' [1:15 ESV].

    c) He said, 'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.' [1:23 ESV].

d) I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, even He who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie. [1:26-27 ESV]

e) Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!. . .I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God. [1:29, 34 NASB]

2) "All are going to Him" [v26]. This was the result of the Baptist promoting Him and this was their complaint, but they were not alone in this complaint. a): In jealousy, the Pharisees also complained. b): In prophecy, Jesus foretold, He would draw all men.

a) So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him." [12:19 ESV].

b) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. [12:32 NASB].

John the Baptist answered the complaint or rebuke by minimizing his own value and giving God glory for all things, even for his mission in life. He pointed his disciples to Christ with this four-part answer:

1) A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. [v27 ESV].

2) You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him.' [v28 ESV].

3) The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. [v29 ESV].

4) He must increase, but I must decrease. [v30 ESV].

Let us look at this four-part answer, given by John the Baptist, verse-by-verse.

The first-part answer:

> **A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. [v27b NASB].**

John the Baptist understood everything comes from God; both a man's work and the reward for the work. No man will receive one cent more than God has allotted to him nor will he receive one cent less.

> Every man has his work and sphere appointed Him from above, Even Christ Himself came under this law (Heb 5:4). [JFB].

> And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU." [Heb 5:4-5 NASB].

Even rulers are subject to the domain God has given (Pro 21:1). As Jesus said to Pilate, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above." [19:11 NASB].

In the same conversation where Jesus said no one comes to Him unless the Father draw him, He also said, "no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father." [6:65b ESV]. We cannot have salvation unless it is granted or authorized by the Father.

Man's nature is prideful. This is why the unbeliever thinks he must have a role in his salvation. The Jew thought their obedience to the Law saved them. The truth is, we are saved by grace: lest any man should boast. John said we receive nothing unless it is given from God.

> What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it. [1Co 4:7 ESV].

If we are followers of Christ, God saved us for HIS glory.

> Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace. [Eph 1:4-6a ESV].

Our talents, our work or career, all that we have are gifts from God. Pride in ourselves or in our stuff is idolatry and covetousness. We must remember the words of John the Baptist, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven." [v27]. He viewed his mission and any glory he should receive as from God. Everything we have; everything God has given us is for HIS glory.

> Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. [Jam 1:17-18 ESV].

The second-part answer:

> **You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent ahead of Him." [v28 NASB].**

John the Baptist was famous, but he did not cling to his fame. He did nothing to exalt himself. He was on a mission to herald the Christ and turn the hearts of the people to the Messiah. He was determined to give glory to God, in everything he did and said.

It is a natural human tendency to grab for more power or attention when met with popular approval, but the Baptist resisted this. He was not jealous of Christ's glory. John stuck to His mission of pointing people to the Christ:

- He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." [1:20 ESV].
- Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. [Mal 3:1a ESV].
- As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." [Mar 1:2-3 ESV].
- And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." [Act 19:4 ESV].

The third-part answer:

> **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. So this joy of mine has been made full. [v29 NASB].**

John the Baptist described Christ as the bridegroom and himself as the friend of the bridegroom. Christ laid claim to the bride; John did not. Even when others would point the bride to him, he was careful to point them back to Christ.

Christ referred to Himself as the bridegroom in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mat 25:1-13). And another time, Jesus said, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? but the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." [Mat 9:15 NASB].

The Apostle Paul explained marriage is a picture of Christ and the church or Christ and His bride.

> FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. [Eph 5:31-32 NASB].

In the end of time, Christ the bridegroom will marry His bride, the church. This is the one of the final parts of the eternal covenant.

> Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" [Rev 19:6-9a NASB].

The fourth-part answer:

> **He must increase, but I must decrease. [v30 NASB].**

As we pointed out above, John the Baptist did not use his popularity to gain social or political power. He resisted the urge to reach for the brass ring, if you will. The Baptist did not seek to establish his life nor his estate down here; he was seeking to please His master in Heaven.

He was humble. The Gospel of Matthew recorded him saying Christ was mightier than he and he was not worthy to carry Christ's sandals (Mat 3:11-12). In the first chapter of John, he said he was not worthy to untie Christ's sandals (1:26). Here was a great man who denounced the teachers of the Law, calling them snakes and a brood of vipers (Mat 3:7). Yet, he did not consider himself worthy to clean Jesus' feet or even touch His sandals.

Our human nature seeks fame and fortune. Most people do not want to die without leaving some kind of legacy; even a small one; we want people to remember us, but to truly commit our lives to Christ is to release all claim to fame; to seek God's glory and His alone (5:44).

Here is the essence of John the Baptist's preaching: he preached the coming judgment of God and our need to repent.

> As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. [Mat 3:11-12 NASB].

Some people think this approach to witnessing or preaching is unloving and judgmental, even arrogant, but this is the same strategy Jesus used when He preached, "Repent, for God's judgment is at hand." [Mar 1:15].

John the Baptist did not preach the modern American gospel, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," but this kind of preaching is so common now, most Evangelicals are convinced a loving God will not send anyone to Hell. Ironically, the modern American gospel has built up the sinners' self esteem, but is patting them on their backs while on their way to Hell. This is the itching ears of 2Timothy 4:3.

The Bible calls us to repent. Christ called for repentance. He didn't try to make people feel good or like Him. He confronted people with the very thing keeping them from God.

When the rich young ruler approached Jesus, asking how to be saved (Mat 19:16-30), Jesus did not say, "All you have to do is believe in Me" nor did He say, "Repeat these words after Me." No. He exposed the man's unrepentant heart. This man thought he could obey the Law; but the law was given to expose our sin and our inability to please God with our own efforts. When the man refused to repent, Christ exposed his pride and his idols and the man left disappointed. This man would have gladly said the sinner's pray, but he would not have been saved.

Nicodemus, too, believed keeping the Law would save him, but Jesus said he must be born again. This was difficult for Nicodemus to understand because it went against everything he was taught. So, too, many modern American Christians do not understand what it is to be born again; to be a new creation; to turn from their sin and follow Christ.

Jesus asked the question, "If you love the praise of man rather than seek God's glory, how can you be saved?" [5:44]. God's Word is for God's glory. Our salvation is for God's glory. John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." [v30 NASB, ESV].

IN CLOSING

It appears the Apostle John, who was previously a disciple of John the Baptist, got into a heated discussion with some of the Baptist's remaining

disciples regarding who had the better baptism. It was not resolved among them, so they took the argument to the Baptist to sort out.

John the Baptist's disciples were jealous of this upstart, Jesus, and they complained everyone was going to Him. John answered, in four parts, each part pointing to Christ.

Here was the Baptist's opportunity to take some glory for himself, but he pointed men to Christ. Just as he encouraged John and Andrew to follow Christ (1:35-37), he now encouraged the rest of his disciples to do the same.

It is common in modern Christian witness to point man to mans' glory. We say things like, "I gave my heart to Jesus," "I made a decision for Christ" or we implore man to do the same or to test drive Jesus and see if He isn't what He said He is. All these things exalt man. John pointed man to humility and repentance. When we speak of God and salvation, do we exalt man? or do we call for man to repent and glorify God?

John 3:31-36 Whoever Believes In The Son Has Life

This chapter began with a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. It will end with a conversation between John the Baptist and his disciples. The two messages are the same: Christ testified to what He had seen and heard in Heaven; those who believe, will have eternal life; those who do not, are condemned already.

Read John 3:31-36.

WHAT THE BAPTIST SAID AND WHAT JESUS SAID

Whenever in the Scriptures something is said twice, close together, we need to listen. It is the "verily, verily." There are four things said in this chapter by Christ, which are repeated by John the Baptist. These four things are important for life and fellowship with God.

1) No one can proclaim the glories of heaven, but the Son of Man who came down from heaven (Jesus in v13).
    a) The Son of God is from above and is above all (the Baptist in v31)
2) We (the Father and the Son) speak of what we know, but you do not receive our testimony (Jesus in v11).
    a) He bears witness to what He has seen and heard, but no one receives His testimony (the Baptist in v32).
3) Whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life (Jesus in v15, 16).
    a) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life (the Baptist in v36).
4) Whoever does not believe is condemned already. (Jesus in v18).
    a) Whoever does not obey the Son of God shall not see life, for the wrath of God remains on him (the Baptist in v36).

John the Baptist proclaimed the same gospel Christ declared to Nicodemus. As he was wrapping up his talk, John affirmed Christ was from above and was above all, while he, himself, was from below and spoke in an earthly way (v31). The message from above is the Son of God has come down to give life. If you do not believe, you will die in your sins.

> You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that

> you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins. [8:23-24 NASB].

John the Baptist said he was from the earth and, though his mission was from God, he can only speak in an earthly way. Or, as Paul wrote, "we know in part" (1Co 13:9). John contrasted this with Christ being from above; from heaven. Christ is not a mere man; He has been with the Father and He, Himself, is God. John tried to make a clear distinction: Christ is greater than any earthly teacher or prophet, for He is above all.

This is why he iterated Christ's greatness before and after speaking of himself. He said, to paraphrase, "Christ is from heaven and is greater than all. Myself and the prophets are mere earthly voices and can only speak with limited understanding. Christ is from heaven and is greater than all. He speaks of what He knows from the courtyards of God." [v31-32].

> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. [Col 1:16 NASB].

Christ is above all: He is above all creation; He is above all rule and authority. Yet, His creation has rejected His authority. John the Baptist said "no one receives His testimony." [v32]. Jesus said, "you do not accept our testimony." [v11b]. He is above all, the Creator of all things, yet the world did not know Him (1:10) and the people He set aside for His own, did not receive Him (1:11).

SETTING OUR SEAL THAT GOD IS TRUE

Contrasting against those who reject Christ, John the Baptist said in the next verse, whoever does receive the testimony of Christ sets his seal or confirms God's Word is true (v33). This contrast, "nobody receives" versus "whoever receives," is not a contradiction: he pointed out the vast numbers of those who reject the truth of Jesus Christ compared to the very few who receive this truth.

> And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." [Luk 13:23-24 NASB].

During the time of Christ, a seal was used for two purposes:

1) to insure no one opened the contents except the intended recipient and;

2) to warrant the contents came from the owner of the seal. It was used to insure against fraud.

John said if we believe, we are setting our seal, or giving proof or witness, that God is true.

> The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. [1Jo 5:10 NASB].

Are these verses saying we have the power to make God into a truth or a lie? Far from it. These Scriptures declare if we believe in the Son of God, we testify with our seal, if you will, God is true. And, if we refuse to believe, we are calling God a liar.

The thing about a seal is this, if we believe, people know it because our seal or testimony is there to be examined by all. There is no private faith in Christ. If you believe in the Son of God, it is not a "personal matter." It is something you set your seal upon; anyone can see it and inspect it. If you claim a personal relationship with Christ and you think it is nobody's business except your own, you might not truly believe. John said those who believe set their seal upon it that God is true.

If we set our seal that God is true, it is because God has set His seal upon us (2Co 1:22). In the same way, we love God, because He first loved us. (1Jo 4:19).

> In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. [Eph 1:13-14 NASB].

Christ's testimony is sure; He bears witness to what He has seen and heard (v32). In verse 34, the Baptist said Christ "speaks the words of God." Indeed, for Christ said He only spoke what He heard from the Father (12:49).

John the Baptist continued this contrast or volley, comparing the character of men and the witness of the Son of God by stating the Father had given the Son the Spirit without measure (v35). Jesus Christ was fully God. As the Apostle Paul wrote, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ (Col 1:19). God gives man the Spirit in limited portions, but to His Son, the Spirit was given in full; without measure.

> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. [Col 2:9 NASB].

According to John the Baptist, the difference between the Son of God and man (including the prophets and himself):

1) He is from above; He is above all and speaks what He has seen and knows. Man is of the earth and is limited in understanding (v31-32).
2) He utters the words of God because the Father has given the Son the Spirit without measure; implying He gives the Spirit to man in limited measure (v34).
3) The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand (v35). He is the highest authority; man is of the earth.

When we believe, we proclaim Christ or set our seal upon Him. God seals us with His Holy Spirit, but to Christ is given the Spirit without measure. For in the man Christ is all the fullness of God. He is fully God and fully man.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BELIEVE

John wrapped up the contrast volley with a comparison between those who believe in the Son and those who do not. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

In this, John gave a strong hint what it means to believe. If you believe in the Son, you will obey the Son. We understand this because of those who do not believe, the Baptist wrote, "whoever does not obey." The implication is, the believer obeys, while the unbeliever does not.

There are many who profess a faith in Christ, but they do not obey the words of Christ. Many of these people feel like they love Jesus, some even love Him "so much" or with all their heart, but we cannot hang our belief on a feeling; if we truly believe in Christ, our actions will show it. Jesus told us you can judge a tree by its fruit (Mat 7:16; Luk 6:44).

The second part of the comparison is the believer has eternal life, but to those who do not obey or believe, God's wrath abides or remains upon them. He did not say they will eventually see God's wrath or someday lose God's love. He said upon the disobedient God's wrath ABIDES. This is present tense.

This is in stark contrast to the modern American gospel, which says, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." In essence, John the Baptist said God does not love, nor has He ever loved those who do not

believe. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

- Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God [v3b NASB, ESV].
- he who does not believe has been judged already. [v18b NASB].
- unless you believe that I am He. you will die in your sins. [8:24b NASB].

The disciples of the Baptist were arguing for John to take the lead and reign in this upstart. John the Baptist replied by warning his disciples they might not be saved.

IN CLOSING

In this passage of Scripture, the disciples of the Baptist were jealous of Jesus, the upstart. They wanted their leader to stand up for his rights. The Baptist had testified of the Messiah, but it had not sunk in. So John used this occasion to compare the Son of God with the natural man. He presented his arguments in a volley between mans' limitations and Christ's full authority. He admonished them to believe and warned them of judgment if they rejected the Son.

John the Baptist assured the hearers, though Christ was a man, He was fully God; He came from above. He said the Father has given the Son the Spirit without measure (v34) and has given all things into His hand (v35). Then he told his disciples, they must believe and obey, lest the wrath of God remain on them (v36).

The modern American gospel does not convict man of sin; it pats him on the back, on his way to Hell. You are not saved by good intentions; salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ, alone. True faith always results in obedience. Those who disobey, remain under God's wrath.

John 4:1-26 Jesus With The Sinner At The Well

Christ died to save sinners (1Ti 1:15). The Apostle Paul said God did not choose the wise and noble; He chose the weak and despised to call on Him, so that no man can boast (1Co 1:26-31). While Jesus was humanly present in the world, He sought out the lowly and despised.

The Jews despised the Samaritans; they were considered the lowest class of people. In this chapter, Jesus calls His lost sheep from among them.

SYCHAR OF SAMARIA

Sychar was located just South of Shechem, at the site of present-day Askar. Joseph's tomb and Jacob's well were nearby. The mount of the blessing, Gerazim was to the West of the city (Deu 27:12). Ebal, the mount of the curse was to the North (Deu 27:13).

These two mountains were constant reminders to the people of the blessings and cursings promised by God; blessings for following or curses for disobedience. The Samaritans lived right in the middle of this history: Jacob, Joseph and the two mountains, yet they syncretized their faith with the pagan religions around them and did not obey God (2Ki 17:41). This is an example that a Godly heritage does not produce a Godly people.

The nation of Israel became divided during the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam. The nation separated into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The North and the South. Jeroboam, who turned the people against Rehoboam, was the first king of Israel after this separation. He set up golden calves to represent God in Bethel and Dan (1Kings 12). This was to reduce the ambition of the people for traveling to Jerusalem to worship, so they would not desire to reunite with the Southern kingdom.

When Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722BC, some Israelites were deported by King Shalmanesser; who then brought back Eastern Gentile tribes to move into their place and intermarry with the remaining Israelites (2Kings 17). The land became burdened with attacks by wild beasts so the Gentile residents requested the king to send them an Israelite priest who would teach them the ways of the god of the land. Now, the already corrupted Hebrew religion of Jeroboam became joined or syncretized with the Gentile cults (2Ki 17:40-41). These pagan, half-Israelites became known as the Samaritans.

The region was named after the capital city, Samaria.

Judah was later led captive to Babylon, but the Jews, after returning from their captivity, had sworn off all pagan idolatry. The Samaritan traditions were repulsive to Judah and the Jews despised them.

The Samaritans developed their own Pentateuch or Scripture and did not accept the poetic and prophetic books of the Old Testament. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah chronicle the interruptions, confusion, battles and other delays to the rebuilding of the temple caused by Samaritans and surrounding peoples. This is another reason why the Jews despised the Samaritans; and the feeling was mutual.

After the temple was rebuilt in Jerusalem, the Samaritans built their own temple on the top of Mount Gerazim. However, it was destroyed around 128 BC by one of the Maccabees, John Hyrcanus. Even after this, the Samaritans refused to return to the true worship of God.

The Gospel of Luke records a time the Samaritans refused Christ any accommodation because He was on the way to worship in Jerusalem. The disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy them, but Christ rebuked them and they went on to another village (Luke 9:51-55). This event reflected the animosity, which was great, between the Jew and the Samaritan at the time of Christ.

Read John 4:1-26.

RETURNING TO GALILEE

In chapter 3, we are introduced to Christ's public ministry of baptizing (3:22). However, in this chapter we are told Christ Himself did not actually baptize; it was His disciples (v2). This is not a contradiction; it is a clarification. Had the Lord baptized, there would likely develop divisions created by those who would consider themselves greater having been baptized by God, Himself. After the resurrection, they might even consider themselves saved upon this merit and never come to repentance or they might consider themselves to have more authority than the apostles. The Apostle Paul warned against situations like this (1Co 1:10-17).

The first of Christ's signs was in Cana of Galilee: turning the water into wine (2:11). Now, Christ was on His way to Galilee once again. He left Judea because, due to His popularity, He was coming under the scrutiny of the Pharisees and He was not looking to agitate them at this time. As the Apostle John often said, "His time had not yet come." On His travel to Galilee, He had to pass through Samaria.

> About December of the year 27 AD the Baptist was imprisoned (Mar 6:17-20). The religious leaders of Jerusalem who, in the days of John's great popularity, had

> been filled with jealousy, rejoiced. . .But this joy was of short duration, for other tidings reached the Pharisees: namely, the multitudes surrounding Jesus. . .were more numerous than those who followed the herald. In fact, even before John's imprisonment Jesus had forged ahead of him in popular favor (3:22-26). Hence from the point of view of the members of the Sanhedrin, matters were becoming worse instead of better. [WH vol 1, pg 154].

Christ's travel to Galilee was around the time of John the Baptist's imprisonment. In any event, the activities of John the Baptist are recorded no more in the Gospel of John after chapter 3.

There are three main roads from Judea to Galilee, but the shortest route is through Samaria. However, the reason the Apostle John wrote He "must" go through Samaria was not likely due to any urgency or necessity of travel. It was because He was destined to speak to a sinful woman and lead many in her town to understand salvation and the true worship of God.

MEETING THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

John commented that Christ was weary from His journey (v6). This displayed the human side of Christ. Additionally, Christ revealed to the woman His humanity when He asked her for a drink (v7). He was fully God and fully man, but He was not a superhuman man. He was weary and thirsty.

If we use Jewish time reckoning, the sixth hour would be noon (v6). The Apostle John used Jewish time reckoning throughout the book. Therefore, this event took place about noon when it was getting hot. The women of the town would go out in the morning to draw water to avoid this hard labor during the heat of the day. This sinful woman who met Jesus, drew water at noon to avoid the scrutiny of the other women. She was likely an outcast for her immoral living.

THE CONVERSATION AT THE WELL

1) Give Me a drink.
    - How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?
2) If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you Living Water.

- Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.

3) Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

   - Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.

4) Go, call your husband, and come here.

   - I have no husband.

5) You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.

   - Sir, I perceive you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship

6) Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews, but the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

   - I know the Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.

7) I who speak to you am he. [portions of v8-26 ESV].

Jesus was sitting at the well, resting from His journey, when the woman arrived. We may assume she had already filled her pitcher with water when Christ asked for some.

As for the etiquette of this matter: It was allowable for Jew and Samaritan to engage in commerce and even public conversation, but it was not acceptable for Jewish men to converse in public with a Samaritan woman. Furthermore, Jewish custom forbade Jew and Samaritan to drink from the same vessel. Jesus had no vessel with Him for the woman to pour water

into. This is why she responded with the objection that a Jew would ask her for a drink.

Christ asked her for a drink. Then, He rebuked her for not asking Him for Living Water. This surely aroused her curiosity and, by now, she could sense there was something unusual about this man. So, after pointing out He had no vessel, she asked Him how He was going to get this Living Water and she wanted to know how He was greater than her forefather, Jacob.

The Samaritans claimed their heritage in Jacob and Joseph. It seemed like a valid argument, for they were sitting on the land and possessed the well Jacob had given his son, Joseph. They used this heritage to validate themselves as they were cut off from Judah, by land and by religion. The woman used this argument to make a point to this Jewish visitor. She argued as if Jacob personally gave the well to the Samaritans or as if possession of the well was a valid substitute for worshipping in Jerusalem.

The woman did not understand Jesus' message of the Living Water. She did not understand the Holy Spirit was this Living Water. At one of the feasts, Christ proclaimed, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" [7:37b-38 NASB].

Jew and Samaritan, alike, had changed God to the image which served their lifestyles and bias. The Jew had kept the form of their religion, but added rule upon rule, while the Samaritan had left much of this and incorporated pagan and worldly philosophy. Jew and Samaritan both rejected the Living Water promised by God; they both followed empty religion.

> for My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. [Jer 2:13 NASB].

The Living Water has come. We should be constantly seeking Him and drinking from His Word. How easy it is to let other things get in the way of our time with God. We might even rationalize how busy we are, but we find time to watch a movie or hang with friends on social media; broken cisterns which hold no water, and at the end of the day, Christ gets the crumbs of what is left.

> O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the LORD. [Jer 17:13 NASB].

In chapter 8, the Jews asked Christ if He is greater than their father, Abraham (8:53). The woman at the well asked Jesus if He was greater than their father, Jacob. In both cases, the expected answer was "no." In both cases, Christ did not answer "yes" or "no," but directed them to their need.

Rather than defend Himself, Christ narrowed the argument to lead her to true faith and worship. Christ gave the woman a comparison between the earthly and the eternal (v13-14). Earthly water leads again to thirst while heavenly water or the Holy Spirit, becomes a well of eternal life and satisfaction.

She heard the claim whoever drinks of the water Christ gives will never thirst again (v14). This caught her interest. Now, here is the difference between Christ's invitation to eternal life and the modern American gospel: The modern approach after this woman asked for the eternal water would be to tell her to accept Christ; never ruin the moment by telling her she must repent, as this might offend her. Christ's method was to confront her with her sin. Though the water is given freely, it is never given without repentance and turning from sin.

> Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the water. . .let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. [Isa 55:1,7 ESV].

Christ told her to bring her husband (v16), knowing full well she had no husband and she was living immorally with a man (v17-18). Up to this point, the woman had desired the physical, thirst-quenching water. Christ confronted her with her sin to show her she needed the spiritual, sin-cleansing water.

It is a common interpretation of this passage, when confronted with her sin, the woman changed the subject, but maybe there is something else going on here. In part, sensing Christ to be a prophet, she was interested in His interpretation of an age old conflict between the Jews and Samaritans (v19-20). Or, it may have been, she was offended by this Jew who judged her, yet if she could validate her religion, her lifestyle could not be condemned. For this reason or others, she posed a question of religion.

Christ stayed on track; He was targeting her soul. He focused on truth, not controversy; He did not defend Himself when she was offended by His judgment.

1. He told her one day the current controversy would not matter (neither this mountain nor Jerusalem (v21)).

2. He told her she and the Samaritans had been living a lie (You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews (v22)).
3. He told her God is looking for people to worship Him in spirit and in truth (v23-24).

In truth, there was no controversy, as Jew and Samaritan both knew the command had been given by God long ago to worship Him in Jerusalem. The Samaritans had compromised this truth for political expediency. Christ did not argue this to settle the controversy, but to open her eyes to her guilt. She was living in sin and the religion she was hiding behind was not going to save her.

How Christ finished the conversation, once again marks a big difference between His methods and the modern American gospel. He told her God is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (v23). The modern American gospel says God loves us the way we are and there is no need to change. By saying those who are saved worship God in spirit and truth, Jesus made it clear there is a change in the lives of those who have truly tasted of this water. We live our religion of worship.

> present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. [Rom 12:1b-2a NASB].

In addition to this. Christ said God is a spirit (v24). The modern American gospel says Christianity is not a religion, but a relationship; as if God is a man like you and me. This false gospel will tell you that you can vaguely desire eternal life from a God of mercy, if you just acknowledge Him. This is nothing more than tipping your hat to God and expecting to be saved from Hell. Christ clarified the walk of the true believer is religious by setting the terms: we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The modern American gospel will tell you God is seeking relationship. Jesus' message is God is not seeking friends; He is seeking worshippers.

THE MESSIAH IS HERE

She was under conviction, yet she resisted repentance. It is hard when you have been taught something all your life and someone comes along and tells you this is wrong. It was hard for Nicodemus, also.

The Samaritans made God in their own image so they would not have to worship in Jerusalem. The woman used this false image to validate her lifestyle. She viewed Christ as a prophet and when His words became

convicting, she claimed a higher authority. Until then, she was free to continue her life as she saw fit.

IN CLOSING

When Jesus met the woman at the well, He told her physical water satisfies for the moment, but spiritual water wells up to eternal life. He then exposed her sin to bring her to repentance. When she tried to dismiss herself on technicalities, He brought her back to the core: God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Some have responded to God's call in repentance and faith. Others, like the woman at the well, have been arguing with God and justifying themselves all their lives. Some use religion to justify themselves or they use it as a cover to continue in their sin. The unrepentant man makes God into an image which validates himself.

Many are deceived to believe they are walking with Christ if they tip their hat to Him. We need to get into the Word, so we can understand who God is and what His image really looks like. We must surrender to Him in repentance. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 NASB].

Is Christianity A Relationship Or A Religion?

Because religion has a bad name in our culture and it bears the image of hypocrites, many professing Christians want to distance themselves from this idea that following Christ is a religion. Rather than preach repentance, the modern American gospel preaches a relationship with God. This is a false gospel. We are told throughout the Scriptures our faith is religion. To make the gospel more palatable to sinners is a blasphemous effort to please man rather than God.

This idea that God is looking for a relationship implies several things:

1) We can bring God down to our own level. Rather than repent, we can add God to our life. He will make our life better, more fulfilling. This is blasphemy.

2) We can define how we worship God and what this looks like. Some have made the worship service so worldly. They have this idea we can make worship so cool and exciting, that Christ might even worship with us. This is blasphemy.

3) God just wants to love us and He accepts us no matter what we do or how we live and on and on it goes. After all, He knows our hearts (as if He sees good in us, although our hearts are evil and have deceived us). This is blasphemy.

4) The relationship is centered around ourself. It is about how we feel about God. This is blasphemy.

This use of relationship implies we can be casual friends with God and the relationship is ours to groom as we see fit.

> you thought that I was one like yourself. [Psa 50:21 ESV].

The easy-believism, seeker-friendly church came up with the idea God is looking for a relationship to make faith in Christ seem appealing. This is the wide gate, where professing Christian preachers try to crowd as many people as possible into the kingdom of God. Jesus warned us to beware of the wide gate and seek the narrow gate. This is religion.

> Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. [Mat 7:13-14 NASB].

Many want to believe Christ was inclusive, but while Christ was on earth, the people had a problem with His teaching because He was exclusive. He

often taught the crowd why they could not be saved. At one point, a man in the crowd asked Jesus to clarify whether He really meant only a few would be saved.

> And someone said to Him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." [Luk 13:23-24 ESV].

The Bible does not say we need a relationship with God. It says we HAVE a relationship with God. We are either saved or condemned.

> who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. [Rom 2:6-8 NASB].

John the Baptist said, those who believe have eternal life; they will be with God forever; but those who disobey REMAIN under God's wrath (3:36). Jesus said whoever believes is not condemned; whoever does not believe is CONDEMNED ALREADY (3:18). There are only two relationships with God.

Christ said God is a spirit (4:24). He made clear God is not a man. If we look at our relationship with God as we look at our relationships with man, we are bringing God down to our level. If we follow Christ, our relationship with God is that of worshipers (4:24). This is religion.

> Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. [Rev 5:12 NASB].

Furthermore, our worship is a lifestyle, not an event. It is not the going to church nor a well displayed passion with arms lifted in the air that God is looking for. The prophet Jeremiah warned the people of Judah having the temple of the LORD was not enough; nor was it enough to worship and rejoice in the temple while living their lives as they saw fit (Jer 7:2-11).

> Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD." [Jer 7:4 NASB].

As for the true nature of Christianity: The Bible is a book of religion and Christ taught religion while He walked this earth. The Bible tells us to put our religion into practice (Jam 1:26-27); warns us not to allow our religion to be in vain (1Ti 1:3-7); and explains what is the religion God accepts or

what God expects of our religious walk (Mic 6:8). Christianity has worship (4:23-24); it has sacraments: baptism (Mar 16:16) and communion (1Co 11:23-25); it has requirements of obedience (Mat 16:24). To follow Christ is a religion.

Jesus called us to abide in Him (15:1-6). To follow Christ with all our heart, soul and mind is worship. To be in His Word, studying it and applying it to our lives, is worship. To live the Word in our lives is worship. This is religion.

> Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. [Rom 12:1-2 NASB].

Jesus told the woman at the well God is looking for worshipers (4:24). To worship is an act of religion not an act of relationship. This worship comes out in what we say and what we do; it is evidenced in how we live. True worship is religion. Those who worship God do not treat this as merely a relationship.

The mantra of the modern American gospel is God is looking for relationship. He needs you. He is waiting for you. He has a wonderful plan for your life. The Bible has news for these people: He is not seeking a relationship; He is not seeking casual friends. He is seeking worshipers, who will worship in spirit and in truth (4:24). You are either a worshiper of God or you are His enemy and under His wrath (3:36).

> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 NASB].

God does not call us to relationship; He calls us to repent. Our walk with Christ is religion, pure and simple.

John 4:25-42 Conviction Of Sin Leads Many To Repent

As Christ and the woman were talking, Christ would convict and she would defend herself with technicalities. Finally, she called upon a higher authority: the Messiah. She was pretty certain the Messiah was not available to prove her wrong. So she could kick this can down the road and not have to justify her life to this stranger.

> **Read John 4:25-42.**

THE MESSIAH WILL DECLARE ALL THINGS

When Jesus replied He is the Messiah, she may have been startled or overwhelmed, but she no longer argued, for truth had hit her square in the face, so to speak.

The Bible does not say whether she actually repented at this moment, but it is strongly implied by the description of events. She left the water jar, leaving behind the urgency of her daily chores. She ran to tell others, confessing her sin and proclaiming the words of Christ. She was born again.

Someone who is born again does not hide their faith; they feel compelled to tell others. This is what Christ meant, when He told Nicodemus, "But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." [3:21 ESV]. The born again do not fear the exposure of their sin, because the change God brings reveals the work of God in their life.

> **Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it? [v29 NASB].**

She was not confused any longer. She did not ask "can this be the Christ?" to resolve any uncertainty on her part. The question was for the hearer to come and see. She was affirming what the Lord said about Himself was true. Repentance had come to her; she was remorseful for her sin as she invited others to hear the message of salvation.

MY FOOD IS TO DO THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME

All through the Gospel of John, much is mentioned of timing. John is very precise in his timing of events. According to John's gospel, this is the first time Christ revealed publicly He was the Messiah and the disciples arrived just in time to witness the declaration. Christ also timed the disciples return to coincide with the woman being born again. They seemed oblivious to the miracle, but rather marveled Christ was speaking to a woman.

It is a wonderful thing that Christ would talk to anyone, man or woman. It is even more phenomenal Christ would leave His throne above to bring salvation to mankind. This was all lost on the disciples at this time and they falsely assumed Christ to have engaged in some petty conversation.

When the disciples urged Christ to eat, His response was He had spiritual nourishment (v31-32) and He was no longer physically hungry. When He said this, giving example of the harvest, they should have understood a great work had just happened. The next few days, as they witnessed this harvest, and that among the Samaritans no less, they would begin to understand the harvest which God is looking for.

Christ said He came to accomplish the work of the Father who sent Him. He did not come to do His own work, as in the work of a man. The work of man seeks his own glory, but Christ came to do the work of the Father, that is, the work of God. The work of God seeks God's glory and Jesus came to do the work of the Father (1:18).

The work of God seeks for men to know and believe (6:29). How much more are we, as mere temples of clay, obligated to live our lives for the glory of the Father rather than for our own glory? Jesus is our example.

Jesus talked about the harvest with His disciples, explaining how one man reaps and another sows. His comments revealed His excitement as He anticipated a great harvest of souls to come in the next few days while they stayed in Sychar. Jesus and the disciples were there to reap a harvest.

Before the town's people came to hear Him, He prepared the disciples, telling them others have labored and the harvest was at hand. We must always keep in mind the wages or the return on the harvest is always from the Father; it is not of our own efforts that we reap. Our obligation is to preach the Word; it is God's domain to determine who will believe.

THE NEED TO HEAR THE WORD

Many believed because of the testimony of the woman at the well. So the people asked Him to stay. He taught them for two days. By the end of His stay, the people no longer believed based upon the word of the woman alone, but upon Christ's teachings they believed.

"We know" is an important declaration. This is not a head knowledge; this is not a private knowledge. When the woman declared Christ to the people, they believed enough to come and hear. After they heard Christ, they knew. Settled. They did not doubt Him. They were not confused about who He was. They heard and believed. They declared their belief. This is why it is important to speak the message of Jesus Christ: so people can know.

> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? [Rom 10:14 NASB].

When people hear, it is the work of God for them to believe (6:29). Those who believe, will know because God gives understanding (1Co 2:14).

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [1Jo 5:20 NASB].

These were Samaritans; they were outcast from the Jews. Yet, they were willing to receive the truth, while the Jews were not. The Apostle John told us Jesus came to His own (the Jews), but His own did not receive Him (1:11). Here is the singular recorded instance of conversion on a mass scale during Christ's ministry and it was not of the Jews, but it was among the despised Samaritans.

> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world . . .so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus . . .so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.' [1Co 1:26-31 ESV].

IN CLOSING

Jesus brought the woman at the well to faith via conviction. He convicted her of sin and the consequence of sin. He did not tell her "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He told her God demanded righteousness; that we must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

She did not add Jesus to her life. She did not come to Christ for physical satisfaction or for help with her life; this is what she sought while in her sin. The woman turned from her sin. She sought after this living water which leads to eternal life.

When the townspeople came to hear the message of Christ, you can be sure this message was the same message He delivered to the woman. The message was this: God is righteous and seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.

> Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. [2Co 5:11 ESV].

In the modern American gospel, there is no fear of God. Men try to persuade others to add Jesus to their life. They tell them God loves them the way they are; there is no need to change; God has a wonderful plan for their life. There is no fear of God; there is no conviction of sin; there is no desire for God's righteousness.

> But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness. [Isa 5:16 NASB].

The woman at the well found her righteousness in Christ. She repented; she threw off her sin. Out of her fear of God, she rushed to call others; to bring them out of their sin. Wasn't this her question? "Meet the man who told me everything I did; who convicted me of my sin. Isn't He the Messiah?"

The people of Sychar came to the Messiah from the testimony of the woman. Upon hearing Christ, they did not "give their hearts to Jesus." The Bible says they believed. God gave them understanding (6:45; Act 16:14; 1Jo 5:20; Psa 25:8-9). This was God's doing.

> This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. [6:29 NASB].

Jesus said one sows and another reaps. We speak and sometimes the hearer responds. Sometimes we speak and people respond because others have labored. Sometimes they do not respond, but our job is to sow the seed.

John 4:43-54 Faith Grew Out Of Hope For Healing

Christ spent two days with the Samaritans. After those two days, He continued His journey to Galilee (v43).

Read John 4:43-54.

HOW CHRIST'S GALILEAN MINISTRY BEGAN

This passage marks the start of Christ's Galilean ministry, which was about half His entire ministry. It began approximately December 27 and ended approximately April 29 the next following year. Sixteen months in all (WH vol 1, page180).

You might wonder why He would go to Galilee, with the knowledge or idea that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown (v44). He most likely left Judea so He would not provoke the Pharisees and start a crisis before its time. He was leaving the place where He was becoming too popular and heading to a place where He would not be celebrated.

Many professing Christians think we must win the world to Christ. It is true, we do have a duty to witness because Jesus told us to go into the whole world, even among our own neighbors and teach others to follow Christ (Mat 28:18-20), but, if there ever was an opportunity to win the world, it was while Christ was on the Earth. He did not do this, in fact, He left a region when He became too popular.

He arrived at Cana. The Apostle John said Christ was welcomed when He arrived in Galilee. He was known because of the miracles He had done in Jerusalem, during the feast (v45). The people were impressed by what they saw, but they were not convinced by His words.

THE REQUEST FOR HEALING

The news was out and word got to a man in Capernaum. He heard Christ was in Cana and He went to see Him; to ask Him to come and heal his son (v46-47). This man from Capernaum, whose son was dying, was a servant of the king, a nobleman or bureaucrat. He probably had some authority and he could have sent a messenger, but he went himself; he wanted to make sure Christ would come.

Matthew and Luke tell the story of a Roman Centurion (captain of 100 soldiers) who had a servant who was ill and dying. He asked Jesus to speak the word and His servant would be healed, for he was not worthy to have Christ come. In fact, in the Luke account, he did not feel worthy to plead

with Christ directly, but sent others. Jesus praised the faith of this man (Mat 8:5-13; Luk 7:1-10).

In this passage, Jesus rebuked this royal official (v48). Here was a man whose son was dying and Christ seemed to lack compassion. This man was likely among those who had seen Christ's miracles in Jerusalem. Which explains why he would travel sixteen miles of hill country to Cana to seek healing for his son who was at the point of death. Jesus rebuked him, for He knew the man's heart. He did not come to hear Christ's message; he did not come to repent. He did not come because he believed Jesus was the Christ. He came because this was his best shot; maybe the man of miracles could heal his son.

Jesus spoke this rebuke for the crowd as well (you people, v48). The Galileans welcomed Him because they had seen His great deeds when they were in Jerusalem at the feast. They wanted to be entertained and impressed. They would have followed Christ to the nobleman's house, sixteen miles away, had Christ traveled there. They, too, had not come to hear Christ's message and repent. These people believed Him to be a miracle worker, but they needed a steady dose of signs and wonders to remain convinced.

The believing crowd, the believing man: This was not a saving faith. Many believe in Christ, but are not saved. In chapter 5, the man who was healed appeared to lack a saving faith. In chapter 6, the crowd of believers began to murmur against Him and eventually left Him. Not all believers, not all professing Christians are saved. People go to church, but are not saved. Many profess faith in Christ, but are not saved.

Some commentaries make mention his faith was limited on another point: he believed Christ's powers were limited to this side of life because he urged Christ to come before his son died (v49). Christ never addressed this, nor did He wait for the son to die to make the point, like He did for Lazarus. Certainly, Christ could have raised the boy from the dead; in Mark 5:35f, He raised up the ruler's daughter who died while He was on the way to heal her (Luke 8:49f) and in chapter 11, when He heard Lazarus was ill and He waited for him to die. In this case, however, the issue did not come up.

CHRIST GAVE THE MAN FAITH

When Jesus told the man to return home, his son will live, the Bible tells us simply the man believed what Christ told him and he went home (v50). No whining, no begging; he simply went home; he acted upon what he believed. We know faith is a gift from God (Eph 2:8-9) and He had just spoken with Christ. He left with faith in Christ.

The man appeared to have a good relationship with his servants, because,

1) they sought him out (v51) and
2) they were concerned about the condition of his son (v52).

HOW FAITH CAME TO THE MAN'S HOUSEHOLD

The servants told him what time his son was healed; it was the same time Christ had told him his son would live (v53). Not only was there much rejoicing for the healed son, but this man now believed in the Son of God and his household believed with him (v54).

This is similar to the story of the jailor with the Apostle Paul and Silas: when he was confronted with an extra-ordinary miracle of deliverance, he believed and his household with him (Act 16:34). This believing along with the household indicates a saving faith; a trusting in the Son of God rather than a mere belief in his power to do miracles.

The Apostle John wrote this was the second miracle Christ performed in Galilee (v54). The first being turning the water into wine in chapter 2.

FAITH VS BELIEVING

Many people believe in God and they want Christ for what He can do for their life. They hope to prosper; they hope their troubles to be over; they hope for relationships to heal; or other such hopes. Their faith is based upon what they hope Jesus will do; maybe even eternal life, but it is not based upon the work of Christ to reconcile them to God. When trials come and their hope fades, they fall away. They are much like the people who needed a steady diet of miracles to believe. This believing is not a saving faith.

We see the ruler and his household were grateful for the healing of his son and they put their faith in the Son of God. With the next healing, we will see a man who is grateful in a limited sense because his desire to please man is greater than his desire to repent and follow the Christ who healed him. Coming up next. . .

IN CLOSING

Christ left Judea because He was getting too popular. The Galileans welcomed Him. They had seen and heard of His miracles while at the feast in Jerusalem. They were hoping to see more. Though they believed, they did not have a saving faith. They were looking for entertainment. Many

professing Christians go to church for entertainment and too many churches are willing to accommodate them.

A man made a difficult trip to ask Jesus to return with him and save his dying son. Jesus rebuked him. Too many people have this idea, Jesus was always compassionate and kind. In reality, Jesus calls out our need to repent, which is the ultimate compassion and kindness, even though it may appear unloving to those who live by their feelings.

The man persisted. Christ told him, "Go; your son will live." There was no entertainment value in this healing for the man nor for the crowd, but the man believed. He obeyed and went home. He did not put forward his ideas to Christ how to heal his son; he did not whine about how young his son or how deserving his son; he did not beg; he did not claim any promise; he did nothing, but believe and obey.

The son was healed and the man's household believed and they were saved, but first. . .he believed and obeyed.

John 5:1-15 The Man With A Purpose Driven Life

Many people have the belief that all the people who were healed by Jesus were saved. Even today, many people believe they are saved because God did a miracle in their life or He answered a prayer. So many professing Christians think their vision, combined with prayer will accomplish whatever they imagine; they believe the false gospel of the purpose driven life.

In this story, we will look at the life of a purpose driven man. He wanted a normal life and social credibility. He did not want to be thrown out of the temple and lose all social standing. This is why he sought the favor of the church, rather than obey Christ.

Read John 5:1-15.

According to Nehemiah 3:1, Eliashib the high priest, along with his brothers, built the Sheep Gate. This was during the time Cyrus allowed the Israeli captives to return to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. By this Sheep Gate, was a pool. There were five shelters where crippled people waited for healing. One man had waited a long time; he had been ill for 38 years.

About the angel stirring the water: The ESV leaves out the last half of verse 3 through verse 4, with a notation; the NASB brackets this portion, with a notation. This is because the older manuscripts, from which they were translated, do not have the part about the angel stirring the water. Tertullian, an early Christian writer who lived about 145-220 AD, described this passage by telling the legend of the angel stirring the water. If he explained the passage with this story, it is likely this part was not in the original text. The words might have begun in later manuscripts as margin notes, eventually creeping into the text (WH vol 1, pg 190-191).

Nonetheless, whether John included this account in the original text or if it was added later, this did not attest to the validity of the miraculous story of the angel stirring the waters. The account only makes mention of the tradition and the belief, without commentary.

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

There was a popular "Christian" book titled "The Purpose Driven Life." The nut of the book, and this is not an endorsement, is instruction to find meaning to our lives based upon five essential purposes, as determined by the author. The book's theme and the words "purpose driven" suggest a person can take control of their life by setting their priorities. The book was

popular because we all want control of our lives, but we know from Scripture, man makes his plans, but God directs his steps (Pro 16:9).

The emphasis of these false Christian self-help books is making your life better; or, as Joel Osteen put it, "Your Best Life Now." These are nothing more than Christianized versions of "Think And Grow Rich" and other secular theologies about putting yourself first. The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God (1Co 3:19).

This crippled man at the pool was there because he was purpose driven to find healing. He had faith in a legend. It is natural for us to pursue a better life for ourselves. It is not natural to surrender our lives to God's will and focus on glorifying Him; this takes a supernatural work of God. Therefore, most people going through trials will fight to maintain their dignity and pride; few will humble themselves and seek God's will in the trial. I know this firsthand because I fail most trials God puts me through.

Think about this: What if the sole purpose of your life would be one event that would bring God glory, but it would also bring rejection or judgment for you among the people you esteem the most? Few would accept this; most would struggle for the acceptance of their peers. This is the story of the crippled man at the pool, who was purpose driven to be accepted in the temple and among his peers.

On the other hand, God had one purpose for the cripple at the pool: that Christ would be glorified by his healing. This is why God made him wait thirty-eight years for healing. All the while, this man's desire was the vindication of his pride. If he had glorified God, he would have been cast out of the temple; he would have lost all his social connections. So, when Christ healed him, rather than give God glory, he sought his own; he wanted to be accepted at the temple.

THE CRIPPLE'S COMPLAINT

When Christ healed the man and told him to pick up his mat and walk, the man obeyed and the healing was immediate (v8-9). So far the story is good.

But there is an indicator of his attitude just before this healing: Christ asked the man if he wanted to be healed. He could have answered, "yes," but he did not. He complained for he had allowed himself to become bitter in his estate (v7). For all those many years, no one had come to his aid; he was bitter. He was proud and he never accepted the fact it was God's will for him to sit and wait for 38 years. He wanted his life back.

Sometimes God asks us to go through difficult times and sometimes the bad times can seem like they drag on forever. Do we give glory to God

each and every day or do we allow bitterness to creep in? If we do not surrender our pride to God's will, bitterness will overtake us.

> In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. [Heb 5:7-8 NASB].

Christ went through a bitter time. He prayed to the Father, who could spare Him, but did not. Nonetheless, Christ submitted to the Father's will and was obedient to death. Christ is our example. When we pray, even when God does not answer according to our will, we must submit ourselves to His will. We must be obedient, even in our attitude.

THE TRADITIONS OF MAN

When Christ healed the man, He chose to do so on the Sabbath (v9). He fully intended to bring about controversy between Himself and the Jews. In this, He would have the opportunity to reveal who He was and why He had come.

The formerly crippled man was now walking along the road on the Sabbath, carrying his mat. A religious leader, or someone who followed the religious leaders closely, and others with him challenged the man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath; because it was against the law.

It was not against the Law as given by God. God never intended such tedious and oppressive rules. The Old Testament commanded Israelites not to carry commercial burdens or labor for profit on the Sabbath (Exo 20:10; Neh 13:15; Jer 17:21). There is no Scripture against carrying your mat on the Sabbath. The Jews made a tyranny of God's Law and a mockery of Christ's healing.

When confronted by this legalist and his entourage, the formerly crippled man defended himself, explaining he was doing what the man who healed him told him to do (v10-11). The man who was healed did not know whom his Healer was and he said so. His reaction to this confrontation was one of self-defense at a time he should have given God glory.

Not impressed by the miracle, the Jews wanted to know who it was who told him to take up his mat. They did not ask "who made you whole?" as that would have exposed their hypocrisy (JFB). It should have been evident to him the Jews intended to prosecute this man. To this, he should have challenged them, as did the man born blind in chapter 9, but the formerly crippled man desired to please them and be accepted in the temple and by his peers.

Jesus asked the question, "If you desire the glory of your peers, rather than the glory of God, how can you be saved?" [v44].

SIN NO MORE

When Jesus met the man at the temple, He warned him to sin no more (v14). Up to this time, the Bible does not mention his spiritual condition, but the passage reveals he did not seek to glorify God; he sought to promote himself or preserve his social position. When he blamed his Healer, as the reason for carrying his mat, he justified himself, and he would blame Him to save himself, even if it condemned his Healer.

Christ warned him against sinful thoughts and attitudes. He warned him to guard against his desire to justify himself and please man. According to the Scriptural account, the man was not rejoicing and praising God for his healing, while at the temple. Never once did he thank Christ when he saw Him again. From this we can assume his purpose at the temple was social rather than for worshiping God.

Many people go to church. Their purpose is not to worship; they seek to glorify themselves. They use church as a social network or a business network, but they do not seek God's glory.

After Christ warned the man, the Bible says he went away and told the Jews it was Jesus who healed him. He did not listen to Christ's warning and he expressed no gratitude. He wanted to get himself off the hook for carrying his mat. So he turned the information about Christ over to the Jews.

This description is similar to the activities of some who witnessed the raising of Lazarus, in chapter 11; they went and told the Jews. Their intention was to bring harm to Christ. Though they witnessed a most amazing miracle, they were offended by Christ.

Think about this one more time: What if the sole purpose of your life would be one event that would bring God glory, but it would also bring rejection from among your peers? Few would accept this; most would struggle for the acceptance of their peers. This is the story of the crippled man at the pool. The whole purpose for the life of the crippled man at the pool, the reason God made him wait thirty-eight years to be healed, was for Christ to reveal His power and authority.

Had this man professed Christ or defended Him, he would have been cast out of the temple and faced rejection among his peers. So, even though this man obeyed Christ and took up his bed and walked, it does not appear his faith was a saving faith.

1) He did not thank Christ or rejoice.
2) He did not defend his Healer before the Jews.
3) When Jesus told the man to sin no more, he left.
4) He left to tell the Jews who it was who had healed him; knowing full well their animosity against Christ. In other words, he snitched.
5) He was looking to please man rather than God.

Jesus warned him to sin no more, so nothing worse will happen to him (v14). What could be worse than spending eternity in Hell? The natural man hates God and the unregenerate heart will not praise Him, even if God works a miracle in his life.

IN CLOSING

Many men, even professing Christians, strive to be rich or comfortable in this world and God appears to bless their efforts. When we see these apparent blessings, we think God blesses positive thoughts and man's efforts. However, not everyone who appears blessed by God is saved and this account of the healing of the crippled man demonstrates not all those healed by Christ were saved.

Though this man sacrificed 38 years of his life, albeit involuntarily, waiting for his special purpose, when he received healing from Christ, rather than giving God glory, he wanted his old bitter life back; healed, of course. He became purpose driven to please man. He didn't want to lose his seat at the temple.

It is a sad thing for our lives to be used for God's purpose, only to miss the joy and promise of living for His glory. If we cling to our goals and purposes and are unwilling to submit to God's purposes, we cannot be saved.

John 5:16-29 Jesus Christ's Authority, The Son Of God

One purpose of the healing Jesus did on the Sabbath was to demonstrate the work of mercy. From the Scriptures we know the Father continually performs the work of drawing people to the Son (6:44) and bringing to completion the good work He began in us (Php 1:6). This is a great mercy because we all deserve God's wrath. Jesus performed miracles of healing. These were a sign, not only of the power of God, but also a physical demonstration of His mercy.

Christ intentionally healed the crippled man on the Sabbath, to bring about a controversy. "For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath." [v16]. Through the resulting confrontation, He exposed the Jews' hypocrisy and proclaimed His mission to reveal the Father.

Read John 5:16-29.

THE SON IS EQUAL TO THE FATHER

Jesus demonstrated His authority with the healing of the crippled man at the pool, but the Jews were harassing Him because He healed on the Sabbath. When Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" [v17], they wanted even more to kill Him.

1) He healed on the Sabbath; and

2) He made Himself equal with God by calling God His Father.

God ordained the Sabbath (Gen 2:3). Therefore, God is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus claimed to be the Lord of the Sabbath (Mat 12:8; Mar 2:28; Luk 6:5). In this chapter, He confronted the Jews and their hypocrisy by healing a man on the Sabbath. A reasonable person, witnessing this miracle, would understand He must have had the authority to do so. This power to heal could only come from God. So, this begs the question: how could He heal on the Sabbath, if it were forbidden by God?

The Jews were not serving God in their keeping of the Sabbath; they were serving their own rules and traditions. They served these rules by demanding the man not to carry his mat on the Sabbath. The Jews had turned the Sabbath from a day honoring to God into a burden of rules to control people. By making rule upon rule, the priests and their law had become the lords of the Sabbath. Jesus confronted them to reclaim His authority.

> For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. [Rom 10:3-4 NASB].

When Jesus Christ said His Father is working until now, and He was working (v17), His claim was He is equal to the Father. The Jews claimed to serve God, the Father, but they had no understanding of the Trinity. And now, a man, who had broken the Sabbath, was claiming to be equal with God. For this reason, the Jews wanted to kill Him (v18).

The Father and the Son are equal. Here is how Jesus further explained it in the following verses:

1) The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing; that is, the Son glorifies the Father in His work (v19);

2) The Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing (v20);

3) Greater works than these will He show Him, so you may marvel; that is, the Father glorifies the Son in His work (v20);

4) Just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, the Son gives life to whom He chooses (v21);

5) The Father has reserved all judgment to the Son, so that, the Son will be honored just as the Father (v22-23); and

6) Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him; that is, you cannot honor God without honoring both the Father and the Son (v23).

The Jews professed to love the Father, but they hated the Son. Jesus was clear in His teaching: a person cannot be saved if he denies the deity of Christ. Therefore, professing Christians who have a unitarian view of God, such as many Pentecostals, cannot be saved. Cults which deny Jesus is God from eternity, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, cannot be saved. A profession of faith does not make you saved.

> Who is the liar, but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. [1Jo 2:22-23 NASB].

THE SON DOES WHAT HE SEES THE FATHER DOING

Twice in this chapter, Jesus said He could do nothing on His own:

1) v19: The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing.

2) v30: I can do nothing on My own … because I seek … the will of Him who sent Me.

When Jesus said He could do nothing on His own, He did not mean He lacked the power. There is a two-fold meaning to this:

1) Christ, though fully man, was not conducting His life as fallen men do; He was not acting to promote His own glory; and

2) Christ did the work He saw His Father doing. This is because the Father and the Son (and the Spirit) are always in complete union with each other and in complete agreement. Not that He needed the Father's permission; they operate together in full accord.

The Father glorifies the Son in His work and the Son glorifies the Father in His work. God glorifies Himself in all His work (v19-20).

What Christ told the people was this: What they saw in this healing was not the work of a mere man; it was not the work of a man looking for wealth, fame or power. What they saw was the work of God. In other words, Christ was telling them this: "You say you serve the Father, but God is here."

In verse 17, Jesus said, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." And, in verse 19, "the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise." Not only is the Son working because the Father is working, but they are doing the same thing. Christ does not work in opposition to nor separately from the Father. This is why He said, in verse 30, "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

This is not to be confused with a popular heresy that claims Christ was continually adjusting what He was doing to bring His works into conformity with the Father. Over and over, Christ told His disciples He and the Father are one. It was the natural state of Christ while He was on earth to be in conformity with the Father. They have always been in complete communion with each other.

This was a fulfillment of prophecy. This is what God told the people through the prophecy of Moses.

> And I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And whoever will not

listen to My words that He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. [Deu 18:18b-19 ESV].

THE LISTS OF CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

Before the creation of the world, throughout eternity past, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were in perfect fellowship; celebrating each other in perfect love. Here are a few verses from the Gospel of John which confirm the Father loves the Son:

1) The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. [3:35].
2) The Father loves Me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. [10:17].
3) As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. [15:9].
4) So that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me. . . because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. [17:23-24].

In this love between the Father and the Son, the Father shows the Son what He is doing. This is more of a celebration together, rather than a revealing or instructing. In the first chapter of Genesis, in the creation account, God made all creation through His Son (Col 1:16). The account says daily God saw all He made was good. This, too, was not a revealing, but a celebration.

After Christ told the hateful crowd the Father loves Him and confides in Him, He told them He will do greater works than this healing, so they will marvel (v20); and some will hate Him more. He gave a list of proofs, confirming the Father's love toward the Son and the authority given Him by the Father:

1) **As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. [v21 ESV].**

Christ's authority will be shown to the world when He raises the dead. He raised the ruler's daughter (Mar 5:22-43); He raised the widow's son (Luk 7:11-15); and He raised Lazarus (11:1-44). In Luke's account, he said "Fear seized them all, and they glorified God." [Luk 7:16]. This should be the reaction, for raising the dead would be a frightful thing to witness. Who can raise anyone from death, except that one have the power of life and death. In this fallen world, there is no greater evidence of authority than raising the dead.

2) **For the Father judges on one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. [v22-23a ESV].**

Jesus Christ is judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25). Just as Christ has the power of life and death, He will judge; He will judge those who will suffer eternal judgment or death. Jesus said if you do not believe, you are condemned already (3:18). This, too, should cause men to fear Him; yet these men were not ashamed to condemn the One who will judge them at the end and send them to Hell.

Can man rightly judge the Judge of all mankind?

3) **Whoever does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent Him. [v23b ESV].**

The Jews professed to hold the Father in highest honor. Yet the Son is equal to the Father in honor. Those who wanted to kill him for claiming this honor are guilty of blaspheming the Father. Christ's authority is equal to the Father and this should be a cause of great fear; especially for those who have judged Him. If you do not honor the Son, you cannot honor the Father.

Religious Jews today do not honor God the Father because they refuse to acknowledge His Son as the Messiah. Many professing Christians claim the Jews and Christians serve the same God. However, Jesus makes it clear: if they do not honor the Son, they do not honor the Father. So, although the Jew may claim the God of the Old Testament, they have made God in their own image, because they exclude the Son.

4) **Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. [v24 ESV].**

Christ's authority is demonstrated in mercy granted toward those who receive Him. For all man is guilty of rebellion against God and deserves death; eternal death. Yet, Christ gives mercy to those who call upon Him; those who believe the Father sent Him. No one can grant this mercy without having the power of life and death.

5) **The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. [v25 ESV].**

The Apostle Paul wrote, "even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ." [Eph 2:5a NASB]. Christ brought life to a dead people. Those whom He has called will hear (10:27). Who can raise people to eternal life, except the one who has authority over life and death? "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." [1:4 NASB].

6) **As the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. [v26 ESV].**

The Father has power over life and death and He has granted this power to the Son. In Jesus incarnate, a man has come to earth, with the power of life and death. This should have caused the Jews to awe and fear; they were speaking to the man who had the power of life and death. How do you kill the One who has the power of life and death?

7) **He has given Him authority to execute judgment. [v27 ESV].**

Not only has the Father granted the Son, or shared with the Son, the power of life and death, He has granted the Son to be the final judge; to be the one who will send men to Hell. This should have caused great fear, yet the Jews continued to judge Him and mock Him and they set out to kill the One who could send them to Hell.

8) **An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. [v28-29a ESV].**

Even the dead will honor His authority. After Christ rose, graves were opened and the dead testified to Christ's authority.

> And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. [Mat 27:51–53 NASB].

"[T]he Father Himself, who will accept no homage which is not accorded to His own Son." [JFB]. There is no competition among the Godhead. They seek each other's glory and, in this passage, we see this of the Father toward the Son and the Son toward the Father. The Father has given the Son authority and demands men to honor His Son. The Apostle Paul tells us, the Father is glorified in the Son's glory; "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Php 2:9-11 NASB].

In verse 20, Christ said the Father will show the Son even greater works so the people would marvel. They marveled at the miracles, though most still did not believe. Then in verse 28, after listing several proofs the Father has given Him authority, He told them not to marvel at this, but marvel that all the dead will come at His call and on His command they will be sorted to eternal life or eternal death.

In a nutshell, He told those who wanted to kill Him it would be His decision whether they would live or die; for eternity. Those who believe in

Him will have life (v24), but this did not deter the angry crowd. They continued to set their judgment against the Judge of all the earth.

> All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [Mat 28:18 NASB].

Christ is the final judge of all; He gives life and He condemns to death. In verse 23, He said the Father judges no one; it is the Son who judges and the Father gave Him this authority so all may honor the Son. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "every knee will bow and every tongue confess."

> Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Php 2:9-11 ESV].

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

> **Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. [v24 NASB].**

Out of death and into life. The two points to escaping the judgment are:

1) Hear Christ's words: to listen is to obey the words of Christ, which is the Bible; and

2) Believe in the Father who sent Him: to believe is to do what the Father requires, namely to receive the Son and follow Him.

A man is condemned who will not believe in the name of the only Son of God and whoever does not obey Christ will not see life (3:18,36). Obedience is the key. Outward form and profession of faith cannot save us. In several passages, the Bible tells us to obey is better than sacrifice (1Sa 15:22; Psa 51:16-17; Pro 21:3; Jer 7:21-23; Hos 6:6; Mat 7:21-23; 12:7). Understand this: obedience is not what saves us; it is the evidence we have been regenerated to a new life. Obedience is a gift to us who are saved (Jer 31:33; Heb 10:16); if we do not have it, we are not saved.

The modern American gospel says, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." We know this is apostate because Christ never tried to convince unbelievers of the love of God. He warned them of their judgment if they refused to believe. Without the fear of God, there can be no repentance. After Christ explained how to be saved, He told His listeners

the time is coming "and is now here" when those who are spiritually dead will hear Christ's words and will live (v25). He is calling those who are dead in their sins to hear, repent and be saved.

Christ has the authority to execute all judgment and in this passage He said He will judge. This goes against the modern American gospel, which says Christ did not come to judge, He only came to love and to save.

> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. [Dan 12:2 ESV].

Christ has warned us of the judgment to come, when everyone in the tombs will come out to be judged (v28). Those who believe will go to eternal life and those who refuse will go to eternal damnation. The Jews were judging Him and wanted to kill Him, but Christ warned them, He will judge and His judgment is just because He seeks the will of the Father. His judgment will be final; He will sort those who will have eternal life or eternal death.

The people did not hear and they did not fear.

This is Christ's call to repentance. He did not woo nor did He beg; He gave warning. There is no salvation in Christ without a fear of God. He warned those who harden their hearts, but He spoke promise to those who listen. He said, those who hear will live and those who have done good will go to the resurrection of life (v25,29).

> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 ESV].

IN CLOSING

Christ was faced with an angry crowd of Jews. They preferred to accuse the Messiah of violating mans' laws, rather than give glory to God for the healing of a man who was crippled for 38 years.

Christ's defense was simple: 1) He said He was working as His Father was working; and 2) He spoke of the Father's love for Him and the authority which was given to Him. Christ's authority is an important matter. It is for this reason we are commanded to teach and preach the Gospel.

> All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,

> baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. [Mat 28:18b-20 NASB].

In the passage, Jesus said, "truly, truly" three times. Truly, truly means we need to pay attention.

1) [v19]. Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing.

2) [v24]. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

3) [v25]. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Christ used the opportunity of giving His defense to share the Gospel. He did not preach the modern American gospel of God's love. He warned the people He is the judge and they will be judged. He told them whoever hears His words and believes in the Father who sent Him will not be judged.

He has promised life to dead men; if we listen, we will pass from death to eternal life. God calls all men to repent and believe. Have you turned from your sin to follow Christ? or, like this crowd, does Christ offend you?

John 5:30-47 The Witnesses Which Testify Of Jesus Christ

In the last passage, Christ declared His authority, gave a warning of judgment and a call to repent. In this passage, He identified His witnesses as proof of His authority.

Read John 5:30-47.

A VALID TESTIMONY

When Jesus said if He alone testified of Himself, His testimony was not true (v31), He did not mean His testimony was false or that He was unreliable. He was referring to the Old Testament standard of two or three witnesses. Jesus said if He, as a man, testified of Himself, this would not be enough to be true or reliable as evidence in a court of law.

> A single witness shall not suffice. . . Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. [Deu 19:15 ESV].

On the other hand, Christ's testimony of Himself is valid, because He is God, but for the sake of the law of evidence, He produced the Father's testimony (v32). Even to this day, the Father testifies to the truth of His Son and He has left us the Scriptures, the Word of God, to confirm this testimony. The testimony of the Father and the Son satisfies the requirements of the law of evidence as given in the Old Testament.

In a nut: The Holy Bible is the Father's testimony of the Son of God.

In verses 21-29, Christ gave a list of reasons why the Father loves the Son and has given Him authority. In this passage, because the people were still unwilling to receive this testimony, so Christ gave a list of five witnesses; more than enough to satisfy the Law for proof of His authority.

1) **John the Baptist**: You asked John the Baptist and he bore witness to the truth (v33-35);

2) **The works**: The works that the Father has given Me to accomplish bear witness about Me (v36);

3) **The Father**: The Father who sent Me has borne witness about Me (v37-38);

4) **The Scriptures**: You search the Scriptures and it is they that bear witness about Me (v39); and

5) **Moses**: If you believed Moses, you would believe Me for he wrote of Me (v45-47).

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Apostle John recorded the questioning of John the Baptist by the Jewish leaders in 1:19-28. Jesus recalled this event to the crowd. He said, "You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth." [v33 ESV].

The Jews thought the Baptist may be the Messiah; so they questioned him because they wanted to know for certain. They may have accepted it if the Baptist would have claimed this glory for himself. For, surely, many times before and even after this, the Jews were deceived by false christs. In this passage the true Messiah stood before them and they were not willing to receive His testimony.

In referring to the testimony of John the Baptist, Jesus said He did not need man's testimony (v34). John was a fallen, imperfect man and Christ had the testimony of the Father.

Nonetheless, many of the Jews held the Baptist's word to be credible: "He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." [v35 ESV]. Though Christ did not need man's testimony, His aim in presenting it was to hand them proof at the level they would accept "so that you may be saved." [v34].

John the Baptist declared Jesus to be the Christ, the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (1:29-30). John issued the call to repent, but they would not believe.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE WORKS

Christ reiterated to the crowd He had the testimony of the Father and this testimony was evidenced by the works the Father had given Him to do (v36). Christ said this testimony of works was greater than the testimony of John. The works were a Huge Testimony; in other Scripture Jesus said if you can't believe, at least believe the works (10:38; 14:11).

The very work of healing a man on the Sabbath was evidence He had the Father's testimony. This should have given them pause to think: for why would God perform miracles through this man if God considered Him to be violating the Sabbath? Jesus said the works He did testified the Father had sent Him (v36).

They could not believe because they were blind (1Co 2:14).

THE TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER

Jesus told them the Father testified He is the Christ (v37). Now, they had never seen the Father nor heard His voice and Jesus said they do not have His Word abiding in them (v37-38), but the fullness of God was standing before them (Col 1:19).

Jesus told Philip if he has seen Him, he has seen the Father (14:9).

Jesus told the crowd if His Word is not abiding in you, it is because you do not believe (v38). God standing before them, but they still did not believe.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE SCRIPTURES

They studied the Scriptures (v39), which testify of the Christ, but they did not hear His voice because they did not have the Word abiding in them (v38). Jesus said His sheep hear His voice (10:27). Many study the Scriptures, but the Word is not in them, because they are not His sheep; they do not hear His voice.

You can read the Bible every day and still be blind. You can find peace and contentment in the Word and still be on your way to Hell. Jesus said they believed they had eternal life from their much study of the Scripture. Nonetheless, they cannot have life, for the Word they study bears witness Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but they refuse to believe (v39-40).

Here was the Messiah telling them to their face that He is the root of the Scriptures and He was standing before them and they still were not convinced. They rejected life, because they were unwilling to come to Christ (v40). Jesus said He does not receive His glory from men (v41).

What is the love of God or for God? Jesus said His glory is in His love for God, not of man, and this is how He knows they do not love God (v42). Loving God is not a gushy feeling, it is a firm conviction that Christ is in the Word of God and to love God is to consume His Word, as Christ will explain further in the next chapter.

They refused the truth; they sought their own glory. If some preacher came bragging in his own name, they would flock to see him, but Christ came in the Father's name and He was not received by them (v43). This continues to this day: professing Christians flock to the preachers with the big name and flashy show. The reason for this is the false christs do not threatens mans' authority, while Christ claims all authority for Himself. This is the core problem.

> **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? [v44 NASB].**

This is the challenge of the ages: Do we fear God or fear man? Whom do you seek to please? Jesus asked the question, "If you seek to please man, how can you be saved." [v44].

- Do we look to the Word of God in the formulation of our opinions or do we mix it up with the wisdom of this world?
- Do we look for ways to make the Gospel pleasing to the world or do we preach and teach the Word as written?
- Do we declare the authority of Christ and the glory of God or do we mix it up with the sovereignty of man?
- Do we accept where God has put us or do we desperately seeks mans' help to advance our situation?
- Do we struggle for the comfort of this world or is our hope in God's glory?

It is natural to seek the approval of our peers, but if we are truly saved, we will lay this aside to gain God's approval.

> For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. [Gal 1:10 NASB].

In four statements, Christ declared He is true and man is false:

1) Christ needs not the testimony of man for His account of Himself to be true (v41).
2) The Jews do not have fellowship with God, they are not saved, therefore, their testimony cannot be true (v42).
3) The Messiah stands before them, but they will not receive Him (v43).
4) The Jews have been deceived by false christs, therefore, their judgment cannot be trusted (v43).

God stood before them and they still refused to believe. God has given man His Word, which reveals His Son and man still refuses to believe.

THE TESTIMONY OF MOSES

Christ's final witness in this list is Moses. Once again, Christ did not need the testimony of man, but His accusers did and Moses was the highest testimony in all in their book; "Moses, on whom you have set your hope." [v45 ESV].

Jesus said if they believed Moses, they would believe in Him, for Moses wrote of the Christ. These men were studied in the Scriptures, but they did not believe. Jesus told them they did not believe. He asked them, if they did not believe what Moses wrote, how can they believe His words (v47).

There are many professing Christians who say they believe, but they disagree with the Scriptures or explain away passages which conflict with their bias. Rather than seek God's intent, they pursue a comfortable faith. Jesus said these people do not believe.

The five books of the Scriptures which Moses wrote are called the Pentateuch. The Jews called these books the Torah and they include Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Some Jews expand the Torah beyond these five books, but for the sake of this conversation we are limiting the definition to this. The Hebrews called these books the words of God, written by Moses with tears (Jewish tradition).

In the Torah, Moses prophesied the Messiah would come.

> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. [Deu 18:15 NASB].

This verse and the surrounding passage set the criteria for all the prophets God would send; but it was also specific to the coming Messiah. All the prophets spoke of the Messiah who would come and these words of Moses were the prophecy of the Messiah.

According to Moses, God would put His words in the Messiah's mouth and He would speak everything God commands (Deu 18:18). This prophecy was fulfilled in the hearing of the Jews, yet they refused to listen. Jesus said He speaks only what He hears from the Father (12:49).

> . . .whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. [Deu 18:19 NASB].

In this passage, Christ warned them He was speaking the words the Father had given Him; He did not speak of His own accord (v19,30).

- He warned them He would judge who would live to eternal life or go to eternal death (v28-29).
- He warned them they were more interested in their own glory than in the glory of God and, therefore, could not believe or be saved (v44).
- He warned them of judgment because they did not believe Moses or the Messiah (v46-47).
- Moses warned them whoever does not listen to the Messiah will face God's judgment (Deu 18:19).

He said:

- if you believed Moses, you would believe Me;
- if you do not believe Moses, you cannot believe Me.

So we see, professing to believe Moses did not make one a true believer. Though they professed to believe Moses, we know they did not believe, because they refused to believe in the Messiah whom Moses wrote about.

IN CLOSING

Christ presented five witnesses who declared He was the Messiah, but the people still refused to believe. Many people say they believe in God, but Jesus said, "You do not have His word abiding in you." [v38a NASB]. Without the Word of God working in you, you cannot truly believe in Christ.

Reading the Bible is not enough. The Jews knew the Scriptures and had much of it memorized, yet they were not saved. If you are constantly in the Word, but you take offense at the hard sayings in the Scriptures and apologize for them, then you are not abiding in the Word and it does not abide in you. Rest assured you are not saved (v38).

Jesus made the case that when people come with pomp and ceremony professing great works and ministries people are quick to go see them and praise them to others. Nothing has changed, because most professing Christians today are fascinated by popular, self-professed spiritual leaders. We read their books, yet we spend so little time studying the Scriptures. Most of these authors are non-believers who are selling to a market. They make the reader feel good rather than convicting them to draw closer to God. But we love them for it; don't we? We are so easily deceived.

Jesus asked the question, "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?" [v44 NASB]. Let His words sink in: if we seek the praise of man, we cannot be saved.

"How can you believe?" This is a convicting question; and Jesus was talking to people who studied and memorized the Scripture. Many people profess a faith in Christ because they think they believe, but they seek after praise from one another; they seek the approval of the world, they seek their comfort, their career, their business. They cannot be saved (Mat 13:18-23).

Do you seek the praise of man? or do you seek the glory that comes from the only God?

John 6:1-9 Large Crowds And The Disciples' Small Faith

Up to now, we see Christ gaining in popularity, even while wrestling with the Jewish leaders. His rising fame was due to the miracles of healing and feeding thousands of people. The people loved what they could get from Him, but His popularity erodes when He said they must desire Him more than food and drink. In this chapter, we will see many of His followers desert Him.

Read John 6:1-9.

THE LOCATION

After Christ's confrontation with the unbelieving Jews, He went to the "other side of the Sea of Galilee" (v1). The man He healed sided with His enemies. He went away from them.

To set the location more clearly: He had gone to Jerusalem for a feast. While there, He healed the man who had been crippled for 38 years. This is where He was confronted by the Jews. So, He left Jerusalem and went back to Galilee. Cana was on the West side of the lake; Capernaum on the Northwest. So, when the Scripture says He went to the other side of the sea, this would be the East side, maybe toward the Southeast; the area of the Decapolis. It could not mean the North, because after the feeding of the five thousand, they crossed the sea again to Capernaum (v17).

The Sea of Galilee, or Tiberius, was central or hometown to many of the disciples. By this sea, is where Peter, Andrew, James and John lived and did their fishing and where Christ met the disciples and revealed Himself after His resurrection (Mat 26:32; 28:7,10,16).

Nonetheless, these mountains where Christ sat down with His disciples were on the East side of the Sea (v3). The Passover was close at hand (v4) and soon they would be making their way across the sea and back up to Jerusalem.

A LARGE CROWD WAS FOLLOWING HIM

The leaders in Jerusalem were accusing Him for healing on the Sabbath, but the people around Galilee were curious of the man who could heal the sick (v2). One could say the desire for free healthcare is not unique to our current generation.

All the Gospels have the story of the feeding of the five thousand (Mat 14:13- 21; Mar 6:32- 44; Luk 9:10-17). The Apostle John seldom repeated events found in the other Gospels, unless he had something of significance

to add or clarify. In this story, John brought out more clearly the kind of Messiah the people wanted would be one who was able and willing to provide for their physical needs (WH, vol1 pg 216).

Human nature does not change: Man wants a king or a hero to look up to. Rather than seek and worship his Creator, man prefers the exaltation of man.

- Not long after the flood, the nations came together to exalt man at the Tower of Babel (Gen 9).
- After God brought the people of Israel out of slavery and into the promised land, they demanded a king to provide them security and economic status among the nations (1Sa 8).
- Prior to the arrival of Jesus, the Jews under Roman dominion were looking for the promised exaltation of Israel. The Jews envisioned a Messiah to bring them out of oppression and exalt their status among the nations as the prophets foretold.
- After Jesus fed the five thousand, He was that hero. The people thought with their new hero as ruler, they would have the added benefits of free food and healthcare.

Here we are, two millennia later, still looking for heroes and glory for ourselves. Mans' natural desire is not for God. Mans' desire is to exalt himself, oppress his enemies and get free stuff.

A large crowd followed Jesus, because they wanted to see Him heal the sick (v2) and they loved free food. If Jesus Christ had been an aspiring politician or community leader, He could have used this popularity to propel himself to greater fame and power. However, He did not seek earthly fame. In Philippians 2, Paul wrote the Son did not count His equality with the Father as something to be grasped or clung to. He willingly became a servant (Php 2:6-7). In this chapter, Jesus Christ was at the height of His popularity, but He did not grasp this power.

SIDENOTE: Christ demonstrated there is no value in earthly power and glory. One of these days, we will see everyone who sought to exalt themself to be as worms. It is one thing to live our lives here and make the best of it, but live as sojourners: provide for our families, establish our businesses and other such things, but if anything we seek causes us to lose sight of our eternal home, turn away. Keep our eyes on Christ.

COMMON GRACE IS NOT SALVATION

Jesus sat down on the mountain with His disciples (v3). The context implies the opportunity was for rest and for teaching. He saw the crowds coming. He was filled with compassion for them. He was concerned the people would need food to eat (v5).

His compassion for the crowds is an example of God's common grace. The Bible says, "for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." [Mat 5:45b NASB]. The Bible also says God "is kind to ungrateful and evil men." [Luk 6:35b NASB]. In His common grace, He fed the crowds, who were ungrateful and questioned His authority.

Many people have the mistaken idea every person Christ healed, fed and blessed were saved. When people believe God worked a healing or other miracle in their life, they often have the false belief this is evidence they are saved. They have mistaken God's common grace for His saving grace.

> Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, "Lord, open up to us!" then He will answer and say to you, "I do not know where you are from." Then you will begin to say, "We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets"; and He will say, "I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS." [Luk 13:25-27 NASB].

The only evidence of being saved is the work of God in our lives. Are we a new creation? Is our desire for God rather than for ourselves? Do we spend time in the Word and in prayer? Do we see a love for others in our lives where once we were filled with anger and hate? This is the work of God in our lives and these are examples of His saving grace working in us.

A TEST OF FAITH

As a test, Christ asked Philip where they would buy bread to feed these people (v5). Now Philip had witnessed several miracles of the Lord. One would think his response would be to affirm he knew Jesus had everything under control, but he did not say anything like this. He spoke from what he saw and he saw even two-thirds of a years' wage was not enough money to buy bread for all these people (v7). Philip failed the test.

The Apostle Paul wrote God is able to do more than we can ask or imagine (Eph 3:20). Yet, how often when we pray, do we limit God to the resources we see at hand? It seems sometimes we see the problem larger than we see God. We are like Peter, who, while walking on the water, was distracted by

the storm around him (Mat 14:28-33). He sank because he was trusting in what he saw, rather than staying fixed upon Him who is in control.

According to Mark's account of this event, Jesus instructed the disciples to find out what food was on hand. In John's account, Andrew brought what he found to Christ: a young boy with a little bread and a little fish (v8-9). He brought the boy and his small lunch, but he expressed his doubt, saying this could never begin to feed the people (v9). So, Andrew also failed the test.

SIDENOTE: Philip and Andrew team up again in 12:20-22, bringing the Greek believers to meet Jesus.

IN CLOSING

A large crowd was following Jesus, but His focus was on teaching His disciples. The crowd continued to come.

Christ gave the burden of feeding the crowds to Philip, by asking how they were going to feed them. Philip responded this would take an enormous amount of money. The problem, as he saw it, was buying enough bread. So far, listening to Christ and seeing all the miracles had not altered his finite thinking (Rom 12:2). This is typical of natural man: every time God sends me a trial, I fail first, then look to Christ.

Andrew brought to Christ a boy with five loaves and two fish. Although the boy's was such a small portion, Christ used those small fish and loaves to feed a multitude of people.

At the time of creation, Christ created all things by His word, out of nothing, but at this mass feeding, for the benefit of the people, Christ used what was at hand. So much food was created, the people were fed from the handful and there were basketfuls left over.

The next time we are faced with trying circumstances, whether they be financial, physical, relational or even persecution, we can choose to be distracted by the problem and our lack of resources or we can bring the little we have to Christ. Knowing this: He already knows what He is going to do and He is able to do more than we can ask or imagine.

> casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. [1Pe 5:7 NASB].

John 6:10-21 Feeding Five Thousand And Walking On Water

In this passage of Scripture, there are two events with great miracles: Jesus feeding the large crowd of people and Jesus walking on the water. These miracles proclaim He is the Creator and He is Lord over all He created. These miracles were also a test of faith for His disciples.

Read John 6:10-21.

CHRIST FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

Christ had the people sit down in the grassy area. There were about five thousand men, plus women and children (v10). Some historians speculate as many as 20,000 people were there.

Jesus took the food and gave thanks (v11). Here is the Son of God; He who made all creation and He certainly could make as much food as He wanted, but He gave thanks to the Father for His provision. Christ is our example: we ought always to be thankful and we ought always thank God for His provision. Nothing comes to us, but what the Father has provided (1Co 4:7). Our thankfulness and our fear of God should outweigh our hurry or our fear of what others may think in asking God to bless our food.

God is thankful toward God. When Jesus gave thanks to the Father for the food He was about to create (v11), here we have an example of God rejoicing in God; God's love for God.

Everyone received as much food as they could eat (v11). Then Christ had the disciples gather up the left overs; the food the people had not eaten (v12). He did this "that nothing will be lost." Even though He so easily made enough food to feed this large crowd from five loaves and two fish and He could make abundantly more, He did not want any of it wasted. The purpose was to display His glory, emphasizing the quantity left over.

This also displayed God's discipline in creation: He gives in abundance, but there is no waste. We see waste all around us in mans' fallen world, but God is greater than man; even His word does not return void (Isa 55:11).

The disciples gathered twelve baskets filled with left overs (v13). We are not told how large were these baskets, but if used for gathering, we can be certain they were not small. Five barley loaves and two fish, which was not enough food to fill one of these baskets, became enough food to feed more than five thousand people and fill twelve large baskets with left overs. This was some miracle.

Seeing this miracle, the people were overwhelmed and declared Christ must be The Prophet (v14). This Prophet was the one prophesied by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15. Many of these people realized the Messiah had come. What did they want now? They wanted to make Him king (v15). So Jesus withdrew to the mountain to be alone.

The people, like Nicodemus and the Jewish leaders, believed the Messiah would overthrow Israel's enemies and establish them above all the nations. They wanted this to happen. They were looking for someone to deliver them from oppression and exalt their nation. Now, they saw the miracles and believed their hope was here.

Christ taught the people while they ate that day. John did not record what He taught, though it is likely it was the same lessons as He taught in Matthew 5 through 7; the Sermon on the Mount. Though this was not likely the same event.

Matthew recorded in the last verse of chapter 4, large crowds had followed Him from all regions. It seems as He traveled, the crowds grew larger. This is an example of the phenomena of the crowds surrounding John the Baptist and Himself, unlike the prophets of old. Jesus described this as the violent take it by force (Mat 11:12). Later in this chapter, we will see Christ reach the height of His fame.

The people saw the miracles and enjoyed the free food, but they did not want to know God. They did not seem to learn from His sound teaching. They wanted more comfort in their lives, and free food and healing helped in this regard. Still today, people are distracted by comfort and wealth or their search for it, so they miss the message of Christ (Mat 13:22). Some may hear this message and they may even believe, but in the daily grind, they do not seek to follow Christ; they prefer to add Christ to their lives.

What Moses recorded of the Prophet to come should have put the fear of God in the people, when they realized He was here. God said, through Moses, the Messiah will tell them everything God commands and if anyone does not listen they will be condemned (Deu 18:15-19). If they truly believed what Moses had written, their desire would have been to learn from Jesus what God commanded, but just like the Israel and Judah of old, they preferred the comforts of this world, rather than the discipline of living in the fear of the Lord.

CHRIST WALKED ON THE WATER

In the remainder of this passage, the story of Christ walking on the water (v16-21), John recorded two miracles which are evidence Christ is God and He is Lord over all creation; He is Lord over matter, time and space.

1. The first miracle was He walked across the sea, on the water. He overcame the laws of physics and nature to walk on water. He did this in the midst of a storm and the storm did not deter Him. This gave evidence He is Master of creation. He is Lord over matter.
2. The second miracle was as soon as He got into the boat, the boat and all the people in it arrived at their destination. He is Lord over time and space.

According to Matthew 14:32 and Mark 6:51, as soon as Christ got in the boat, the storm ended; this is a third miracle. All these miracles prove He is God; He is the Creator and He is Lord over all He has made.

Before they left the shore, the disciples waited for Him, thinking He would come, but they finally left when it was dark (v16-17). This happened in early Spring and without Daylight Savings Time; so darkness likely fell between 6:30pm and 7pm. The disciples were rowing while Jesus remained on the mountain to pray.

The first watch of the night was between 6pm to 9pm; the second, 9pm to 12am; the third, 12am to 3am; and the fourth 3am to 6am.

Early in the morning, during the fourth watch of the night (Mat 14:25; Mar 6:48), which was between 3am and 6am, Jesus approached the boat, walking on the water. The men rowing the boat were experienced fishermen. Nonetheless, after eight or nine hours, they had barely navigated three to four miles. They were fighting a fierce storm and they were likely exhausted by the time Jesus caught up with them. Here is Jesus, walking on the water, in the midst of a fierce storm; walking faster than experienced men can row the boat.

According to Matthew and Mark, the disciples thought He was a ghost (Mat 14:26; Mar 6:49). The accounts of Matthew, Mark and John each tell us the disciples were afraid when they saw Jesus walking on the water. When He revealed it was He, the disciples believed Him and took Him into the boat. Before entering the boat, Matthew gave the account of Peter requesting to walk on water, which Christ granted, but Peter became filled with fear when he took his eyes off Christ to focus on the storm around him (Mat 14:30).

The disciples took Him into the boat and immediately the boat was at the destination shore (v21). It had taken these experienced fishermen eight to nine hours to row half way across the lake (three to four miles). When Christ got in the boat, the travel was completed; immediately.

Christ is in control; whether this be control of the forces of nature and of time, performing miracles, providing food or completing our destination.

IN CLOSING

After Jesus fed the great crowd of people from five small loaves and two small fish, they believed He was the promised Messiah and they wanted to make Him king. They had seen the miracles of healing and had tasted the free food. They wanted their nation to be great again.

The natural man strives to live a life of comfort. Few desire to know God and be right with Him. To satisfy this desire, many professing Christians have formulated a god they have made in their own image; one who approves of them. They can say the sinner's prayer and go about their life. The natural man does not seek after God. It takes time and effort to seek after God.

> THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD. [Rom 3:11 NASB].

It was futile for these experienced fishermen to be rowing against the storm; sometimes we think we "make things happen," but Solomon wrote, man makes his plans, but God directs his steps (Pro 16:9). It is God who "makes things happen." Nothing happens outside of God's will and purposes. When we take Christ into the boat, if you will, He works all things for His glory and we get to participate in this.

> You have also performed for us all our works. [Isa 26:12b NASB].

> Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. [Pro 3:5-6 NASB].

Christ proved He is the Creator. He fed the multitudes, He walked on the water and He brought the boat to their destination immediately. He is in control and He is not limited by our imagination. He is Lord over matter, time and space. Let us keep our eyes on Him.

John 6:22-35 Jesus Christ Is The Bread Of Life

This passage begins with Jesus commenting on the free bread and warning against working for food that perishes. The people responded, "Manna." Then Jesus revealed He is the Bread of Life.

Read John 6:22-35.

The crowd remembered He had sent the disciples away in a boat; and there was only one boat. The Bible does not say anyone suggested Christ might have walked across the sea. But the people noted the anomaly (v22).

Boats from Tiberius picked up the people and took them to the opposite side of the lake where Jesus was (v23-24). It is possible these boats had been fishing. Maybe fishing wasn't so good this morning and there was more money to be made ferrying the people who were eager to follow Jesus to Capernaum.

When the people found Him, they wanted to know the secret how He had arrived without a boat (v25). If the Son of Man had been self-seeking, this would have been a glorious time to tell them how He had walked across the water and maybe could have given them a short demonstration. This would have been the response of a natural, self-seeking man. However, although Christ's miracles were signs of His deity, He did none of them to glorify Himself. His glory was in revealing the Father to man (1:18).

He preformed the miracles of healing as an exhibit of God's common grace and, among the elect, it was proof He was God. Special miracles, such as walking on the water, calming storms and transfigurations were reserved for the disciples, so they would know for certain He was God, but to the people, His response was the same as always: He cut to their need; their need to repent and follow Him.

DO NOT WORK TO SATISFY YOURSELF

In response to the question from the crowd, how had he arrived, Christ got to the heart of the matter. He rebuked them because they were seeking Him to enhance their personal prosperity: free food. The signs He did proved He was God. The crowd could not see this, because they were not seeking to know Him; they were seeking free food (v26-27).

How many professing Christians are truly following Christ in obedience and the fear of God? How many have just added their faith to their lifestyle, if you will, because they feel Christ completes them in some way or He answers their prayers in ways which satisfy them? We should look at our

life and consider our motives for professing Christ. Do we proclaim God's kingdom or do we prefer to build our own with God's help?

Christ's four part admonition in verse 27:

1) Do not work for food that perishes.

    a) That is, food which satisfies physical desires, "because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated." [Mar 7:19a].

2) Work for the food which endures for eternal life.

    a) We find in verse 29, this food is to "believe in Him whom He has sent." We find in verse 50, this food is to eat of Christ, that is, chew on the Word.

3) Work for the food the Son of Man will give you.

    a) He gives us life. He will lay down His life for our sins to satisfy the wrath of God (v51). Everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life (v40).

4) For on Him God the Father has set His seal.

    a) We know we love God if we keep his commands and we receive this seal, the promised Holy Spirit (14:15,23; Eph 1:13).

We looked at what it meant to set a seal:

> Whoever receives His testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. [3:33 ESV].

To set a seal is to certify: the seal certifies the genuineness of the article and certifies who sent it. It is not a private thing, it is a public display.

In this verse (v27), the Bible tells us the Father has set His seal on the Son.

What is the seal? The Seal is a Who, not a What; it is the Holy Spirit. The Bible foretold the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him (Isa 11:2). At Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit rent open the skies and descended upon the Son as a seal (1:32-34).

What are the purpose for this seal? The Father has certified or made it known Jesus Christ is His Son, the chosen Messiah and that the Son was sent by Him.

What are the ways or evidences that God has set His seal on the Son? Not only did the Father certify Him through many prophecies in the Old Testament; He also certified Him by voice and the Holy Spirit descending

upon Christ at His baptism (1:31-34) and He certified Christ through the miracles He performed (10:38; 14:11), including the feeding of the five thousand, which these people recently witnessed. Finally, He certified the Son by raising Him from the dead (Act 17:30-31).

When Christ said do not work for food which perishes. He was speaking to the Jews; they were accustomed to the Jewish tradition of works, which was salvation by works. So, when Jesus said to work for food which endures to eternal life, they misunderstood. They asked Christ what was the ultimate works of God they could do (v28). In other words, their question was, "What work could we do to be saved?"

Their religion already exceeded God's Law with rule upon rule and they foolishly prided themselves they kept these rules. They believed salvation was based upon what they did. They believed their righteousness would bring them salvation. They believed they already did more than God required, "so what more can we do? was the question.

> **This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. [v29b NASB].**

Once again, Jesus' answer struck to the heart of the issue. You see, they asked Christ what work could they do and He answered them what God has done: if they believe, this is the work of God (v29).

> To know Christ and to believe in Him is no achievement of man, but the gift of God. God alone can create and preserve faith in us. [Martin Luther, Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, pg 19].

Salvation is based upon what God has done through Christ. To be saved, we must believe; to believe is a gift from God.

> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin. [Rom 8:3 NASB].

> For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. [Php 1:29].

Our work cannot accomplish nor earn our salvation. Without God's Spirit working our regeneration, our hearts are in opposition to God. Therefore, salvation must be the result of God's work in our lives. As Jesus said, "This is the work of God that you believe."

MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS

Jesus told them they must believe in the One whom God sent (v29). The people knew Christ was referring to Himself. So, despite the miracles of healing and the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, they demanded to see a sign for proof He was the One sent by God (v30).

They continued to resist the teachings of Christ, because they had hard hearts, indeed.

> because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so. [Rom 8:7 NASB].

If Christ had come to fulfill their needs, they could accept Him as the Messiah. This is what Christ warned them against, when He warned about seeking food which perishes, and He called man to repentance. He told them to trust God to work salvation in their lives. This was a stumbling block to them; it went against everything they were taught. It went against their pride and their works.

The crowd wanted a sign He was the Messiah, but just the day before, they were convinced and they were planning to make Him king, by force. These were professing believers. This demonstrates the fickleness of man. This is proof that unless Christ perseveres us, we cannot persevere at all. This also demonstrates the natural mans' tendency to make God into a god of his own imagination; a god which man can accept; a god who serves man. Few are willing to fear God and repent.

The people challenged Him, "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness." [v31a NASB, ESV]. We can see God is in full control, even to directing the thoughts and arguments of man. Jesus had fed them the day before and He had just warned them about what they eat, spiritually. Jesus fully intended to talk to them about the Bread of Life and the crowd just turned the conversation to bread.

When they said, "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness," they could have been saying, "sure you fed five thousand yesterday, but Moses fed hundreds of thousands in the desert every day."

Though John's account does not say they ascribed this work to Moses, we know they did because Jesus corrected them. "it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven." [v32 ESV]. Not only did Jesus 1) take the credit the people had given to Moses and gave it rightly to God the Father, but 2) He told them the Father gives the true bread. The Father gave the manna and the Father gives the Bread of Life.

In this explanation, Christ used the manna as a type of the Messiah. Therefore, the True Bread or the Messiah is greater than the manna.

1) This bread comes down from Heaven; and

2) This bread gives life to the world (v33). Once again, just as in 3:16, this life is for the world not exclusively for the Jew, as was the manna.

The Samaritan woman at the well, after learning of the water which quenches all thirst, she wanted this water (4:15). These people, after learning of the bread which gives life, wanted this bread "from now on " or "always" (v34) because they were looking to satisfy a physical need. Just the day before, they wanted to make Christ king so they would not have to toil for food.

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

When the people asked for this bread, Jesus told them it was He.

> **I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. [v35 NASB].**

1) Whoever comes to Me shall not hunger;

2) Whoever believes in Me shall never thirst.

These are not two options of the faith: 1) coming to Him and 2) believing in Him. You cannot come to Christ without believing and you cannot believe without coming to Him.

The people were self-professed believers. The people were there: they were physically present with Christ. However, He rebuked them because they had not come to Him, they did not receive His words and obey.

These people thought Christ was a great man and they saw and testified He did great things; in fact, they were going to make Him king, but knowledge is not believing and even in their "believing" they were arguing with Him. Many professing Christians argue with Christ; they contend against the Scriptures they do not like. Just as surely as these people professed to believe, some professing Christians "feel" like they believe, but they are not saved.

Jesus is the Bread of Life. He is the food we need. If we chew on the Word, He will satisfy our hunger and thirst and lead us to eternal life.

IN CLOSING

Here we see the unbelief of professing believers.

When they arrived on the other side of the lake and found Him, they asked how or when He arrived. Rather than answer their questions, Christ revealed their motives; He cut to what they needed. They were seeking Him because they wanted physical satisfaction; they were not interested in being saved from their sins.

Many people think they believe in Jesus, they scramble to hear this preacher and see that one, but they believe in a god made in their own image. They want their faith to validate their comfort or their pursuits. They do not believe in the God of the Bible; they are not repentant.

Jesus said, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life. . .I am the bread of life." [v27a, 35a NASB]. We must desire Christ as we desire food, for if we eat of Him, we will have life eternal (v27). To desire Christ is the work of God (v29b).

If you profess Christ, abide in Him; be in the Word; eat of the Bread of Life. If you desire the Word, this is the work of God.

I AM In The Gospel Of John

1. (6:35) I AM the bread of life (cf 6:48, *et al*).
2. (8:12) I AM the light of the world.
3. (8:24) unless you believe I AM, you will die in your sins ("he" or "I AM He" is not in the Greek).
4. (8:28) When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM ("he" or "I AM He" is not in the Greek).
5. (8:58) before Abraham was, I AM."
6. (10:7,9) I AM the door.
7. (10:11,14) I AM the Good Shepherd.
8. (11:25) I AM the resurrection and the life.
9. (14:6) I AM the way, and the truth, and the life.
10. (15:1) I AM the true vine (cf v5).
11. (18:5) Jesus said to them, "I AM" ("he" or "I AM He" is not in the Greek; cf v6,8).
12. (18:37) You say that I AM a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world.

Several of these declarations come with additional titles, such as bread or life, light of the world, door, Good Shepherd, resurrection and the life, way, truth and life, true vine and such. Some of these declarations are plain and simple: "I AM."

HISTORY OF I AM

The first instance of God using the name "I AM" to make an absolute declaration who He is, was in the book of Exodus. God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." [Exo 3:14 NASB].

Moses had run away from Egypt after killing a man. He fancied himself a deliverer of Israel, but after killing an Egyptian who had struck an Israelite and knowing he had been discovered, he ran to escape the authorities (Exo 2:11-15). Now, he was tending sheep in the desert and he came upon a burning bush which would not quench. God appeared to Moses through this burning bush and told him He was going to bring Israel out of Egypt and He would send Moses to speak to Pharaoh. Not only was Pharaoh the last

man Moses wanted to see, but he doubted even the people of Israel would listen to him.

> Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" [Exo 3:13-14 NASB].

Before Moses' time, God declared Himself to Abram, saying, "I AM your shield." [Gen 15:1 ESV]. He said to him, "I AM God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless." [Gen 17:1 NASB, ESV]. He said similar things to Isaac and Jacob, Abraham's son and grandson. To Jacob, God declared Himself and commanded him to go to Egypt, leaving the land of promise.

> I AM God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. [Gen 46:3 NASB].

Jacob went to Egypt and settled with his family. After time had passed, the Egyptians forgot all the good Jacob's son, Joseph, had brought upon them by delivering them from the great famine, which God had inflicted upon the whole world. They enslaved Israel and for 400 years, Israel was oppressed in the land of Egypt, but God declared:

> The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst. [Exo 7:5 NASB].

Showering upon Egypt terror upon terror, God brought Israel out of Egypt with His mighty hand, after killing every Egyptian's firstborn son. He brought Israel safely through the Red Sea upon dry ground, while destroying the mighty armies of Egypt, including every chariot, covering the Red Sea upon them. Up to this time, Egypt was the greatest and most powerful nation upon the earth, but by the hardness of their hearts, God reduced the nation to nothing.

> All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to him, "What have you done?" [Dan 4:35 ESV].

THE MEANING OF I AM

About thirty years ago, it became popular to describe anything impressive, even vaguely so, as "awesome." To this day, it continues, even among professing believers, but to be awesome, something must be dreadful or fearsome; this cannot be a flippant impression. It may be delightfully impressive, but it also carries fear of the one who does the impressing. A good example is when Jesus calmed the sea. The sea is powerful, and when it is violent, it can be overwhelming and fearful. Many of these disciples were men of the sea. They had experienced the terror of the sea, but Jesus calmed this sea with His spoken word. The disciples were impressed, but it also brought fear among them, so that they declared, "Who is this man?" and they worshipped Him (Mat 8:28).

> Say to God, "How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power Your enemies come cringing to You. All the earth worships You and sings praises to You." [Psa 66:3-4a ESV].

He is the God of all creation, who spoke the world into creation. He sustains the world by the word of His power (Heb 1:3). When man defied Him, He brought unthinkable catastrophe. He brought a flood upon the whole earth, He divided continents, He raised up mountains and flattened hills, He changed languages and halted mans' understanding, He made the Sun stand still, He brought huge tragedy to Egypt, He reigned down destruction upon armies and cities. We could go on and on to recite and describe the details of these events and we would be forced to come to one conclusion: ***God, alone, is awesome***.

> Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it? [Amo 3:6 ESV].

> LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. [Hab 3:2].

To the Jew, "I AM" was the name of the Lord; reserved only to God. The name is significant because it declares God is God of the past, the present and the future (Rev 21:6). This name declares He is sufficient in Himself; it declares there is no other; and this is the God who brought Israel out of Egypt with dreadful signs and miracles.

> "I AM the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." [Rev 1:8 NASB, ESV].

When Jesus declared Himself to be "I AM," He made Himself equal with God. For man to declare himself equal with God was blasphemy and punishable by death, but Christ was true to declare Himself to be the I AM.

> He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I AM coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! [Rev 22:20 ESV].

THE SEVEN COMMON I AMS

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

In 6:35 and 48, Jesus said, "I AM the bread of life." He fed the five thousand and the people were about to make Him king. The next day, though, they wanted a sign. He told them He was the bread from God. When the people were offended, He doubled down and told them they certainly must eat this bread to have eternal life. To eat this bread is to chew on the Word. To have the life of this bread, we must desire the Word like we desire food; we must drink in the Word like we thirst for water. In Christ, alone, is this life.

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

In 8:12, Jesus said, "I AM the Light of the world." He promised those who follow Him will not walk in darkness. John said God is light and in Him is no darkness at all (1Jo 1:5). Jesus said men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (3:19). Many professing Christians believe they can mix the Light of the Word with the light of the world, but Jesus said if the light in you is darkness, how great is this darkness (Mat 6:23). And John affirmed, if we profess faith in Christ while clinging to the wisdom of this world, we lie, because we are full of darkness (1Jo 1:6). Reject, therefore, the light of this world, which is darkness no matter how positive it sounds, and cling to the light in the Word of Christ.

I AM THE DOOR

In 10:9, Jesus said, "I AM the door." Christ protects His sheep from thieves and robbers. Jesus said Satan seeks to destroy man and he is so cunning, he could deceive those who belong to Christ IF THAT WERE POSSIBLE (Mat 24:24). This means it is NOT possible for Satan to deceive those who belong to God. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and they will not follow the voice of a stranger (10:5). No one can take His people out of His hand or His Father's hand (10:28-29). Be warned: if you follow every new wind of doctrine rather than keeping to the Word, you cannot be saved. Repent and follow Christ, alone.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In 10:11, Jesus said, "I AM the Good Shepherd." The Good Shepherd leads His sheep and protects His sheep and Jesus said He lays down His life for His sheep. He did not die for everyone. Jesus died for the sins of His sheep; He faced the wrath of God, alone, for the sins of His sheep. He did this of His own choosing (10:17-18). Christ, alone, gives His sheep eternal life and He will preserve His sheep to the end (10:28-29). If we could lose our salvation, we would; but Christ keeps those who are His. To know this should quicken us to stay in His Word and feed upon Him daily.

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

In 11:25, Jesus said, " I AM the resurrection and the life." Christ has conquered death (1Co 15:55-57). In Genesis 3:15, after man fell into sin, God promised to send a Redeemer who would crush Satan's head and the Apostle Paul wrote Christ "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." [2Ti 1:10]. And he wrote, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." [Rom 16:20]. When Christ took upon Himself the wrath of God on behalf of those who follow Him, He nailed our sins to the cross (Col 2:14) and His resurrection from the dead became our resurrection. If we follow Christ, we no longer face death, for we will be raised up to life.

I AM THE WAY AND THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

In 14:6, Jesus said, "I AM the way, and the truth, and the life." He is the bread of life: we must chew on His Word to have this life. Jesus said, if we abide in His Word and His Word abides in us, then we will know the truth; because He is truth (8:31-32). And, He said He is the way, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." How can we profess to be in Christ, if we are not in His Word and following Him?

I AM THE TRUE VINE

In 15:1, Jesus said, "I AM the true vine." The branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine. In each of these I AMs, the declaration is about who Christ is, but the call is for us to cling to Him; to rely upon Him alone and to abide in Him, eat Him, drink Him, walk in His ways. In this passage, Christ warns the branches, who are the professing Christians or believers, those who do not produce fruit, will face the fires of Hell (15:6), but, this fruit is not something we can produce. It is what He produces in us, as we abide in His Word (15:4-5).

TWO SIMPLE I AMS

BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM

In 8:58, Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Here is Christ, a man, who claimed, not only to have been alive when Abraham walked the earth over 2000 years before, but He claimed to be I AM; to never have come into existence. He incarnated into a man, that is, He was born into human flesh, but this was not His beginning. Before that, He was, as He always was, before the beginning of time. This is an incredible claim for a mere man.

His miracles proved He was from God, but rather than regard His claim as truth and worship Him in awe, the people rejected Him on the face of it. They picked up stones (8:59). This conversation was over and they were going to kill Him, but Jesus hid Himself in the crowd, an impossible feat when the whole crowd had turned against Him. The demons, when faced with the Christ, exclaimed with awe, He was the Son of God (Mar 3:11; Luk 4:34,41), but these people, the professing believers, did not marvel; they hardened themselves because they would not have a god who fell short of the image they had created.

I AM WHOM YOU SEEK

In 18:5, Jesus said to them, "I AM." The question was, "'Whom do you seek?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I AM.'" [18:4-5]. Some Bibles say Christ responded with "I AM He." However, the Greek does not have the Word "He" in this passage; we know this, because the "He" is italicized. "He" must have been added later for clarification or grammar, but this fix has clouded Christ's answer or His claim that He is the "I AM."

Christ had foretold He would give of His life and no one would take it. Often, when the people sought to kill Him, John would attribute their failure to accomplish this as due to "His time had not yet come." Now the time had come and He announced to them, "I AM." The one who always was, was now here and His time had come.

They were put on notice, the man they sought to kill was God, Himself. The people would take Him and murder Him, yet He would rise again, giving proof He is the One He claimed to be: He is the I AM.

IN CLOSING

The seven common I AMs are Christ's declarations with His call to respond to abiding in Him. The two simple I AMs were met with hardened hearts and rejection.

Jesus Christ is the Great I AM.

- Do you give lip service to following Him, yet will not give Him time and be in His Word, chewing on it and drinking it in?
- Will you reject Him, professing believer, because He is not the god you want Him to be?

We are put on notice: Christ is the I AM; He is God. Cling to Him; be in His Word. Eat the Bread of Life.

> unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins.
> [8:24]

John 6:35-45 Jesus Told Believers Why They Don't Believe

Jesus was speaking to a crowd, among whom were those who professed themselves to be His disciples (v60). Some in the crowd considered their heritage to be sufficient evidence of following God (v31). They were Jews. They were sons of Abraham.

Many were interested in Christ; they were following Him; they believed He was a prophet, the Messiah. They wanted to see and experience more of His miracles. Jesus invited them to taste the Bread of Life (v35).

Read John 6:35-45.

There is a set of bookends to this passage:

- verse 37 Christ said everyone the Father has given to Him, will come to Him.
- verse 45 Christ said everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, will come to Christ.

A FALSE BELIEVING

These people professed to believe, they felt like they believed; but, they did not believe. Jesus told them they had seen Him, yet they did not believe (v36). God had come down to earth to dwell among men; He gave proofs of His deity. Many believed He was the Messiah, but they refused to believe He was God.

Many professing Christians think they believe in Christ, but they do not have a saving faith. Though they appear to follow Christ, they resist Him, just like this crowd resisted Him. They think they can believe without hungering and thirsting for His Word.

How did Christ witness to a people who thought they were right with God? He did not pat them on the back, like the modern American gospel, declaring God loves them. He revealed their unbelief. Jesus told the people (v35-36):

1) whoever comes to Me shall not hunger;
2) whoever believes in Me shall never thirst; and,
3) you have seen Me, yet you do not believe.

- He invited them and, lest they presume they already believed.

- He told them they did not, so they could do something about it.

After this, did He plead? did He beg the people to open their eyes and receive the truth? No. He explained to them all whom the Father has given Him will come to Him (v37a). In essence, He told them they cannot be saved. Even though man is invited and admonished to come, the decision is not left to freewill; it is left to the Father's choosing. Many a preacher wastes his time endlessly begging and pleading, as if a hardened heart has the ability to change its mind and will do so if the right words are said or right tone is used.

Although it is the Father's choosing which determines who will come, the second part of the verse demonstrates man's responsibility to come. And Christ said the one who does come to Him, He would not cast out. The Father chooses; man responds; Christ accepts.

> **All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. [v37 NASB].**
>
> I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O LORD, but with justice; not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing. [Jer 10:23-24 NASB].

In essence, Christ told the people He turns away the false believer, but He will not turn away those whom the Father has given Him. Coming to Christ, though it is our responsibility, it is not what saves us; it is evidence God has drawn us.

According to Charles Spurgeon, coming to the Son is more than a vague willingness and God does more than stimulate a man's emotion. God motivates the entire will of the one who is chosen. The will of man is changed from slavery and clinging to sin, to a desire to have fellowship with God.

This phrase, "Whoever comes to Me, I will never cast out," is thrown around like a promise while evangelists beg and plead for unbelievers to come forward to receive Jesus. This is not the intended meaning. This promise applies to those God has given to His Son, as expressed in the first part of this verse, "All the Father gives Me will come to Me." This coming to Christ is not self-motivated. So, this verse is not about convincing souls to come forward at a meeting. It is confirmation, those God chooses will come.

When it comes to evangelizing, we should use Jesus' example. We should not beg and we must not water down the Gospel to be a pleasing message

or relevant to the unsaved. We should profess and declare the truth about God's wrath, mans' sin and Christ's redeeming work, knowing God will draw those who are His.

CHRIST CAME TO DO GOD'S WILL

The nut of verse 36 and 37 is, though the people had seen Him, they did not believe; but Christ had come for those whom the Father had given Him.

Jesus intended to make His point stick. He doubled down: He explained He did not come to win their favor, but He came to do the will of the Father (v38). He was there to save those whom the Father had given Him (v39). And twice He said, He will raise them up on the last day (v39,40).

Christ did not come to convince the unbelievers. He came to do the will of the Father (v38). The will of the Father was that He should lose none of those the Father had given Him (v39). This explains why He died: He came to redeem His own. He did not come to save everyone in the world, but those the Father had given Him and He will raise them up on the Day of Judgment.

> While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. [17:12 NASB].

The will of God is never thwarted. He is sovereign and He is almighty. If you are chosen by God, you cannot be lost. Christ gave opportunity to all. He called all the people to believe, but only those drawn by the Father could hear (v44) and every one of them will come to Christ (v37,45). The Father's will is for Christ to raise up all those who are His on the last day (v39-40). This is the hope of all who believe.

GRUMBLERS CANNOT BELIEVE

When Christ told the people He will raise the believers up on the last day, this was a promise and a warning: a warning of the judgment to come; the last day. If He will raise up the elect to life, what will become of those who do not believe?

He offered the crowd the opportunity to repent. He said He had come down from Heaven and He is the Bread of Life. Everyone who looks to Him with faith will have eternal life and will escape the judgment on the last day. He offered a promise that those who believe would not be turned away and He would raise them up at the last day to eternal life (v37,39).

The unbelievers grumbled (v41-42).

How could Jesus be God if He was familiar? They knew His family and He grew up near them. Many believed He was the Messiah or a great prophet, but they could not believe He had come from Heaven; that He was God. They watched Him grow up in their neighborhood.

If they understood the prophecies, they would have known it was foretold the Son of God would come to earth and live as a man. Here are two verses which declare this plainly:

> Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. [Isa 7:14 NASB; Immanuel means "God is with us"].
>
> For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us. [Isa 9:6a NASB].

Christ's response to the grumbling was to tell them they cannot believe unless the Father draws them (v43-44). He told them it was pointless to complain against His claim to be the Son of God, because they could not be saved, anyway.

He reiterated they will not be a part of those who are raised up to eternal life on the last day. Being excluded from hope should have caused them to fear and repent, but they had no understanding.

For the third time, He made the promise; those who believe He will raise to life on the last day (v39,40,44). He said this three times, so if we are following Christ, we can count on it. Each time He said this, it was in contrast to the unbelieving heart; it was a promise to the believer, but it was a warning to those who are skeptics.

This audience was composed largely of people who were following Him and many in the crowd were professing believers. Some claimed to be disciples (not to be confused with the twelve), but Jesus said they cannot come to Him. They saw Him, in the flesh, they tipped their hat to His authority, but they did not believe.

No one can come to Christ on their own decision or effort. Only those drawn to Christ by the Father (v44-45). Those the Father has given to the Son, will come to Him (v37). No one else can come. They may scoff and complain, others may appear to seek Him out, they may attend church every Sunday, but they cannot come to Christ. They will not come.

This is why Jesus did not argue with the scoffers and complainers. He simply told them they cannot come (v44). There are a lot of professing Christians today who are not chosen (Mat 13:24-30; 1Jo 2:19). It would be

well for us to remember Christ's warning: not everyone who claims His name will be saved.

> Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." [Mat 7:21-23 NASB].

Not everyone who professes to believe in Christ is saved, but all who are chosen to be saved will come to Christ. Jesus said the true believer will be taught by God (v45). This means God will open their hearts and give them understanding. When they hear or read the Word, they will not doubt; they will believe.

> But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. [1Co 2:14 NASB].

Jesus explained those who come to Christ are instructed by God and He used Old Testament Scripture to validate His claim. He said, "it is written in the prophets." [v45].

- Isaiah had written the children would all be taught by God (Isa 54:13).
- Jeremiah had written God would write His Law on their hearts and no longer would they need to teach each other (Jer 31:33-34).
- Ezekiel prophesied God would remove the heart of stone and give a new heart of flesh and cause the believer to walk in obedience (Eze 11:19-20; 36:26-27).

God's Word is given to the world, but not all will hear. The natural man is in rebellion toward God and cannot hear the Word. When God makes a man born again, that man desires the Word and the Father opens his heart to understand it. He is taught by God.

IN CLOSING

Here again we have seen the unbelief of professing believers.

Christ told these people, who claimed to be believers, they have seen Him, but do not believe. Many people profess to follow Christ, but they do not

obey Him. They are not in the Word and prayer and their lives do not produce fruit. They complain against a God of wrath and they have trouble with many of Christ's declared statements.

Jesus Christ came to turn people to the Father. He told the crowd all the Father gives Him will come to Him, and whoever comes, He will not cast out (v37). This is the promise, which is part of the eternal covenant:

1. All who come to Christ were first given to Him by the Father; and
2. If we come to Christ, He will receive us.

The will of the Father is:

1. None of those He has given to Christ will be lost;
2. All who look upon the Son and believe will have eternal life; and Christ will raise them up on the last day.

The last day is the Judgment Day. On this day, every man will be judged to damnation in Hell or be raised up to eternal life with God. Eternal terror or eternal glory.

When a man has been born again, he desires the Word and the Father opens his heart to understand it. He is taught by God. These people thought they believed, but their hearts were hard. Many people who go to church have hard hearts and do not desire the Word.

If you are skeptical of Scripture, if you need to explain it away or if you are embarrassed by some Scripture when confronted by unbelievers, you might want to examine yourself, because you are not a true believer. You have not been taught by God. You will not be raised to eternal life. Repent and follow Christ.

John 6:46-58 Who Eats This Bread Will Live Forever

Christ preached man was destined for God's wrath and needed repentance. To those who scoffed, He explained to be saved is exclusively the Father's decision, not theirs. He came from the Father and He came to make the Father known (v38; cf 1:18). As the Father sent manna in the desert to give life to the Israelites, He has sent the Bread of Life into the world (v33,51).

Read John 6:46-58.

I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE

The people could not see God the Father (v46), for He had not come down to physically reveal Himself. However, Christ came from the Father; He has seen Him and declared Him to the people (v46; 1:18). Those who believe have eternal life (v47). This means the grumblers and skeptics who followed Him, do not have eternal life.

In the past, when God spoke audibly, it was a fearful sound; and the people begged Moses to speak on God's behalf. Moses was the human buffer between God and man.

> Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die. [Exo 20:19b NASB].

Moses foreshadowed Christ as the human buffer between God and man. Only the Son has seen the Father and He was in the world, speaking to the people, revealing the Father. He had come in the flesh and He was teaching, giving them the words of life.

I am the bread of life. [v48].

This was one of Christ's "I AM" statements. "I AM the Bread of Life." He always was, He is now and He always will be.

Christ spoke the words of creation; He is the founder of life (1:1-4). By His words He sustains the world and the universe (Heb 1:3). And He gave Himself as bread to man. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Mat 5:6). To eat His words is to eat of the true bread; the bread which gives life.

Jesus repeated His claim, He is the Bread of Life (v35,48). So pay attention and listen. The manna in the wilderness was a great miracle, but it did not prevent those who ate it from dying (v49). Many grumbled in the desert because they did not like this bread and they died (Num 11). The manna was a common grace provision for daily food, but it did not protect them from God's judgment.

Jesus said the Bread of Life came down from heaven "so that one may eat of it and not die." [v50]. Then, He repeated His claim to be the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven (v51). Now, if Christ was trying to win the crowd over, He would not repeat the things the crowd had a hard time accepting. But He was warning the masses and calling His sheep, and His sheep will hear His voice.

EAT THIS BREAD AND LIVE FOREVER

In verse 50, Christ said anyone who eats this bread will not die; in verse 51, He said anyone who eats this bread will live forever. So, He emphasized eternal life from the negative and the positive side. Christ came to give life to those who were dead in their trespasses and sins.

The manna falling from heaven in the wilderness was a type and foretelling of the Bread of Life from Heaven.

The bread we eat does not save us from death, but everlasting life is found in the true, spiritual bread, which is Christ. As He said in Mathew 4:4, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word which proceeds from the mouth of God. 1:1 tells us Jesus Christ is the Word of God; He is the mouth of God. True faith is exhibited by those who cling to the words of God, which give eternal life. The bread is symbolic of His words, which lead to life. To eat this bread is to chew on His words.

Christ said the bread that He will give for the life of the world is His flesh (v51). During the Last Supper, Jesus broke bread and said, "This is My body which is given for you." [Luk 22:19]. He spoke of His death; His sacrifice. Christ is given to us. Chew on Him, for He is true food.

Christ told the crowd, the Messiah came to die (v51). Their hope of the Messiah was fulfilled in an earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem and they could not understand the spiritual significance of what Christ was teaching.

> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews
> and folly to Gentiles. [1Co 1:23 ESV].

When Jesus said the bread He gave was His flesh, He was telling of His death, which would bring life for the world (v51). The skeptics mocked and inferred He was promoting cannibalism (v52).

In Matthew 13 and Mark 4, Jesus explained the purpose of parables was so the people might see and hear, but not understand; lest they should turn and be saved. Here, Jesus spoke symbolically and the people did not understand.

What was Christ's reaction to this misunderstanding? Did He back down or rephrase what He said so that it would be more palatable to the people? No, He did not. Instead, He doubled down on His claim and reaffirmed, with double emphasis, if they did not eat His flesh and drink His blood, they had no life, but those who do will be raised up for eternal life on the day when all the rest of mankind are judged (v53-54).

CHRIST DID NOT WATER DOWN THE GOSPEL

There is no effective purpose in watering down the Gospel to make it pleasing to man. Christ did not do this. Christ was never embarrassed by the Word of God, even when misunderstood. Those who try to conform the Scriptures to be palatable to the hearer err on three accounts:

1) They fail to follow the example of Christ. When confronted by grumblers, He did not change His message. In fact, He reiterated and emphasized those parts which were the stumbling blocks to the people;

2) They err in doctrine because they change the message in order to attract those who will not believe and they build God into an image they hope the unbelievers will believe; and

3) They compete with God, because they think they can draw man to Christ, when Christ, Himself, said no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him (v44).

   Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar. [Pro 30:5-6 NASB; cf Deu 4:2; 12:32; Jos 1:7; Rev 22:18-19].

Christ warned the crowd unless they eat His flesh and drink His blood, they have no life in themselves (v53). Many people believe they have life in themselves. They are positive people, full of worldly wisdom. Jesus warned, if the light in you is darkness (worldly, no matter how bright), how great is this darkness (Mat 6:23b). The only road to life is to be eating and drinking Jesus Christ.

CHRIST CALLED BELIEVERS TO ABIDE IN HIM

Christ did not limit His teaching to rebuking the naysayers. He called out to those who would listen. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." [v54 NASB]. He said His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink (v55) and all who eat of

Him are those who abide in Him (v56). That is, they are eating and drinking the words of Christ, the Scriptures.

In 15:1-6, He taught He is the vine and His followers are the branches. The branches drink and get nourishment from the root or the vine. He said we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Him. To abide in Christ is more than a feeling; it is more than spending a quick five, ten or fifteen minutes reading a devotional and getting on your way. To abide in Him is to desire Him like food and water.

> O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. [Psa 63:1 NASB].

Christ said as He, His flesh, has life through the Father, so those who abide in Him will have life in Him (v57). The Father sent Christ to earth and gave life to His flesh. Those who abide in Christ will have life through Him: "live by Me" or "live because of Me."

Christ ended this portion of His teaching by repeating every claim:

- He is the bread that came down from heaven and,
- unlike the manna, which people ate and died,
- whoever eats of the bread from heaven will live forever (v58).

In verse 29, Jesus said it is the work of God that we believe. We know this believing is more than a head knowledge. This believing comes from God and the fruit or evidence is we will be clinging obediently to the words of Christ; this is abiding in Christ.

The true follower of Christ is not distracted with the cares of this world. He leaves these things to God. The true believer is concerned with getting to know God and becoming more like His Son. He eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ; he is in the Word. He desires God like the body desires food and water.

> For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that

not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these, but if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear for clothing?" For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things, but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. [Mat 6:25-33 NASB].

ABIDING IN CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1) You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. [5:38 NASB].

2) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. [6:56 NASB].

3) If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. [8:31-32 ESV].

4) 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. [15:4 NASB].

5) 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. [15:5 NASB].

6) 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. [15:6 NASB].

7) If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. [15:7-8 NASB].

8) Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. [15:9 NASB].

9) 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. [15:10 NASB].

IN CLOSING

You can have your fill of bread and be satisfied, but you will die. Those who eat of the Bread of Life will have everlasting life. Christ said He came to give His life, His flesh, so we can have this eternal life (v47-51). Do not work for food which perishes, but for the food which gives life (v27).

Eating this Bread of Life is not to taste it once. It is to constantly seek and eat as a necessity of life. Nobody is saved by saying the sinner's prayer and going their own way or even cleaning up their life a bit. Salvation belongs to those who abide in Christ; this is what it means to be eating His flesh.

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." [v56 NASB]. Abiding in Christ, feeding on His flesh or His Word, is the ONLY way to eternal life. Desire His Word, chew on it and drink it in, just as you desire food and drink. There is a feast in His Word.

> I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food. [Job 23:12b NASB].

John 6:59-71 The False Believers Grumble And Turn Away

Jesus was at the height of His fame when He fed the five thousand. The people wanted to make Him king, but when He offered them the Bread of Life, they rejected Him and turned away.

Read John 6:59-71.

THE GRUMBLING BELIEVERS

Christ was speaking to professing believers and He was speaking in the Jewish church or synagogue, in Capernaum, near the Sea of Galilee (v59). In this passage, we will see a profession or faith does not make one a believer or a disciple.

In this passage, the scoffers are described as "disciples" (v60,61,66). They were following Christ. I remember about thirty years ago, it became popular for Christians to describe themselves as "Christ followers" because they felt the name "Christian" included too many empty professions of faith. It did not take long for the empty professors to lay claim to the new title. When it is popular to follow Christ, everyone wants to lay their claim to be His disciple.

These Christ followers were having a difficult time accepting the words of Christ (v60). Influenced by the grumbling around them, many of the disciples began to do the same. Rather than seeking to understand more about what Jesus was saying, they joined in the complaining. There is much peer pressure within a crowd.

Faced with complaints, Jesus did not try to please the crowd or try to make His teaching easier to digest. Instead, He doubled down again by telling them even more difficult things. Jesus told them He would ascend to Heaven, where He came from (v62). He asked them what they thought about this. The Jews were already offended because Christ said He was equal with God and had come down to earth. This new claim to ascend to Heaven is not going to satisfy those disciples who were eager to please the Jews.

BELIEVERS CANNOT SAVE THEMSELVES

When Jesus told them it is the Spirit who gives life and the flesh is no help at all (v63), He told them they were not saved and why they were not saved; they were trying to save themselves. They were looking at their own efforts, so they could not understand what it meant to believe.

It is hard for man to come to Christ. These people believed He was the Messiah, but they could not accept His teaching, because it was so much different from what they were raised to believe. Many professing Christians today believe Jesus is the Son of God, but cannot accept His teaching; they pick and choose the teachings of the Bible they agree with. They prefer the watered-down teachings they were taught and teachings which fit or justify their lifestyle. Jesus said it is the Spirit who gives life (v63); it is the Spirit who reveals truth to man and draws him to Christ.

The flesh cannot help us (v63). It is not our desire or seeking which leads us to Christ. Worldly wisdom and positive thoughts cannot lead us to God. In fact, the natural man, the flesh, is blind to the things of God and is powerless to come to Christ without being regenerated by the Spirit.

You see, being saved is more than a head knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. There are multitudes of people who believe this, but they rely on their own wisdom for their hope of eternal life. They think they can do good to earn their way to God or they think God grades on a curve and as long as they are not as bad as the next guy, they will still win their way to heaven. Many think if they are kind and tolerant, they are doing what Jesus taught. A head knowledge of Jesus and a desire for eternal life cannot save.

Most to be pitied are those who think faith in Christ is a mere event; they say the sinner's prayer and confess Jesus is the Son of God; they confess Him as Lord, but they have no idea what this means. They foolishly believe God accepts man as he is and requires nothing of him. They go through life unchanged, thinking they are saved only to have a rude awakening in eternity.

> If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! [Mat 6:23b ESV].

The flesh is no help at all (v63); neither by will nor by wisdom. It is the Spirit who gives life. He it is who quickens man and draws man to Christ. It is the Spirit who makes us born again and Jesus said just as we cannot understand the wind, we cannot understand the Spirit, but we can see the evidence of His work (3:7-8). The flesh, our own effort or decision, is of no help at all. The Apostle Paul wrote when we were powerless to help ourself, Christ died for us (Rom 5:6).

The Spirit gives life. The Gospel of John is the story of the Light overcoming darkness and the Life overcoming death; this story begins in the first chapter. If we rely upon God, we have life. If we rely upon our own wisdom, logic or effort, we have death (v63). Christ's words are spirit, that is they are from God the Father, brought forward by the Holy Spirit, and they are life. If we desire everlasting life, we must cling to Christ's words, which are spirit and life.

CHRIST KNOWS TRUE BELIEVERS

The Bible says Christ knew from the beginning those who did not believe (v64). When was this "beginning"? We know it was at least prior to the time He called His disciples because this text says He knew from the beginning the one who would betray Him, but from Scripture, we see this beginning actually points to a time before creation, as the Apostle Paul wrote God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). Christ knew before He came to the world to die for mans' sins, who were the chosen, that is, who were given Him by the Father (v37) and He knew who would not believe.

After He emptied the temple, many believed He was the Messiah, but this was not a saving faith. We know this because the Bible says, "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men." [2:24 NASB]. This is not passive, as in merely foreknowing; it is active, as in predestined: He knows those who are chosen; those who belong to Him.

Once again, Christ did not plead with the unbelievers. He did not beg them to come. He told them they did not believe (v64) and He warned they cannot come unless it was granted or allowed by the Father (v65). He said His reason for saying this was because they cannot be saved. Think about this: Jesus told these professing believers they cannot be saved.

In this chapter, the Bible gives us an example of a willing audience. By their freewill, many in the crowd were followers or disciples of Christ, but they were not quickened to believe His words because they were not chosen by the Father. So, they believed Jesus was the Messiah, but their freewill was satisfied in their sin and their freewill rejected the hard teachings of Christ and in their freewill they left Him. Freewill cannot bring us to God. It is the Spirit who gives life, our efforts are useless (v63).

How foolish are those preachers who believe we can win the world for Christ. If ever there was a time this could happen, it would have been when the Son of God lived among man. If God's prevenient grace applied to all men, Jesus would have beseeched them to use this grace to believe, but God's saving grace applies solely to those chosen in Christ. Thus, Jesus told the scoffers and complainers, who were professed believers, they cannot come (v65).

THE BELIEVERS TURN AWAY

The many disciples are about to turn away. Voddie Baucham Jr has been known to say something along the line of "if a man could lose his salvation, he would." Freewill brought these people to Christ, but it could not keep

them. When Christ doubled down on what they refused to believe, they left and followed Him no more (v66).

> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. [10:27 NASB, ESV].

In this one chapter of the Gospel of John we see Christ's rise to fame and His fall, if you will. Christ was at the height of His popularity when He fed the five thousand, but He lost it all by teaching hard truth and sticking with it. Nonetheless, He did not come to win a popularity contest. He came to do the Father's will (v38).

Hard teachings drove His followers away:

1) Christ claimed to come from God and be equal with God;
2) Christ claimed to be the bread from heaven, which must be eaten to have eternal life;
3) Christ claimed He was going to ascend back to Heaven.

Those not chosen by God cannot choose God. Like this crowd of professing disciples, some are attracted to the Gospel and appear to be saved, but, like the seed on the rocky soil (Mat 13:5-6), when difficulties come, they wither and fade.

As the freewill believers were leaving, Christ sealed their doom by saying, "This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father." [v65 ESV]. If the Father does not draw you, you cannot come to Christ. This is a call to repentance for the elect; for those who can hear.

> TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS. [Heb 3:7b-8a].

His word is our food and His salvation is our drink. If we are saved, we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. This means we must be in His Word, chewing on it and drinking it in; we must desire Him like food and drink. This is impossible for the man who is not drawn to Christ.

Jesus asked the twelve disciples if they were leaving with the crowd (67). Peter spoke for them and said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." [v68b-69 NASB]. Peter could only say this because the Spirit had revealed this to him. On another occasion, when Peter declared Christ to be the Son of the living God, Jesus said, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." [Mat 16:17 NASB].

Was Christ relieved the twelve had stayed? No. He knew those who were His. He did not respond by thanking them for choosing Him nor did He thank them for staying while others left. No. He declared to them that they were there because of His choosing (v70).

He warned the twelve, one among them would betray Him, calling him a devil (v70). This was a prophecy, but it was also a call for them to examine their lives; a warning not to take their faith for granted.

> Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? [2Co 13:5 NASB].

IN CLOSING

The crowd following Jesus believed He was the Messiah who was to come, but as the cynics began to complain, many who professed to believe were swept along with their protests and accusations. If your desire is to please the crowd, then they will wear you down as they grumble and complain against God.

If you find yourself swept along by the logic, reason or complaints of the world and if you find yourself explaining away the Word of God to satisfy the cynics or trying to make God relevant to unbelievers, then you need to examine yourself to see if you are in the faith.

When the Jews grumbled, Jesus did not beg them to believe. He gave no altar call to receive Him. He did nothing to salvage what appeared to be His faltering ministry. On the contrary, He told them they could not believe unless the Father authorized them to come to Christ (v65). In this, He told them, they could not be saved.

Jesus asked the twelve if they were going to leave as well, but Peter answered Him, saying they had nowhere else to 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." [v68b-69 ESV]. This is evidence of what Jesus said; He said those who come to Him were taught by God. The unregenerate heart could not come to the conclusion Peter expressed.

When Jesus said, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil," He spoke of Judas who was going to betray him. Judas is an example of one who believes they are following Christ and they think they are saved, but their hearts are constantly longing for more of the things of this world. Eventually, they leave. The Apostle John wrote, they went out from us because they were not of us (1Jo 2:19).

We need to examine our hearts constantly. Our desire for the things of this world can lead us away from Christ. Our discontent or grumbling of spirit can cause us to leave Christ, just as these believers left Him. If we are like them, we were never saved at all. Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith.

Can We Come To Christ Via Freewill?

Upon Peter's confession, Christ did not thank the disciples for choosing Him. No. He reminded them, it was they who were chosen by Him (v70). They had not come to Him of their own freewill. In fact, the lesson in this is that all glory goes to God that He would cause any of us to follow Christ

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. [1Pe 1:3 NASB].

CAPTIVE TO SIN

Spurgeon's claim that a man's will is either led captive by sin or is held in the blessed bonds of grace, affirms the Scriptures. In this chapter, Jesus said it is the Spirit who gives life, and the flesh or our will is no help at all (v63). Then He said to this crowd of believers, who professed to be His disciples, "there are some of you who do not believe." [v64]. They had come to Him of their own freewill, but they did not have a saving faith, because freewill cannot produce a saving faith. The flesh is no help at all.

> And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved). [Eph 2:1-5 NASB].

The Bible tells us we were dead in sin. How can a dead man choose life?

The Bible tells us we were serving the prince of the power of the air and that we were sons of disobedience. How can a servant of the devil and a son of disobedience choose to obey God?

The Bible tells us we were indulging our flesh and our minds and we were children of wrath. How can children of wrath, who indulge themselves in sin, turn from their sin by their own choice?

The Scripture above then tells us, "But God. . .even when we were dead in our sins, made us alive. . ." We have been saved by grace, lest any man

should boast (Eph 2:8-9). If we claim we made a decision for Christ, if we claim we can be saved by our own freewill, we are boasting.

The Bible tells us a slave to sin cannot choose Christ until we are regenerated to slaves of righteousness (Rom 6:16-18).

NO ONE SEEKS AFTER GOD

Jesus said no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him (v44). In Jesus' parable of the straying sheep (Luk 15:1-7), there is no mention of the sheep returning of its own choosing.

The sheep is sought after by the shepherd; he collects it and returns it to the flock. The Prophet Ezekiel wrote the sheep are scattered for lack of a shepherd (Eze 34:5). Without a shepherd, the sheep are lost. Jesus came to seek out and save the lost (Luk 19:10) and the Father draws His sheep to the shepherd.

The Psalmist David and the Apostle Paul wrote there is no one who seeks after God (Psa 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Rom 3:10-12). The Prophet Isaiah wrote we have all gone astray, like sheep, everyone has turned to his own way (Isa 53:6). Freewill cannot bring us to Christ.

MANY CANNOT COME

In 2:23-25, many claimed to believe, but Christ had no confidence in them because He knows the heart of man. In other words, these people claimed to believe, but they were not saved. We see examples of this throughout the Gospel of John. So, unlike the modern American gospel, which boils salvation down to a recitation of the sinner's prayer, Jesus said the truth is hidden from those not chosen. In fact, He thanked the Father for this.

> I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. [Mat 11:25-26 NASB].

Jesus told the unbelieving Jews, who thought they were saved because of their lineage to Abraham, where He is going they cannot come (7:34). In Romans chapter 9, Paul explained from Isaac were two flesh, Jacob and Esau. To demonstrate salvation is for the elect and not of the physical lineage, God chose only one of these two sons to continue the promise; He chose the lesser of the two sons. "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." [Rom 9:13]. Then Paul doubled down on this idea of election by saying God hardened Pharaoh's heart and for God's glory he was destined for destruction.

Many Christians have a difficult time with this. I have heard people say about Romans 9, "My god would never. . ." Be careful with this, for the Bible just said He did. Be sure your god is the God of the Bible. I have listened to many try to explain this hard concept away, saying God did not harden his heart, but Pharaoh hardened his own heart and God used this, or they will come up with other such arguments. Here are some problems with this reasoning:

1) Read the Scriptures. God told Moses beforehand He would harden Pharaoh's heart (Exo 4:21;7:3). That some passages refer to Pharaoh hardening his heart (about equally split between Pharaoh and God) can only be explained as the result of what God determined and directed would happen. This also demonstrates God did not harden Pharaoh against his will. Pharaoh was willing to be hardened against God.

   there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it. [Ecc 8:8 NASB].

2) Do you think God left the exodus of Israel from Egypt to chance and that He was waiting for the right moment when there should be a defiant Pharaoh? Is God subject to mans' freewill and must He work around mans' choices to accomplish His will? Or does He bring about history according to His predetermined plan, minute-by-minute? The first chapter of Ephesians tells us God determined all His purposes before He even created.

   The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will. [Pro 21:1 ESV].

3) The Apostle Paul refutes these attempts of man to water down this passage in Romans 9, by stating, "There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.' So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." [Rom 9:14b-16 NASB]. This passage makes it plain, some are chosen and some are not. Period. God said it.

   Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared

> beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called. [Rom 9:21-24a NASB].

In this passage, Paul said those destined for wrath were prepared for destruction, but those destined for glory, were prepared beforehand or chosen. The first three chapters in 1Corinthians, Paul argues the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God and the wisdom of God is foolishness to man. The unregenerate sinner cannot understand the wisdom of God. This wisdom must be God-given.

> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [1Co 2:14 ESV].

Jesus was clear: many cannot come to Him (6:65, *et al*).

GOD CHOOSES THE ELECT

When I was young in the faith, I had a difficult time believing God chose me. I believed if the decision was left to God, I might never have eternal life; for there was absolutely no reason He would choose me. Therefore, I clung to the idea I had chosen Him. However, as God opened up the Word to me, I understood more about my deceitful heart and my will being bound to my desire to sin. I had no desire for righteousness before God regenerated my heart and even now my sin nature seeks to overcome my faith. Therefore, I can only praise Him for drawing me to Him; for I understand now my sin nature would never have allowed me to choose God, but God chose me; as undeserving as I am. Now, I rejoice and I am grateful the choosing was God's.

> He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will. [Eph 1:4-5 NASB].

In this passage above, the Apostle Paul makes clear God chose is in Christ before He created the world. This is not just a foreknowledge, for the Bible says we were chosen and we were predestined to be adopted as sons and this was, "the kind intention of His will." Not our will, but God's will.

Paul said because God chose us, He called us through the Gospel (2Th 2:13-14). In Romans chapter 10, Paul asked how can they hear unless the Gospel is spoken. God has made a way for all those whom He chose to hear, understand and receive the message of the Gospel (1:10-13). So, the elect were not merely foreknown by God, they were chosen and the means

were accomplished that they would be regenerated and receive the Word in faith. All those given to the Son, will come to Him (6:37).

IS GOD A GENTLEMAN?

Many preachers declare God is a gentleman and He will not force Himself upon you; that your salvation is your choice. This is to declare God is only sovereign where His sovereignty does not conflict with man's. This is blasphemy! God's sole interest is in His glory. He created all things, including man, for His glory. The believer and the condemned serve His glory and He is not interested in sharing His glory with man.

> For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; for how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another. [Isa 48:11 NASB].

> We are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand. [Isa 64:8b NASB].

God alone is sovereign and He will accomplish all His purposes (Psa 115:3; Isa 46:8-10). If God has chosen you, you will come to Christ.

> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me. [6:37].

Consider the case of the Apostle Paul: he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians and bring them captive to Jerusalem for their execution. He was breathing out threats and murder (Act 9:1). His freewill was pursing murderous ends, but Christ called him. He overwhelmed him and blinded him; He did not give Paul a choice; He did not ask Paul for permission. He said, "get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do." [Act 9:6 NASB]. Paul obeyed under duress.

So too, if we believe, we who have been chosen in Christ. We were chosen before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). We were chosen for His purposes and we were not given a choice (Psa 138:8). Jesus told the disciples, they had not chosen Him, but He had chosen them (6:70;15:16). We are not given a choice (Psa 139:16) and when God regenerates us, the response of our freewill is to gladly receive Him.

> Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power. [Psa 110:3 ESV].

When God regenerates us, He conforms our will to desire to receive Him and we are happy in the receiving. Just as those who are not chosen remain in their rebellion; they do not do so against their will. They are happy to remain in their disobedience, which is the natural state of man.

Does this mean you cannot come to Christ? If God is sovereign, if He alone is in control, does this mean you cannot receive Christ? How do we know if we are chosen or not? My friend, if you hear Christ's voice, if you feel yourself being drawn to Him, receive Him today. God is drawing you; do not harden your heart (Heb 3:15).

> Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. [Heb 3:7b-8a ESV].
>
> Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. [2Co 6:2 ESV].
>
> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. [v37a NASB].

God demands all men to repent. Do not delay. Come.

> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 NASB].

DOES MAN HAVE FREEWILL?

Does man have freewill? Yes. Can he be saved by it or use it to come to salvation? No. Man is bound to the will of his flesh unless and until he is regenerated by God. This is why no one comes to Christ unless the Father draws him (v44) and no one comes to Christ unless the Father grants it or gives permission (v65).

Many professing Christians declare this is not fair. However, what is fair is for all men to be condemned to Hell. But God, in His mercy, chose some to redeem and call His own. They are a gift from the Father to the Son. This is the eternal covenant and it is clear the election of the saints is not about man, but it is about God and His purposes.

My friend, if you are following Christ today, do not give glory to yourself. Do not take God's glory upon yourself by claiming you came to God by your own freewill or you made a decision for Christ. Remember Ephesians 2:8-9, "lest any man should boast." Give glory to God and thank Him for choosing you and drawing you to His Son (v44).

The battle of freewill is settled: we can only come to true faith in Christ if the Father draws us (v44) and authorizes us (v65).

If you are not following Christ, but hear His voice, do not delay to repent and follow Christ.

John 7:1-11 Jesus' Brothers Challenge Him To Seek Fame

Although Christ was rejected by those who professed to follow Him, He stayed around in Galilee and continued to minister to the remnant. He prophesied He was going to be rejected (4:43-44), but this did not deter Him from His mission.

Read John 7:1-11.

In chapter 5, the Jews in Jerusalem were plotting to kill Christ because He healed a man on the Sabbath and claimed to be equal with the Father.

In chapter 6, Christ was at the peak of His fame in Galilee after feeding the five thousand and the people were conspiring to make Him king. However, His fame fell when He taught one must feast upon Him to have eternal life.

Now, in chapter 7, though He continued His ministry in Galilee (v1), He would returned to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Booths (v2) and the Apostle John gave a list of reactions to Him.

Reactions to Christ in this chapter:

1) His brothers did not believe (v5);
2) Some said He was a good man (v12);
3) Some said He was leading people astray (v12);
4) The Jewish leaders claimed He was uneducated (v15);
5) The crowd said He had a demon for claiming the Jews were trying to kill Him (v20);
6) Then, some were amazed He was speaking openly when His life was in danger (v25-26);
7) The Jewish leaders issued an arrest warrant (v32);
8) The people were divided on the Christ (v40-43);
9) The arresting officers were amazed by His teaching (v46);
10) The Pharisees were arrogant, sneering and condescending (v47);
11) Nicodemus appealed for due process on Christ's behalf (v50).

Christ's miracles attracted the crowds while His teachings repulsed them. This seems to be a common theme throughout the Gospel of John. In our churches today, there are a lot of people in the pews who cling to a feeling, want an experience or they like what they see going on in their local church and they profess a faith in Christ. They seek doctrine which affirms their

way of living, but are repulsed by doctrine which speaks to repentance, obedience, purity and faithfulness.

MISUNDERSTANDING CHRIST

It seems Christ's brothers misunderstood His motives. They accused Him of looking for fame and they mockingly told Him to go to the next big event to show Himself to the world (v3-4).

SIDENOTE: This is a worthless point, but I have to confess that for years, every time I read this passage, I have this picture in my mind of Jesus talking with three of his brothers who are washing their 1953 Chevy BelAir two-door hot rod in their driveway. Jesus is walking by. One brother has control of the garden hose and two brothers are lathering the car with soapy sponges. They stop their work and turn to look at Christ and give him a bad time. I am sorry if you can never unsee this, but I had to get it off my chest.

Christ had reached His peak popularity in Galilee and was just as quickly abandoned by the crowds. His brothers likely noticed His decline in fame and were rubbing His nose in it. They challenged Him to go to Jerusalem and make Himself known to the world. A man seeking his own glory would have done this. Although Jesus was fully man and fully God, He did not use His humanness for His own gain; He was resolved to glorify His Father.

> For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [6:38 NASB].

His brothers told Him to go to Judea so the people who believed could see the miracles He performed (v3). They recognized His works were supernatural, but they did not believe He was the Son of God (v5). They did not believe He had the words of life.

To know or to acknowledge the works of Christ is not the same as believing. His brothers knew Him and saw His works, but they did not recognize His divinity nor His sovereignty over their lives. They had a head knowledge of His works, but did not see Him as God. They did not believe and would not worship and obey.

> I have become a stranger to My brothers, an alien to My mother's sons. [Psa 69:8 ESV].

MY TIME HAS NOT YET COME

Christ told His brothers, "My time has not yet come." [v6b]. This is the same thing He said to His mother, at the wedding of Cana, when she told Him they had run out of wine (2:4). At that time, she believed her son could

remedy the shortage and was coaxing Him to reveal Himself. In this situation, His brothers did not believe, but were coaxing Him, mocking Him, to reveal Himself.

In the previous chapter, Christ made it clear He did not come for His own fame; He came to do the Father's will. In the Father's will, everything has its proper time and in the Gospel of John, much is said about God's time.

- We can understand from the Apostle John's constant reference to time, Christ's life was designed, minute-by-minute.
- Solomon wrote in the third chapter of Ecclesiastes there is a time designated for everything. God has already ordained the past, the present and the future.
- David wrote in Psalm 139, God knows every word on our tongue before we say it and this is more than a mere foreknowing because all our days were written in His book before our first day even came to pass.
- The Apostle Paul said, in the first chapter of Ephesians God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world.
- The Apostle John wrote in Revelation 13 and 17, the Book of Life was written before the creation of the world.

So, we know from Scripture, before creation, God designed the world and everyone in it, minute-by-minute. However, someone might ask, if Christ could not be killed before His time, why did He avoid the Jews in Judea, as stated in verse 1?

In Luke 4:30, Christ faced a hostile crowd, in fact, they were ready to throw Him off a cliff, but the Scripture said He walked right through the crowd. In 8:59 and 10:39, there are similar accounts of His escape from those who sought to kill Him. And, in 10:18, Jesus said no one will take His life from Him, but He will lay it down of His own accord; by His own authority.

So, when verse 1 says He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were looking to kill Him, this brings up the question of whether He feared He could be killed before His time. The answer is "no." Christ was not afraid nor could He be killed before His time. Commentators say He wanted to forestall provoking the crowds; to avoid working up the mob before His time. This is also why he traveled to Jerusalem in secret and arrived unannounced.

Jesus told his brothers, He was not going to the feast (v8). Many manuscripts say "not going to the feast yet." This is more likely, because we know Jesus did not lie. When His brothers left for the feast, traveling

with the crowds, Jesus stayed in Galilee (v9). Later, Jesus and His disciples, traveled privately (v10). No one saw Him arrive, although many were looking for Him and asking if anyone had seen Him (v11).

He did not go to the feast in public array. Had He done so, there would have been quite a commotion, which would have built larger as He approached the city. This would have detracted from His triumphal entry on His way to the final Passover. He went privately and without ceremony. The crowd would not know He was at the feast, until it was time to speak.

THE LOVE OF THE WORLD

Christ's time had not come: the time for Him to die. His brother's time was always good (v6b): they were living for this world. He said, "your time is always here. The world cannot hate you." [v6b-7a]. Essentially, Jesus told His brothers to go to the feast and have fun. Although the purpose of the event was to worship God, there was no repentance. The crowd at the feast was like minded: most were there for the food and festivities. Though they were religious, they were confident in their good works. They were not there to worship God, because they were not repentant.

> When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? [Isa 1:12 NASB].

Many professing Christians go to religious or church events to have fun and the mood is destroyed by conversations of repentance or deep theology. Jesus would destroy this festive mood when He began to teach. The world hated Him because He testified their works were evil and they were in need of repentance (v7).

When Christ said the world will hate Him because He testified against their evil deeds, He included His brothers in the condemnation. They did not believe and they resented His constant convicting messages and His claim to be God.

Jesus told His disciples the world will hate them because of Him (15:18-19; Mat 10:22). Many professing Christians try to escape this. They work for the approval of the world; some want the Gospel to be popular with the world or relevant. What did Christ say? Did He tell us to work for the approval of the world or did He tell us the world will not approve us? The world will never approve of the true Gospel.

The Apostle James warned us friendship with the world or looking for its approval, is enmity or hostility toward God (Jam 4:4). If pleasing people and making them feel good is more important than standing up for God's truth, how can we say we are following Christ? Jesus asked the question in 5:44, "If you are working for the approval of man, how can you be saved?"

IN CLOSING

The Feast of Booths was coming up in Jerusalem. His brothers badgered Jesus to go; to show Himself to the world. They did not yet believe in Him. Jesus told them His time had not yet come.

The Apostle John refers to time and timing many times in this Gospel. God worked out every detail and nothing happened at the wrong time; no plan of man could interfere with God's purposes.

Christ's message to His brothers was those who please the world will be loved by the world, but the world hates Him because He testifies against the world, that the world is evil. Those who work to please Christ will be hated as well, for the message of Christ is to repent and follow Him.

John 7:11-24 God Fearing People At A Religious Feast

Christ waited in Galilee for the caravan of rejoicing religious people to leave for Jerusalem before He and His disciples went to the feast in private (v9-10). For the people, the feast was all show. Christ's mission was to reveal the Father and call for repentance.

Read John 7:11-24.

RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

So, here we have a crowd of religious, "God-fearing" people. They claimed to follow God and they were in Jerusalem for a religious feast. However, they did not worship God. They worshiped their religion; a religion about God. Their religion was not going to save them.

The Jews were seeking Him at the feast (v11). This was a good place to find Him and arrest Him. Like His brothers, they thought Jesus was a fool for the crowds. Meanwhile, the crowds liked the drama of the controversy and they were arguing whether He was a good man or whether He was a distraction from the truth (v12).

Reinforcing the fact the people worshiped their religion: the temple was more important than the truth. The people were more afraid of getting kicked out of the temple than they were of facing God's judgment. Some were convinced of the truth, but would not defend Christ openly (v13).

Some said Christ was a good man, while others said He was leading people astray; away from the truth (v13). Both groups had wrong ideas because they did not know the truth. Christ was more than a good man: He was the envoy from the Father. He spoke for the Father, because He was God, Himself. Christ was the Messiah sent from God. Jesus said, if anyone truly follows God, this person would know His words were truth (v17).

To follow Christ requires faith in a God you cannot see. Many people are attracted to a faith they can touch and feel. Such as a church with a building, real people they can relate to, real programs they can participate in and a relevant pastor. This describes most of the modern American Christians. It is not Christ they are following; they are committed to the group, the visible church congregation. Like these Jews, they worship their religion.

The Jews believed their religion of works would save them, and many professing Christians glory in their church. They believe they are spiritually safe by belonging to a local church. They are comfortable following a Christ they can add to their lives. They cling to a gospel formulated by

consensus. They are deceived to believe their warm thoughts of God will save them. However, they will not follow a Christ who calls them to repentance and calls them to take up their cross daily.

The Prophet Jeremiah warned about this:

> Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, "This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD." [Jer 7:4 NASB].

TEACHING AT THE FEAST

Jesus began teaching at the temple in the middle of the feast, which was three or four days into it (v14). Rather than present Himself while everyone was talking about Him and looking for Him, He waited for the stirring to die down.

The Jews were impressed with His knowledge, but they knew He had no formal training (v15), so they rejected what He said without examination. The Jews were formally trained men, educated to know God's Word. They were well versed in Moses and the Prophets and most had memorized generous portions of each. Christ, who was prophesied by Moses and the Prophets, was teaching them from the very words they had studied and memorized, but they were blind to see it and deaf to hear it.

They could not see nor understand when prophecy was being fulfilled right in front of them.

Jesus said His teaching was not His own, but was from the Father who sent Him (v16). He did not take credit for His own wisdom, for He came to make the Father known (1:18). He came to speak what the Father charged Him to say (12:49).

This crowd was not seeking what God had to say, but Jesus said if anyone was willing to do God's will, he will know Christ spoke for God (v17). In another passage, He said His sheep hear His voice (10:27). If we abide in His Word, we will know the truth (8:31-32).

We know these people were not seeking God's will, because in verse 19, Jesus directed these people to their knowledge of Scripture, but said they violate this same Scripture by seeking to kill Him. They thought they knew the Word, but Jesus said they failed to understand and accept the truth. They claimed to seek God, but they reacted violently against truth.

Many are the professing Christians who are well versed in the Word, but they torture the doctrines of grace. When we read and study the Scriptures to confirm our own worldviews rather than seek the truth, we are truly in

darkness and cannot know the truth of the Word of God. Jesus said, if the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness (Mat 6:23).

You will know if the teachings of Christ are true if your desire is to do God's will and do not to seek your own gain (v17). Only when our desire is to please God can we properly interpret the Scriptures and know God's truth. The Holy Spirit gives us understanding.

> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [1Co 2:14 ESV].

Christ said the one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory (v18). Many claim to speak for Christ today, but they compromise or pervert the Scriptures to gain a following. Many are the preachers who proclaim a "relevant" gospel; who believe they are doing great things for God. They claim to seek God's glory, but it is their own fame they pursue.

These preachers pick and choose which Scriptures are true. They validate sin in the name of compassion. They twist the Scriptures to endorse a worldly view of social justice. They tell lost sinners God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their life; they tell them God loves them the way they are. These preachers are not seeking the will of God; they are speaking on their own authority, seeking the praise of men.

Most professing Christians view Jesus as the man who healed the sick and hung out with sinners without judging them. Forgotten is the man who warned professing believers they were not saved; who called sinners to repentance and warned them to abide in the Word. We need to study the Scriptures, looking for God's will, so we can discern the truth.

In chapter 5, the last time He was in Jerusalem, Christ confronted a crowd, maybe many of the same people, who professed to know the Word of God; similar to professing Christians, if you will. He rebuked them, for they searched the Scriptures which speak of Him, but they could not recognize Him because they were more interested in their own glory and pleasing their peers (5:39-47). Now, in this chapter, He confronted the crowd and warned them, they may know the law of Moses, but they do not keep the law (v19).

The Jews professed a zeal for Moses, but did not heed his words. For Moses promised the Messiah would come and warned the people to be careful to obey everything He told them (Deu 18:15). While professing Moses, they did not listen to him and they held the Messiah in contempt, saying He had a demon (v20). As Christ said, you will seek God's will or you will seek to kill the Christ (v17-19). There is no middle ground.

Now we get to the center of the controversy: The last time Jesus was in Jerusalem, He healed a man on the Sabbath (5:1-16). When the crowd claimed no one sought to kill Him, Jesus reminded the people of the controversy (v21-23).

Jesus acknowledged they marveled at this miracle (v21). This is why some in the crowd said He was a good man. However, many were stumbling over the fact He healed on the Sabbath. This is why they said He was leading people astray (v12).

Jesus reasoned with them, doubling down on the truth, again. He reminded them the Jewish law required a male child to be circumcised on the eighth day, one week after birth (Lev 12:3). The law makes no distinction for the Sabbath, the circumcision shall take place regardless the day. Christ asked the crowd, if a man can be circumcised on the Sabbath, to fulfill the law of Moses, why were they angry with Him for making a man's body whole on the Sabbath (v23). Christ had violated no law of God, only a rule of man. Man's religious rules are for appearance sake, but God knows the heart.

If Christ had healed the man on any other day, there would have been no controversy, but it was God's intention to create a controversy. The purpose was, as stated in verses 17-18, to see if anyone was truly seeking God's will and to expose those who seek their own glory.

Jesus warned the crowd not to judge by appearances, but with right judgment (v24). Judging by mans' rules, He had violated the Sabbath; but if judging by the truth, then this miracle of healing was a validation Christ had come from God. We cannot reach right judgment if we are worried what other people think or if we judge truth by consensus or if we judge Scripture by the filter of our bias. Only when we seek God's glory can we truly see with right judgment.

If our religion is composed of rules and traditions, or if we seek to please man with our appearance of goodness, our religion is in vain and we are not saved. In this passage, God fearing people were at a religious feast, but could not recognize the fulfillment of the Scriptures when He stood among them.

Rather than seek the truth, their desire was to kill Him, because He violated their bias; He offended them. Their hard hearts could not understand His teaching. They thought themselves religious, but they were seeking their own glory.

IN CLOSING

Some claimed Christ was a good man and others claimed He led people astray. No one defended Him openly because they did not want to get

kicked out of the temple. Fear of man causes many to stand down when they should be defending God and His Word.

These were "God-fearing people." Yet, we can see most of them were rebellious in their hearts. Going to church does not make you saved; going to conventions, conferences or feasts does not make you saved. These people had a religion, but they did not seek God.

Christ came to make the Father known. He called men to repent of their ways and follow the One who is true. He challenged them to seek the truth and judge with righteous judgment and not according to appearance.

Those who try to be religious by keeping rules, may appear righteous, but they miss the truth. Jesus' call was to honor God; to worship Him. This is true religion and this is truth. True religion seeks God's glory.

John 7:25-32 Using Peer Logic To Disprove The Christ

The people were not willing to accept Christ's authority because He did not respect the rules made by man.

When Christ claimed they were trying to kill Him, they mocked Him and said He had a demon (v19-20), but after He reminded them of the controversy and He rebuked them for holding mans' laws above God's (v21-24), they suddenly remembered why they wanted to kill Him (v25).

Read John 7:25-32.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

This would be the greatest conspiracy, if it turned out the Pharisees wanted to kill Christ, but they knew for fact He was the Messiah (v26).

The crowd rationalized if the religious leaders were deceived, the crowd was not. The crowd reasoned He could not be the Messiah, because when the Christ appeared no one would know where He came from, but they knew He had come from Nazareth and many in the crowd knew His family (v27). Thus, they reasoned, He could not be the Messiah.

The crowd came up with this idea on their own, that no one would know where the Messiah came from (v27). The people relied upon Biblical ignorance to make this claim, but it sounded good.

- The Prophet Micah said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). When the wise men came from the East, the priests and scribes used this Scripture to direct them to the Christ child (Mat 2:1-6).
- Regarding where Christ grew up: the crowd must have forgotten Isaiah's prophecy, the region of Galilee would be glorified by the presence of the Messiah (Isa 9:1-2).

Later in this public discussion, some of the people admit to the Christ being born in Bethlehem (v42), but mistakenly claim Jesus came from Galilee. He was raised in Nazareth and they must have presumed He was born there. Regardless, the purpose of their speculation and reasoning was to dismiss Christ's claims. For if Christ was the Messiah, they would be obligated to obey His teachings. They were comfortable with their sinful lives and their religion of works (3:19). Therefore, they disqualified Christ, so they would not have a moral obligation to believe.

CHRIST SPOKE TRUTH; NOT FEELINGS

So Christ spoke out above the crowd in the temple. Using their own words He revealed they did not know Him at all. It was not important where He was born; it was important where He came from. He went right to the point, telling them He was sent by the Father, whom also they did not know (v28).

These people prided themselves in the Law and saw themselves to be children of God through Abraham. Now, this man Christ, told them He knows the Father, but they do not. This was Christ, telling them they were not saved.

> No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known. [1:18].

Christ made the Father known. This is why He came. A man seeking fame would have been promoting his own glory, like His brothers encouraged Him to do, but Christ did not come to promote Himself. He was sent; He was sent by the One who is true. "And Him you do not know." [v28]. This was a call to repentance, for to know God is to understand He is holy and we need to repent of our sins.

This is not exactly the way the modern American gospel would have put it. Jesus did not tell them God loved them and had a wonderful plan for their life. He did not promise them their lives would be better if they followed Him. He condemned these people, because they were here for a feast in celebration before God and they were zealous in their religion, but they refused to leave their sin; therefore, they did not know God.

> Their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; but they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, nor do they consider the work of His hands. [Isa 5:12 NASB].

You can see very clearly, Christ was not concerned about their feelings. He was not concerned He might come across as unkind or hateful. He was concerned about God's glory and their lost souls. Once He established they did not know God, He doubled down and declared to them He came from the Father who sent Him (v29). Once again, this was not for His glory, and He certainly was not winning any friends here.

Remember Jesus' example the next time you use the phrase, "What Would Jesus Do?". This was for God's glory, and there were those in the audience who were called. As Christ proclaimed the Word, the lost sheep would hear and understand (v17,31). The rest would harden their hearts, but the Gospel was preached to them and they are without excuse.

"So," "therefore" or "because He said these things," they were seeking to arrest Him. Nonetheless, those who sought to apprehend him were powerless to do so, because God is always in control. He sets the timetables of history (v30) and everything is subject to "the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will." [Eph 1:11b ESV]. Though Christ's words upset them, they were powerless to stop Him.

TRUE BELIEVERS WILL SPEAK THE TRUTH

Earlier, no one spoke openly about the Christ for fear of the Jews (v13), but once Christ declared plainly who He was, there were many who did believe. They testified about Him openly by reasoning with the people whether the Messiah could do more miracles than this man (v31).

Believing is always accompanied by a profession of faith. There is no private faith. When the Word of God is attacked, those who believe will speak out.

So the people were divided: many believed, but most looked for every logical reason to reject Him.

The Pharisees were paying attention to the crowd and were concerned which way the conversation was going (v32).

1. Is this the man the Pharisees were seeking to kill, but do they now know He is the Christ? (v25-26).
2. If the Pharisees do believe, they must be wrong because we know when the Messiah comes, we will not know from where He comes (v27).
3. The believers were starting to defend Him by claiming no one could do more signs than Jesus (v31).

The crowd was divided, mostly in favor of the Jews. Yet the Pharisees noticed Christ was winning some of the people. So they sent officers to arrest Him, falsely assuming they could overcome the One God sent (v32).

IN CLOSING

When the crowd used logic to explain why Jesus could not be the Messiah, He mocked their false wisdom, throwing their words back in their faces. Jesus rebuked them because they did not know the Father, even though in pretense they were holding a feast to Him.

The Pharisees wanted to arrest Him, but it was not His time. Their inability should have made obvious to them everything was in God's control. This attested to Christ's claim He was sent by the Father.

The Apostle John wrote many believed in Him. They defended Christ by saying no one could do more signs than He had done. Whomever truly believes, will defend Christ. There is no such thing as a private faith.

Most this crowd were attracted by His miracles, but repulsed by His teaching. Today, many desire Christ to do things for them or fix their lives, but they want nothing to do with obedience. They profess to believe, but they are not saved.

John 7:33-39 The Living Water Satisfies Our Thirsty Soul

Christ put out the call to repent saying, "you do not know the Father," but few believed (v28). Now, He will warn them the time to believe is short and He promised to those who believe, from them will flow rivers of living water.

Read John 7:33-39.

YOU CANNOT COME

Earlier in this chapter (v16-18,28), Jesus said He was sent by the Father. In this passage, He said He would go back to the Father, but this was bad news for the unbeliever. He said, "You will seek Me and you will not find Me. Where I am you cannot come." [v34 ESV]. He was talking about Heaven; He was talking about their hard hearts, which would keep them from being with God in Heaven. The Jews stumbled upon the meaning and they mocked Him as if He said He was going to hide somewhere.

They were baffled by His warning. They failed to understand the spiritual depth and the eternal implication. He told the Jews, those who wanted to get rid of Him, He was going to the Father and they cannot come. Jesus is the only way to the Father (14:6). Where the modern American gospel would proclaim to the hardened unbeliever, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," Jesus declared, "you cannot come." [v36].

At the Last Supper, Jesus had a similar conversation with His disciples. He said, "A little while, and you will see Me no longer." [16:16]. He told them sorrow was coming, but He would see them again and their joy could not be taken away. How different Christ spoke of those who followed Him, than of those who opposed Him and mocked Him.

Can you see why it is blasphemous to tell unbelievers, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life"?

On the last day of the feast (the eighth day; cf Lev 23:39), Jesus stood up and cried out. His purpose was so everyone could hear Him. God speaks to all; all men are accountable for the words of Christ, but few are chosen to receive and understand the meaning.

THE LIVING WATER

Jesus offered Living Water to those who were thirsty (37-38). Are you thirsty to know God more? Christ's message was not one of making your life better. It was a message of satisfying the thirsty soul. Not all souls are thirsty: only the soul which is drawn by the Father. So, He was calling out

to those whom God was drawing. If you do not thirst for the Word, God is not drawing you and you are not saved.

Jesus used the theme of the last day of the feast to illustrate His call to follow Him. The feast's theme was, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." [Isa 12:3 ESV]. Several Old Testament Scriptures referred to this theme (Isa 58:11; Joe 3:18; Zec 14:8).

> It was a sabbath, the last feast day of the year, and distinguished by very remarkable ceremonies. "The generally joyous character of this feast broke out on this day into loud jubilation, particularly at the solemn moment when the priest, as was done on every day of this festival, brought forth, in golden vessels, water from the stream of Siloah, which flowed under the temple-mountain, and solemnly poured it upon the altar. Then the words of Isaiah 12:3 were sung, With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Salvation, and thus the symbolical reference of this act, intimated in John 7:39, was expressed" [OLSHAUSEN]. So ecstatic was the joy with which this ceremony was performed, accompanied with sound of trumpets, that it used to be said, "Whoever had not witnessed it had never seen rejoicing at all" [LIGHTFOOT]. [JBF Commentary].

This was the setting: a jubilant celebration, celebrating with the water from the river under the temple. This water represented the Holy Spirit; it was a type or forerunner of the promise of the New Covenant.

> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules. [Eze 36:26-27; cf Deu 30:6; Jer 31:31-33].

Jesus cried out, announcing this Living Water is now here; He was promising this water, the Holy Spirit, to all who would follow Him. God had planned this celebration beforehand and that it would reflect the joy of salvation. The Holy Spirit is our jubilation; He is our cause for rejoicing, because He seals us in Christ Jesus for eternal life (Eph 1:13; 2Co 1:22).

On the last day of the feast, Christ stood up and cried out, that is, He shouted, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" [v37b-38 NASB]. On other occasions He made similar proclamations:

- He told the woman at the well whoever drinks the water He gives will never thirst again, "The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [4:14 ESV].
- He proclaimed in Capernaum He was the Bread of Life and whoever comes to Him will never hunger or thirst (6:35).
- He spoke at the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." [Mat 5:6 NASB, ESV].

Christ has promised us, if we devour His Word, He will satisfy our hunger and thirst (6:35). If you do not desire the Word or if you are satisfied with a only short reading of the Word, it cannot well up within you (4:14) and you cannot be certain you are saved.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal upon us (Eph 1:13). Jesus said when we have the Holy Spirit, rivers of Living Waters will flow out from us. Therefore, this is how we know we have the Holy Spirit: we desire the Word and Scripture flows through our words and deeds.

> With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. [Isa 12:3 ESV].
>
> Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. [Isa 55:1 ESV].

Christ extended this call to the thirsty and hungry. This feast celebrated the waters flowing below the threshold of the temple. The prophet Ezekiel talked of these waters and said, "so everything will live where the river goes" (Eze 47:1-12). Christ compared the Holy Spirit to these waters.

These religious people felt confident they were right with God because they were celebrating a religious feast. The people should have been ready to hear Jesus Christ calling them to come and drink, because this feast was the illustration and celebration of this message. Christ, sending the Holy Spirit upon those who follow Him, was the fulfillment of it. The Living Water was at the feast and He was calling, but few heard Him and many mocked Him. The crowd went to the feast, but missed the message of it.

> They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD, or see the work of his hands. [Isa 5:12 ESV].

LIVING WATER WELLING UP IS NOT CHARISMA

Christ promised spiritual prosperity to all who follow Him. "Out of his heart will flow rivers of Living Water." [v38 ESV]. Modern American preachers proclaim following Christ leads to financial prosperity. They pervert the Gospel with a call to self-satisfaction. Search the Scriptures: God does not promise money; He promises to give us Living Water. To be marked or sealed by the Holy Spirit is our assurance of a prosperous spiritual life and an eternal life with God.

Do not be sidetracked by the modern charismatic movement: Regarding the Holy Spirit, the Apostle John wrote the Spirit had not yet been given because Christ had not yet been glorified (v39). Luke explained, in Acts 2:1-4, the Jews who believed received the Spirit in an outpouring while together in one place. This event was repeated for the Gentiles (Act 10:44-46; 19:2-7). Some professing Christians twist the Scriptures to depict this type of event as the means of being filled with the Spirit, but this was not a prototype; it was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel and others.

> And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. [Joe 2:28 ESV].

"All flesh" meaning all mankind; the Jew and the Gentile. However, no longer is the filling of the Spirit a mass outpouring. The Apostle Paul explained we who are saved, receive the Spirit when we receive Christ (1Co 12:13; Eph 1:13-14; cf Rom 8:9) and Peter affirmed this in Acts 2:38. All who are saved have the Holy Spirit as promised.

Rather than be in the Word, some professing Christians rely upon outward signs, such as speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances. Though this was necessary in the early church before the work of the Scriptures was complete, this is not needed today (1Co 13:8-11). Outward manifestations are no longer necessary because we have the Word of Truth; the Scriptures are complete.

Instead of seeking preachers via "manifestations," which are often manufactured, we should be looking for fruit, as Jesus said (15:1-6; Mat 7:16-20). If we find a professing brother who speaks in tongues, but has no spiritual fruit, he is no brother at all. Most professing Christians are not in the Word and many of them claim to rely upon the Spirit leading them. Often what this "spirit" says is opposite the message of the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit will never speak what is not true to Scripture. God has nothing new to tell us; we have the Word, the Bible. Keep the Word: Jesus told us to hunger and thirst for it.

When we are born again, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). He works in our lives to make us more like Christ (Rom 8:28-29). He directs

us to truth through the Scriptures (2Ti 3:16; 2Pe 1:21). We need to be in the Word, because from the Word, the Holy Spirit gives us understanding and directs us into truth (1Co 2:12-14).

- The Spirit instructed the apostles in the writing of the Word or New Testament (1Co 2:9-13; 2Pe 1:21; cf 2Co 13:3; 2Th 2:13-15).
- He continues to teach us by opening up the Word so we will understand (1Co 2:14; 2Ti 3:16-17).
- When the Holy Spirit leads us into truth, we will seek the Word and not rely upon "manifestations" outside of it (1Jo 2:26-27).

IN CLOSING

Jesus told the crowd He would be with them a little longer and where He was going they could not come. He warned them, they were not saved. Rather than heed the warning, they speculated and in their rebellion, they mocked Him.

The last day of the feast was the biggest celebration; it was a celebration of water. Jesus cried out if anyone follow Him, out of them will flow rivers of Living Water. Christ proclaimed the prophecies of the Holy Spirit were being fulfilled.

If we are truly saved, the Holy Spirit is working in our lives and we will have this Living Water.

- we will desire the Word;
- we will be in the Word;
- we will speak the Word.

This is what it means to have rivers of Living Water flowing out of us.

John 7:40-53 Faced With Truth, Consensus Theology Brings Division

Christ's words angered the crowd as He exposed their hypocrisy and lack of understanding of Scripture. However, some listeners were coming to conviction.

Read John 7:40-53.

Some in the crowd were convinced Jesus was the Prophet; the one prophesied by Moses (v40).

> The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen. [Deu 18:15 ESV].

In this passage, some called Jesus the Prophet and others made the correct distinction He was the Christ or the promised Messiah (v41). These were likely those who truly believed; the same people who said, "When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done?" [v31].

THEOLOGY BY DOUBT

But, then, there were the doubters. In verse 27, the crowd claimed when Christ would come, no one would know where He was from, but now, they claimed He could not come from Galilee, because the Scriptures said He would come from Bethlehem (v41b-42).

Some people need a technical reason not to believe. They look for a reason to doubt. For, if Christ was the Messiah, they would be accountable to His teachings; if He were not the Messiah, they could dismiss His teachings, but they got their technicalities wrong.

1. The records confirm Jesus Christ is of the lineage of David on His mother's side (Luk 3:23-38) and on His earthly father's side (Mat 1:1-16), though Joseph contributed nothing toward His birth. These records would have been available because Jews kept close records for every family through the captivity years and resettlement. This is how the gospel authors were able to list Christ's family lineage with accuracy.

2. These public records and the record we have from the Scriptures confirms Christ was born in Bethlehem (Mat 2:1; Luk 2:4-6). The Jewish leaders were able to point the Wise Men to the right location when they were searching for the Christ child.

This evidence was not unknown, but it is the nature of man to cling to hearsay and rumor to support what they want to believe, dismissing all other information which does not confirm their bias.

THEOLOGY BY CONSENSUS

Quite often, people tend to rest their theology upon the majority view. I remember when I was young in the faith, I wrestled with the prescriptive methods of the easy believers. The consensus was, as long as you checked off all the boxes, you were saved. If you accepted Jesus into your heart and said the sinner's prayer and professed Him as Lord and were sincere when you said it, then the consensus was you were saved. I questioned this against Christ's claim we must take up our cross and follow Him, but my Sunday School teachers and youth ministers assured me, this was "another level" of the faith. Though I thought this was in error, I trusted the idea or theory that, if not exactly correct, God would not send so many professing Christians to Hell. So, as long as my faith was the same as the majority, I reasoned I should be safe. We tend to want to reach salvation by consensus, but this is dangerous.

The modern American gospel is full of theology which does not come from Scripture, but we feel comfortable with it because everyone speaks it. Among these are "give your heart to Jesus," "say the sinner's prayer," "I made a decision for Christ." These statements make us no different from these crowds, who reached salvation by consensus. Most professing Christians do not have a Biblical understanding of the means of salvation.

Professing Christians have become so obsessed with the gospel of kindness and have forgotten the Gospel preached by Jesus Christ, which is "repent, for the kingdom of heaven (judgment) is at hand." [Mat 4:17; Mar 1:15]. We have forgotten Jesus told us to count the cost and to take up our cross and follow Him (Luk 14:27-33). We have forgotten Jesus said we must be born again and this is the work of God (3:3-8). We have forgotten those who disobey REMAIN under God's wrath (3:36) or, as Jesus said, "are condemned ALREADY." [3:18]. We need to examine ourselves in the light of the Scriptures to see if we truly believe or to understand if, maybe, we have been following with the masses, hoping we will flow into Heaven.

THEOLOGY BY DIVISION

Wrestling with these technical problems with the advent of the Messiah and the familiarity of Christ and His family, the people were divided. Earlier in this public conversation, the crowd was arguing whether He was a good man or leading people astray (v12). This time, they were divided whether

He could be the Messiah or had come from the wrong town (v40-42). They could not hear the Gospel, because they were arguing over technicalities.

Jesus Christ claimed to come from God; to be equal with the Father (v29). He claimed to give of the Holy Spirit to those who followed Him (v38). There were three responses to His message:

1. Some believed (v40-41a);
2. Others tried to water down the message or argue the minor points (v41b-42);
3. Some wanted the message to go away (v44).

Twice, the Apostle John brought this up: some wanted Him arrested (v30,44). Many people cannot handle conflict and want to eliminate the cause. The Pharisees viewed Christ as a threat to their domain and authority. Others viewed Christ as leading people astray (v12). However, no one could lay hands on Him because His time had not yet come (v30,44).

An objective heart would have understood this inability to apprehend Christ was of God and, as such, the matter should have been settled and Christ should have been worshipped, but a freewill bound by sin clings to a sinful, hardened understanding and cannot see the truth. Therefore, the blasphemies against Christ continued.

When the officers sent to arrest Jesus returned empty-handed, the Pharisees were angry and accused them of being duped. The Pharisees set themselves up as the standard for truth, claiming the people were cursed because they did not know the law (v49), but the officers were convinced, "No one ever spoke like this man!" [v46b ESV].

Times do not change: those who rise to power believe themselves to be superior and smarter than the common man, but God chooses to reveal the truth to those of low estate.

> I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. [Mat 11:25b NASB].
>
> For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong. . .so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." [1Co 1:26,27,31 NASB].

How often people are fooled by good sound bites. We look to leaders and famous preachers for truth, but too often they are not following the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote, "none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" [1Co 2:8]. The rulers of this age, to which Paul referred, were the famous leaders, preachers and teachers: the Pharisees and such.

So, Jesus called them out. In verses 19-24, Jesus accused them of failing to keep Moses' Law by trying to kill Him. He also accused them of not following Moses' Law by failing to honor the purpose of the Sabbath (v22-23). The Pharisees had created so many laws, confusion prevailed and "masters" were needed for proper interpretation. Therefore, God's Law was mocked in practice.

At another time, Jesus called out seven woes to the Pharisees. Regarding the tithe, He said they strained out a gnat to swallow a camel. They made themselves look clean outwardly, while inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence. He berated them for their hypocrisy and condemned them in their sin (Mat 23:13-36).

The Pharisees had twisted the Word of God so violently, the people could not see the fulfillment of the promise when He stood before them, in the flesh, but there were some whom God had opened their eyes to the truth. This is how the coming of the Christ brought division: He exposed the lie; He exposed the hypocrisy of those who professed to speak for Him.

Nicodemus was concerned. The officers had not returned with Jesus and it was obvious from the reaction of the Pharisees, they wanted to make haste in the execution of this man. Nicodemus considered Jesus to be sent by God (3:2). So he tried to slow this rush to execute Him. He wanted Christ to have a fair hearing and he questioned, as a point of law, whether a man can be judged without a trial (v50-51).

The Pharisees' response to Nicodemus was to rebuke him for siding with a Galilean and challenged him to search the Scriptures and see no prophet comes from there, but a search of the Scriptures shows this to be false, because Jonah was from Gath-hepher, which was in Galilee (2Ki 14:25). Elijah was from Thisbe and possibly Nahum and Hosea were from Galilee.

Then, the leaders mockingly accused Nicodemus of being a Galilean. This was a put-down intended to shut him up. It seemed to work, for the passage does not record a response from him.

Nicodemus was not yet willing to reveal he was a believer. We know this, in part, because of the Apostle John's rebuke in 19:38-39. Further evidence of his silence is when the Pharisees made it clear to the soldiers, none of the teachers of the law had believed in Christ, but Nicodemus did not speak out

to correct this error (v48). He feared man more than he feared God. At this time, Nicodemus did not have a saving faith.

The people were divided: some believed Jesus was the Messiah; some believed He was merely a prophet; and others wanted Him dead. Of the Pharisees and leaders, most did not believe, but the few, like Nicodemus who did believe, were afraid to confess. Jesus said He came to bring a sword (Mat 10:34-39). He came to bring division, not peace (Luk 12:49-53). So this crowd could never be a happy crowd. Furthermore, they could never come to the truth because few among them were looking for the truth.

They each went to their own house (v53). The plot to kill Jesus just lost wind in the sails and would have to resume another time.

[THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT INCLUDE 7:53 to 8:11. It is probable these verses were added sometime later.]

IN CLOSING

The people were divided. Some saw Christ as the Messiah while others wanted to water down His message or to disprove Him. The second half of the chapter is similar to the first: Christ spoke truth and division ensued.

Often times, when divisions arise, men will compromise the truth to achieve unity. Christ never did this; when truth divided, He doubled down with more truth. He stood on truth and we are called to do the same.

The modern American gospel has created a Jesus who loves everybody, a Jesus who is kind and would never offend anyone. This is a false Jesus and a false gospel. The truth offends, and Christ never let other people's feelings get in the way of His preaching. He claimed to bring division and a sword (Mat 10:34; Luk 12:51). Christ is the "rock to stumble over" (Isa 8:14-15). The soldiers said no one ever spoke like this man (v46).

Beware of efforts to create unity among professing Christians, based upon claims of kindness and tolerance, rather than upon the truth of Scripture. Wide is the road which leads to death, narrow is the road to life and few will find it (Mat 7:13-14). We cannot achieve salvation by consensus.

John 8:1-11 Jesus Said Leave Your Life Of Sin

[THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT INCLUDE 7:53 to 8:11. It is probable these verses were added sometime later.]

Whether or not this passage was added or was in the original text, it appears in verse 12 Jesus was still in Jerusalem. In chapter 7, Jesus was talking to the crowd at the feast. In verse 52, He was speaking to people on the last day of the feast. So, here, in this passage and the rest of this chapter, He must be speaking to people left over from the feast or the usual daily crowd in the temple. Regardless, we will look at this passage as if it was included in the original text, because, somehow God allowed this.

Read John 8:1-11.

The accusers of Christ had gone home, but He spent the night praying on the Mount of Olives (v1). The next day, He was teaching in the temple.

Even though most Jesus' professing disciples or followers had left Him in chapter 6, there were still a great many people who wanted to hear Christ's teaching. When He came to the temple early in the morning "all the people" or a large crowd of people met Him (v2). This passage says He sat down to teach, which, some commentators say, indicates it was informal teaching as opposed to a lecture.

THE SETUP

After He began teaching, the church leaders brought a woman who had been caught in adultery (v3). The Pharisees had not given up their quest to kill Jesus. Just the day before, the Pharisees had sent officers to arrest Him. Their plan now was to find something to charge Him with. After all, Nicodemus had brought up an important legal point: Christ would have to be put to trial before they could execute Him (7:50-51).

So, they wanted a judgment from Jesus regarding this woman. Their motive was to set a trap. Would Christ overstep His authority by condemning this woman? or could they accuse Him of debasing the Law by exonerating her? They put this woman's life on the line to bring a charge against Jesus.

The Pharisees claimed the Law of Moses commanded them to stone this woman (v5). This was a setup, because it was framed upon a half truth. The Law, according to Deuteronomy 22:22, said to put to death both the man and the woman caught in adultery. Certainly, it was not possible the Pharisees caught only the woman. If they caught her in the act, where was the man?

It has been speculated they conveniently found an adulterous woman that very morning, because this adultery came from among their own. In any event, the Apostle John confirmed this was a setup and the purpose was to bring a charge against Christ, because they still wanted to kill Him (v6).

GETTING TO THE POINT

Regarding this woman's crime, Jesus did not waste time arguing what the Law said. He got to the point; He wrote on the ground with His finger. The Bible does not tell us what Jesus wrote on the ground (v6). Maybe it was their sin, maybe it was the name of the man with whom she was caught, or maybe it was nothing, maybe by this action He was expressing His disinterest in this conversation. Regardless, they continued to press Him, so He stood up and said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." [v7].

When Christ charged the man without sin to cast the first stone, He did not mean the sinless man. He did not mean only sinless men could render civil judgment. If that were the case, we could have no civil law and there could be no punishment for crimes, but we know God gave man the responsibility to punish crimes (Gen 9:6; Exo 21:12-36). However, the point Jesus made was the Pharisees were not seeking justice; they had evil motives for making the charge and they were guilty of the same crime.

In Deuteronomy 17:7, the command is for the one who witnessed the sin to cast the first stone. No one should die or be judged by third party evidence or hearsay. So it is only right for the eye-witness to be the first to execute judgment. If they are not willing, it is possible the crime did not happen. So, when Jesus called for the sinless man to cast the first stone, He was addressing their hypocrisy.

Christ knew this was a setup. Christ knew the purpose was to bring evidence for a charge against Him. The Pharisees were quick to cast judgment, but slow to repent. They abused the Scriptures for their own power and glory.

> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. [Mat 23:15 NASB].

THE DISMISSAL

After Christ had scattered the hypocrites, He asked the woman where were her accusers and had any condemned her. She answered no one had convicted her. Jesus' response was, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." [v11]. His reproof indicates she was probably guilty of this sin.

She had been forgiven of a sin which, according to the Law, required the sentence of death. Jesus put only one requirement upon her: sin no more.

Did this woman leave her life of sin?

When Jesus healed the man crippled for 38 years, He warned him to, "Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." [5:14]. The healed man did not act penitently. In fact, it appears he snitched on Jesus so he would not be kicked out of the temple; so it is likely he was not saved.

The woman caught in adultery was confronted with the same command, "sin no more." [v11]. She seemed repentant and Scripture leans in her favor, because it records she called Him "Lord." She set out to serve Him and it appears she was likely saved.

There is only one way to leave a life of sin, this is to follow Christ. When we receive Jesus Christ we are told to leave our life of sin (v11; cf 1Pe 2:24). We will not be sinless; the Apostle Paul explains this in Romans chapter 7. Nonetheless, our lifestyle will be focused on pleasing the Lord (Rom 8:13-14).

> For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [Col 1:13-14 NASB].
>
> For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. [1Th 4:7 ESV].

IN CLOSING

It was for the sake of their own power and glory the Pharisees brought this woman before Jesus to judge. They brought her to Jesus because they wanted to collect evidence for a judgment against Him. However, going up against God, they fell into the trap they had laid. When we judge with malice, we fall into the same trap, for we are all fallen, sinful creatures (Rom 2:1-4).

When Jesus pardoned the woman caught in adultery, this was not an example of the modern American gospel version of Jesus; a soft-spoken, sweet, loving and always forgiving Jesus. Many misuse this Scripture, claiming it is an example of Christ's compassion and unconditional grace. They miss the part where Jesus required of this woman to sin no more.

When Christ calls us to follow Him, He commands us to leave our life of sin. Repent and obey Christ today.

the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.
[Eph 5:6b NASB, ESV].

John 8:12-30 The Light Of The World Brings Judgment

Between these two events, healing the man crippled for 38 years and liberating the woman caught in adultery, Jesus declared to the crowds He is the Bread of Life. He promised the Holy Spirit would be a River of Life within those who followed Him.

But the people, using worldly wisdom, could not get past the technical problems and the Pharisees could not get past their pride and hatred.

Isaiah prophesied, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." [Isa 9:2a ESV]. Though they saw prophecy fulfilled, this crowd rejected Christ and remained in darkness.

> the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [3:19b NASB].
>
> **Read John 8:12-30.**

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Jesus told the crowd, "I am the Light of the world." [v12]. At the beginning of this Gospel, the Apostle John wrote,

> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. [1:4-5 NASB].

God is light; the world is darkness. "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. . .the world through its wisdom did not come to know God." [1Jo 1:5b; 1Co 1:21b NASB]. To have fellowship with God, we must walk in the Light. We cannot come to God by way of positive thoughts or self-help. Though the world's wisdom appears bright, it is false and it is darkness.

Christ, the Light, came into the world and brought light into the darkness. Some believed; some tried to mix the Light with the darkness; some rejected the Light and clung to the darkness.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." [Eph 5:8a ESV]. And he explained those who follow Christ have been delivered from the world's darkness and are given the hope of eternal life.

> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom

> we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. [Col 1:13-14 ESV].

Here is Christ, the Light of the world. If we look to Him, abide in His Word, we have all the light we need and it will carry us to eternal life with Him. Yet, there are so many professing Christians who cling to the wisdom of the world and do not understand it is darkness. They would syncretize the Word with the world's wisdom, which cannot lead us to God (1Co 1:21). Jesus said if we receive light from the world, it is darkness; deep darkness (Mat 6:23). He also said, "He who follows Me, will not walk in darkness." [v12].

> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
>
> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [Col 2:6-8 NASB].

The world's wisdom, psychology, positive mental attitude, a host of man-centered religions and philosophies and such, are designed to take us away from God; they are a substitute for God. They design our thoughts around man, self-help and away from God. If we walk in them, we walk in darkness.

Jesus warned us Satan would deceive the elect, IF THIS WERE POSSIBLE (Mat 24:24). If you are enticed by positive quotes from worldly people, examine yourself to see if you are in the faith (2Co 3:15). Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and they will not listen to the voice of another (10:4-5, 26-27). You cannot mix the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God and be saved.

The true light is holy; God is holy. We often think about holiness to be purity or the absence of sin. This it is, but it is more. Holiness is unique to God; the word means to be set apart. The light signifies holiness. Darkness has covered the world and the world is bound by sin, but the Light is set apart from the darkness; it shines in the darkness and we are given the opportunity to follow this light.

The modern American gospel speaks of God as love. It might tip its hat to His other attributes, but seldom will it speak boldly of God's justice, His wrath or His holiness. Of God's holiness, the Scriptures say, "holy, holy, holy." [Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8]. Of no other attribute do Scriptures say it three

times over. Never do the Scriptures say God is "love, love, love." No one is holy, but God is holy three times over. Holiness is unique to Him and all of God's attributes are wrapped up in His holiness.

As God is holy, we are commanded to be holy (1Pe 1:15-16). Set yourself apart to be holy unto God. This Light Jesus declared is our eternal hope:

> And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. [Rev 22:5 NASB].

But who has this hope of reigning with the Light forever and ever? The modern American gospel brings salvation down to an event, but Jesus called it a lifestyle. He said, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness." [v12]. To walk in the Light, we must follow Christ. Following Christ is not saying the sinner's prayer, marking the date in our Bible and going back to the life we always lived. Following Christ is rejecting the world's darkness, even its "positive" darkness, and being obedient to Christ. Jesus told us to seek the light and stay out of darkness.

> This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:5-7 NASB].

Jesus described John the Baptist as, "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light." [5:35 NASB]. John the Baptist was not the Light; he was a reflection of God's light (1:7-8). If we are following Christ, the Apostle Paul said we are light in the Lord; we, too, will be reflections of God's light (Eph 5:8).

PHARISEES CHALLENGE THE LIGHT

The Jews had a law, which held that a charge or an accusation could not be considered to be true without a corroborating witness. This is a principle from Deuteronomy 17:6: a person could not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. From this principle, Jewish law considered, for the sake of evidence, any statement which could not be backed up by a second or third witness to be false. So the Pharisees challenged Christ, saying He was bearing witness about Himself, so His testimony could not be true (v13).

In chapter five, Jesus acknowledged this when He said, "If I alone bear witness about Myself, My testimony is not true." [5:31 ESV]. During this conversation Christ acknowledged the legal precedent and brought in His Father as a second witness (5:32) and He brought in four more witnesses: the works He does from the Father, John the Baptist, the Scriptures and Moses (5:33-47).

This time, the conversation went a different direction. Rather than acknowledge the Law and bring in more witnesses, Christ began with a different approach: His testimony is true because of where He came from. "I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know." [v14b ESV]. This also refutes the crowd's earlier claim, which was they knew where He came from and, therefore, He could not be the Messiah (7:27). Now, Jesus warned them they did not know where He came from, which means they have no part in Him; which means they were not saved.

Christ is exempt from the law of evidence because He is God. "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true." [v14]. Nonetheless, God can meet the technicalities of the law by His own testimony; He is one in three persons and thus, there are always two more witnesses for any person of the Godhead.

In a few more verses, Christ will say He will judge the world with the Father. In this He satisfied the law of evidence. He assured them there are two witnesses regarding this matter; God the Father and God the Son (v17-18). He was not there on His own authority because He was sent by the Father.

MY JUDGMENT IS TRUE

The judgment of the Pharisees was based upon their prejudices; it was self-serving and malicious (v15). This is what Jesus was talking about when He said, "Judge not, that you be not judged." [Mat 7:1 ESV]. When He said, "I judge no one" [v15], He was talking about this malicious, self-serving judgment, but He wanted them to know He will judge them and He told them so, twice (v16,26).

Many professing Christians like to claim Jesus did not judge, but they do not understand Scripture. Here, though He appeared to say so, this is not the context. He did not judge as the Pharisees did, maliciously. He warned the people they are standing before and accusing their judge. So, do not take verse 15 as stand-alone evidence Jesus said He does not judge. For this would be taking this single clause out of context, where, in the very next verse He warned them His judgment is true and the Father joins Him in this judgment (v16).

In 5:19, Jesus said He only does what He sees the Father doing and in 12:49, Jesus said He only speaks what the Father tells Him to say. So, when He made verbal judgments, these were not His own, as a man in the flesh; they were the judgments of God.

The Word of God brings judgment:

> For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. [Heb 4:12-13 ESV].

The Word of God never returns empty:

> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. [Isa 55:11 NASB].

As Christ in the flesh revealed God's judgments to man, so too, the Bible as the Word of God reveals God's judgments to man. God uses the Word to conform the obedient to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29) and the disobedient to eternal damnation (3:36; Mar 16:16).

These men Jesus was speaking to had studied the Scriptures. Christ was the fulfillment of the Prophet foretold by Moses (Deu 18:15-19), but when He stood before them, they could not recognize Him. They ignored the warning and set their own judgment.

Christ will return to judge the world. The Bible tells us God commands all people to repent "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." [Act 17:31 NASB]. Christ will judge the world with the Father and, in verse 26 of this passage, He warned the people He has much to judge.

THE PHARISEES MOCK HIM

So, the Pharisees asked Him, "Where is your Father?" (v19). It was likely Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus was already passed away. The people around Galilee knew Jesus and His family and word had likely reached the Pharisees, Jesus had no living father. So when Christ claimed His Father testified about Him (v18), the Pharisees called for Christ to produce His witness, His Father. Their tone may have been sarcastic.

Jesus responded by saying, "if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." [v19]. This is Christ's clear declaration He is the Son of God; He is God. The Pharisees studied the Scriptures, but they were blind to what the Scriptures revealed. The last time Christ was in Jerusalem, when challenged for healing a man on the Sabbath, He rebuked them saying, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me." [5:39 NASB]. Proud of their own wisdom and knowledge, they could not see God had come down to man, as foretold by the Prophet Isaiah (Isa 9:6).

This was no obscure conversation. Christ spoke this in the temple in Jerusalem (in the treasury), before the crowd of people and the religious leaders (v20). They heard the message and though they opposed Him, "no one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come." [v20 ESV]. God is always in control and He has set a time for everything and everything occurs at the prescribed time (Ecc 3:1-8).

YOU CANNOT COME

> **I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come. [v21 NASB].**

Jesus warned the unbelieving crowd, they were on their way to Hell. They heard the message as He spoke in the temple; they had the opportunity to follow the light. They would be accountable for their refusal; they would be without excuse. If they died in their sin, they could NOT go where Jesus was going. He was going to Heaven and they could not come (v21). In essence, Jesus told them they were on their way to Hell.

This is the Gospel message: to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live with Him forever. Jesus told the unbelievers, they had NO hope. He did not water down the message or try to appeal to man by declaring the false hope that God loved them and had a wonderful plan for their life.

Rather than repent when Jesus addressed their lost condition, the Pharisees obscured the message by raising frivolous, mocking questions. "Will He kill Himself?" [v22]. In the previous chapter, Christ made the same claim about going away and they could not come (7:33-34). They mocked Him then also (7:35-36), but Jesus did not answer the mocking questions. He pressed them to repent, to believe He is God or die in their sins (v23-24).

"You are from below." [v23]. The world looks upon God with worldly wisdom. In the first three chapters of 1Corinthians, Paul wrote the wisdom of God is foolishness to man and the wisdom of man is foolishness to God. These men studied the Scripture, but could not understand it. The Apostle Paul said the wisdom of God is spiritually discerned (1Co 2:14).

"Unless you believe that I AM" (the "he," in verse 24, is not in the Greek). I AM is the name for God. It represents One who is all knowing, all power, all present. So when Jesus said unless you believe He is the I AM you will die in your sins (v24), He was not talking about tipping your hat to Him or merely believing His deity as fact. He was talking about a belief which leads to obedience; He was talking about a righteous fear of God, the I AM.

> But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. [Psa 130:4 NASB].

> Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. [Isa 55:7 NASB].

This is quite different from the modern American gospel. Professing Christians who desire to please the world, want people to believe Jesus was always kind and tolerant, but Jesus was NOT tolerant and He said harsh things. He calls man to repent. These people who proclaim Jesus' love and acceptance to sinners, when God is calling them to repentance, are the tares among the wheat (Mat 13:24-30). God has allowed them to infiltrate His church, but, though they be the nicest people, they will meet their judgment at the end. They cannot come.

WHO ARE YOU?

In their disbelief, they asked Him, "Who are you?" [v25]. The Jews asked this question of John the Baptist (1:19), but he responded, "I am not the Christ" or Messiah. He knew the point of the question. Jesus, too, knew this, but He was not going to give them what they wanted; their purpose was to accuse Him and He had already told them clearly whom He was. So, He answered them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?" [v25 NASB].

The leaders and the mockers set themselves up for judgment and the judge was standing in front of them (v26). This was a clear warning. How ironic it was, the religious leaders were looking for Christ to say something offensive, so they could bring charges against Him. If they sought the truth, they would have understood and repented.

Christ assured them He had much to judge against them (v26). In another passage, Jesus said if anyone does not believe He is the Messiah sent from the Father, he is condemned already (3:18).

He affirmed again He was sent by God the Father (v26). This was His authority to make claim to be the Messiah; and this was also His warning to the Jews. What Christ said was plain, but those who refused to believe

could not understand (v27). In this passage, they mocked Him three times and would not listen.

> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [3:19 NASB].

THE GOSPEL AND THE AUTHORITY

"When you have lifted up the Son of Man." [v28]. This was Christ's declaration how He would die and who would kill Him. He would die on a cross (lifted up) and the Pharisees, along with this crowd of people, would put Him there (you have lifted up).

"Then you will know I AM." [v28]. When He died, the veil in the temple was torn in two (Mat 27:50-51). From top to bottom. This was something no man could do because of the thickness of the curtain. The Jewish leaders all saw it, but they had a financial interest in maintaining the lie. When given absolute proof He was the Messiah, they refused to repent.

He told them they would kill Him, but we all participated in this. It was our sin which put Him on the cross. The Jews rejected Him; every man in his natural flesh rejects Him. We are all in opposition to the Messiah and have killed Him. We all know He is the Son of God, whether we acknowledge Him or not. The demons know and could not help but proclaim Him (Mat 8:29; Mar 1:24; Luk 4:34). In the end, every knee will bow and every mouth will confess (Php 2:9-11). We all know.

Though the world kill Him, the Father will not leave Him and He always does the will of the Father (v29). Here Christ refuted the claim many make that the Father abandoned the Son on the cross.

The Gospel was preached, affirming once again His words were from the Father (v28), and many believed (v30). He is the Light of the world and He brings man out of darkness.

IN CLOSING

The things Christ said to the crowd and the Jews, about Himself and about themselves:

1. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. [v12].
2. Even if I do bear witness about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going. [v14].

3. I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, My judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent Me. [v15-16].
4. You know neither Me nor My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also. [v19].
5. I am going away, and you will seek Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come. [v21].
6. You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. [v23].
7. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He you will die in your sins. [v24].
8. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but He who sent Me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from Him. [v26].
9. When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM. [v28a].
10. I do nothing on My own authority, but speak just as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. [v28b-29].

"As He was saying these things, many believed in Him." [v30].

Christ began with the promise to lead those who will follow Him out of darkness. Though the majority defied Him, in the end, the Bible says many believed in Him. We will die in our sins if we do not believe in Him.

John 8:31-36 Abiding In Truth Will Set You Free

In the previous passage, Jesus proclaimed He is the Light of the world (v12). You cannot walk in truth, if you walk in darkness.

Jesus said He spoke the truth which He heard from the Father (v26-28) and the passage ended with "many believed in Him." [v30]. This next passage begins with Jesus exhorting those who believe to abide in His Word.

Read John 8:31-36.

ABIDE IN MY WORD

Jesus preached repentance. To professing believers, He told them what true faith looks like. To skeptics, He explained why they were not saved. In this passage, Jesus challenged the believers: If you abide in My word,

a) you are truly My disciples, and

b) you will know the truth, and

c) the truth will make you free. [v31-32].

"The truth will set you free." The world loves this portion of Jesus' quote. They leave out the part about knowing the truth can only come from abiding in Christ's Word. They do not want God's truth; they want their bias to be truth. So, they comfort themselves their truth will prevail and they cannot see they are embracing lies.

> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
> Fools despise wisdom and instruction. [Pro 1:7 NASB].

In our culture, the truth is considered to be relative to our personal beliefs. People believe everyone can have their own truth. They the truth without God, but Jesus told the people plainly the truth is centered in Him; and it still does today. God does not change (Num 23:19; Heb 13:8).

Jesus warned if you look for truth within your own wisdom or within the world's wisdom, the light in you is darkness; deep darkness (Mat 6:23). You cannot know the truth without Jesus Christ and He said you must abide in His Word to know the truth; only then will you be free.

WHAT IS FREEDOM?

If the truth makes us free, what is this freedom?

> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. . . now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God." [Rom 6:18,22 ESV].
>
> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. [Rom 8:2 NASB].

The Apostle James called God's law "the perfect law, the law of liberty." [Jam 1:25 NASB, ESV]. The Apostle Peter wrote, "Live as people who are free. . .living as servants of God." [1Pe 2:16 ESV]. Freedom is the ability to serve God and follow Christ. Seeking freedom away from God is finding bondage to sin; while seeking to abide in Christ is to be truly free, indeed (v36).

Most people have no problem with the claims of Christ, until He requires commitment on their part. If Jesus had told them to go to church every week or maybe join a Bible study group, where they must answer a half dozen shallow questions before sampling cookies and coffee, the people who believed might have been good with that.

When Christ told them to abide in Him to be free, the believers challenged Him, saying they were children of Abraham and had never been enslaved to anyone (v33). Sure enough, just as we have seen in previous chapters, their belief did not run deep. They believed He was the Messiah, but they were not interested in a committed life.

Many profess to believe in Christ, but there is no fruit and they have no desire to be in the Word; they have no desire to leave their lives of sin. The Apostle James said, "faith without works is dead." [Jam 2:26]. It is not the works which save us, but the works are the result of our faith. If all God required were for us to merely believe, a belief with no fruit, the demons do that; they "believe and tremble." [Jam 2:19]. Many profess to believe, but they do not tremble.

These people felt confident in their heritage to save them. In another passage, Jesus warned against trusting in ancestry for salvation. To be born of Abraham is no assurance of salvation.

> And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [Mat 3:9-10 ESV].

When challenged by Christ to abide in Him to know the truth and to have freedom, the people were offended. Take note: these were professing

believers and they were offended by the words of Christ. Many professing Christians today are offended by the words of Christ; the words of Scripture. To be a professing believer is no assurance of salvation.

The believers tried to set Christ straight. They claimed to be offspring of Abraham which had never been enslaved to anyone and, therefore, were already free (v33). How blind their pride and their religious practices made them. They were not free in any respect:

1) They were currently enslaved to:
    a) the rigid law as taught by the Pharisees and
    b) the Roman government.
2) Abraham's people had a history of slavery:
    a) in Egypt for four hundred years and
    b) many other conquerors and oppressors, as described in the Book of Judges and
    c) then, to Assyria and Babylon, who took them from their land.

Oblivious to the facts, they saw themselves as free people. Sin blinds peoples' hearts. It makes them see God's Law as a bondage, rather than the perfect Law of freedom. The world preaches freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity (2Pe 2:19).

Jesus extends this promise to us: If we abide in Him, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. If we want to live Godly lives and see the fruit of God produced in our lives, we must abide in Christ; we must be in the Word.

> I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. [15:1-6 NASB].

Many professing Christians do not want this conditional freedom. They want an easy grace, where they can remain in their sinful lives, believing God understands their hearts. They falsely believe they can escape the fires of Hell by clinging to an event where they made a decision for Christ. They may make time for church, but they do not have time to abide in Christ and they are not saved.

SLAVES TO SIN

Jesus wasted no time arguing whether their faith was misplaced in Abraham. He got down to the root problem: "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." [v34 NASB]. A slave of sin is not saved. Without a believing faith, which results in abiding in Christ, you are still a slave to sin and are not saved.

It matters not what a man looks like to others. A man might be the nicest person, but all it takes is one sin to be a sinner (Jam 2:10) and, the Apostle Paul argued in Romans 7, this sin is in our nature. The Bible says, every person has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). So, we see, every man is a slave to sin, unless and until he is set free by God. Christ came to give freedom to those who believe (3:16; Rom 8:1-2). If you are truly saved, you will turn from your life of sin. There is no bouncing back and forth, there is no recovery group to pat you on the back and "rescue" you. If you are not a new creation, you are not saved (2Co 5:17).

> Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? . . . For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Rom 6:16,23 ESV].

To the Jew, Christ warned against trusting in their line of birth for salvation. To the professing Christian, He warned against trusting in anything other than Christ Himself. Unless there is an abiding in Christ, you cannot be saved.

This is not something you manufacture, this is the fruit of being saved. This is God working in you. You may believe Christ is the Savior, but a true believing faith leads to a hunger for the Word and an abiding in Christ.

Most people do not have time for this, but they mistakenly think they will have time for God in eternity. If you think you are saved, but you have little time for Christ and His Word, you are mistaken; you are still a slave to sin.

THE SON SETS YOU FREE

Up until the passing of Sarah, Abraham had two sons; these are the only two sons of Abraham the Bible spends any significant time discussing. One was Ishmael, the son of the flesh, the son of Sarah's slave, Hagar. The other was Isaac, the son of the promise. Ishmael became a threat to Isaac, so he and his mother were sent away.

They were cast out of the house because the slave's son was not the heir (Gen 21:8-12). This is an example of what Jesus was talking about, when He said the slave does not remain in the house forever. The house belongs to the heir; there is no certainty for the slave.

Not all who were born into the lineage of Abraham were saved. Both Ishmael, the son of the slave, and Isaac, the son of the promise, were physical sons of Abraham. The son of the slave was given no inheritance. So, it was a false hope to depend upon ancestry for eternal life. Jesus was warning them, they were slaves; they needed to trust the Son to become true sons of God.

Isaac was a type of Christ. He was the son of promise; he owned the entire household because he was the heir. Promise speaks to election. Jesus said only those who are given Him by the Father will come to Him (6:37,44,65). Christ is the first begotten of God and we who believe in Him are adopted into His family as sons of promise (Rom 8:15,23).

The Apostle Paul described this election:

> And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad —in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls— she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" [Rom 9:10-13 ESV; quoting Mal 1:2-3].

The people Jesus was talking to believed they were saved because they were offspring of Abraham. So Jesus pointed out Abraham had two sons. The son of the slave was cast out and could not fulfill the promise. Like Isaac, Jesus is the true Son and salvation comes through the line of the promise. Salvation, therefore, does not follow human lineage. Salvation follows promise or election. Salvation is by faith in God, which is given to us by God (Eph 2:8-9).

Following the son of unbelief, leads to slavery to sin (Rom 6:16). If you abide in Christ, the Son of the promise sets you free and you will be free indeed (v36).

IN CLOSING

Jesus was talking to professing believers and He told them they were not saved. He said if they were truly His disciples, they would abide in His Word and then they would know the truth and the truth would set them free.

Rather than seek the truth, they favored their worldview as truth. They were angry at Jesus when He did not confirm their bias. He told them, they must abide in Him.

IF we abide in His Word,

- THEN we will know the truth and the truth will set us free.
- Most professing Christians have a worldview that God is love and God loves them no matter what they do. Jesus said if they do not abide in Him, they cannot know the truth.

Are you feasting in the Word? or are you starving in the darkness?

John 8:37-47 Standing Firm In The Faith Of Lies

Jesus said if the Son sets you free, then you will be free indeed. We can trust nothing else for salvation. The Jew mistakenly trusted his heritage and his works of the Law. So too, many professing Christians trust in an event, a decision, a profession of faith, but none of this can save.

The only way to salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ and the work He did on the cross. If we are truly following Christ, we will be free from our old sins; we will desire to know Him; we will be in the Word.

Read John 8:37-47.

TRUE HERITAGE

Jesus acknowledged they were the physical offspring of Abraham, but, He pointed out, they were not acting according to their lineage. Abraham looked for God's promise, but these people wanted to kill the fulfillment of the promise (v37). Therefore, they were not true sons; they were sons of another father.

> Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me? [7:19 NASB].

"My word finds no place in you." [v37 ESV]. In another passage, Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice." [10:27]. They could not hear, because they were not following Christ. In essence, Christ told them they were not saved.

They claimed to follow Abraham and Moses, yet they betrayed their claim because they were not seeking the Messiah, as Abraham and Moses did. The Messiah was here and they were trying to kill Him (v37).

Jesus contrasted their faith to what Abraham did. The Bible says Abraham believed and it was accounted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6). His faith brought about obedience. Christ told them He had shown them what He had seen His Father doing and they, in turn, spoke what they heard from their father (v38). The implication was Abraham was not their father.

They answered Christ's rebuke with a second claim that, "Abraham is our father." [v39]. So Christ repeated His rebuke, if they were sons of Abraham, they would be doing what he did, but they desired to kill Him. Therefore, they were doing what their father did, implying again, their father was not Abraham (v39-41).

Did Christ's words lead them to repentance? No. When He doubled down, warning them they were not serving God nor following Abraham, did they repent? No. In their pride they were committed to justifying themselves.

Pride is a great sin; when we indulge in it, when we think highly of ourselves, we cannot see the truth. They were indignant and argued they were not bastards or children of fornication. Now, they upped the ante, claiming not only to be children of Abraham, but now to be children of God the Father (v41). Here they were: professing to the Son of God whom they hated, "We have one Father—even God." [v41b ESV].

This is further evidence, a profession of faith does not make one saved. Jesus explained to them how God was not their father. If He were, they would love Him, because He came from the Father and was sent by Him. Therefore, their father was Satan himself and the proof of this is they wanted to kill Him (v42-47). In other words, Jesus was clearly warning them, they were not saved.

SIDENOTE: Get it out of your head the false understanding that Jesus was always sweet and kind and never said harsh things. The Gospel of John is full of examples of Jesus telling people they were not saved. This may seem harsh or rude, but this is true kindness, true love, true compassion. For the false gospel which declares God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, pats sinners on the back while on their way to Hell. The true Gospel which warns a man to repent and turn away from destruction, has real compassion for that soul.

SLAVES TO WHOM YOU OBEY

Twice, in this passage, Jesus told them they could not hear His Words (v43,47), the second time, He said the reason was because they were not of God. Their father was Satan because he was whom they obeyed. If you live a sinful life, you are a child of Satan. Your profession of faith cannot save you.

> you are slaves of the one whom you obey. [Rom 6:16b NASB, ESV].

They were bound in their sin. Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father." [v44a NASB]. This is why they could not hear Christ. This is why they could not follow Him of their own freewill. Unless the Father draws him, the natural man is captive to sin and has no desire to follow Christ. A slave to sin cannot come to Christ of his own freewill.

Professions of faith do not represent true faith unless it produces the works of faith (Jam 2:18). If they truly were sons of Abraham, they would honor

the promise he was looking for. If they were children of the Father, they would honor the Son of God, whom He sent. By their actions and their arguments, they did not serve God.

Jesus made it clear: there are two camps. Those who belong to God and those who belong to Satan. There is no in-between. You will serve God or you will serve Satan. You will believe the truth or you will believe the father of lies. Just as these believers scorned the words of the Son of God, so do many who profess faith in Christ. They are not saved because they are still slaves to sin.

They profess faith in Christ, but they scoff at the Word; they serve Satan.

> Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. [Jer 6:10b NASB].
>
> But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. [1Co 2:14 NASB].

Jesus asked the question: who can convict Me of sin (v46)? Christ's holiness was known by all. His wisdom and His miracles were unmatched. Yet the people refused to believe in Him because they could not hear His word (v43). They could not hear, because they were slaves to sin.

YOU WILL NOT STAND AT ALL

Here are the points Jesus made against their claim to be children of the Father (v42-47).

1) If God were your Father, you would love Me for He sent me and I am here, not as a man who glorifies himself, but as one sent by God (v42).

2) You cannot understand what I am telling you because you are children of the devil and your will is to do what he desires (v43-44).

3) Satan was a murderer from the beginning and does not speak the truth because there is no truth in him at all. When he lies, he fulfills his character, because he is the father of lies (v44).

4) I tell you the truth, but you do not believe. Whoever is of God hears His words (v45,47).

5) The reason they could not hear the truth was because they were not of God. There was no one who could bring evidence to convict Christ of sin, but they still refused to believe (v46-47).

Chapters 6-8 can be characterized as a never-ending argument between Jesus and the professing believers. These people were arguing with Jesus, mocking Him and attacking His character. We call this *ad hominem* attacks, but when assailed against God, this is blasphemy.

The people stood firm in their faith built on lies.

- They believed they were free people, though inwardly they were enslaved to sin and outwardly they were nationally subservient to Rome.
- They believed they followed the Law and Moses, but they followed mans' rules and they were seeking to kill the Prophet of whom Moses prophesied.
- They believed they were children of Abraham, yet they were seeking to kill the Son of Promise for whom Abraham looked forward.

This was a false faith. Believing you are saved, does not make it so. Their faith was built on lies. This is why Jesus warned them, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." [v31b-32], but they were content in their deception and did not want to be free, because their father was the devil (v44).

Isaiah wrote:

> If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all. [Isa 7:9b ESV].
>
> If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. [Isa 7:9b NIV].
>
> If you will not believe, you surely shall not last. [Isa 7:9b NASB].
>
> If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. [Isa 7:9b KJV].

The JFB commentary says, regarding Isaiah 7:9, "There is a. . .play on the words, in the Hebrew: 'if ye will not *confide*, ye shall not *abide*.'" The idea is we must cling to God; we cannot trust in ourselves or in help from man.

Throughout the Old Testament, we read of the nations of Israel and Judah fornicating their religion with the practices of the nations around them. In this passage of Isaiah, God rebuked Ahaz, king of Judah, for trusting man rather than God. He warned Ahaz to stand firm in the faith and promised the nations which threatened Judah would be destroyed. The sign of the promise was this familiar prophecy through Isaiah:

> Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel . . For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken. [Isa 7:14,16 NASB].

The two kings or two nations were Israel and Syria. Indeed, by the time the Son of God walked the earth, the nation of Israel, as Isaiah prophesied, was dispersed across the European and Western Asian countryside. The few Israelites which remained intermarried with the people around them and did not follow the Law of Moses. These were the Samaritans, a nation of half breeds, whom the Jews despised. As for Syria, they were dispersed and did not return and become recognized as a nation until 1945.

But the significance of the verse, "If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all," was understood when Judah went into captivity in Babylon many years later. They understood it was because of their tolerance and syncretism with other religious views, which caused them to "not last" or "not be established." So, they finally, as a nation, gave up the worship of idols. Thus the rise of sects which would hold tightly to the Law.

Of these sects, the Pharisees became preeminent. They became the leaders of the people, along with the Sadducees, the priests, but in the Pharisees' efforts to keep the Jewish religion from philandering with the religions of the nations around them, they contaminated the faith with a "religious humanism." They had good intentions, but they had bad means; they sought to keep God's favor by their own efforts and the Law of God became twisted into a law built on lies. An idolatry of its own.

Therefore, just as God warned the nation before the captivity, if they did not stand firm in the faith, they would become undone, Jesus reiterated this warning and told this crowd He was going away and they would die in their sin (v21). Amidst the scorn, the arguing and the mocking of the leaders and the professing believers, Jesus offered them a faith to stand firm upon.

> So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." [v31-32 NASB].

If we are not continually in the Word, abiding in the Word, if we do not stand firm upon the Word of God, stand in our faith in Christ alone, we cannot stand at all. Those who do not stand, are not saved. For it is not the act of being in the Word which saves us; those who are truly saved hunger for the Word and will be in it continually.

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

The Pharisees began with good intent, but little-by-little, they allowed mans' rules to overcome God's rules. Though they left behind the idolatry of the pagan nations, they began to cling to the idolatry of rules. They lost sight of God, who is holy, holy, holy. To turn His Laws on their face is an evil which will be met with His full wrath.

The modern American gospel appears to be the opposite of the Pharisees' legalistic religion, but it, too, is a salvation based upon what you do. If you satisfy the checklist, you will be saved:

- say the sinner's prayer,
- make a decision for Christ,
- accept Jesus as your Savior,
- come forward in a meeting and
- more works or things to do to be saved such as these.

The modern American gospel appears to be salvation by grace, but it does not rescue man from sin; for this faith is based upon action on a man's part, rather than on the work Christ did on the cross.

Furthermore, the modern message changes the Gospel into the good news of God's love and kindness, while neglecting His holiness, His righteousness, His judgment and our need for repentance and turning from sin. Those who preach a loving God to sinners may seem to have good intentions, but it is not God's intention and they will meet with His full wrath.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly good news. The news is Christ died for our sins while we were unable to help ourselves (Rom 5:6). Christ nailed our sins to the cross (Col 2:14) and gave us His righteousness (2Co 5:21). Therefore, it is the work of Christ whereby we are saved. If we receive Christ, this too is the work of God; for the Bible tells us we do not receive Christ of our own will or our own power, but God's will (1:12-13).

As for works: Those who are truly saved will abide in Christ, be in the Word, and He will produce His works in our lives (15:1-6). Even our good

works are of God (3:21) and our participation is evidence we have been regenerated (2Co 5:17). Salvation is fully of God alone, by His grace, through faith which He has given us, not of our own efforts, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

> This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. [6:29b NASB].
>
> You have also performed for us all our works. [Isa 26:12 NASB].

Be in the Word. Then, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

IN CLOSING

Jesus said we must abide in Him to know the truth and to be free. Rather than believe the truth, these professing believers argued with the Messiah; the Son of promise.

The Bible called these people believers, but to declare a profession of faith is not salvation. You cannot be truly saved from judgment unless you receive the words of Christ and live by them.

The professing believers of Christ's day had made God in their own image. They added to the Scriptures so they could have the confidence they had done their part to be saved. They added works to faith. Like them, the modern American gospel has made God into an acceptable image, so the professing believer can feel confident they have done their part to be saved or even done their part to "turn their life around." They have added works to faith. They may profess Christ, but they serve their father, the devil.

Is your faith built on lies? or are you trusting solely upon the work of Christ? Are you in the Word and is God producing fruit in you? Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

John 8:48-59 To Honor The Father, Honor The Son

Professing believers were arguing with Christ. They could not disprove His teaching, so they attacked His character. This is the old standard: when you run out of arguments, start calling names.

The natural man has objection to God's authority. This is what repulsed the Jews about Christ. If ever there was a time to win the world to Christ, it was while He was incarnate. Certainly, seeing God in the flesh should have drawn their freewill to Him, but Christ brought truth and He brought it with authority. The believers answered in anger.

Read John 8:48-59.

SERVE GOD OR SATAN

The Jews accused Him of being a Samaritan (v48), which was the most degrading character attack, aside from having a demon. Jesus had made it clear: you either serve God or Satan. This crowd refused to honor Him, so Christ told them their father was Satan (v44). They threw this back at Him, accusing Him of having a demon (v48,52).

The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote Christ endured the scorn of sinners (Heb 12:3). Christ bore the reproach of those who hated God (Rom 15:3). With their mouths, they professed to follow God, they professed to believe in Jesus, but they followed a god made in their own image. Rather than conform their lives to the Word; they manufactured a god who fulfilled their expectations. They looked so religious, but they refused to repent.

Many professing Christians have created God into an image which is comfortable for them. Their god is one who approves of them, who understands their heart, who loves them unconditionally regardless their sinful lifestyle. They think they follow Christ, but they do not know the Scriptures and are offended when reproved by the Word. They may look religious, kind or good, but they refuse to repent.

You either serve God or Satan. There is no middle ground. If you are not right with God, you are serving Satan and need to repent.

MOCKING THE SON

In the last chapter, the crowd accused Jesus of having a demon for claiming they were trying to kill him (7:20). Now this crowd of believers were repeating the accusation, after Christ again claimed they were trying to kill him (v40).

Jesus responded to their accusations saying He did not have a demon, but He honors His Father and the people dishonor Him (v49). This is one of the few times when Jesus appeared to defend Himself. One of the few times He directly confronted their false accusation, but there was a purpose here. He had been speaking to the people what the Father had given Him to say. When they dishonored Him, they dishonored what the Father said. He defended His Father's honor (v49). He did not defend Himself to seek His glory (v50).

> 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. [7:18 NASB].

He answered with truth: He honored the Father (therefore, He had no demon). He was always obedient to the Father. The Apostle Peter wrote:

> WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. [1Pe 2:22-23 NASB].

They dishonored Him, but He did not seek His own glory (v49-50).

GOD JUDGES THOSE WHO MOCK HIM

Christ assured the mockers there is One who seeks the glory of the Son and He is the judge (v50).

> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Php 2:9-11 NASB].

It is the Father's interest that the Son be exalted and glorified. The man, Jesus, did not seek this glory and He did not exalt Himself among men, but the Father will assure it is so, for when the Son is glorified, the Father is glorified. God's glory is what God seeks. And He will judge all those who diminish this glory, even professing Christians (v50). This should give us pause to reflect and tremble in reverence.

Can we not remember the cost to man when he failed to honor God? We can read of dreadful catastrophes in the Old Testament:

- the Flood, which destroyed all life (Gen 7-8);

- the changing of mans' language at Babel (Gen 11:1-9);
- the parting of the continents after man spread out (Gen 10:25);
- the ten plagues upon Egypt (Exo 7:1-12:32);
- God opening the Red Sea so Israel could walk across on dry ground and God drowning the armies of Egypt when He folded the sea over them (Exo 13:17-14:31);
- the Sun standing still (Jos 10:12-14);
- the Sun moving backward (2Ki 20:1-11);
- destruction reigning down from heaven upon armies and cities (Gen 19:24; Jos 10:11; 2Ki 1:10-12).

In our own day, we have witnessed devastating wars and weather-born catastrophes and the Bible warns us, wars and calamities cause people great fear and these come from the LORD (Amo 3:6). The Book of Revelation tells us of catastrophes to come. They will be many and they will be dreadful. The Prophet Habakkuk wrote:

> LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy. [Hab 3:2 NASB].

Daniel said God raises kings and casts them down (Dan 2:20-21). History tells us stories of strong nations God cast aside in a day. Can we think in our own day how God makes Himself known to a people who once honored Him and are now casting Him aside? People and nations will go by the wayside, when they diminish the glory God has given to the Son.

Sure, one can argue, mankind has always had war and natural disaster, but the Bible makes clear, the intensity and the location of the destruction is determined by God (Jos 11:20; Joe 1:15; Amo 5:9; Hab 3:2; Jam 4:12). Where is our fear of God? According to Philippians 2:9-11, He will see His glory. Therefore, a Godly fear leads man to repent and give God His due honor. He will judge all men (v50) and great fear will reign on that day (Mal 4:1-3).

HOW TO AVOID DEATH

After Christ's warning if they continue to dishonor Him, they will face judgement, He gave them hope and a promise. He began this with, "truly, truly." This means it is important, so pay attention. The promise is anyone who keeps or continues or abides in His Word will never see death (v51).

What does it mean to keep His Word? We hunger for it, therefore, we are continually studying it. We profess the Word to a dead people. We defend the Word against false doctrine.

What does it mean to never see death? Surely all men die, but to those who are saved, to be absent from the body is to be with God (2Co 5:8).

Here the reproach got heated. To tell these people to keep His Word, implied He had the truth and they did not. They repeated their charge Christ had a demon (v52). They questioned His promise that the one who kept His word would never taste death, and their criticism was based upon the fact that Abraham and the prophets all died. They told Christ He could not be greater than Abraham and the prophets. Then they asked Him, "Who do You think You are?" [v53]. They were insulted Jesus would claim to be greater than the prophets and even Abraham, himself. They were insulted this man, whose family they knew, would claim to be the Son of God and claim to be sent from the Father.

Christ, who is Deity in the flesh, was pointing the people to the Father, but they could not see His holiness. They could not see they were lost in their sin. They refused to repent and they scorned Him.

> For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach. . . and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. [Psa 69:7a,9b ESV].

Christ was sent by the Father to reveal truth (v32,40). Those who refuse to believe, risk the judgment of the Father (v50; cf 3:18). Those who keep His Word, will not face this judgment. This is the death Jesus said they will not see (v51).

> Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. [5:24 NASB].

> I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. [11:25-26a NASB].

CHRIST SOUGHT THE WILL OF THE FATHER

Christ assured them once again He did not seek His own glory. If He did, His glory would be nothing (v54a). Look at the difference between the man Jesus and all other men: the natural man seeks His own glory or kingdom, be it ever so small. Christ did not come to seek His own glory, but to do the will of the Father (v50, cf 5:30; 7:16-18).

> Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation. [Heb 5:8-9 NASB].

Jesus told them, it is the Father who glorifies Him. This is the same Father whom they claimed to serve (v54b). So, He reproved them for claiming to serve the Father while not knowing Him and He called them "liars" for professing faith in God (v54-55).

> The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [1Jo 1:4 NASB].

Jesus warned they did not know the Father, but He did know Him. In fact, He knew the Father so well, He said He would be a liar if He said He did not (v55). Nonetheless, His words did not stir repentance; the Jews did not want to know more. Instead, they doubled down on their hatred for Christ.

The Father they claimed to love was a god made in their own image. They took His Law and made it "more righteous," if you will, by adding rule upon rule. They falsely believed they kept God's Law. They falsely believed God was pleased with them. They falsely believed they were righteous in themselves, by what they did. When God came down to man, they could not see righteousness was standing before them, in the flesh, because they were filled with so much self-righteousness.

> He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. [1:11 NASB].

Jesus called the professing believers liars (v55). This is so opposite of the modern view of Christ. The kind, gentle and compassionate Christ; the Christ who would never offend, always the gentleman, but the Christ of the Bible confronted them with the truth; He revealed their deceitful souls to give them opportunity to repent.

CHRIST IS THE I AM

The Bible says Abraham's faith was counted for righteousness (Gen 15:6). What did He believe? Jesus told them Abraham saw the day of Christ coming to redeem man and he rejoiced (v56). He believed in the Redeemer promised by God, in Genesis 3:15; he believed in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ, the Redeemer sent by the Father, has always been the only way to be saved, in both the Old Testament and the New.

Abraham's day was a long time prior; approximately 2000 years prior. And the implication of how Christ described Abraham's hope was that He was

present at Abraham's rejoicing (v56). The critics challenged Him: How could Christ be present to know about Abraham rejoicing when He was not even fifty years old on this day (v57)?

Jesus answered them, saying, "Truly, truly," which means listen well. He said, "before Abraham was, I AM" (v58). "I AM" is God's name. It is a powerful statement of God and speaks to His holiness. All life is in Him; all things exists from His creation and are sustained by His word. He is before all time; He is in the past, the present and the future; He is eternal and time is subject to Him. There is no one greater than Him. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

> God said to Moses, "I AM who I AM." [Exo 3:14].

Jesus compared "Abraham was" and "I AM."

> The words rendered 'was' and 'am' are quite different. The one clause means, 'Abraham was brought into being'; the other, 'I exist.' The statement therefore is not that Christ came into existence before Abraham did, but that He never came into being at all, but existed before Abraham had a being; in other words, existed before creation, or eternally. [JFB].

Once again, Christ made Himself equal with God (cf 5:18). So the people picked up rocks to stone Him, but He hid Himself and escaped (v59). Because, as the Scriptures say in several places, "His time had not yet come."

To hide Himself, while speaking to a crowd in the temple, would be humanly impossible. The fact is, the people were blind: not only could they not see the truth, but when they moved to kill Christ before His time, God made them unable to follow His movement to avoid them. Therefore, the fact Christ escaped their grasp, should have convicted them they were blind and needed to repent.

The Son came to give them understanding. Earlier in this Gospel, the Apostle John said He came to make the Father known (1:18). He came to honor the Father. Jesus gave a clear message, but rather than seek the truth, they defamed the Christ. They refused to honor the Son of God.

Next: how a man born blind was able to see.

IN CLOSING

Christ brought truth and promised freedom for those who abide in it, but even the professing believers reproached Him and would not obey. When

he declared Himself to be the I AM, they were repulsed and refused to believe. They were self-righteous.

The man Christ did not seek His own glory, but the Father seeks it and will judge all those who diminish it. Tremble my friend, for when you leave out the call to repent and turn from your sin, you have diminished His glory. For this was the message of Christ: repent for God's judgment is at hand (Mat 4:17) and go your way and sin no more (8:11). For the true glory of Christ is to worship in spirit and in truth (4:24).

Christ promised eternal life to those who obey. Unless you abide in the Word, you cannot obey; you cannot be free. Do you live the life of repentance and are you in the Word?

John 9:1-17 The Man Born Blind Saw Clear Truth

Christ promised the crowd if they would abide in His Word, they would know the truth and the truth would set them free. But they did not want the truth, because they were blind. In this chapter, Christ healed a man born blind and this man spoke truth to those who were blind of heart.

Read John 9:1-17.

PURPOSE DRIVEN LIVES

In chapter 5, the man Jesus healed was crippled for 38 years. He was healed for God's purposes; for God's glory. But the man saw the miracle as an advantage for himself. He was not willing to lose his seat in the temple for the purpose of glorifying a man he just met. Even after Christ warned him to sin no more (5:14), he sought his own glory rather than God's. Though Christ performed a miracle in his life, there was no evidence he was born again.

When God works in peoples' lives, some give glory to God alone; they see the miracle or they see their salvation as God-centered and God-glorifying. Others see God's work in their lives as God giving glory to them. They see salvation as man-centered, man-exalting. They ignore the Scriptures which tell us we are saved by grace, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

Here in chapter 9, Christ healed a man born blind. Like the cripple, his lifetime of disability had a purpose. Christ told the disciples, it was not because of this man's sin nor his parent's sin for which he was born blind, but it was for God's glory (v2). The formerly blind man understood this and was willing to lose his seat in the temple, if need be, for God to receive the glory for what He did. We can be certain this man was saved; not because Christ worked a miracle in his life, but because of the evidence of a changed heart. He committed himself to giving glory to God at great personal cost.

JESUS WAS DOING GOD'S WORK

The disciples assumed sin was the cause of this man's blindness (v2), but Jesus told them this man was born blind for God's glory (v3). To this day, man still has this misunderstanding that if you are good, God will bless you and bad things result only from bad living. The truth is, every life is designed to bring glory to God (Pro 16:4; Isa 43:7).

Jesus said, "We must work . . ." [v4]. The disciples were part of this work. He told His disciples soon this work will come to an end; "night is

coming." [v4]. The night was the time He would endure the wrath of the Father while He hung on the cross and the Bible tells us the sky was black from about noon until three o'clock (Mat 27:45; Luk 23:44; Mar 15:33). Time was short, there was not much daytime left, and there was much work to be done.

By saying "We must work," He confirmed healing this man born blind was not a random act of mercy, but was a predetermined work for the glory of the Father.

Four things we learn from verses 4 and 5:

1. "We must work. . . " Though the disciples were limited in understanding, they were partners with Christ in this work He was doing. The benefit the disciples had was Christ's presence instructing them. We also must work for God's kingdom and we have the Scriptures to instruct us.

2. "the works of Him who sent Me. . ." Christ's mission was doing the works of the Father who sent Him. He was sent by the Father and He did the works of the Father. We are sent by Christ (Mat 28:18-20). Our mission is to do His works. We are to teach and disciple people to follow all Christ has commanded; to obey what He has instructed in His Word.

3. ". . .while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work." While Christ was in the world, it was day. The disciples had no problem following Christ while He was present, in the flesh. It was harder when night came. In fact, the disciples fled when the light began to dim and Peter denied Him three times (chapter 18).

4. "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." Christ has gone up to heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father (Act 2:33). He has left His Word and we are His reflection if we abide His Word (Mat 5:16; Eph 5:8).

Light helps man see. Without light we cannot walk about without stumbling and falling. Jesus told His disciples He was the Light of the world (v5). He demonstrated this, in a practical way, by giving sight to the man born blind.

Christ could have touched the man or spoken the word and given sight to him. Instead, He spat on the ground and made mud and dabbed the mud on the man's eyes and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam (v6-7). The Bible does not tell us why He worked the miracle this way.

> Just why Jesus chose this particular method we do not know. The answers usually given fail to satisfy: for

> example, that He did this in order to impress upon the man that the healing power came from Jesus (but would not the word of Jesus take care of this?); or in order to make use of the healing qualities of saliva or of mud; or to make this blind man more thoroughly blind (!) so that he might appreciate the cure more deeply; or to symbolize the fact that man was made from the dust of the earth; etc, etc. If an answer must be given, it may be said that the Lord probably used this method in order to induce the proper attitude of heart and mind; i.e, to bring about perfect obedience, that type of submission which carries out a seemingly arbitrary command. Cf. Gen 2:16,17. According to this answer, the mud had nothing whatever to do with the physical cure; it had no medicinal qualities, not any more than did the waters of the Jordan into which Elisha bade Naaman to plunge himself seven times (2Ki 5:10) in order to be healed of his leprosy. In both cases the command was a test of obedience. [WH vol 2, pg 75].

This man was going to be confronted by the Jews before he had even seen his Healer. Therefore, this "proper attitude of heart and mind" would be put to the test.

The Apostle John made note of the meaning of Siloam, which is "sent." The man was sent to the pool to wash. The man did not question the seeming foolishness of the mud nor the arbitrary requirement to wash the mud off in a specific pool; he obeyed. "He went and washed and came back seeing." [v7 ESV]. He trusted in God's work.

THE MIRACLE IN DISPUTE

The neighbors and some who had seen the man begging, thought this man who could see was the same man who was formerly blind, but some doubted and said it just looked like him. He assured every one, it was he. Even when some continued to deny, he kept saying he was the man (v9). Here he was walking around like anyone else; and seeing. Never had a man born blind been healed.

So the friends and neighbors wanted to know how he was healed (v8-10). The man told them how Jesus had made the mud, anointed his eyes with it and told him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. He attested it was Jesus who healed him and he was not ashamed to say he believed and obeyed (v11). He gave all the glory to the man, Jesus.

But the people did not give glory; they wanted answers. The people asked where to find Jesus, he told them he did not know (v12). Keep in mind, he

had never seen Jesus and would not know what he looked like if He was standing right there.

So the people brought him to the Pharisees (v13). It may have been they wanted to turn him in for testifying about Jesus or it may have been some of the people were hoping this miracle would prove to the Pharisees this Healer was the Messiah and, thus, end the controversy.

DIVISION AMONG THE PHARISEES

After the formerly blind man explained how he received his sight, the Pharisees quarreled whether the Healer was from God. Some argued He could not be from God because He did not keep their man-made rules for the Sabbath. Others argued it was impossible for a sinner to do such miracles (v16).

Three violations of the man-made Sabbath laws:

1. Jesus made the clay or mud;
2. Jesus applied the mud to the man's eyes; and
3. Jesus healed a man of his blindness.

The enormity of the miracle testified the Healer was sent from God. Instead of stumbling over the Healer, this should have caused them to question their man-made rules for the Sabbath.

Pride is the greatest barrier to the truth. The Pharisees took pride in keeping the Law and all the laws they had added. They were revered by the people for their strict adherence to it and they were not about to change just because someone came along doing miracles.

As if this would settle the matter, the Pharisees asked the man who was healed what he thought about the man who healed him. The formerly blind man did not know who Jesus was (v35-38), but he knew He must be from God, so he said, "He is a prophet." [v17].

IN CLOSING

The man was born blind for the sole purpose of God's glory. Christ framed the miracle in the context of light and darkness. He brought light to a man who could only see darkness.

The Pharisees were divided whether the Healer was acting for God. No one had ever healed a man born blind, but they could not get past the fact the Healer had broken a man-made rule, as if God would never do this.

This is a good example why it is important to understand and study sound doctrine. What we believe of the Word, is how we will see God and how we will act. The Pharisees were so convinced of their man-made rules, they could only see God within those parameters. They were religious and by human standards they were good people, but they were not saved.

The Pharisees could not admit Christ came from God because He failed to meet their expectations. The man healed, though he did not know Christ as the Messiah, he was convinced his Healer came from God and he called Him a prophet. He was not concerned to satisfy their opinion; he spoke the truth, at least as much of the truth as he knew at that time.

John 9:18-34 The Blindness Of Those Who Refuse Truth

Christ had performed a miracle never done by any man before: He healed the eyes of a man born blind. He did this to demonstrate He is the Light of the world.

The Pharisees refused to believe this could be from God because the healing took place on the Sabbath, which was against their man-made rule. In their view, God would never do that. They made God into their own image.

They tried to pressure the formerly blind man to betray his Healer, like they did to the man crippled for 38 years, in chapter 5, but the formerly blind man was resolute. He did not yet know his Healer was the Messiah, but he was firmly convinced his Healer was from God.

Read John 9:18-34.

GIVE GLORY TO GOD

When the blind man declared his Healer to be a prophet (v17), this did not settle the matter and the naysayers began to doubt there was a miracle at all; they doubted the man had been born blind (v18). They considered his testimony worthless because the man would not retract nor compromise his belief that his Healer had come from God.

Hoping to destroy his testimony, they called for his parents to give an account. The parents affirmed he had been born blind, but they refused to comment on his healing because they did not want to be thrown out of the temple; "for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue." [v22b ESV].

The stakes were high: The temple was not only the perceived link between man and God, but it was also at the core of the Jewish social life. To be thrown out of the temple meant to be rejected by God and to be shunned by one's friends.

The Pharisees were relentless in their unbelief. No matter how many times they went over this miracle and no matter how overwhelming the evidence, they continued in their unbelief. So they called the man who was healed to be questioned again. They said, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner." [v24b NASB].

The term "give glory to God," in the first clause, could have meant "confess your sin" as used in Joshua 7:19 or Jeremiah 13:16. Thus, to satisfy their willful unbelief the Pharisees accused the man of lying. Some

commentators say the term "give glory to God" could have meant "give glory to God and not some sinner for your healing," but this cannot be the meaning, as many of the Pharisees refused to believe he was healed at all and the man healed had already attributed this miracle to God by declaring his Healer to be a prophet or someone sent by God (v18).

The second clause, "we know this man is a sinner," indicates the meaning of "give glory to God" was "confess your sin or your lie" or "confess this man is a sinner." They were pressing him to deny his Healer had come from God or deny he had been healed at all.

STANDING FOR THE TRUTH

The man healed refused to argue whether Jesus was a sinner, but he stood by the truth he had been blind and now he could see (v25). So the Pharisees asked him again, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes." [v26b NASB, ESV]. They were desperate to disprove the healing. Maybe they hoped if he repeated his story, they could catch him in a lie.

The man could see the Pharisees wanted to dictate the story; they didn't want the truth. He told them they were not listening, then asked them why they wanted to hear the story again. Seeing they had been trying to twist this story, the man tried a little twist of his own: he facetiously accused them of wanting to become His disciples (v27).

This comment made the Pharisees angry and defensive. They accused the man of being Christ's disciple, which did not seem to bother him at all. The Pharisees claimed they were disciples of Moses (v28). The Pharisees argued they knew God had spoken to Moses, but as for Jesus, they did not know where He came from (v29). The fact was, they were unwilling to accept Jesus' claim He had come from the Father (3:31; 8:23; *et al*).

They must have been at their wits ends. The Pharisees were the authorities of the temple; they held the keys for all religious worship. They were the ones who held the inquest and asked the questions, but now they were defending themselves against this uneducated man off the street.

Watching the Pharisees, the leaders of the faith, twist the truth made the healed man angry and, sensing their frustration, probably emboldened him. He blasted them for missing the obvious: They didn't know if Jesus came from God, yet He opened the eyes of a man born blind (v30). Miracle after miracle, Christ proved He came from the Father, yet the Pharisees stumbled over every single one, lest they give their praise to God.

Then the man who was healed applied a little logic:

A) We know God does not listen to those who oppose Him, but only to those who do His will (v31); and

B) Never since the creation of the world has anyone healed a man born blind (v32);

C) Therefore, if Jesus were not from God, then He could do nothing (v33).

When they assaulted Christ with their words, this man hit back with the truth. Unlike the cripple healed in chapter 5, the formerly blind man cared more to honor God than he cared about keeping a seat in the temple. It was a terrible punishment to be cast out of the temple, but this man obviously feared God more than he feared man. When he saw God was being dishonored, he refused to compromise God's glory.

PLEASING MAN VS PLEASING GOD

Many professing Christians are flippant with their praise to God. They are willing to give praise to God when it does not seem to offend anyone. They like to be viewed as a good Christian; they enjoy the praise of man. However, when the Word of God is attacked, they are silent; they do not defend the Bible against those who attack the Gospel or proclaim a false gospel. They are willing to compromise God's glory to retain the praise of man, like the man crippled for 38 years.

Outraged, the Pharisees condemned this man, they rebuked him for having the gall to try to teach them, the high and mighty. Then they cast him out of the temple (v34). This meant he could never go back; now this man would be shunned.

This formerly blind man is the first to be recorded in the Scriptures who was kicked out of the temple for following Christ.

Many modern American Christians would have rebuked the man. They would have directed him to Romans 13:1, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities," but this man rightly stood up to the governing authorities to defend God's Word. When truth is being defamed, we have a duty to God to defend it.

SIDENOTE: The formerly blind man put forward this argument, "We know God does not listen to those who oppose Him, but only to those who do His will." There are many Scriptures which proclaim this. He had been blind, but he understood the Scripture.

> The idea that God hears the prayers of the righteous, but rejects the prayers of the wicked is found [throughout] the

Bible: 1Sa 8:18; Job 27:9; 35:12; Psa 18:41; 66:18; Pro 1:28; 15:29; Isa 1:15; 59:2; Jer 11:11; 14:12; Eze 8:18; Mic 3:4; Zec 7:13; Joh 8:21; Act 10:35. [WH vol 2, pg 91].

IN CLOSING

While the Pharisees were relentlessly unrepentant, this man, who was healed from his blindness, countered their blasphemies by relentlessly defending God. Fear of man will cause us to compromise the Gospel. Like this man, we must keep our eyes on Christ, the one who has given us sight.

John Calvin said, "A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent." Many professing Christians remain silent while God is under attack because they do not want to offend man. Jesus warned if we seek to please man rather than God, we cannot be saved (5:44).

Christ, the light of the world, healed a man born blind. Christ brought him out of darkness and the healed man proclaimed light to all who would listen. This cost him any standing in the community, for he was kicked out of the temple and would now be shunned by all.

When the Gospel is under attack, do you defend it? For God's glory?

John 9:35-41 Fear Of Man Versus Fear Of God

This is the third part of the story of the man born blind.

In the first part of the story, Christ declared He is the Light of the world and He proved or demonstrated this by healing a man born blind; He brought light to a man who could only see darkness, but we see there was a controversy because Christ healed the man on the Sabbath. While others debated whether this could be of God, the man healed believed his Healer was a prophet; that is, the man believed his Healer had come from God.

In the second part of the story, the debate became more fierce and those who claimed to have the light proved they were blind and in darkness, because they would not give God glory for His work and they would not acknowledge the Light of the world had come.

In the third part of the story, Christ confronted the man He healed, just as He confronted the man whom He healed who was crippled for 38 years, in chapter 5, but there are two differences: First, the man in chapter 5 was confronted by Christ while in the temple; while the man born blind had been cast out of the temple. The second difference was their reaction to what Christ told them.

Read John 9:35-41.

YOU HAVE SEEN HIM

When confronted by Christ, there was an entirely different reaction from the man born blind. Jesus heard the man had been cast out of the temple for defending Him. Christ found the man and asked him if he believed in the Son of Man (v35). Some manuscripts say "Son of God" the implication here is "the Messiah" or "sent from God." Having never seen Jesus before, but probably recognizing His voice, he asked, "Who is He that I may believe?" He called Him, "Lord" (v36).

Jesus told him, "You have seen Him." This was a profound statement, for this was the first time he had seen Him. Then the man worshiped Him, proclaiming his belief and again calling Him, "Lord" (v38).

The man trusted Jesus, who had healed him. He knew Christ came from God and he wanted to believe in whomever Jesus would point him to (v36). When Jesus revealed to the man He was the Messiah, who had healed him and who was talking to him now, the only response the man could produce was to declare his belief and worship Him (v37-38).

Think of the intensity of the moment: this man had risked being kicked out of the temple and all this represented; access to God and community social life. He risked it defending God to those whom people considered to speak for God, even though he knew little of the man who healed him. Though his life had improved, in that, he could now see, his life had now changed forever, in that, he had no official access to God and he had lost all social connections.

But God reached down to him, so he could know Him and he could only respond by declaring his belief and worship. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is evidence of a regenerated life.

The man's instant response was to call Christ "Lord," declare his belief and worship Him (v38). The worship described in this passage is not frivolous.

> In the Gospel of John the verb ['worship'] always indicates divine worship (cf 4:20-24; 12:20). [WH vol 2, pg 93].

In chapter 5, after Christ healed the man who was crippled for 38 years, the man did not defend Christ to the church leaders who were seeking to find evidence against Jesus. He appeased them, because he did not want them to kick him out of the temple. Jesus found him in the temple and reminded him of his miraculous healing and warned him not to continue in sin, but the man rejected Christ's warning and reported Him to the Pharisees (5:14-15).

These two healed men we have been comparing, demonstrate the difference between fearing God and fearing man. The crippled man, healed after 38 years, was no doubt thankful for his new health. However, he would turn Christ in, to keep a seat in the temple. While the man born blind took refuge in the Lord and was willing to defend Him at great personal cost.

> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. [Psa 118:8-9 NASB, ESV].

If you ask the average professing Christian whether they fear man or God, they will answer they fear God, but in actual practice, they are fearful to stand up for God when confronted by unbelieving peers. They fear losing the praise of man. They may even justify their actions, saying they do not want to turn people off or they want to keep the lines of communication open so they can witness later, or some other false defense. Jesus asked the question, "If you seek the praise of others and are unwilling to defend God, how can you be saved?" [5:44].

CHRIST CAME TO JUDGE

Upon this man's profession of faith (v38), Christ declared He came into this world for judgment (v39). He divides the blind, those who refuse to believe, from the seeing or those who do believe. He gives sight to those who were blind and He blinds those who think they can be saved by their own efforts (v39).

> HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM. [12:40; cf Isa 6:9-10 NASB].

The man born blind could now see with both his physical eyes and his spiritual eyes. He was regenerated in Christ and given understanding. The Pharisees, on the other hand, believed themselves to be wise and full of understanding, but they were blind. Their blindness was exposed by a man formerly blind who had no formal training in the Scriptures (v34).

After Jesus said He came to the world for judgment and those who think they see are blind, the Pharisees were on the defensive; they were indignant and they challenged Christ, "are we also blind?" [v40]. Christ did not reason with them according to their feelings nor did He try to win their good graces. As always, He pointed them to the truth.

Christ assured them if they were blind, they would have no guilt, but they were unrepentant. They refused to acknowledge they were blind and in need of light. Therefore, their guilt remained upon them; they were responsible for their own rebellious hearts (v41).

> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. [15:22 NASB].

WORLDLY WISDOM VS FOLLOWING CHRIST

The Pharisees were formally trained in the Old Testament Scriptures, yet they refused to believe the truth. They rejected the Messiah as revealed by Moses and the prophets, because they wanted a Messiah who conformed to their bias. They could not acknowledge they were blind because they believed themselves to be wise.

> and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, you, therefore,

> who teach another, do you not teach yourself? [Rom 2:19-21a NASB].

Many people are confident of their salvation, because they read the Bible every day. The Pharisees believed their much study of the Scriptures gave them wisdom and favor with God, but they had twisted the Scriptures to make God in their own image and they added rule upon rule upon rule. They were depending upon their own wisdom, but they were blind and could not see that the light they depended upon was darkness.

> But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! [Mat 6:23 NASB].

Once again, the contrast between the man born blind and the Jews:

1. The man born blind had no light until the Light of the world gave him sight. He is the picture of those who have been regenerated by God.
2. The Pharisees depended upon their own wisdom for light, but the light within them was darkness and how great it was. They are the picture of those who depend upon their own wisdom and effort for salvation; they reject the work of Christ.

If we depend upon God's Word for light, we will see clearly. If we depend upon our own wisdom for light, we will be full of darkness; and, like the Pharisees, we won't even recognize the light within us is darkness.

Many depend upon psychology and positive motivation for their light and they think themselves successful due to this light. Many professing Christians believe psychology and positive motivation are similar to or compatible with Scriptural teaching, but this is darkness and how great is the darkness.

> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
>
> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [Col 2:6-8 NASB].

Does it bother you that I should say psychology and positive motivation are not compatible with Scripture? The whole purpose of applied metaphysics is to replace God in our lives. A Godly man will seek the Word so God can

produce fruit in his life (15:1-6). A positively motivated man seeks to produce positive character within himself and through his own efforts.

The Word will lead man to God, while applied metaphysics or positive motivation (PMA) will lead a man to himself. This is the sin of applying worldly wisdom to our lives. Paul warned the wisdom of God is foolishness to man (1Co 2:14) and Jesus warned we cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24). Nonetheless, many find it inviting to apply worldly wisdom to their lives, especially positive messages. Jesus said this is darkness and if the light within you is darkness, how great is the darkness (Mat 6:23).

There is no wisdom of this world that can help us walk with Christ and if we are faithfully walking with Christ, there is no wisdom of this world that will be attractive to us, not even positive messages. Think about this.

Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." [Eph 5:8 ESV].

IN CLOSING

Confronted by Christ, this healed man worshipped Him. He had a limited understanding of his Healer, but he knew his Healer was from God. He defended Him relentlessly, at great cost, and when his Healer was revealed, he worshipped Him with the same vigor as he had defended Him.

Christ has come for judgment. He gives light to those who believe and He brings darkness to those who claim to have light in themselves.

In the study of this chapter, we compared the reaction of the man who was born blind to the reaction of the man who was crippled for 38 years, in chapter 5. The man who was crippled tried to please man because he did not want to lose his place in the temple. The man who was born blind defended Christ from the attacks of the religious leaders. Both were physically healed by Christ, but only one showed signs of regeneration.

If we are following Christ, we are walking in the light. Our light is His Word and His Word alone (8:31-32). If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God. This is our hope and there is no wisdom this world has to offer which can add to it. Seek the pure light. Seek fellowship with God. The world has nothing positive to offer.

John 10:1-10 Follow The Good Shepherd Or Follow Lies

The Pharisees were indignant that Christ would suggest they were blind. He said the Pharisees were guilty because they claimed to have the light, but they rejected the Light sent from God. The light they accepted was God's Word syncretized with their own wisdom and they could not see this was dark. Many professing Christians combine the Scriptures with psychology, positive motivation and other worldly wisdom, but this is darkness. Jesus said if the light within us is darkness, how great is the darkness (Mat 6:23).

In their time, the Pharisees were the false shepherds described in Ezekiel chapter 34. They demonstrated this by casting from the temple a true follower of Christ; namely the man born blind whom Jesus healed. Jesus, the true shepherd had come as the fulfillment of His judgment against the false leaders of His sheep

> I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another. Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God. [Eze 34:22-24a NASB].

There are yet many false shepherds. Many people are seduced by false teachers because they do not get into the Word and learn what God says about Himself. They listen to false teachers and cannot tell the truth from the lie because they do not know the Bible. They believe they have the light, but the light within them is darkness and how great is this darkness.

It is hard to enter through the narrow gate (Mat 7:13-14). Most professing Christians prefer the ease of being spoon-fed their religion, which is the wide gate. Jesus warned the professing believers in chapter six, if they did not eat His flesh and drink His blood, they could not be saved at all. To be true followers of Christ, we must eat and drink the Word of God.

The first twenty one verses of chapter 10 is a continuation of the conversation with the Pharisees, which began in chapter 9. Christ said He came for judgment; to give sight to the blind and He came to blind to those who claimed to have sight. When the Pharisees defended themselves, Jesus changed the analogy to shepherds. He is the true shepherd, they are the false shepherds or thieves and robbers.

Read John 10:1-10.

THE SHEPHERD, THE GATEKEEPER and THE DOOR

Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees. He began with "truly, truly," because what He was about to say was unequivocal, absolute and not mere speculation. He wanted their attention because He was speaking against them. He was going to explain to them how the Pharisees, though respected religious leaders, were thieves and robbers (v1). They took for themselves rather than work for God's glory. False teachers do not enter through Christ, the door (v7). They climb in some other way to gain access to seduce the sheep. In this case, the Pharisees preached works upon works to control the sheep.

Jesus described Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep (v2,11). The gatekeeper opens the door for the Shepherd of the sheep (v2-3). God the Father is the gatekeeper: He draws the sheep to the Shepherd (6:44); He chose His sheep, in Christ Jesus, before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4) and He will lose none of those who are His (v28-29; 6:39; 17:11-12).

In verse 7, Jesus described Himself as the door. Christ is the door to protect the sheep and none can be snatched from His hand (v28).

Christ is the Good Shepherd. He brings out His sheep to good pasture (v3). "He makes me lie down in green pastures." [Psa 23:2a NASB]. This is a description how He opens the Word to us and gives us understanding. This passage says, He goes before His sheep and they follow Him, because they know His voice (v4). If we are His sheep, we will know His voice and follow Him when we are in the Word.

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given
> us understanding so that we may know Him who is true;
> and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ.
> This is the true God and eternal life. [1Jo 5:20 NASB].

Jesus said Satan would lead the elect astray, IF THIS WERE POSSIBLE (Mat 24:24). The reason it is NOT possible for the devil to deceive the elect is because Christ's sheep hear His voice and do not listen to the voice of a stranger (v4-5). This suggests they are in the Word and recognize what is of God and what is not. Jesus said His sheep will run from the strange voice (v5). If anyone is following a false teacher, they are following their itching ears (2Ti 4:3) and they are not saved.

This passage may also describe other shepherds (v2); under-shepherds who preach the true Gospel. While Christ is not physically present, they lead the sheep in God's Word. For these the gatekeeper will open the door because they represent the Good Shepherd. The sheep will hear the voice of the Shepherd through them, because they speak the Word of Christ.

Some under-shepherds speak the Word, but they add things or subtract things. They are false teachers. Charles Spurgeon warned us discernment is not understanding truth from false; but understanding truth from almost truth. We can discern between the truth and partial truth, which is a lie, only if we are in the Word. Those who seek the Shepherd will run from any preaching which is not the full truth, because the voice will sound wrong.

> If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. [8:31b-32 NASB].

Many professing Christians claim to follow this preacher or that one. The Apostle Paul rebuked this attitude in the first chapter of 1Corinthians. He said some claimed to follow Paul, others Apollos and others Peter. Paul asked the question, "Is Christ divided?" [1Co 1:13]. do not be deceived to follow the man. Any shepherd who works for a following is seeking his own glory and is not speaking for the Good Shepherd. He is a thief and a robber (v1) and Christ's sheep will not follow him (v5) nor will they listen to him (v8).

Jesus said His sheep will not follow a thief or robber; in fact, they will run away (v5). We see the never ending parade of fads and false teachers in Christendom and it seems with each one, a multitude of professing Christians appear to follow. They embrace each and every fad rather than cling to the Word of God. Examine yourself: the Word of God is the only voice of Christ. If you feel the tendency to go along with every wind of doctrine (Eph 4:14), you may not be a sheep of Christ; you may not be truly saved.

Again, "truly, truly" in verse 7: the Door is the Shepherd. In verse 9, the door is for the sheep. "If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." [v9]. Christ said He is the way the truth and the life; the only way to the Father (14:6). The Apostle Paul explained it is through Christ we have access to the Father (Eph 2:18). Christ is the door; the access; the only way to the Father.

Two benefits of following Christ are found in verse 9:

1) you will be saved; and

2) you will find pasture.

This is a benefit and a mark; those who are saved spend time with the Shepherd. Psalm 23:2 says, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." No matter what turmoil is happening, spending time in the Word and prayer is the green pastures. The mark of a true follower of Christ is one who spends

time with Christ and is content in Him. This is what the Scriptures describe as finding pasture.

THIEVES AND ROBBERS

In verse 8, Jesus said His sheep did not listen to the thieves and robbers. The very recent example was the man born blind. When the Pharisees tried to discredit the work of God, the man refused to listen to them, even though they were the established religious authorities. He rebuked them for claiming to speak for God while refusing to give God credit for Christ's miraculous work (9:30-33).

"All who came before Me were thieves and robbers." [v8]. Jesus was not incriminating His prophets of Scripture, when He said "those who came before Me." This accusation was against those who do not come through Him; they do not preach the Word.

In verse 10, Jesus compared Himself against the thief. The thief came to steal, kill and destroy, but Christ, the Good Shepherd, came to give life abundantly. In other words, the thieves and robbers use the sheep for their own gain, but Christ is the shepherd who works for the benefit of the sheep. We see this today: many prominent preachers getting rich by proclaiming a message of financial wealth; their view of the abundant life promised by Christ.

> promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption. [2Pe 2:19a NASB].

The test of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a powerfully positive message; not a promise of a prosperous life; not a promise of getting your act together. This is the message of thieves and robbers and many professing Christians are deceived by this. The Gospel is the life changing message of the Shepherd who died to save the sheep; it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom 1:16). The abundant life Jesus was talking about is the promise of fellowship with God. The thief presents a man-centric gospel of material blessings while Christ keeps His sheep focused on Himself and God's eternal glory.

There are those who seek access to the sheep: 1) the shepherd or 2) thieves and robbers. The shepherd enters by the door (v2); the thief enters by another way (v1). The Pharisees were not teaching the truth and they refused to acknowledge the Gospel who had come in the flesh. They were climbing into the sheepfold some other way.

> The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they

> say things and do not do them. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger, but they do all their deeds to be noticed by men. [Mat 23:2-5a NASB].

Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 describe these shepherds looking for their own advantage; and the prophets give woe. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' time, many preachers today masquerade as shepherds, but they work for their own advancement. Many evangelical pastors seek the praise of man and preach a gospel of positive motivation and psychology. They may throw a Scripture verse or two into the mix to validate their points, but they do not preach the Gospel.

> Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the Lord, I have become rich,' and their own shepherds have no pity on them. [Zec 11:5 ESV].

IN CLOSING

"Truly, truly. . ." [v1,7]. Listen well for this is firmly established.

Jesus said those who do not enter by the door are thieves and robbers (v1). He is the door (v7). Those who came before were thieves and robbers (v8). When He condemned "those who came before," He was speaking of those who had the position of shepherd, but were leading people astray for their own power or financial benefit.

Christ's sheep must be in the Word to know the Word; to hear His voice (v4,5,8,27). Then they will know if their shepherd is of God or is of man.

Many are the false teachers who claim to preach the Word, but use their position for money, power and fame. We see this on national television, but we fail to recognize this on the local level. Most evangelical pastors preach psychology and throw in a few Bible verses to back them up. They want to be please man more than they desire to preach the Word. When the world attacks the truth of the Word of God, many pastors and evangelists compromise the Word to please man. These are not true shepherds. They do not represent the Good Shepherd. They are hirelings and they will run from the wolves.

Many are those who follow these false teachers, but Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and they will not follow the thief nor robber (v4,5,8]. This means, those who follow false teachers are not of Christ's sheep, because it is not possible to deceive the elect (Mat 24:24; Mar 13:22).

What are the teachings from the preachers you listen to? Is your desire for prosperity and comfort? or is your desire for more time with God? Examine your heart.

John 10:11-21 The Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life

Jesus said He is the Good Shepherd and His sheep hear His voice. He warned against false teachers, calling them thieves and robbers (v1,8). He said His sheep will not listen to their voice, but they will run away (v5). So, we see there is an intimate relationship between Christ and His sheep.

We cannot have an intimate relationship with Christ if we do not study His Word (8:31-32). For it is by His Word we hear His voice. Those who do not know His Word are easily lead away from sound doctrine and will cling to false doctrines, which please man. Let us examine our hearts and let us be zealous for His Word.

Read John 10:11-21.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Before David was king, he was a shepherd of his father's sheep. He put his life on the line for his sheep. He chased off the bear and the lion and rescued the sheep from their grasp (1Sa 17:34-36). David was a type or picture of Christ. Christ is the Good Shepherd, rescuing His sheep from those who would devour them.

The Old Testament talks about God as a good shepherd (Psa 23; 80:1-3; Ecc 12:11; Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Eze 34:12-31; 37:24-28; Mic 5:2-4; 7:14; Zec 13:7). Jesus is the fulfillment of these Scriptures. When Christ claimed to be the Good Shepherd, it should have been clear to the Jewish hearer, these Scripture passages were speaking of Him. Here are portions of Scriptures, noted above, which give us a few more details about the Good Shepherd:

1) Psa 23:1-3 He provides pasture and water for the sheep.
2) Psa 23:4-5 He leads the sheep and guards them in perilous situations.
3) Isa 40:11 He tends His flock, gathers the lambs in His arms, carries them and gently leads.
4) Eze 34:12 He seeks out His flock, from where they have been scattered.
5) Eze 34:23 He shall feed them.
6) Eze 37:25 He will cause the sheep to dwell in the land.
7) Zec 13:7 He protects the sheep from being scattered and He bore their guilt.

The Good Shepherd gave His life for His sheep (v11). He laid it down voluntarily (v18). The hired hand (v12) does not own the sheep; he sees danger and flees. He leaves the sheep unprotected because he does not care about them (v13). The wolf comes and devours some while scattering others. In verses 11-13, Christ taught three things about Himself as the Good Shepherd:

1. He owns His sheep; they were His and He bought them with His life. The Apostle Paul affirmed this when he wrote you are not your own, for you were bought with a price (1Co 6:19-20).
2. Christ is with His sheep through all dangers. In verse 28, He promised, "no one will snatch them out of my hand."
3. Christ is not a hired hand. The hireling will not die for the sheep, but will run from danger. Christ willingly died for His sheep.

   Though this may be said of literal shepherds, who, even for their brute flock, have, like David, encountered "the lion and the bear" at the risk of their own lives, and still more of faithful pastors who, like the early bishops of Rome, have been the foremost to brave the fury of their enemies against the flock committed to their care; yet here, beyond doubt, it points to the struggle which was to issue in the willing surrender of the Redeemer's own life, to save His sheep from destruction. [JFB].

Many are the preachers who are merely hired hands. They were not called to shepherd the flock. Their desire was for a good job, a respectable career or a perceived authority. These type of church leaders quickly fall away. They may not quit their position, but when the world attacks, they compromise rather than stand for God's truth. They work to become relevant and the sheep who follow them are lead astray, devoured or scattered.

Once again, in verses 14-15, Christ said He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. Whenever the Bible says something twice, or three times (11,15,17), it is because it is firmly set; there is no "maybe" and there is no speculation. He is our Good Shepherd and He gave His life to save His sheep from a destruction more terrible than a bear or a lion. Here, Christ is drilling this principle and this prophecy into the Pharisees, who would rather compromise with a hostile, Roman government, rather than boldly proclaim the God of the Bible.

Christ explained whom He died for: He said He gave His life for His sheep (v15). He did not give His life for the whole world, as goes the common misinterpretation for 3:16. He came to die for those who belong to Him.

Those who receive Him are His sheep (6:37). Those who remain in rebellion to Him, remain under God's wrath (3:36).

In this passage, we are given another Scriptural view of what it means to truly believe. Christ said, "I know My own and My own know Me." [v14]. His sheep know Him because they recognize His voice (v4) because they spend time with Him (v9). Believing is not a head knowledge; it is an intimacy, which is not a warm, fuzzy feeling; it is fellowship with the Father and the Son. We get this intimacy from being in the Word and spending time with Him. Jesus knows the Father and He did what the Father told Him. His intimacy led to obedience. If we know Jesus, we will be obedient. This is the mark of those who have been truly regenerated in Christ: the fruit within them reflects the Word, because they obey the Word (15:4-5).

OTHER SHEEP NOT OF THIS FOLD

Jesus said, "I have other sheep that are not of this fold." [v16a]. Although Israel was God's chosen nation, Christ would die for and include sheep from among the Gentiles. This is the message of 3:16: God loved the world, not only the Jew. Paul called this the great mystery, in the Book of Ephesians. The God of Israel broke down "the dividing wall of hostility" and now includes the Gentile in His kingdom (Eph 2:13-18). Isaiah, the prophet, wrote of this more than 800 years before Christ came to Earth.

> The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, "Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered." [Isa 56:8 NASB].

The Jews were keenly possessive of God's choice of Israel, but Jesus warned them their heritage would not save them (8:33-59; cf Mat 3:9). Nicodemus, like most Jews, believed the Messiah would redeem Israel and condemn the rest of the world, but Jesus told him He had come for the world (3:16). In another conversation, Jesus said many Gentiles will take their place and dine with the King (Mat 8:11; cf Act 28:28). In Christ's kingdom, believing Gentiles will take the place of unbelieving Jews (Luk 14:16-24); but do not confuse this with the false doctrine of replacement theology.

In another passage Christ said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." [12:32 NASB]. The reference to all people does not mean every person of the world and we can be certain of this because it has not happened, nor will it. The reference to all people means people from all the world; those who are His, both the Jew (from the chosen nation) and Gentile (from the rest of the world).

The key ingredient of those who are Christ's sheep, those who truly believe, is "they will listen to my voice." [v16].

Christ made two things clear:

1) Gentiles will be admitted into the fold which the Jews thought was reserved for them alone; and

2) His sheep listen to His voice.

Christ said there will be one flock and one shepherd. Many claim there are several ways to God, that is, multiple paths or multiple religions. Christ said He is the only way (14:6) and here He said there is only one flock and only one shepherd. God is not reaching out to everyone. He calls those who are His to enter by the narrow gate (Mat 7:13-14).

This calling is not a frivolous plea on God's behalf. This is an effectual work of the Spirit according to Jesus.

> 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. [3:8 NASB].

The Psalmist David said,

> Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of Your power. [Psa 110:3 ESV].

Jesus said all the Father has given Him WILL come to Him and He will lose none of those given to Him, but will raise them up on the last day, which is Judgment Day (6:37-39). The Apostle Peter wrote God is unwilling any of the elect should perish; meaning they won't.

> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. [2Pe 3:9 NASB].

Most professing Christians take the words of Peter out of context. They claim God is not willing any person should perish, but in the previous chapter, Peter gave a list of those God IS willing should perish. In this verse, Peter is speaking to the elect, as he reminded the reader throughout the first and second epistles. He said God is patient toward *YOU*, the elect; not willing any of *YOU*, the elect, should perish. This is the same meaning as verse 16, "they will listen to My voice." God is unwilling any of the elect will perish and they will listen to His voice.

God's calling is sure and is not left to chance (Rom 11:29).

FOR THIS REASON THE FATHER LOVES ME

The second part of verse 17 is explained in verse 18 (lay down My life. . . take it up again). Christ is not subject to the whims of man. He died at the hands of man, but only according to His own authority. God scheduled the time, the place and the means.

Even if we were to volunteer to die for someone, we are not in control of our life. We were not born voluntarily nor is the day of our death voluntary. So, too, the days in between are held captive to God's design. Man makes his plans, but God directs his steps (Pro 16:9).

The first part of verse 17 comes without explanation and may be a little more difficult to understand: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life." [v17a]. Christ laying down His life is the "blood of the eternal covenant" spoken in Hebrews 13:20. Isaiah wrote, "it was the will of the Lord to crush Him." [Isa 53:10]. Christ laid down His life, not only to redeem those chosen in Him before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4), but as an act of love toward the Father; an act of covenant.

> but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. [14:31a ESV].

"For this reason the Father loves Me." Was the love of the Father toward the Son conditional upon Him dying for mankind? Here we have glimpse of the eternal covenant. The Father and the Son are of one mind. The Father set out to redeem those who are His; those chosen in Christ from before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). Christ set out to show His love for the Father, by dying to redeem those who belonged to Him. This was all determined before the creation of the world. Before the first man was created, God designed mans' redemption.

> As the highest act of the Son's love to the Father was the laying down of His life for the sheep at His "commandment," so the Father's love to Him as His *incarnate* Son reaches its consummation and finds its highest justification in that sublimest and most affecting of all acts. [JFB].

The writer of the Hebrews wrote, "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." [Heb 5:8 NASB]. We know God the Son did not need to "learn" obedience in the same way fallen, rebellious man does. However the writer was speaking within the context of human understanding about the incarnate nature or humanness of the Son. He was fully human and fully God, but the human part of the Son was untested before He lived the incarnate life. Thus, every act of obedience was "learned."

This may be the context Jesus was speaking to when He said, "For this reason the Father loves Me." He was speaking within the context of human understanding about the untested incarnate nature of the Christ; though it was known and directed by God in advance.

Going back to the second part of the verse: "I lay down my life that I may take it up again," Not only was His death a voluntary act, as we looked at before, but He said He would raise it up again. Christ prophesied His resurrection. No one had ever been raised from the dead never to die again. Man had no power over Him. His authority to do this came from His Father (v18).

No one had ever healed a man born blind. His critics stumbled over this and now He was telling them He would lay His life down voluntarily and He would also raise it up again. No man had this power; only God could do this. And his critics were going to stumble again.

> BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE. [Rom 9:32b NASB].
>
> for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. [1Pe 2:8b NASB].

The people could not understand Christ's claim He would raise Himself up to life after He had voluntarily died. So, the people were seriously divided: "many" versus "others." Many claimed He had a demon or was insane, but others recalled the great miracle He did; healing the eyes of a man born blind. They pointed out no one had ever healed the eyes of a man born blind and not even demons could do this. In essence those who believed argued, if this man said He would rise from the dead, there was no reason to doubt His words (v19-21).

"This commandment I received from My Father." [v18 NASB]. God's love for Himself is manifested in Christ coming to earth to redeem man to Himself. The Father was willing to crush the Son and the Son was willing to bear it, to display their love for each other and show their glory to man.

> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Php 2:8-11 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Many are the preachers who have a good career, but care little for the sheep. They do not seek out the lost sheep; they do not keep the sheep focused on the Good Shepherd. When trials come, they compromise the Gospel to please the world and to remain relevant. They scatter and devour the sheep through positive messages, which feeds their own wallets.

Though the God of Israel came to earth in human form and ministered and died, He brought about salvation to those sheep in the nations of the Gentiles. He will bring them into the fold. There will be one fold and one shepherd. There are not multiple ways to God. There is only one shepherd and He is the only way to God.

Christ told the people who wanted to kill Him, He would rise again. He told them the Father loves Him because He will lay down His life for the sheep. He told them He would rise again, because the Father had given Him the power to do it.

Christ told the false shepherds, He is the Good Shepherd. He was speaking to the false shepherds, the crowd and His disciples. The people had a choice: would they continue to follow the false teachers or follow Christ? Once again, truth brought division and the people were arguing whether He was truly the Messiah.

Jesus said He knows His own and His own know Him (v14). It is through the Word we can know Him, hear His voice and follow Him intimately.

John 10:22-42 Jesus Reaffirms His Relation To The Father

Though the subject matter in this text is similar to the previous passage (My sheep hear my voice), a few months have lapsed between verse 21 and 22. The Apostle John set up a new scene: Christ was walking through the Temple, specifically the Colonnade of Solomon, during the Feast of Dedication, which was in the Winter (v22-23).

Read John 10:22-42.

THE SON AND THE FATHER ARE ONE

The Jewish leaders surrounded Him and demanded a direct answer whether He was the Messiah or not. "How long will you keep us in suspense?" [v24]. Ha! They were not anxious nor uncertain about who Christ was; they had already made up their minds. Their purpose in the questioning was to gain evidence to convict Him of blasphemy. Christ knew this and answered them with precision:

1. I told you, but you do not believe (v25).
2. My works declare clearly who I am (v25).
3. You do not believe because you are not of My sheep (v26).
4. I give My sheep eternal life (you do not have eternal life) (v28).
5. No one can snatch My sheep from My hand or My Father's hand. (Though the Pharisees controlled the state of religion, they could not turn Christ's sheep away from Him). (v28-29).
6. I and the Father are one (v30).

This is an effectual un-calling, if you will. Just as Christ's calling to the sheep is effectual and all who are His will come to Him, those who are not His sheep cannot hear, cannot understand and cannot come (Rom 9:6-28). The religious leaders were effectual in turning those away from Him who did not truly believe, but they could not deter Christ's true sheep. Not only do His sheep hear His voice, but He proves He is God because He keeps them. His message to the Pharisees: those who are His are destined to eternal life; the Jews, the Pharisees, the critics are not.

So, to restate what Jesus said in verses 25-30: Christ is one with the Father; meaning He is God; He is the Messiah. He was whom He said and the works He performed declared this, but the Jews refused to believe. If He answered their question directly, yes or no, they still would not and could not believe because they were not His sheep. Those who are His sheep,

hear His voice and follow Him; He gives them eternal life and no one can take them from Him. Christ and the Father are one.

THE ELECT ARE GIVEN TO CHRIST BY THE FATHER

Though the word "chosen" or "elect" is not used in this passage, it does fit the context because Christ said His sheep have been given to Him by the Father (v29). If the Father has given them to the Son, they already belonged to the Father and, therefore, must have been chosen in advance. The Apostle Paul wrote we were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). Furthermore, what Jesus said in 6:37 supports this doctrine: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me."

Many claim those who receive Christ, the Father then gives them to the Son, but Jesus said the giving of the sheep has taken place before the coming. We see this in verse 26: the critics do not believe because they are not of His sheep; this illustrates the believing is given to His sheep; therefore, those who believe were given the faith to believe, then they came to Him. So, we see, this is just as the Apostle John has explained, we do not choose God, but He chose us.

> [those who receive Christ] were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. [1:13 NASB, ESV].

THE ELECT CANNOT BE TAKEN

No one can snatch the elect from hand of the Son or from the Father. God the Father is the gatekeeper (v3) and none can be snatched from His hand (v29). In verse 7, Jesus described Himself as the door. Christ is the door to protect the sheep and He will lose none of those who are His (v28).

Those who follow Christ are secure in Him; they cannot be taken from His hand. The Father gives the sheep to Christ and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. Those who are saved, cannot lose their salvation, they would have to be wrestled from Christ's hand AND the Father's hand. It cannot happen. So we see, the perseverance of the saints is not of our own doing: it is God's doing.

> 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. [6:39 NASB].

"No one will snatch them out of My hand." How do you know you have this eternal security? How do you know no one will snatch you out of Christ's hand? Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and they follow Him.

This means the true believer hears the Word and obeys. This is the work of God and if you see God has worked obedience in your life, this is your assurance no one can take you from His hand.

Christ's claim to give His sheep eternal life is present tense not future tense. "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish." [v28a]. Eternal life is not a gift we receive later. If we follow Christ, we have eternal life, even now, and this is manifest in the fact no one can snatch us from His hand.

> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Rom 8:38-39].

"I and the Father are one." The reason Christ came was to redeem those who belong to the Father. Christ and the Father are one and they are of one mind in this, that none of them be lost.

> Salvation is not ultimately for our sakes; but for the glory of God. God in salvation is vindicating Himself and manifesting Himself to the whole universe. [Martin Lloyd-Jones].

> And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. [Isa 2:11b NASB, ESV].

THE JEWS STILL SEEK TO KILL HIM

His claim to be equal to the Father was all the Jewish leaders needed to charge Him with blasphemy, which was a mortal crime. As the Apostle John wrote a few chapters earlier: "For this reason 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." [5:18 NASB].

Having claimed to be one with the Father (v30), the Jews picked up stones to stone Him (v31). John wrote, "they picked up stones again." This was becoming a familiar thing: Jesus speaks, they pick up stones. But Christ was destined to die on the cross; He was not going to be killed with stones.

Christ did not recant His testimony of being equal with the Father. Instead, He doubled-down with more information or evidence about His relationship with the Father. Christ challenged them with the evidence of His works; works from the Father (v32). The evidence was clear, these works were from the Father because no one had ever done the works Jesus

had done; and this the Jews did not deny. They charged Christ with blasphemy (v33), admitting to His good works.

This is incredible and demonstrates the blindness of His critics. For it was obvious the works of Christ came from God, yet they still wanted to kill Him. They refused the Truth standing before them. They were blind because they had made God in their own image.

Jesus did not try to please His accusers, He did not try to reason with them, He did not apologize for offending them. He tripled-down with Scriptural example and more truth. He asked them if prophets of old were called "gods," why is the Son of God a blasphemer for claiming to be God?

The phrase "I SAID, YOU ARE GODS" [v34], is a reference to Psalm 82:6. Jesus reasoned with them: the men of old who came as official representatives of God, as prophets, kings and judges of His law were called gods in the Scriptures (1Sa 28:13; Psa 82:1; Zep 2:11). Jesus reasoned with them, if mere men are put up on this pedestal, why cannot the Son of God, the One sent by the Father, be called equal with God?

He challenged them with truth, pointing out the irony of charging God with blasphemy of Himself. "do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" [v36 ESV].

He stepped up the challenge to examine the evidence: If His works were not the works of the Father, then don't believe, but if they were the works of the Father, at least believe the works (v37-38). The works gave evidence the Father was in Him; no one had ever done these things. This bookends with verse 25, where Jesus started the conversation stating, "the works I do in My Father's name bear witness about Me." The Jews acknowledged the works, but refused to accept His deity.

In verse 36, He said the Father sanctified Him and sent Him into the world. From before creation, God the Father set apart God the Son, to be holy, to be the perfect spotless sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God against sinful man. Their redeemer was standing before them, yet they charged Him with blasphemy.

Then He quadrupled-down, "The Father is in Me, and I in the Father." [v38 NASB].

THE ESCAPE

They refused to be convinced. They sought to arrest Him, but Jesus escaped them (v39). How He escaped, we are not told, but, as the Apostle John wrote elsewhere, it was because His time had not yet come.

He was surrounded by the Pharisees (v24), but He escaped them. They had picked up stones to stone Him (v31), but nobody threw one. None of this gave them pause to consider, He was the Son of God. It was obvious God had thwarted their immediate effort to kill Him.

There was another time Jesus was in the temple and the people took up stones to stone Him (8:59). Then, too, He escaped. He escaped while He was surrounded by people in the temple. They never stopped to consider they were blind.

After this episode with the Jews, Jesus traveled to the other side of the Jordan, where John the Baptist had previously ministered. Many came to Him there and remembered the Baptist's words about the Christ and believed in Him (v40-42). He stayed there and ministered to these people (v40).

Just like the event recorded in John chapter 7: The Jewish leaders refused to believe, while some of the common people saw the obvious. They saw the works and knew He had come from God. Many believed (v42).

> But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" [7:31 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Jesus began His proclamation with, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me." [v25 NASB]. It ended with, "though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." [v38 NASB]. Though they did not want to believe, He pointed them to the evidence.

God has made Himself obvious and known, but the natural inclination of man is to deny Him. Mans' rebellion toward his Creator is open and notorious; and man is without excuse. Every man will stand before the Judge of all mankind and it will be a fearful thing.

> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. . .and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. [Rom 1:21,32 NASB].

To the believer, God has granted eternal life. This life is guaranteed by the Son and nobody can wrestle the believer out of His hand. The believer has been given to the Son from the Father and nobody can wrestle the believer out of the Father's hand. Who is the believer? Jesus said His sheep hear His voice. The believer is known by his obedience to the Word.

John 11:1-16 The Death Of Lazarus While Jesus Delayed

In the Gospel of Luke, we meet Mary and Martha. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching, while Martha was distracted with all the duties of being a good host. Martha complained Mary was not helping and Jesus replied to her, "you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." [Luk 10:41b-42 NASB].

Many people claim to follow Christ by serving; they see doing things for God as akin to salvation. Serving is necessary, but it cannot be a substitute for spending time with God and taking time to learn from His Word. In Christ's warning in Matthew 7:21-23, many people had mistaken serving for salvation and Jesus said He never knew them. In the story of Mary and Martha, Jesus affirmed the most important thing is to spend time with Him. Following Christ is abiding in Him (15:1-6).

The Gospel of John accounts for us, another episode of Mary and Martha, along with their brother Lazarus. He was sick and about to die. So Mary and Martha sent for Jesus.

Read John 11:1-16.

In this passage, the Apostle John wrote, "It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped His feet with her hair." [v2]. However, it will not be until the next chapter, chapter 12, where he will write about this incident. He was able reference this before telling the story of Mary wiping Christ's feet, because it was already a commonly known story, just as Jesus said it would be (Mat 26:13). The Apostle John recorded the incident and put a name to the person.

THE DELAY FOR LOVE AND GLORY

Lazarus was ill and his sisters petitioned the Lord to come heal him (v3). They were confident Jesus would come because He loved them. When the news arrived, Jesus assured those with Him: 1) this illness will not lead to death; 2a) this illness is for God's glory; and 2b) the Son of God will be glorified through this illness. Christ's glory and the glory of the Father are intertwined because they both seek glory for each other (8:50; 14:13). Jesus' explanation meant a great miracle was about to happen.

Lazarus' illness was for God's glory. Everything happens for God's glory; even illness. When we face hardship, we tend to look for remedies; but do we seek God's glory? Nothing happens in our lives, but God is seeking His glory. This is hard to remember as we face our daily struggles, but in the

tedious minutia which frustrate us, or the heavy trials which devastate us, God is revealing His glory.

The passage says Christ loved Lazarus, Mary and Martha; yet He delayed two days before traveling to see His sick friend (v5-6). One might question how this delay would show love; the man was dying, but the passage records like this: "So when He heard. . .He then stayed two days." [v6]. Seems illogical, but John is writing after the fact. Looking back on what God did, it was obvious it was necessary for Christ to delay.

If Christ would have arrived before Lazarus' death, there would be no glory in raising him from the dead. As we have seen, God does everything at a specific or appointed time and for a particular reason. The reason is always His glory. Had He arrived two days earlier than He did, the sisters may have felt better, but God's glory would not have been displayed to the full.

SIDENOTE: God is not interested in our feelings. God does not seek our comfort; He seeks His glory.

When Christ decided it was time to go, the disciples objected, because the last time they were in Jerusalem they feared for their lives. Bethany is adjacent to Jerusalem and news of His visit would certainly reach the Jews. Forgetful of their miraculous escape, the disciples were afraid and concerned about self-preservation, but Christ was concerned for His mission; His glory.

It is human nature to become intimidated by adverse circumstances. However, nothing happens which is not ordained by God, down to the very moment and means. Christ demonstrated His confidence in the Father's design and control by waiting until the right time, then in making the trip in the face of danger.

This was the eleventh hour, for Christ's crucifixion was at hand. Hostility from the Jewish leaders was increasing. The disciples were afraid, but Christ could walk fearlessly into danger, because He did what He saw the Father doing and He had a mission at hand.

STUMBLE IN THE NIGHT

> **Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world, but if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. [v9-10 NASB].**

In Jerusalem, the time where this daylight is close to twelve hours is in the middle of March and the end of September, but dividing 24 hours in half, declaring one-half daylight and one-half dark was not Jesus' point. To walk

in the light was the point. Jesus walked in the light by doing what He saw His Father doing. We walk in the light by abiding in the Word and living obedient to what we read. The darkness is when we heed not God's instruction or walk in our own wisdom.

If Jesus, the man who was also God, depended upon and looked to the Father, then how much more shall we need to depend upon and look to Him. God gives us light through His Word. To walk in the day is to be in the Word. If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble (v9).

We have discussed the difference between walking in the light and depending upon our own wisdom. If we depend upon our own wisdom, the light within us is darkness and how great is this darkness (Mat 6:23). If we syncretize the Word with the world; if we mix in a little worldly wisdom and positive ideals, we are trying to serve two masters (Mat 6:24) and will be walking in the night. Jesus said if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles (v10).

LAZARUS WAS DEAD

The disciples did not understand the mission, so Jesus told them Lazarus had fallen asleep and He must go and waken him (v11).

The disciples figured sleeping was a good thing and he would get well. If they didn't have to go, they would not risk death at the hand of the Jews. So they used this argument to try to convince Christ to stay away from Jerusalem. Jesus had to tell them plainly Lazarus was dead (v14).

Jesus told them, for their sakes, He was glad He was not there when Lazarus died (v15). Missing the point, Thomas conceded to follow and die with Him (v16). Since Lazarus was dead, there seemed to be no reason to risk life and limb, but if Christ was determined to go, the disciples were resigned to accompany Him though it may cost them their lives. But something was afoot, for Jesus told them, "so you may believe, let us go to him." [v15].

The Apostle John stated early in the Gospel, "in Him was life." [1:4]. No one ever died in Christ's presence and, when you think about it, it would not seem right or fitting for the Author of Life to let someone die while He is present. He healed many and gave life to those who were dying. If Christ had rushed to Lazarus' side, he would not have died and this great miracle could not have happened. This is why Jesus said He was glad He was not there. God's great glory was about to be revealed, in resurrecting Lazarus from the dead, so the disciples would believe.

IN CLOSING

In verse 4, Christ said this illness will not lead to death. Yet, ten verses later, Christ told them Lazarus had died. Did the disciples think Christ had told them a lie? In this case, God's glory was revealed by raising Lazarus from the dead. So Christ was true when He said this illness will not lead to death.

The disciples were blinded by fear; they had no vision to see something very great was about to happen. How often we fall into this same trap. Like Peter, while walking on the water, he became distracted by the storm and the waves around him. The disciples were blinded to God's power, because of their fear. God is always in control. Let us keep our eyes on Him, not upon the circumstances around us.

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were loved by Christ, but God allowed adversity in their lives for God's glory to be revealed. God allows difficulty and trials in our lives so His glory can be displayed and to conform us to be like His Son (Rom 8:28-29). How often we become blinded by fear and do not see God's glory at hand.

We read of this great miracle, but it is not a template, as some false teachers would lead you to believe. Sometimes God delivers us from adversity, but sometimes God is glorified in our hardship; even when this hardship leads to the death of His servants.

When Jesus received word Lazarus was ill, He delayed two days. God is not at our beck and call. He is not seeking our comfort. He does everything at the right time, place, method and means; for His own glory.

Are we keeping our eyes on God?

Are we looking for His glory in our adversities?

John 11:17-44 Christ Is The Resurrection And The Life

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, He found Lazarus had been in the grave four days (v17). To use the term, "He found," is a physical perception or a description from a human standpoint. Christ knew He was dead and buried before He started the trip, and He told the disciples (v14).

Read John 11:17-44.

It was possible, Lazarus had already died by the time Jesus got the news he was sick.

> If he died on the day the tidings came of his illness and was, according to the Jewish custom, buried the same day . . .and if Jesus, after two days further stay in Perea, set out on the day following for Bethany, some ten hours journey, that would make out the four days; the first and last being incomplete. [JFB commentary].

This passage tells us Bethany was close to Jerusalem and many had come from Jerusalem to console Mary and Martha (v18-19). This was going to be a glorious miracle and God brought many eyewitnesses to confirm it and take the news back to Jerusalem.

Upon news of Christ's arrival, Martha went out to meet Him, while Mary remained behind. This is true to the character of these two women: Martha was the doer, the take-charge sister and Mary was more deliberate and not to be rushed. It is also possible the reason Mary stayed behind was because she was greatly disappointed, maybe even bitter, Christ had not come earlier. She had invested much of herself in His teaching, yet He failed to save her brother.

DOUBTS AND IF ONLYS

When she saw Jesus, the first thing Martha did was to speak her mind. She was upset with Him for not being there to save her brother. If He had come timely, her brother would not have died (v21), but now everything was out of control and her brother was gone.

Mary expressed the same "if only" (v32). The two women had probably repeated this phrase many times to each other in the days previous. When we go through times of testing, it is not uncommon to have doubts and to lose sight of God's love. It is natural to consider the "if onlys" rather than remember everything is in God's control. This is not said to justify our natural bent; it is natural, but it is still sin.

Martha, the doer, expressed her faith in Christ. She knew God would not deny any request from the man, Jesus (v22). At this point, we do not know if she believed firmly Jesus was God. Surely, He came from God and she believed Christ could bring her brother back to life again and this appears to be her indirect, but hopeful request. Nonetheless, Jesus will move her to a full confession.

Jesus said her brother would rise again (v23b). Many sympathizers had assured her Lazarus would rise again to eternal life with God. Was Jesus giving her this same assurance? When Jesus did not directly say He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, Martha may have thought her request was too wonderful for God to answer; so she back pedaled and affirmed a theological position, saying she knew her brother would rise at the resurrection (v24).

However, Jesus told her He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Martha appeared to have missed this. So Jesus had to remind her, He was God in the flesh and not merely a man. "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." [v25b-26a NASB].

This is one of the "I AM" statements in the Gospel of John. When He said, "I AM the resurrection," He declared He had come to die and He also declared He had conquered death. John began this Gospel saying, "in Him was life." [1:4]. He also said Jesus Christ is the eternal life (1Jo 1:2). God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son (1Jo 5:11).

> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. [5:21 NASB].

Martha knew Christ was the Messiah, but her believing was not free of doubts. Here, Christ told her of His character: He is Life and He gives life to those who believe. If we believe in Christ, though we die in this life, we have life everlasting with Him.

BELIEVING UNTO ETERNAL LIFE

> **Do you believe this? [v26b NASB, ESV].**

Though she had doubts and fears regarding death and her brother's life, she confessed her faith in Christ. She said she believed Jesus, the man she was talking to, was the Son of God who has come into the world (v27). We look upon this conversation in hindsight. By faith we know Jesus Christ is the Son of God and we have proofs for our faith in the Word of God. Martha, however, was talking, in the present tense, to another human being, before He died and rose again and this conversation was while she was grieving

the death of her brother. Yet in this trial, she declared Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (v27). This is a great and incredible faith. We are not humanly capable of this. The Apostle Paul told us our faith is a gift from God, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

In chapter 6, when all the other disciples left Christ, Jesus asked the twelve if they wanted to leave like the others.

> Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." [6:68-69 NASB].

SIDENOTE: Martha believed Jesus was God, the Son of God, the giver of eternal life. In chapter 6, the disciples expressed their belief Jesus was God, the Son of God, the one who gives eternal life. The Apostle John wrote this Gospel so we may believe Jesus is God, the Son of God, by whom we have eternal life (20:31).

We have looked at the verses which tell us Jesus is life in the Gospel of John. Here, talking to Martha, Jesus declared He is the resurrection. He is life; He has defeated death.

1. 2Ti 1:10 Christ Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.
2. Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death forever and will wipe away tears.
3. 1Co 15:24-26 He will deliver the kingdom to the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.
4. Heb 2:14 Through His death He destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.
5. Rev 1:17-18 He has the keys of Death and Hades.

Martha's confession is the Gospel: "I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." [v27]. This confession is our hope of eternal life; it is the mark of those who have been born again.

> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him. [1Jo 5:1 ESV].

Before Jesus asked Martha if she believed (v26b), He declared,

> **he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. [v25b-26a NASB].**

Man is fallen and full of sin. Therefore, these bodies must perish. Though the believer's earthly life will pass away, he shall live again; his soul shall never die. Those who live again, will never die again. They will live forever and will never see eternal death.

Christ came to make the Father known; He came to die; and He came to rise again. He testified He would die and rise again (2:18-22; 10:17-18). Jesus is life and all who believe in Him will never see eternal death. This is a great and marvelous hope.

MORE DOUBTS SETTLED

The disciples and those lamenting Lazarus' death did not understand, but this day He was going to give them a taste of His power over death; a reason to hope in His death. This should have settled all doubts.

Martha's conversation was finished; so she went to Mary and told her Jesus would like to see her (v28). So, Mary went to meet Jesus, who had not yet entered the village (v29-30). When she found Him, with her mourners in tow (v31), she fell at His feet and recited the same "if only" Martha had said (v32). And she called Him "Lord."

She demonstrated her worship of Christ and her belief in His authority by falling at His feet. This is what we are doing when we kneel in prayer. Kneeling to God in prayer is a physical expression of submitting to His rule. It is a worship of His authority.

She was crying and the people with her were crying and Jesus tried to hold back the tears, but finally, He wept (v35). In the context of this verse, we see Christ was not grieving the death of Lazarus, for He was going to raise him. His emotion demonstrated He is truly sensitive to the griefs of those He loves. The Bible tells us Christ is acquainted with grief (Isa 53:3) and He sympathizes with our weakness (Heb 4:15).

The ESV Bible says He was deeply moved (v33,38), but noted this may mean He was indignant. It was Jewish custom to hold wakes with loud crying over the dead. The John MacArthur Study Bible commented this was nothing less than pagan. For it demonstrated a hopelessness rather than a belief in a future resurrection.

It may have been Christ, though sympathetic, was indignant or even angered by the demonstrated hopelessness of the mourners, including those hired by Mary and Martha. Martha expressed belief Lazarus would rise

again on the last day and Mary bowed in worship. Yet, these women allowed this hopeless wailing and grieving to dominate their time of mourning. They both expressed their faith, but they lived by their doubts. Oh, this is so familiar. Are we not all guilty of this?

When the people saw His tears, some were convinced Jesus loved Lazarus (v36). Some were more cynical and criticized Him for not preventing Lazarus' death (v37). When Christ arrived at the tomb, He again struggled with His emotions. He was a man like us (v38). However, He was not emotional over the death of Lazarus. We know this because He was going to raise Him from the dead. He was emotional experiencing the hurt, the pain and the doubt in His friends and in the people, and the hopelessness they displayed.

He ordered the stone covering the tomb to be moved (v39). Martha, the one who pleaded with Christ to bring her brother back, now protested because the odor would be terrible as her brother had been dead four days. Her protest was not without foundation: Not only would the people be exposed to impurity, but "According to the Talmudists, it was forbidden to open a grave after the stone was placed upon it." [JFB].

Christ told her "I am the resurrection and the life." [v25]. He told her if anyone believed in Him, they would never die (v26). She, herself, had confessed He was the Christ, the Son of God (v27). Yet, as Christ approached the grave, Martha was still filled with hopelessness and she was afraid there would be a bad smell. So, Christ rebuked her, "Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" [v40 NASB].

RAISING THE DEAD

They removed the stone and Jesus prayed. Jesus did not present any request to the Father; rather His prayer was an affirmation or declaration He was in accord with the Father. These words were for a witness to the people (v41-42). It was God's will Christ should raise Lazarus from the dead. Christ would do this. Rather than pray this would happen, He prayed for God's glory to be revealed so the people would believe.

Then Jesus called out the man who was formerly dead and told the people to free him from his grave clothes (v43-44). This was a rather extraordinary event in the lives of Lazarus and all the eyewitnesses. This was a demonstration Jesus Christ is God and He is the resurrection. Speaking of Himself in the third person, Jesus said one day He will call out every person to come from their tombs to enter everlasting life or to face judgment (5:28b-29).

Christ claimed to be one with the Father. This miracle should have proved it beyond all doubt, for no one can raise a man from the dead, except God. If Jesus had been a liar or imposter, then certainly God would NOT have raised Lazarus from the dead.

> Now can it be imagined that God would hear an imposter or so order or suffer it that so extraordinary a thing should be done immediately in consequence of the word and act of an imposter upon his asking it of him who was so impudent, when he asked it as to call him Father and tell him that he always heard him and tell him that he spoke thus for this end that others might see that he did indeed give a testimony to his mission and authority by doing of it at his request in such a manner? [Jonathan Edwards, Miscellany 444].

Raising Lazarus from the dead firmly demonstrated Christ was God and He had the authority to claim His relationship as Son to the Father. Furthermore, death was put on notice that it could not contain the Messiah. All the doubts and if onlys were settled.

IN CLOSING

By the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. Martha met Christ, expressing her doubts and fears. "If only," but she also confessed her faith, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Then Mary met with Christ and expressed the same "if only" as she fell at His feet and worshiped.

Jesus felt compassion and indignation over the effects of sin on human life and He wept. As God, He knew these effects; as man, He felt it as only God could feel it.

When Christ was about to raise Lazarus, He prayed. He did not pray the Father would grant His request; He thanked the Father for their unity and prayed for God's glory. The fact that Lazarus walked out from the tomb when Christ called is evidence the Father heard the Son. If Christ was not God, how could this miracle have ever taken place? For only God can raise the dead and certainly He would not have done this for an imposter who claimed to be one with Him. Christ said He is the resurrection and the life and He proved this by bringing life to a dead man.

Mary and Martha professed their faith, but walked in their doubts. This is human nature, we all do this, but it is sin. Christ has given evidence He is God and God is in control. When difficult times come, we need to keep our eyes and our hope on Him.

John 11:45-57 Prophecy And Plans To Kill The Messiah

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Four days dead. No question he was dead. Nothing like this had happened in the history of man, but not everyone was impressed. Some people see the works of God and are in awe; while others are offended and continue to despise Him.

Read John 11:45-57.

Many of the eyewitnesses believed, but some went and snitched to the Pharisees (v45-46). They reported Jesus; hoping to do Him harm. They saw the miracle, accepted the fact, but refused to believe. This is similar to the crippled man Jesus healed in chapter 5. They preferred the praise of man and wanted status in the temple.

This is the first passage where there is any indication more believed than did not. In most recorded encounters, "many" scoffed, but "some" believed. In this narrative, "many" believed, but "some" went to snitch. The power of this miracle was undeniable.

PLANS TO KILL JESUS

Well, the informants sure raised the ire of the Jewish leaders. Mass testimony of the power and greatness of God to raise the dead did not convince the Jewish leaders the Messiah was at hand. It made them more determined than ever to get rid of Him.

The Pharisees were anxious because Christ's miracles were becoming more powerful and they could see the people abandoning their authority and starting a revolution to set up their Messiah. Two things they feared:

1) losing power and authority over the people; and

2) losing their position and authority within the Roman Empire.

"What are we going to do?" [v47]. Though it was clear the Messiah had come and was moving among men, the Pharisees, scribes and priests would not repent. What was at stake, was their wealth and control of the people. They would rather fight the eternal God than lose their position of power on this temporal earth. True are the words of Solomon: "there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it." [Ecc 8:8b NASB].

Traditionally, the high priest would prophecy every year. This year, he prophesied one man would die for the nation, namely Jesus (v51). He had not prophesied this on his own, but God had given the vision to him. Sometimes, God speaks through rebellious and evil men. Read the story of

Saul in 1Samuel 19:20-24; and the story of Balaam in Numbers 22 through 24. Though the high priest abused his position, God still spoke through him.

> The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. [Mat 23:2-3 ESV].

God had used the mouth of this evil man to prophecy Christ's death and to declare God would "gather together into one the children of God." [v52]. The Jews probably thought this prophecy meant God would bring the dispersed Jews back to Israel, but the real meaning was God was going to bring together both Jew and Gentile into the family of God. This is what 3:16 means by declaring "God so loved the world." The Jews interpreted the prophecy to mean more power for them, when the meaning was more glory for God among all the whole world.

> **in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. [v52b NASB].**

SIDENOTE: Who are children of God? The world says we are all children of God. The Jews believed all those born of Abraham were children of God, but the Gospel of John says those who receive Christ, those who were born of the will of God, are given the right to become children of God (1:12,13). All men are created by God and in the image of God, but only those who follow Christ are children of God.

This was a great prophecy. It was a message of God bringing salvation to the world; to the the Jew and the Gentile. Had they understood the words in Isaiah 52 and 53, they would have known the Messiah came to die to redeem His people. He would be crushed by God for the sins of man, so that many would be accounted as righteous and He would rise from the dead to make intercession for sinners. But they did not have ears to hear.

The Pharisees were encouraged by the prophecy of the high priest. They liked the idea of the death of Jesus. So they set about planning to kill the Messiah, believing they were serving God (v53).

Here Caiaphas took God's wonderful prophecy of a Redeemer who would die and twisted this for evil. The solution was pragmatic: Kill one man rather than have the whole nation perish. Which they feared would happen if the people tried to set up the Messiah as king.

If the Messiah were to come today, man would still try to put Him to death. Many of the modern evangelical leadership would defame Him, because Christ's preaching does not conform to the modern American gospel. He

never preached God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life; in fact, He constantly warned professing believers they were not saved. Jesus Christ always preached repentance and turning from sin. But man does not want to repent; they want a god who loves them the way they are. Most professing Christians prefer the form of religion, of going to church, rather than taking up their cross and following Him. So, much the same as Jesus' day, if the Messiah came today, there would be divisions and plots among the religious leaders.

To prevent provoking the Jews before the time was right, Jesus and His disciples stayed away from the big city (v54). The Passover was at hand and people were beginning to collect in Jerusalem. Soon, Christ would return. Soon, He would die for the sins of man.

This would be the final Passover Feast during the life of Christ. Mark 14:1 and Luke 22:2 affirm the scribes and Pharisees were desperate to kill Jesus. In Matthew 26:2, Jesus told the disciples the Passover would be in two days and He would be handed over for crucifixion.

PURIFICATION BY BLOOD

The people had to arrive early enough so they could be purified. This was important so they would not miss any of the feast. If an Israelite were unclean, they would not be able to eat of the feast. When Jesus was taken to Pilate, in chapter 18, the Jews would not go into the Praetorium, a Gentile building, because they did not want to become unclean and miss the feast.

When Hezekiah restored the temple worship, the decision to honor the feast of the Passover was made. The Passover had been neglected for decades. The decision to restore it was made in haste and they had to move the date over one month because there were not enough priests who were purified to administer the feast. Many came in haste to worship at the feast and were not purified and many who helped tear down the altars of the foreign gods were not purified. So, the priest threw out blood upon the people as a hasty cleansing and Hezekiah prayed for the people so God would see them as cleansed or righteous. God honored Hezekiah's prayer and the people were able to celebrate the feast as if they were purified in the traditional form (2Ch 30:16-20).

Only blood purifies man from sin. Such was the story when Hezekiah hastily put together the feast of the Passover, which had long been forgotten in his time. Such was the story of the original Passover. The blood of lambs, which had been slaughtered, was spread on the lintels and jambs of the doors so the angel of death would pass over and do them no harm.

> Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. [Heb 9:22 ESV].

Christ offered His blood for mans' sin. Hebrews 13:20 calls this the blood of the eternal covenant.

> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. [Col 1:19-20 ESV].

Purification is an expression of God's holiness. Habakkuk 1:13 says God is pure and cannot look upon evil men with favor. Man must be purified before coming before a holy God. This is why Jesus took our sin upon Himself and gave us His righteousness. His blood satisfied the Father's wrath and this is why God the Father sees us as righteous through His Son, Jesus Christ.

> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:21 NASB].

Jesus said unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (3:3). To be born again is to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit (3:8) to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4). Jesus Christ satisfied our purification by His blood.

> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. [1Pe 1:18-19 NASB].

PASSOVER PATROL

Many were looking to see if Jesus would come to the feast. In chapter 7, there was a similar anticipation among the people, wondering if He would come to the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem. He was a man of controversy and the drama between Him and the leaders was probably entertaining to some.

> The Jews were looking for Him at the feast, and saying, "Where is He?" And there was much muttering about Him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, He is leading the people astray." Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of Him. [7:11-13].

This time there was much interest because they heard the news of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. No one had ever healed a man born blind, as Jesus had done; which was the controversy last time He was in town. Now, Jesus had raised a man from the dead. Surely, He was the Messiah, the people surmised. They may have been anxious to see if the Pharisees and priests were convinced.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, He always went to the temple and taught. This time, there was even more interest in what He had to say. The Jewish leaders used the opportunity of the feast to use the people as lookouts to turn Christ in if He showed up. Tyranny always relies upon snitches and double-crossers to keep the people under control.

IN CLOSING

The eyewitnesses saw the miracle of Christ raising a man from the dead. Some believed and glorified God. Others were repulsed and sought His destruction, so they reported Him to the Jews.

Man has always sought to make God in his own image. The Jewish leaders sought a god who fortified their authority and the people looked for a god who would save them from Rome. In our day, the modern American gospel has killed the message of Christ. There is no repentance; there is no taking up our cross to follow Him. The message is God has a better life for you. The Gospel is no longer God-centered; it has become man-centered.

To come to God, we must be purified. Man can only be purified from sin by blood and it is only the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which satisfied the wrath of God and reconciled man to Him.

Will you repent of your sin or will you conspire against the Messiah and stay with the image of a god who loves you in your sin?

John 12:1-11 Bethany Friends Hold A Feast For Jesus

To this episode, there are parallel accounts in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9. At this dinner, Mary wiped Jesus' feet with expensive ointment, at the home of Simon the leper, in Bethany. Matthew and Mark wrote she anointed His head with the oil. This is not a contradiction, it was likely she did both. Matthew and Mark mention this dinner was at the home of Simon the Leper, while John says the dinner was in the town of Bethany, which is the town of Simon, Lazarus, Mary and Martha.

What about Luke's account? The Gospel of Luke records the story of a woman who wiped Jesus' feet with ointment at the home of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7:36-50. The story in Luke appears to be a different time and place than the Matthew, Mark and John accounts. If this is the same story, there is much to reconcile.

- One of the biggest problems, in trying to match the Luke account with the other three gospels, is the timetable: Luke's account is the early to middle of Christ's career, while the accounts of the other three gospels are at the end.
- Another problem: In the Matthew and Mark accounts, Jesus said wherever the Gospel is preached, the woman would be remembered because she prepared Him for burial. In the John account, this woman is named (11:2; 12:3). However, in the Luke account, the woman was not preparing Christ for burial, but was grieving and repentant for her sin and Jesus sent her away with her sins forgiven.
- The last problem is the host: Though they were both named Simon, the attitude of the Simon in Luke was hostile toward the woman and Christ. The other accounts make no mention of this and it is likely Simon the leper was healed by Jesus, so he would be gracious.

  Read John 12:1-11.

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DINNER CONVERSATION

The dinner for Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, whom Jesus had likely healed. From the last chapter, we found Bethany to be where Lazarus lived and it was close to Jerusalem. When Jesus came to Bethany, on His way to Jerusalem, "they made Him a dinner." [v2]. The wording seems to imply Lazarus and his sisters hosted the dinner. The Matthew and Mark accounts confirm the dinner was located at Simon's

home (Mat 26:6; Mar 14:3). Therefore, it is reasonable to say the dinner was held at Simon's house, hosted by Lazarus and his sisters.

Martha served tables and Mary waited upon Jesus by anointing Him with oil, using her hair. The description of both women's activities are consistent with other passages of the Scriptures describing them. Martha served while Mary gave her attention to Jesus.

Jesus was at the feast with His disciples. In attendance were one man whom He healed and another whom He raised from the dead.

Because the Gospel of John was written many years after the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), stories common to the other gospels were not repeated unless he wrote to clarify some portions. In this story he clarified two things:

1. he identified the unnamed woman. In the other two Gospel accounts of this story, Jesus said, "Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." [Mat 26:13; Mar 14:9]. John made sure you remembered her name (v3;11:2).; and
2. he clarified the instigator of the criticism for her act of kindness to be the betrayer, Judas.

By disclosing Judas to be the one behind the criticism of Mary, John brought out his character. John called him a thief (v6). Looking at this account along with the other two renditions of the story, we see, though Judas was looked upon with distain after the betrayal of Christ, prior to, he was respected and could influence or motivate the other disciples with his opinions. John said Judas criticized Mary, while the other two accounts said the disciples criticized her. In all likelihood, both are correct: After being chided by Judas, the other disciples likely chimed in. No one questioned Judas' motives because he was respected.

This gives us a picture of the disciples' fraternity or kinship before the betrayal. This should help us understand why no one, except Christ, had any idea Judas would be the one to betray the Messiah to His enemies; even after Jesus clearly pointed out whom the betrayer would be.

The oil Mary used was an expensive ointment made of pure nard or spikenard (v3). Commentators say it was produced in the Himalayan Mountains. Thus, the long and dangerous travel to Jerusalem would make this product expensive indeed.

When she was rebuked by her critics, Christ came to her defense. According to all three versions of this story, Christ attributed her act to

preparing His body for burial (v7); it seems everyone at the feast missed this point. His claim to His imminent death fell on deaf ears.

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were well off; probably quite wealthy. Mary could afford this expensive ointment. Many people think Christ was against the wealthy and they cite the story where He told the rich man to give his wealth to the poor (Mat 19:21). However, Jesus claimed to be their friend (11:11) and it does not appear He ever gave this same advice to them. Why was this? The Bible does not condemn wealth, it condemns idolizing wealth; it condemns the love of money. The rich man was guilty of this.

> For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. [1Ti 6:10 ESV].

In this act of anointing Jesus, Mary demonstrated a generous nature; she demonstrated her love for the Lord is worth around a typical yearly wage.

Judas, on the other hand, demonstrated a selfish nature, in that he had already calculated the value of the ointment.

It would have been obviously self-seeking if he were to demand she donate this to Christ's fund, the purse he held. So he demanded the money be given to the poor, a generic request, which if honored would likely end up in his purse. Little did he know, his betrayal was imminent and there would be no time to sell the bottle.

Had Judas understood the value of the man Jesus Christ, the Messiah, he would have known no ointment could cost enough to satisfy the honor due the man and the significance of the events, which were fast-approaching.

SIDENOTE: This story gives us a look at what the Bible says about wealth and poverty. Many professing Christians have made an idol of forcing others to help the poor and they demand government programs, but is this a Biblical view? Jesus said, "you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me." [v8 NASB]. The other two accounts say the same thing and Mark added, "and whenever you want, you can do good for them." [Mar 14:7 ESV]. We are individually accountable to help the poor. There is no honor is stealing from taxpayers to force a corporate charity.

Three things to understand from this:

1) Our best efforts will not end poverty;

2) The Gospel is more important than financial health; and

3) Whenever we want, we can help. This means taking personal responsibility rather than using government programs, which rob from others and create government dependents, so that the recipient no longer needs to trust in Christ.

The Bible commands us to help the poor, but it also says we will always have the poor with us (v8; Deu 15:11). In this respect, establishing government programs with the intent to end poverty is wrong-headed and goes against Christ's teaching. God's emphasis is upon personal accountability.

> For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land. [Deu 15:11 ESV].

The Bible tells us the person who gives to the poor lends to the Lord (Pro 19:17). This is a personal action between a man and God; not a corporate responsibility of government. If God wanted poverty wiped out, Christ would have accomplished this while He was on this earth. If the Gospel of Jesus Christ was about helping the poor or if the two were equivalent, Jesus would have used this opportunity to say so. But He said the opposite by commending the woman who put Christ before all others, even in the face of criticism.

SIDENOTE: Christ healed the sick and raised the dead, but never once was it recorded He made a poor man wealthy or even got them out of debt.

"But you do not always have Me." [v8]. Back-to-back, two times, Jesus announced His death is imminent, but no one seemed to notice.

With this statement, the story in the three Gospel accounts comes to an end. After this, Matthew and Mark reveal Judas cut a deal with the chief priests to hand Christ over to them. So, it may have been triggered by Jesus' public rebuke after criticizing Mary for wasting money, Judas may have been embittered and turned his heart to betray Christ.

EVIL MEN WILL LEAD

In verse 9, the Apostle John mentioned a large crowd had gathered for the feast to see Jesus and they wanted to see Lazarus, the man raised from the dead. This was more evidence Christ's fame was spreading and this was upsetting the Pharisees. So, they sought not only to kill Jesus, the author of life, but to kill Lazarus also, whom Christ had just recently raised from the dead. It seems almost humorous that men who claim to represent God would plan the death of a man whom God recently raised from the dead.

They had no faith in God. Their lives as priests were merely a career. Their hatred of God blinded them to the irony of their plans.

Jesus said, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." [Luk 16:31 NASB]. These men knew the Scriptures and had committed huge blocks of it to memory. Moses and the Prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. However, when the Messiah appeared, those who were in positions of authority, as God's representatives, refused to believe. Having a high position or being a pastor or priest in any church is no guarantee of being saved.

God allows evil men to reign and many people are led astray because of them. It is natural to confuse authority with truth and many get caught in the trap of following personalities. However, Jesus said His sheep hear His voice, they follow Him and no one will snatch them out of His hand (10:27-28). Jesus also said, "For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, IF POSSIBLE, even the elect." [Mat 24:24 ESV, emphasis added]. Though evil men lead, the truly saved will only follow Christ.

Jesus was clear: His sheep will not be led astray; they cannot be deceived. You will not see a true Christian following the latest Christian fad. God allows falsehood because His glory is revealed when His followers are not swayed.

> for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [1Co 11:19 ESV].
>
> and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. [Act 20:30 NASB].
>
> Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared. [1Ti 4:1-2 ESV].
>
> But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. [2Pe 2:1-3 ESV].

> They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us, but they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. [1Jo 2:19 ESV].

IN CLOSING

A dinner was given for Jesus at the home of Simon the leper, in Bethany. Lazarus, Mary and Martha were there. Martha served and Mary washed Jesus' feet with ointment.

Judas, jealous of the money spent on the ointment, criticized the waste and said the money should be given to the poor. In pursuit of his own lust, he tried to guilt others with social responsibility.

Jesus said we will always have the poor, but we will not always have Him. More important than social responsibility is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Christ said we will always have the poor, He quoted Scripture from the Old Testament. If the Bible says we will always have the poor, then we are wasting taxpayer money trying to eradicate poverty. Nonetheless, there are ample Scriptures telling us to help the poor. This is personal responsibility; God will hold people accountable to this, not governments.

Whether in church or government, God allows evil men to reign. All things will be done to accomplish His purposes, but the evil have been judged before time began. Their power on earth will not mitigate their destruction on the great day of the Lord. David was concerned that evil men always seemed to prosper and at times, lamented his righteous struggles. "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight, until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end." [Psa 73:16-17 NASB].

John 12:12-19 The Triumphal Entry Of Christ Into Jerusalem

No one had ever raised a dead man to life. Therefore, many people rightly concluded Jesus had to be the Messiah. They believed the Messiah would reign in Jerusalem and destroy Israel's enemies. However, Christ told the people He had come to die and at the feast, Mary washed His feet in preparation for burial. Regardless, the people were determined to have their king.

The night of the dinner, a large crowd had gathered to see Jesus and Lazarus (v9). The day after the dinner, when they heard Christ was coming to Jerusalem, this same crowd grabbed palm branches, went out to meet Him and gave praise.

Read John 12:12-19.

"Hosanna" is used as an exclamation of praise and worship (v13). This crowd was quoting Old Testament Scripture and, in this context, the phrase meant "please save" or "save now."

> Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! [Psa 118:25-26a ESV].

THE KING OF ISRAEL

It is evident from their praise, the people believed Christ was the Messiah. They were excited and anxious for Him to overthrow the Romans and reign in Jerusalem as king. This misconception was due to their lack of discernment of the Scriptures and clinging to narratives which satisfied their desire for a comfortable life.

When reading the prophets, often Christ's incarnation and His second coming events are described in the same passage. One example of this is Isaiah 9:2-7: the second verse told of the first coming (the people walking in darkness have seen a great light), while the third verse told of the second coming (You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy). Verse 7 prophesied the Messiah will reign on David's throne and there will be no end of this kingdom. This is descriptive of the second coming, but the people desired Christ to reign now.

We live between the first and second comings of Christ, so we see the divide of prophecy which has been fulfilled and prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled. Before Christ came, it was more popular to receive the prophecies

of a rescuing king, such as in Isaiah 9, than to understand He would first die for our sins to redeem us for God, as described in Isaiah 53.

Once again, this misconception was due to their lack of discernment of the Scriptures and clinging to preferred narratives, which is mans' natural inclination. When we read the Scriptures, we filter it through our bias. Few careful to rightly divide the Scriptures to get the true meaning.

> Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. [2Ti 2:15 NASB].

In several instances in the Gospel of John, especially noted in chapters 6 and 8, Jesus explained to the people who professed to believe, why they were not saved. The Apostle John seems to bring this out. Here, the people believed in Christ, once again, but in the next day or two their affections would be changed, when Jesus failed to live up to their expectations. So, we see becoming emotional about Christ, even to declare loud praises to Him, is not an assurance of salvation.

THE DONKEY'S COLT

Jesus rode through the gates of Jerusalem on a young donkey (v14). This day, as Jesus rode through the gates, a prophecy was fulfilled (v15). Did anyone notice? John wrote the disciples did not understand until after the Lord was glorified (v16).

> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. [Zec 9:9 NASB].

Quoting the prophet, Zechariah, the Apostle John wrote Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey's colt (v14-15), as a fulfillment of prophecy. John did not go into detail how Christ acquired the animal, for the Synoptic Gospels had already told this story.

The Bible says Christ will come again and this time on a white horse. He will come as the conquering King (Rev 19:11-21). However, in the Old Testament, the only prophecy of the Messiah riding into Jerusalem, is the prophecy of Zechariah. The Messiah riding on the colt of a donkey. The fulfillment of this prophecy should have led those who studied the Scriptures to look closer at the prophecies of the Messiah and realize the Messiah would first come as the suffering servant as described in Isaiah chapter 53.

Traditionally, the donkey was a symbol of peace; whereas the horse was the symbol of war and conquest. The Prophet Zechariah said the Messiah would come with righteousness and salvation, in humility mounted not on a donkey, but on the donkey's colt. By using the colt, the illustration is of exponentially more peace and less a conquering hero. There would be no conquest of Rome for the Messiah, Jesus Christ came to give of Himself to die for His people; making peace by reconciling them to God. The Prince of Peace came to bring peace between God and man.

> For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross. [Col 1:19-20a NASB].

In a later epistle, the Apostle John wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." [1Jo 4:10 NASB]. Propitiation means to appease or satisfy the wrath of God. Jesus Christ, died for our sins to appease God's wrath; making peace between God and man. Had he not satisfied God's wrath with His own blood, no man would have been spared God's vengeance; there would be no peace.

> God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day. [Psa 7:11 NASB].

> But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. [Rom 2:5 NASB].

This goes against the modern American gospel, which says God loves everyone. The Bible is clear, He shows love to those who are His; to those who believe in the Son, but His wrath remains on those who do not follow Christ.

> Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God REMAINS on him. [3:36 ESV, emphasis added].

The Prophet Isaiah wrote we have all gone astray and we have all turned each other against God, but God laid our sin upon His Son, Jesus Christ (Isa 53:5-6). The Father was pleased to crush Him for our sake (Isa 53:10). "He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." [Isa 53:12b ESV]. Christ nailed our sin to the cross (Col 2:14) and now God sees us as righteous through His Son (2Co 5:21). The Prince of Peace has reconciled us to God. Christ rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey as a testimony He had come to bring peace between God and man.

THE PALM BRANCHES

The palm branch was used in Jewish celebrations as a symbol of victory. This crowd saw Christ as the conquering hero; they believed now was the time He was coming to Jerusalem to set up His kingdom. This is why the people were laying palm branches on the road into Jerusalem for Christ's donkey to walk upon.

After Christ's entry into Jerusalem, the people who had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus, continued to testify about what Christ had done (v17). Because of this witness, more and more people were coming to see Him; crowds were coming to see the man who raised the dead (v18).

THE PHARISEES' COMPLAINT

the world has gone after Him. [v19].

The life of Christ was getting closer to the cross. As John related each event, he brought out the Jewish leaders' increased desire to kill Him. With the people now hailing Him as the conquering hero, their Hosanna, the Pharisees knew they were losing this battle. The time was at hand. If they did not kill Him now, He would draw everyone away from them and they would lose everything.

When the Pharisees described this crowd as "the world," of course they did not mean everyone in the whole world. They meant a large population of people around Jerusalem; this is where the crowds were. We have to understand the meaning of words in context. The next time you hear someone say the meaning of 3:16 is Christ died for everyone in the world, consider the word "world" in context with the surrounding passage. In this passage, world has a very limited context.

IN CLOSING

The people and the disciples had a mistaken view of Christ's mission. They filtered the Scriptures through their bias. They believed He was the Messiah and they chose to believe this meant He would save them from Rome. Hosanna means to "save us now." In saying this, they saw Him as their Hosanna, their Savior from the hardships of life. Truly Christ was their salvation, but He would not save them from Rome. He came to save His people from God's wrath.

Christ rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey; the child of the symbol of peace. He came as the Hosanna who would bring peace between God and man. As the Prophet Isaiah wrote, He bore the sin of many, those who

were chosen in Him before the creation of the world; and He makes intercession for transgressors, those who have received Him (Isa 53:12).

The disciples were experiencing prophecy being fulfilled as they watched, but did not understand any of this until after Christ had been glorified.

As the story of Christ got closer to the cross, the crowds were getting larger and the Jewish leaders were getting more determined to kill Him.

- The Pharisees wanted to kill Him to remain in control of the people.
- The people wanted a Messiah to overthrow Rome, so their nation could be in control.
- The disciples wanted to rule in Christ's kingdom, so they could be in control.
- We want to be rescued from trials, so we can be in control.
- We all desire control and we forget all things are under God's control.

"The world has gone after Him." Are you going after Christ? Or are you still searching for the comfortable life?

John 12:20-27 To Follow After Christ, Lose Your Life

The Prince of Peace, the King of Israel, entered into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. The people welcoming Him with shouts of Hosanna wanted Him to make their nation great again. But He came to earth to die, to bring peace with God for His people.

To be reconciled to God, we must humble ourselves and repent. Our sinful selves want control of our lives; we want a comfortable life. Many are the professing Christians who believe Christ came to give them a prosperous life, but the Word of God is not a tool for enhancement. He makes us right with God, so we will live like He is our Lord and our King.

Read John 12:20-27.

THE GENTILES SEEK CHRIST

Some Greeks, who had come to the feast, wanted to see Jesus. The JFB commentary suggests they asked Philip because he lived in the same region and they were looking for a favorable introduction. Philip brought them to Andrew. Andrew, also, was from the same locality (1:44). The two disciples told Jesus (v20-22).

The JFB commentary said these men were likely Greek proselytes rather than Greek Jews. If they were proselytes, they were Gentile and it was likely Jesus was in a part of the temple where they had no access. This, too, would be a reason they sought Philip.

When the Greek men came to Philip, he had a dilemma: Philip was a disciple of Christ, but he was also a faithful Jew, who followed the strict rules of his religion. Although the Jewish faith allowed for proselytes (Exo 12:48; Deu 29:10-13), would Jesus allow the same among His followers? Furthermore, if he brought the men to Jesus, would He and the disciples incur the wrath of the Jews for speaking with Gentiles in the temple court? Not sure what to do, is probably the reason Philip consulted with Andrew before taking the men to Jesus.

In chapter 10, Jesus said, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." [10:16 NASB]. These Gentile men illustrated some of these sheep were already coming to the flock.

SIDENOTE: The JFB commentary also pointed out how, at Jesus' birth, wise men came from the East; whereas these men, near to the time of the cross, came from the West. Men came from the East and the West to see the Messiah, while those among Him were critical of Him or sought to kill

Him. John MacArthur pointed out in his study Bible, "At the very moment when the Jewish authorities plotted virulently to kill Him, Gentiles began to desire His attention."

THE HOUR HAS COME

The Bible does not give us the reason these men sought an audience with Christ.

- It is possible the men wanted to meet this famous Man.
- It is possible they believed He would be king and wanted special access to Him at the coronation.
- It is possible they respected the teachings of Christ and had some questions regarding salvation.

In any case, Jesus' response was to announce His death (v23-24). Christ did not speak negative of His death; He did not speak with dread. He related His death to a seed, which falls in the ground to die and then brings new life. The new life which sprouts from His death will produce much fruit (v24). The fruit would be those who would follow Christ. He might have mentioned "much fruit" in response to the Gentiles seeking His audience. Christ looked forward to bearing this fruit, saying He would be glorified.

He was troubled, but He looked forward to His death and the produce it would bring. He did not lament nor seek to escape this hour, but said, "For this purpose I have come." [v27].

> But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.
>
> As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. [Isa 53:10-11 NASB].

Christ used this event to illuminate the glory which was about to transpire. These Greek men were shut out of the temple, except for the Gentile court, but Christ's death was about to tear down the wall of partition separating man from God (Mat 27:51; cf Eph 2:14-16; Heb 10:19-22).

WHOEVER LOVES HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT

Whether these men had come to see the King or had a question of religion or salvation, Jesus' answer was lose your life and follow Him. He would set the example with His death, which will bear much fruit.

Christ continued with His salvation message. He warned against setting our affection on the world and desiring anything from it (v25). If you love this life, that is, if you seek fulfillment in this life, you will lose it. But if you hate this life, that is, if you seek God's will, not your comfort, in this life, you will find eternal life.

Christ was about to voluntarily give His life to redeem many. He did not love His life so as to shrink from death. He calls on all who follow Him to have the same attitude toward this life; surrender it to God.

The Apostle Peter said we suffer for Him because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example for us to follow in His steps (1Pe 2:21). If we cling to this life and its passing pleasures, we cannot serve Christ. To serve Christ is to seek His glory, even if it means suffering and death, rather than seeking our own comfort and pleasure.

The Apostle James said if we love the world, we are enemies of God. He likened those who profess to believe in Christ, but were following the world as adulterers. Those who practice adultery against Christ cannot be saved.

> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [Jam 4:4 ESV].

Jesus warned, you cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24).

> Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. [1Jo 2:15-17 NASB].

Many are the professing Christians who desire to satisfy the world; they want to make Christianity relevant to the world because they want the praise of man; they love comfort and the best of what life has to offer. Jesus said, they cannot be saved (5:44).

If we follow Christ, the world will hate us (15:18-27); which includes many professing Christians will hate us. If you are not experiencing friction with the world, you are not following Christ.

If the Greek men had come to celebrate a coronation and wanted access to the king, they were loving this life. Maybe this rebuke was for them. The king they were seeking was about to die and He said if they serve Him, they must follow Him. To follow Christ is to leave the world behind, to walk in newness of life.

> Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [Rom 6:4 NASB].

Jesus said those who serve Him will be honored by the Father (v26). Christ is calling His people out of this world; to live for Him and not for this worldly gain They must lay their comfort aside for the sake of God's glory. To be honored by the Father cannot be compared to any honor bestowed by man.

JESUS WAS TROUBLED

Many had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. Of these, many were anxious to see Christ and to celebrate Him for the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Many hoped to see Him crowned King. There was much excitement in the air, but Jesus was troubled because the hour had now come and the people did not understand.

He was about to endure much more than physical death; He was about to endure the wrath of the Father, who was going to crush Him.

All through the Gospel of John, it was noted His hour or time had not yet come. Now, Christ declared the time had come (v23,27,31). There was no going back because this was the reason He came. The psalmist described the distress of Christ.

> I am poured out like water,
>
> And all my bones are out of joint;
>
> My heart is like wax; it is melted within me.
>
> My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
>
> And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
>
> And You lay me in the dust of death.

> For dogs have surrounded me;
>
> A band of evildoers has encompassed me;
>
> They pierced my hands and my feet.
>
> I can count all my bones.
>
> They look, they stare at me;
>
> They divide my garments among them,
>
> And for my clothing they cast lots.
>
> But You, O LORD, be not far off;
>
> O You my help, hasten to my assistance. [Psa 22:14-19 NASB].

What do we make of this question: "and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'?" [v27].

- Did Christ have second thoughts?
- Or was He asking for their opinion?
- Or was it merely rhetorical?

To vacate this plan, would be to disobey the Father; an impossible feat. Obedience to the Father would come at a high price to the Son and this was the point: the proof, if you will, of the eternal covenant; the proof of the fellowship between the Father and the Son. Hebrews 5:8 said He learned obedience; not that He was ever disobedient nor that His learning was like ours. He was God in the flesh and this flesh had to prove obedience, to be the perfect man for the perfect sacrifice. He was troubled, but nothing was going to deter Him from His mission.

The question represents the enormity of the task ahead and Christ's answer was, "For this purpose I have come."

IN CLOSING

Some Greeks asked Philip to bring them to Jesus. At Jesus' birth, wise men came from the East; whereas near to the time of the cross, these men came men from the West. Foreigners traveled to see Jesus, while His own people sought to kill Him.

Coming to this hour of death, Christ was troubled, but He would not fail, for He was destined to fulfill His mission as the perfect sacrifice to satisfy the wrath of God.

Christ described His death to be like a seed, which dies and brings forth more life. If we follow Christ, we must not love this life. We must lose our life, die to this life, for the One who gave His life for our salvation.

> **He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. [v25-26a NASB].**
>
> Unless we deny our own will, we shall never do God's will. [Thomas Watson].

John 12:28-36 Christ Warns Against Walking In The Dark

Christ became man to glorify the Father. Throughout His life, He made the Father known to man (1:18). Even in His death and resurrection, the Father would be glorified (Act 17:31). The previous passage ended with Christ stating He was troubled; nonetheless, He would fulfill His purpose (v27). His time had come and God's name will be glorified.

Read John 12:28-36.

THE SON'S DESIRE IS THE FATHER'S GLORY

When Jesus came to this distressing hour, His chief concern was the glory of the Father. In our human minds, when we go through trials, our desire is to be rescued from distress. In all things, in all events, God's chief concern is His glory.

Father, glorify Your name. [v28a].

Many people and theologians have theories as to what gives God the most glory, but the Scriptures are clear, God's ultimate glory is found in Himself and nothing gives God more glory than the glory He gives Himself (17:1); He chose us for His glory (Eph 1:4-14); He chose Israel and preserved them for His glory (Isa 43:6-7; 48:9-11). He chose to have His Son suffer His wrath for His glory (Isa 53:10-12; Heb 2:10).

> For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. [Rom 11:36 NASB].

> all things have been created through Him and for Him. [Col 1:16b NASB].

> Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. [Isa 6:3 NASB].

> I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images. [Isa 42:8 NASB].

> My glory I will not give to another. [Isa 48:11].

There is no glory so great as the fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The unity of their work and the praise, majesty and love heaped upon each other can never be surpassed. It will not be surpassed by the millions upon millions of choirs singing His praise through all eternity, because God is complete in Himself.

Many people and theologians have theories as to how we can give God more glory; as if we hold the power to control the volume to His majesty, if

you will. We can do nothing to add to His glory, but to glorify Him is our duty and if we truly love God, it results in our pleasure.

> The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. [Ecc 12:13-14 NASB].

We must be careful our praise is not frivolous, nor be it an expression to satisfy our emotions. Beware lest we make God in our own image:

> Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. [Act 17:29-31 ESV].

It is the duty of man to give praise to God, but praise to God without repentance is vanity. Without the fear of God, our hearts cannot be humbled to repent. For those who refuse to repent and glorify God, God will display His glory in their judgment and eternal torment.

FEAR GOD'S VOICE

When the Father said, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" [v28], this was the third recorded time the Father had spoken in an audible voice during Christ's life. The first was at His baptism (Mat 3:13-17; Mar 1:9-11; Luk 3:21-23), the second was at the transfiguration (Mat 17:5). When the people heard the voice, they exclaimed it was or must have been an angel of God. We can be sure it was a fearful sound, for the crowd declared the voice thundered (v29).

Before the giving of the Ten Commandments, God spoke to the people audibly and it caused great fear. The voice of God thundered. It probably sounded like the earth was breaking apart. The Psalmist said the voice of the Lord:

- thunders;
- is powerful and majestic;
- tears cedars apart;
- hews out flames of fire;

- shakes the wilderness;
- makes the deer to calve;
- strips the forest bare (Psa 29).

Moses told the people God uses His voice to lead us away from sin.

> Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." [Exo 20:18-20 ESV].

In the modern American gospel, we are told we need not fear God because He loves us, but the Bible tells us those who do not fear, who do not obey, remain under His wrath (3:36). The reason we see so many professing Christians chasing after and living like the world, is because there is no fear of God. God commands every man to repent (Act 17:30), but we see so many professing Christians living unrepentant lives.

NOW IS THE JUDGMENT OF THIS WORLD

Jesus did not need the Father's voice for His own affirmation. He was in perfect unity with the Father. The purpose of the Father's voice was so the people would know the Father had sent Him. The voice of God was to declare His glory.

Christ added the warning, judgment is at hand (v31). So, the voice was meant to instill fear, as Moses said, to bring the people to repentance (Exo 20:18-20). God will judge all those who do not repent and obey. The day is fixed (Act 17:31).

Jesus' first recorded sermon was, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." [Mat 4:17; Mar 1:15]. The meaning can be easily reached Jesus was warning of judgment; He was warning of God's wrath. This passage was the last time He would teach these people and He was preaching God commands every man to repent and give Him glory because His wrath is at hand. Christ was NOT preaching, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life."

In this passage, Jesus said judgment is upon this world and the ruler of this world will be cast out (v31). It is a terrifying thing for a nation to have its ruler executed by hostile parties. The ruler most people serve is Satan;

many would be unwilling to admit this, but they refuse to follow Christ. Therefore, the devil is their leader and Jesus just declared to this crowd, their leader has been defeated.

Those who refuse to follow Christ will follow the devil. Nice people who do good things, but are not obedient to Christ, are following Satan. Christ's death and resurrection brought judgment upon Satan and all those who follow him.

> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [3:19 NASB].

What God said in Genesis 3:15, foretold that Christ would crush Satan's head. In another passage, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." [Luk 10:18]. And the Apostle John wrote Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; to destroy the power of sin.

> Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. [1Jo 3:8 ESV].

Freeing us from the power of sin is the work of God; it is not the result of anything we do, not even the result of our repentance. We were dead in our sins, when He made us alive (Eph 2:1-5).

In his epistles, the Apostle John wrote, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." [1Jo 5:19 NASB]. Though we once followed the evil one, Christ nailed our sins to the cross, triumphing over all principality who would draw us to death (Col 2:13-15). Satan holds power over the world, but he has no hold over those who follow Christ. Therefore, judgment for this world means life for Christ's followers. This is why He said "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself." [v32].

DRAW ALL MEN WHEN LIFTED UP

What did Christ mean by "all" men? We have already discussed the meaning of "world" in 3:16, to mean those who are His throughout the whole world; Jew and Gentile. The angel told Joseph, "He will save His people from their sins" [Mat 1:21]; he did not say Christ would save the whole world. Isaiah said He bore the sins of many (Isa 53:12); he didn't say Christ bore the sins of the whole world. In chapter 6, Jesus said no one could come to Him unless the Father draws him (6:44). Finally, in the Book of Acts we are told, "as many as were appointed to eternal life believed." [Act 13:48]. Those who are chosen by God from before the creation of the

world, are drawn and they believe. Therefore, we must conclude, as for this act of drawing all men to Himself, He is speaking of His chosen; those whom He predestined to receive Christ. All of them. This is the meaning of God not willing any should perish: all the elect will come to repentance (2Pe 3:9).

> All that the Father gives Me will come to Me. [6:37a NASB].

There is another perspective of Christ's claim He will draw all men to Himself. That is drawing, as in getting their attention, but not to salvation. From the moment Christ died, He has drawn the attention of the entire world. The calendars we use are set from the presumed year of His birth (AD, Anno Domini or the year of our Lord; and BC, before Christ); even though there is recent worldwide effort to change this and it is absurd for professing Christians to join this push to eliminate God from the calendar.

Christ is the greatest controversy in the world: despite all the wars, violence and hardships which wage around mankind, the conversation is Christ, the only God who died to save man from God's wrath. The fact that atheists are compelled to argue against His existence and His authority is evidence He is and He has drawn the attention of all men.

The term, "lifted up," was a common term for crucifixion. Not only did John write Christ said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die (v33), but the people reacted, demonstrating they knew He meant He was going to die (v34).

Jesus explained to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." [3:14 NASB]. The serpent on the pole was a foretelling of Christ. When God sent judgment and the people, dying of venomous snake bites, looked at the bronze snake on the pole, they were saved from death (Num 21:4-9). So, too, when we look to Christ on the cross for our salvation, we are saved from permanent death.

Speaking of His death upset the people, because, like Nicodemus (chapter 3), they understood the Messiah would come and reign forever at Jerusalem. Imagine their disappointment when the one they thought to be the Messiah, the victor over Rome, whom they just welcomed and celebrated with palm branches and praise as He entered Jerusalem, announced He was going to die.

They looked to the Scriptures, but had understood them all wrong:

1) I will establish Your offspring forever, and build Your throne for all generations. [Psa 89:4 ESV].

2) The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." [Psa 110:4 NASB].

3) There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. [Isa 9:7a NASB].

4) they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. [Eze 37:25 NASB].

5) And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. [Dan 7:14 NASB].

These prophecies and others speak to Christ's earthly and eternal reign, but these prophecies were not for this time, for the Son of Man came to die; to redeem His people for God. When reading and studying the Scripture, they only heard what they wanted to hear.

Being in the Word is of no use if you are using the Word to satisfy your bias rather than allowing the Scriptures to transform your life. These people wanted a comfortable life; they wanted a ruler who would eradicate all their enemies. Many professing Christians are looking for a comfortable life; they believe the Word of God is a handbook to a prosperous life, but Jesus' command is to take up our cross and follow Him.

THE SON OF MAN

They asked Him, "Who is this Son of Man?" [v34b]. They preferred a Messiah who would reign forever. Jesus' answer was the light would be among them a little while longer, meaning His time of departure was at hand. They should walk in the light while it is light, that is, they should follow Him while He is still here, so the darkness of this world would not overtake them and they stumble (v35). This was His final call to repent and follow Him.

WALK IN THE LIGHT

Human reasoning without God is darkness (Mat 6:23; 1Co 1:18-25). Misapplying the Word of God is also darkness. Jesus warned, "he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes." [v35 NASB].

Christ urged them to believe in Him while He was still with them. Believe in the Light and become sons of Light (v36). The only way to know the truth is to be in the Word; not shaping it to please ourselves, but abiding in it and allowing it to shape our lives and thoughts (8:31-32); to conform us to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). Romans chapter 8 says we are adopted as sons, for those who walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Christ is no longer on earth in the flesh, but He has left us His Word. If we believe in the Light, we will be in His Word and it will transform our lives so we may be sons of Light.

> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. [Mat 5:16 ESV].

After He said these things, He hid Himself (v36b), but He will return shortly to give one last call to follow Him.

IN CLOSING

Jesus' first and last sermons were warning of God's judgment. He did not preach, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He constantly warned people of judgment and the need to repent.

God is glorified in all that He has made and He is glorified in the salvation He has provided through His Son. God is glorified by all who will receive His Son and He will be glorified in the eternal judgment upon all those who refuse to believe.

With His voice, God the Father made it clear Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Although the voice was fearsome, the people did not listen or they soon forgot what they heard, because they were looking for a Messiah who would reign forever and give them a comfortable life. When they could see Christ was not going to do this, the people forgot the fearsome voice and demanded He be crucified.

Jesus told the crowd:

- Judgment is upon the world;
- The ruler of the world is cast down;
- If I am lifted up, I will draw all men to Myself.

This is an awesome picture: All mankind has been living in unrepentant sin. Then Christ came to bring judgment and that judgment was borne upon Himself as He was lifted up, in view of all the world, and the ruler of this world, Satan, was cast down in utter disgrace. God crushed His Son, but

gave the death sentence to the devil. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Christ Jesus is Lord (Php 2:10-11).

Christ admonished the crowd to walk in the Light. Today, God speaks to us through His Word. If we are in His Word, it will lead us to fear Him. Many read His Word, but soon forget what they heard and they have no fear of God. So many professing Christians today cling to their sin; they have favorite sins, which they consider to be small sins. This is evidence they do not fear God. John the Baptist warned, the disobedient remain under God's wrath (3:36).

Repent and turn from your sin.

John 12:37-43 God Hardens Hearts To Accomplish His Will

Christ's just spoke to the crowd with a warning of judgment and a call to follow the Light of the world. This was the crowd who welcomed Him into Jerusalem as a king, but when He announced He had come to die, He fell short of their expectations, because they were looking for a comfortable life.

If Jesus kept right on feeding the multitudes, healing diseases and disabilities and if He would also reign as king and put away all their enemies, then, in their minds, He would have been the perfect Messiah. Many people become Christian thinking Jesus is going to make their life better, so they "make a decision for Christ," but as time goes by, their lives are still the same old ruts they created and they fall away. They never became sons of Light, because they never truly believed; they were only looking for a comfortable life.

Read John 12:37-43.

This entire passage is commentary by the Apostle John. This is sound doctrine explained by a man who spent three years with Jesus and was taught by the Holy Spirit. The two main points:

1) Some hearts God hardens; and
2) You cannot be saved if you hide your faith.

SOME HEARTS GOD HARDENS

The Apostle John explained the reason the people still did not believe in Him after so many miracles was to fulfill what the Prophet Isaiah had written (v38; quoting Isa 53:1). Here was God, descended from Heaven in human flesh; the Son of Man speaking the words of truth from the Father; the Creator speaking to His creation, and few believed. The people could not believe, just as Isaiah foretold, because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts (v40; quoting Isa 6:10).

John made it clear, God had no intention of saving these people. He hardened their hearts so they would not believe. And, just like Pharaoh, God did not harden their hearts against their will; it was their will to hate God. The freewill of a slave to sin, is to love sin.

Many professing Christians have difficulties accepting the doctrine of predestination or election. They have problems with God's claim He has rejected certain people. These professing Christians want to make God in

their own image; they want a god who is kind and fair. They do not think it fair what Paul wrote in Romans 9, that God chose some for life and some for destruction, but the Apostle Paul asked, who are we to question God? (Rom 9:20). The potter has the right to make what He wants from the clay. God has said He will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy (Exo 33:19) and He says He will harden whom He will harden (Rom 9:18).

Election is of God. Jesus said no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him (6:44). Paul wrote, "So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." [Rom 9:16 ESV]. This is the same thing John wrote in the opening of the Gospel of John: those who received Christ, this receiving was not due to man's will, but God's will (1:13).

> He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. . .having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. [Eph 1:4a,11b NASB].

God chose us in Christ before the world was created (Eph 1:4). We are chosen for God's purposes (Eph 1:11). We are NOT chosen for anything good in us nor are we chosen because God knows our future decision. We could not make this decision to repent and follow Christ if God had not drawn us and regenerated our hearts. As Jesus said, "you must be born again." [3:3]. It was not our decision to be born the first time; it was all of God. So too, it is only of God, by whom we can be born again.

The people's hearts were hardened to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy and accomplish God's will. God always has a purpose. In this case, it was to bring about Christ's death, but in the broader scope, the destruction of many is to spotlight God's mercy toward the few.

> What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory. [Rom 9:22-23 NASB].

Isaiah foresaw the Son of God come to earth to die to satisfy God's wrath and make many be accounted righteous. He wrote of this in Isaiah 53, but he began this account with the question: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" [v38 NASB, quoting Isa 53:1]. He understood God hardened mans' hearts so they would not receive God's mercy (v40-41, quoting Isa 6:10). Isaiah's prophecy is clear: God hardened people's hearts so they could not see and understand and repent and God would save them (v40).

This is God's will: to display His wrath upon those He has rejected, so He can make known His mercy to those who are His. This is an awesome work of God. We may have a hard time understanding this, but God said it and this should cause us to fear, repent and give Him praise.

This should cause us to warn others of the coming judgment, just as Jesus did. Jesus is our example: If Christ, knowing who is chosen and who is not, warned all, should we not also warn all? Should we not preach repentance to everyone?

YOU CANNOT BE SAVED IF YOU HIDE YOUR FAITH

The Apostle John finished his commentary, noting some did believe, even some in authority, but for fear of the Jews, not wanting to be put out of the temple (9:22), they hid their faith (v42). They did not confess their faith because, "they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." [v43 NASB]. This is a believing which is NOT unto salvation. They believed, but they did not act upon it. This means they believed intellectually, but were not willing to take up their cross and follow Christ.

James wrote the demons believe and tremble (Jam 2:19). If you fear man more than God, you cannot be saved (5:44; cf Mat 6:24). Jesus said, you cannot have a private faith.

> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed, but whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God. [3:20-21 ESV].

> You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. [Mat 5:14-15 NASB].

Speaking about sin and evil thoughts, Jesus said what is in the heart will come out of the mouth (Mat 15:18). This is true, even for our faith. If we are regenerated by God, what comes out of our mouth will be words to His glory. We cannot hide our witness, for as Jeremiah wrote,

> If I say, "I will not mention Him, or speak any more in His name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. [Jer 20:9 ESV].

And the Psalmist David wrote,

> My heart became hot within me. As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue. [Psa 39:3 ESV].

If we truly follow Christ, we cannot keep silent. We are told from the Scriptures to fear God and not man (Psa 118:8-9; 146:3; Mat 10:28) and Jesus asked the question: how can a man could be saved if he seeks the glory of man, but does not seek the glory of God (5:44).

John made this accusation against those who did not profess their faith for fear of the Jews, knowing at the time of his writing some of these, such as Nicodemus and Joseph (19:38-39), had later became vocal in their faith and were influential in the early church. He did not mince words, even though they later became his Christian brothers.

> It indicates the displeasure with which God regarded their conduct at this time, and with which He continues to regard similar conduct [JFB; quoting Webster and Wilkinson].

IN CLOSING

The Apostle John made the doctrine of election very clear: God hardens the heart of the unbeliever so they cannot come to Christ. We may think this harsh, but God does not force them into unbelief against their will. If you want this to be fair: we all deserve death and eternal torment. However, God chose to save some. If you are following Christ, thank God for His mercy and kindness toward you.

Professing to be a Christian, but hiding or compromising your faith for the sake of receiving acceptance and glory from your peers or for fear of receiving their rejection, is no saving faith at all. Jesus asked the question, "How can you believe?" [5:44].

John 12:44-50 Christ's Final Message To The Unbelieving Crowd

The hearts of the people in this crowd were hardened, so they could not believe. They expressed their rejection of a Messiah who came to die, rather than make their nation great again and give them a comfortable life. In the face of this, Christ made one last call to repent.

Read John 12:44-50.

In this passage, Christ came out of hiding (v36) and established once again the fact He is equal to the Father. His purpose was to reveal the Father to man (1:18).

1. If you believe in the Son, you believe in the Father.
2. If you see the Son, you see the Father.

He called the people, one last time, to believe. He declared He revealed the Father and He said whoever believes in Him, believes in the Father who sent Him (v44-45). He called man to come out of the darkness, saying He has come as Light, so that everyone who believes will not remain in the darkness (v46).

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

> **I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. [v46 NASB].**

Jesus said if the light within you is darkness, it is a very great darkness (Mat 6:23). Men cling to the darkness of worldly wisdom, which says they are basically good and not deserving of death. They cling to the darkness of a god made in their own image, who will accept them in their sin and require no repentance. The Bible says men love darkness because their deeds are evil (3:19). In this passage, Christ made clear that those who are saved will come out of darkness.

These are the bookends of the Apostle John's account of Christ's ministry:

1. Christ was the Light sent from the Father, to make Him known (1:4-18).
2. He came as Light to show us the Father, so those who believe will not remain in darkness (12:44-46).

THE JUDGMENT

Christ gave the promise of life to those who believe and warned of judgment for those who reject Him (v47-48). In this call, He said He did not come to judge, but to save and He issued one last call to repent. Regarding judgment: He told Nicodemus those who believe in Him will not be condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already (3:18). In this sermon, He warned though judgment was reserved for another day, the words He had spoken will judge the unbeliever (v48). Those who do not believe will have no excuse.

Here are the two types of people who will face judgment: 1) those who hear, but do not obey (v47). Many are those who tip their hat to God, they go to church and do Christian things, but they do not obey; they continue to live sinful lifestyles. According to 3:36, God's wrath remains on them. 2) those who reject Christ and will not receive His words (v48). They will not listen. The very words they will not listen to are the same words which will condemn them.

In 5:22, Christ said the Father has given all judgment to the Son and in 5:27, Christ said the Father gave Him all authority to judge because He is the Son of Man. In this passage, He said He did not come to judge (v47). He is not contradicting Himself. In this passage He had been talking about His death and being lifted up. He did not come to judge according to the flesh, as man does and He did not come to set up judgment against nations, as the Jews expected, nor was He speaking of the final judgment of man, but He warned, judgment is coming (v48).

> You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone, but even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. [8:15-16 NASB].

In this passage, He said the one who rejects Him has a judge, the word He has spoken will judge him (v48). His word is true because He spoke what the Father commanded Him to speak (v49).

> Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. [5:24 NASB].

Christ did not come to render judgment; He came to suffer on mans' behalf. However, He made clear if they disobey or reject Him, they will be judged; they will be judged by the very words He gave them (v47-48). God has given us His Word. If we reject this Word, we have no excuse and we will be judged by it.

Christ said He did not speak as a man seeking His own glory. He came to do the Father's will (v49). Therefore, in this passage, the words He spoke were those commanded by the Father. Several times through the Gospel of John, Jesus said He did not speak or act on His own accord, but He spoke and acted what He saw the Father speaking and doing (5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10-11; cf 10:18; 15:10).

1. Whoever believes in Me, believes . . . in Him who sent Me (v44).
2. Whoever sees Me sees Him who sent Me (v45).
3. For I have not spoken on My own authority, but the Father who sent Me (v49).
4. Therefore, I say what the Father has told Me (v50).

This was a fulfillment of prophecy. This is what God told the people through the prophecy of Moses and the Pharisees, who judged Him, should have recognized His words. The Messiah would seek the will of God rather than seek glory for Himself and we are commanded to listen to Him.

> And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. [Deu 18:18b-19 ESV].

There will be a day of judgment and Christ will judge the world. The Apostle Paul argued this case when confronting Greek philosophers who rejected the true God. He said God will judge the world through Christ, whom He has appointed. The Father gave assurance He approved the words of Christ by raising Him from the dead.

> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 NASB].

The words Christ spoke, the Scriptures, will judge those who heard them and those who refused to listen. However, to those who believe, His words are eternal life because His words came from the Father. Christ could extend this promise of eternal life because the Father sent the Son and gave Him this commandment (v49).

> For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself. [5:26 NASB].

IN CLOSING

So, to recap this last portion of chapter 12:

1) The people who hailed Him as the Messiah and welcomed Him to Jerusalem, no longer believed in Him once He said He had come to die.

2) The Apostle John said God hardened their hearts so they would not believe. This is hard for us to understand because, in our human wisdom, we think God would want all men to believe. The Apostle Paul wrote God endured with much patience those destined for destruction, in order to make known the riches of His glory for those whom He chose in Christ before the creation of the world (Rom 9:22-24). Some people are destined for mercy and others for destruction. God has a plan and purpose and this will be accomplished.

3) Some believed, but they feared man more than they feared God. So, their belief was not a faith unto eternal life.

4) Christ then professed He spoke on authority of the Father and those who believe in Him believe in the Father and have eternal life. Those who do not obey or will not listen will be judged; the words He spoke will judge them on the last day.

He made a call for all men to come to Him though not all are drawn to Him. The command stands for all men to repent (Act 17:30-31). Though not all are called, the One who will judge gave opportunity for all to repent. There is no excuse.

The first time Christ came, He came to save. The next time He comes, He will judge the world. He spoke the words, He gave the call; those who do not obey or will not listen will be judged by the words He declared. Are you listening and obeying?

John 13:1-17 Jesus' Love And Washing The Disciples Feet

Chapters 13 through 17 are an account of what happened the evening before Christ's crucifixion and what Jesus taught His disciples during His Last Supper.

Five main events happened in this chapter:

1. Jesus washed the disciples' feet;
2. Jesus announced His betrayal;
3. Jesus declared His imminent death;
4. Jesus commanded the disciples to love each other; and
5. Jesus foretold Peter's denial.

Chapters 14-16, contain the final teachings or doctrines given by Christ to His disciples and chapter 17 contains more doctrine in His prayer to the Father. It is ironic, the doctrines Christ presented so clearly, many professing Christians consider to be controversial.

Read John 13:1-17.

JESUS' LOVE FOR THE DISCIPLES

To reinforce the point that God is always in control, the Apostle John mentioned much about time and timing. John said Christ's time or His hour had not yet come in several passages (2:4; 7:6; 7:8; 7:30; 7:33; 8:20; 12:23; 12:27 and 12:31) He also made plenty other mentions related to timing, such as "the next day."

> But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son. . . [Gal 4:4 NASB].

This chapter begins beautifully. Christ is described as knowing His time had come, but He was consumed with love for His disciples (v1). Not only are we reminded everything happens in God's time; we also learn God's complete control is not a rigid, emotionless, schedule-driven agenda. Christ loved His disciples to the end; His trial did not dampen His love.

Because of His love, Jesus gave His disciples a final discourse on doctrine. He gave them instruction rather than leave them with sentimental feelings. He began by washing the disciples' feet; leaving them an example of serving each other. What better way for man to know God's love than to have an understanding of His doctrines? As the Apostle John wrote in His epistles:

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [1Jo 5:20 NASB].

Sound doctrine is integral to the Gospel of Salvation. Many modern churches announce they avoid doctrine because it brings division. Jesus said He came to bring division (Luk 12:51). Truth always divides from false teaching. Beware the preacher who avoids doctrine as he is likely forming God in his own image. He may be preaching a psychological love, but he is not preaching the love of God. Jesus' love led to teaching sound doctrine. Paul taught sound doctrine is necessary for salvation (1Ti 4:16).

JUDAS WAS A TOOL FOR SATAN

The Apostle John continued the introduction to the story of the feet washing by saying the devil had already urged Judas to betray Christ (v2). Earlier on, Judas had made an agreement to betray Jesus and the Jews promised a payment of thirty pieces of silver (Luk 22:3-6).

In this passage, John wrote the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas (v2). In the Luke account, it is written Satan entered into Judas (Luk 22:3); John affirms this in verse 27. Judas betrayed the Christ, but he was directed by Satan. The devil was active in trying to put away the Messiah and he found a disciple who was willing to help him. Judas' own greed and love of the world made him vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Jesus warned a man cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24).

Satan won the battle to conquer Judas, but He lost the battle for Christ. God's ways are higher than mans' ways (Isa 55:9) and His ways are higher than the devil's and all the principalities (Col 1:16). Satan, desiring to destroy Christ, played right into God's hand by facilitating the death of His Son on the cross, for the salvation of many.

Christ's sacrifice was foretold in Genesis 3:15: Satan would bruise or strike His heel, but Christ would trample Satan's head. Christ was destined to die before the creation of the world. His heel was bruised, so to speak, but He rose from the dead and this led to greater glory (v3; cf 17:1). Christ conquered death and destroyed the devil who held the power of death and who holds people captive to sin.

> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through

> fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. [Heb 2:14-15].

Mankind is at the devil's mercy, of which he has none; he holds the world to a lifelong slavery to sin. The Apostle Paul wrote God "will soon crush Satan under your feet." [Rom 16:20]. The devil was conquered through Christ's death on the cross. Jesus described the devil as the ruler of this world and said he will be cast out (12:31).

> for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. [Rev 12:10b NASB].

JESUS WASHED THE DISCIPLES' FEET

Christ was about to teach them doctrine, but sound doctrine is worthless if they do not love and serve each other. So, He first taught them love. He began this teaching by demonstrating this love through humble service. Christ is our example.

> If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. [1Co 13:2 NASB].

John described Christ's mind going into this event of washing the disciples feet. He knew the Father had given Him all things and He knew He had come from God and was going back to Him. In other words, Jesus knew He was God and was soon to be glorified, yet He humbled Himself for the benefit of His disciples (v3).

> although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [Php 2:6-8 NASB].

On the one hand, He faced death, on the other hand, He knew He was God. Yet, neither fear nor His high estate could keep Him from serving those He loved. He rose from supper; laid aside his outer garments; tied a towel around his waist; poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them, just like a servant (v4-5). At the final supper, He demonstrated this servant's attitude.

When Christ came to wash Peter's feet, the disciple resisted and he continued to resist a second time, though Jesus explained, "What I am

doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." [v7 ESV]. So Jesus told him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." [v8 NASB]. Only then did Peter allow Him and he asked Jesus to wash his hands and head as well (v9). Then Christ explained this additional washing was not necessary because he was already clean (v10).

He was already bathed while sitting under Christ's teaching for the last three years. And this is a picture of the Christian life: The Word cleanses us. Are we bathed in the Word? If we are in the Word, we are washed.

> Already you are clean because of the Word that I have spoken to you. [15:3].

Jesus prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth." [17:17]. The more we are in the Word, the more we become sanctified. When we read, study and meditate upon the Word, it cleanses us. We are washed, yet we are not without sin; this is the dirt which collects as we walk along life's road. For this, we need washing again and again. The confession of our sin; the washing of our feet, if you will.

> but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. . .If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [1Jo 1:7,9 NASB].

When we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we will be seeking to walk in the light, but this does not mean we will be sinless; neither does it mean we are out of the light whenever we sin. This is the beauty of what Christ has done for us:

1. We walk in the light and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from ALL sin.
2. We confess our sins, that is, we continually repent of our sin, and He forgives us and cleanses us; washes our feet, if you will.

This is the beauty of fellowship with God: The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. The Father draws us into fellowship; the Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts to fellowship; and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us for fellowship. The picture of Christ washing the disciples' feet is a picture of the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us from all our sin.

> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. [Tit 3:5-6 NASB].

Nonetheless, the Word cannot wash the soul of the unrepentant. As the Apostle John pointed out: Jesus said one man in the group was not clean. Judas had been in this group for three years, listening to the words of Christ, yet he was not sanctified because he loved the world and was not repentant (v11). Many professing Christians go to church for years, even all their lives; they talk the talk and even appear to walk the walk, yet they are not clean; they are not saved. Many people read the Word, they find comfort and encouragement in it, but they do not find fellowship with God and they are not saved.

Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mat 13:24-30). A man sowed a field of wheat and an enemy sowed weeds among the good crop. His servants wanted to gather the weeds, but the master told the servants to let them both grow together and at harvest they will bind the weeds and throw them in the fire. There have always been false converts in the church. Judas, one of the twelve disciples, sat under Jesus' teaching, but he was not saved.

After Jesus finished washing the disciples' feet and put on His outer garments and rejoined them in the feast, He said He had given them an example to live by. And the example is this: those who lead should serve, just as Christ did not come to be served, but to serve (Mat 20:28). Jesus said, "and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave." [Mat 20:26 NASB].

Peter later wrote to the dispersed believers, telling them to shepherd the flock, "not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. . . Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another." [1Pe 5:3,5 ESV]. Jesus said a servant is not greater than his master (v16). If Christ humbled Himself to wash His disciples' feet, then, we too must serve each other in humility.

Some professing Christians engage in feet washing ceremonies. However, there is no record of the apostles repeating this feet washing ceremony. Therefore, we can be sure these people, though maybe well-intended, have missed the point. The Apostle Paul explained this in Romans 15:1-6: Our responsibility is to bear with the failings of the weak; not to please ourselves; to build up our brothers in Christ, just as Christ did; to welcome one another as Christ welcomed us. We do this for the glory of God, so we may glorify Him with one voice. We should serve each other as Christ served us and gave His life for us. Therefore, if we serve Christ, we will serve our brothers in Christ, but the mere act of feet washing serves nobody.

> **If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. [v17 NASB].**

Or, as the Apostle James said, be doers of the Word and not just someone who knows the Word (Jam 1:22).

IN CLOSING

Christ knew He would soon suffer on the cross and He knew one of His disciples would betray Him. Judas was vulnerable to Satan's influence because he desired the world more than Christ, even while he was walking with Him for three years. Being in the Word is no assurance of salvation. We need to guard our affections.

Christ knew He was God. The Apostle Paul said Christ did not cling to His Deity; He emptied Himself to become a servant (Php 2:6-7). This night, He got up from the table and washed the disciples' feet. He loved His disciples to the end.

At another time, He told the disciples whoever would be great among them must be the servant to all (Mat 20:26; Mar 10:43). By this act of feet washing, He vividly set the example to serve.

Many churches today have feet washing sessions, but they miss the point. We are called to bear each others' burdens (Gal 6:2). This means we help our brother in need, physically and spiritually. We do not practice staged acts of humility.

The disciples were already clean because they had been listening to Jesus' words (15:3), but their feet were dirty from travel. We are clean if we are in the Word, yet we are not without sin and we become dirty from travel, if you will. When we confess our sin, He is faithful to forgive (1Jo 1:9).

After Christ finished washing the disciples' feet, He explained to them a servant is not greater than his master. Christ served them and He was going to die for them. He said we will be blessed if we follow His example of service to our brothers (v17).

John 13:18-30 Dark Is The Heart Which Betrays Christ

Jesus said the one who is bathed does not need to wash; he needs only his feet cleansed. Then He said His disciples were clean, because they were cleaned by His teaching, but not every one of them, because one of the disciples was going to betray Him (v10-11). You can fellowship with believers and pretend to follow Christ, yet be on your way to Hell.

Read John 13:18-30.

Christ promised to bless those who obey Him (v17), but in the next breath said He was not speaking or extending His promise to all who were listening (v18). Judas was with Jesus for three years, but he did not walk with Christ. The unbeliever will not be blessed for an outward show of doing Christian things.

THE BETRAYER

Jesus said, "I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled." [v18a]. Judas was not chosen to life; he was chosen to fulfill Scripture. This is the doctrine of election: some are chosen to life and some are chosen for destruction (Rom 9:11-23). There is no middle ground.

Christ told the disciples about the betrayer in their midst for two reasons:

1. He wanted them to know a betrayer in their midst was a fulfillment of Scriptural prophecy. "HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME." [v18b NASB, quoting Psa 41:9].
2. He wanted them to remember when this happened, so they would know and believe He was the Messiah; the I AM (v19).

Was Christ surprised Judas had turned against Him? Not in the least; He tolerated his presence for three years, knowing full well Judas was not one of His sheep. With God, everything happens as designed. Judas was chosen to fulfill God's purpose; he was chosen for destruction.

> Understand, Judas' part was not apart from his own will. Even though God ordained that Judas would be the one of the Twelve who would betray Christ, it was not apart from the desire of Judas. Judas was no robot. Our Lord did not simply allocate to an unwilling Judas the part of the villain in the crucifixion. Such a thing would be inconsistent with the character of Jesus Christ. It is also inconsistent with the historical record. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, He endeavored to drive Judas to repentance, time and time

> again, with His love, His pleas, and His rebukes. So although Judas's treachery fit into the plan of God, God did not design him as a treacherous man. He became a traitor to Christ by his own choice. God merely designed his treachery into the divine plan. He took Judas, wretched as he was, and fitted him into His plan. If God was responsible for making Judas what he was, Jesus would have pitied him rather than rebuked him. [John MacArthur; Unmasking the Betrayer].

In this, there is a warning to us, as further explained by John MacArthur.

> Judas, through his life of treachery, supplies sinners with a solemn warning. We learn from the example of Judas that a person can be very near to Jesus Christ, and yet be lost and damned forever. Nobody was ever closer to Christ than the Twelve. Judas was one of them, and he's in hell today, because while he may have given intellectual assent to the truth, he never embraced Christ with heartfelt faith. [John MacArthur; Unmasking the Betrayer].

Even with this ominous threat of betrayal looming over Him, Jesus reaffirmed to the disciples He was sending them out. Whoever received them, that is, their message, received the one who sent them, namely Christ Himself. Those who receive Christ's message, receive the one who sent Him, namely God the Father (v20). In other words, hard times were coming, but the disciples had a mission, to proclaim the truth of Christ, and the kingdom will be advancing.

> From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence [advanced forcefully], and the violent take it by force. [Mat 11:12 ESV].

Up to this moment, the message of His betrayal and trouble to come had fallen on deaf ears. The disciples saw the kingdom as being at hand. There was opposition and times were stressful, but they believed their Messiah was going to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem, destroy Rome and make Israel great again.

Recently, these men were jockeying for positions in this kingdom and arguing over who was the greatest among them (Mat 20:20-21; Mar 10:35-37; Luk 22:24). So it was with great effort and emotion for Christ to call out the plain message, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." [v21 ESV]. After hearing this, the disciples looked at each other with uncertainty (v22). The Apostle Matthew wrote they were sorrowful (Mat 26:22). Luke wrote they questioned among themselves (Luk 22:23). Mark wrote each questioned whether it was themselves (Mar 14:19). It appears

each one, except for Judas, was concerned whether they might be the betrayer; abhorring the thought.

John was resting near Jesus and Peter motioned for him to ask the Lord who it was (v23-24). So John asked and Jesus answered it would be the one to whom He gave the morsel of bread after He dipped it (v26). Then He dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, saying, "What you are going to do, do quickly." [v27 ESV], but no one at the table knew why Jesus said this to Judas (v28). No one seemed to notice the correlation between what Christ said and the fact He had given the bread to Judas. It was necessary they did not know who the betrayer was, so they would not be distracted during Jesus' teaching this night.

This also reinforces the idea Judas was highly respected among the disciples. In chapter 12, when Mary was anointing Jesus with perfume, Judas was influential in persuading the disciples to complain about this waste, which could have benefited the poor (12:4; cf Mat 26:8; Mar 14:4). The disciples seemed to agree with him, because Judas was respected among the disciples. They did not suspect any evil in him. This is how John came to write no one knew why Jesus told Judas to do quickly what he had determined (v27). This is why there were no suspicions upon him even after he left the dinner. John wrote, "Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, 'Buy what we need for the feast,' or that he should give something to the poor." [v29 ESV].

THE DARKNESS

John made an interesting observation by saying when Judas went out it was night (v30). Evil deeds are done in darkness, whether this be the darkness of night or the darkness of the soul. Many people posing to be Christians have ranking and respected positions in the church bodies, even elders and pastors, but their hearts are evil, seeking their own gain. Some are determined to betray Christ for their own personal comfort. These people may be wealthy, they may be the nicest people, but they walk in darkness.

> and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [3:19b NASB].

Judas came to this meeting with betrayal in his heart. There was nothing he could learn by listening to Jesus' teaching, because his heart was hardened. So he went out.

IN CLOSING

Though Jesus washed all the disciples' feet, one of them would never have true fellowship. Though the disciples were cleansed by His teaching, one of

them would never be clean. Many people sit in churches and profess faith in Christ, but they will never have fellowship with God and they will never be clean from their sin. Like Judas, they are on their way to Hell.

From the beginning, the tares have been sown among the wheat. Christ allowed Judas to associate among them as one of them. So too, God allows false professing Christians to associate among the true brothers.

Judas was respected among the disciples and no one suspected he would betray Christ. He even had a position of responsibility; he carried the money purse. There are many professing Christians in the churches who are not saved; they are even in leadership. They betray Christ in word and deed; these are the tares and they will burn. Association is no assurance of salvation.

When Judas went out it was night. His soul was dark as he betrayed the Light of Life.

John 13:31-38 Where I Am Going You Cannot Come

After Judas left, there was no restraint on what the Lord would disclose to the remaining eleven disciples, His chosen. For the next three chapters, Christ gave them final instructions in doctrine.

This chapter could also be titled, "A New Commandment I Give To You." This is a material doctrine in this passage, so we could focus on this, and we will look at this. However, twice Christ told the disciples, "Where I Am Going You Cannot Come" (v33,36). So we will leave the title as it is.

Read John 13:31-38.

GOD'S GLORY

Jesus began by expressing God's glory: "the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. . .God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately." [v31b,32b]. He spoke in triumph, declaring victory.

God's glory is His ultimate purpose. His time had come and He would be glorified in His death on the cross. The Father would be glorified by Christ's obedience in death, for the redemption of those whom the Father has given Him and the Father would glorify the Son by raising Him from the dead.

> He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:31b NASB].

Because man sinned, man had to die and this death meant permanent separation from God. There was not one man who could satisfy God's wrath and restore man to fellowship with God; not even Abraham or Moses. Like the animals sacrificed in the Old Testament, the one who died must be spotless and perfect. There is not one man, for as David said, "in sin my mother conceived me." [Psa 51:5b NASB]

So God became a man, to die and satisfy His wrath. This is the eternal covenant. Christ alone was the perfect sacrifice, for while He is fully God, He is also fully man. This is why He left the glories of His throne and came to earth, to be born among men. As a man, He lived the perfect life, fulfilling all the Law. He was like us in every way, but remained sinless (Heb 4:15). God made Christ, who was sinless, to become sin for us, so that, through Him we are considered as righteous before God (2Co 5:21).

He was sinless and spotless before God, because He is God. He alone could satisfy the wrath of God. Through Christ, the Father was glorified because

the Son was obedient, even to death on the cross, and in Him many are made alive; many are made righteous.

> For as by one man's [Adam] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's [Christ's] obedience the many will be made righteous. [Rom 5:19 ESV].

Having expressed His impending glory, Christ foresaw with pity the difficult time coming for His disciples. He anxiously awaited the glory He would receive from the Father, but He knew the heartache awaiting the disciples when He would be gone. He loved them. He called them "little children," a term of endearment (v33).

CANNOT FOLLOW

He knew they would be scattered and scared. He said they would seek Him, which means they would long for the days when they were with Him and felt secure. He told them the time remaining was short and where He was going they could not come; they could not follow Him to His death (v33).

On occasions past, He told the Jews where He was going they could not come (7:34; 8:21), but now He said this to His disciples; the ones who were with Him wherever He went. Jesus told Peter, he could not follow Him "now" but will follow later (v36). To the Jews who did not believe, Jesus said, "you will seek me and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." [8:21 ESV].

The disciples would be separated only for a time; the unbelieving Jews could not follow Him ever.

A NEW COMMANDMENT

Things were going to become intense, confusing and scary. While He was with them, the disciples were arguing over who was the greatest in the kingdom. While He was gone, He wanted them to be set apart; to be holy. The feet washing was an example to humble themselves and serve as slaves to each other. So, now He went a step further by giving them a command to love each other.

> **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [v34 ESV].**

He told them to love each other. This was before He got into the meat of the doctrine or teaching that night. He knew they would soon be scattered and afraid. He wanted them to remember to love each other when their natural reaction would be to despair and blame.

This commandment continues. We all have trials, but amidst our struggle, we must remember to bear each others' burdens (Gal 6:2). Paul said this is how we "fulfill the law of Christ." If we love God, we will love the brothers; if we do not love the brothers, we do not love God. There is no trial or pressure in our life which can justify us losing sight of this command.

> The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. [1Jo 2:9 NASB].
>
> This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. [1Jo 3:23 NASB].
>
> And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. [1Jo 4:21 NASB].

The Apostle John wrote much in his epistles of the importance of loving our brothers in Christ. In 1John 2:7 and 2John 5, he said he is not writing a new command, but a command from the beginning. The beginning being when Christ gave the command to the disciples. In his epistles, John wrote if we do not love our brothers, we do not love God.

Our human nature tends to hate or be critical and we can become upset or cynical over other peoples' shortcomings. If we truly love God, if we have been regenerated by Him, His love will flow from us to our brothers. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). To bear with each others' burdens (Gal 6:2) is to bear with each others' shortcomings.

Christ would remind the disciples of this command again, in chapter 15, with the admonition there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for his friends and this is what He was about to do (15:12).

> **By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. [v35 NASB].**

To show love for each other, we look out for each other's good (1Co 10:24; Php 2:4). We bear with each other's shortcomings and forgive each other (Eph 4:2-3; Col 3:13). We are kind to each other (Eph 4:32; Rom 12:10). We help those who are weak in the faith (Rom 14:1; 15:1-2). Loving the brothers is the mark of being Christ's disciple.

The Apostle Paul wrote about love in 1Corinthians 13:4-8a.

1. Love is patient,
2. Love is kind and

3. Love is not jealous;
4. Love does not brag and is not arrogant,
5. Love does not act unbecomingly;
6. Love does not seek its own,
7. Love is not provoked,
8. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered,
9. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
10. Love bears all things,
11. Love believes all things,
12. Love hopes all things,
13. Love endures all things.
14. Love never fails.

This isn't a squishy love or a feel-good love where we validate our brothers be they right or wrong. This is upholding each other in the faith, even rebuking when necessary. Solomon wrote, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." [Pro 27:6a NASB, ESV]. David wrote, "Let a righteous man strike me, it is a kindness; let him rebuke me, it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it." [Psa 141:5 ESV].

Even Paul had to rebuke Peter, when he got off-track (Gal 2:11-21) and Paul told us, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." [Gal 6:1 ESV]. Paul's explanation for rebuking Peter was, "when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel." [Gal 2:14 ESV].

Love is two-fold: to bear burdens and to keep each other in the faith. The modern, squishy love where we smile and say kind things, even validating sinful lifestyles, is not the kind of love Christ was talking about. Love is not a feeling. Love is walking in truth.

> Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart. [1Pe 1:22 NASB].

> Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. [1Jo 3:18 NASB].

The point is, we love by looking out for each other, physically and spiritually. To keep each other pointed to the truth and our hope in Jesus Christ, is the greatest love we can show.

PETER WILL DENY CHRIST

It does not appear Peter was listening to the new commandment to love. He was still focused on the part where Jesus said you cannot follow.

If Jesus was leaving, Peter wanted to go with Him. Jesus said Peter could not follow Him now (v36). Though the disciples had been with Him daily for three years, He was about to complete His mission; to die for the sins of man. This He must do alone, for in this He would glorify the Father and the Father would glorify the Son (v31-32).

Jesus said Peter would follow later (v36). Spoken directly to Peter, but spoken to all the disciples. Christ said He would die alone, but the disciples would die later and rejoin Him. At this time, the prospect did not look so glorious, but Christ has risen from the dead and conquered death, so we can see this is a glorious hope indeed.

In chapter 21, Christ spoke to Peter again about how he would die and that it would not be something to look forward to (21:18-19). Church tradition says when Peter faced the prospect of hanging on a cross, he requested it be upside down as he did not feel worthy to die in the very same manor as His Lord.

When Jesus said he could not follow Him now, Peter said he was willing to die for Him. This was pride and self-confidence speaking. Our pride is a vain thing and it elevates our own abilities and our own strength in our minds. Peter saw himself as dedicated to the Lord; He saw himself as strong in the face of death. He did not see himself as he truly was: scared and cowardly.

Then Christ gave Peter the bad news; he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. This happened, just as Christ said (18:27). No amount of positive thinking could prevent the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy. Peter trusted in his own strength only to find he had none.

We, like Peter, have no strength in ourselves. This is one of the doctrines Christ taught His disciples during the Last Supper. We can only bear fruit for God if we abide in Christ.

> 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. [15:4 NASB].

Every strength we think we possess is truly a gift from God. For without the strength and character given us by God, we are truly wretched and weak. Solomon wrote, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." [Pro 28:1 ESV]. To flee is the true and natural character of sinful man. God gives His people a new nature; a nature where we can be strong in the face of evil.

> Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love. [1Co 16:13-14 NASB].

Many, in pride, cling to the words of the Apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." [Php 4:13 NASB, ESV]. This is one of the most abused verses in Scripture. Paul was talking about contentment; accepting whatever situation God has put us in. Most times, people claim this verse for their own purposes; as if it is a promise God will fulfill their hopes and dreams and it affirms their resolve to do great things. Our eyes should be on God's purposes, not our own.

> I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. [Job 42:2 NASB].

Peter denied Christ three times that evening. He was focused on himself, he was afraid and he failed.

IN CLOSING

Jesus told them they would seek Him, but not find Him. He gave them a new command to love each other. He said all men would know they were His disciples, if they love each other. This command extends to us.

The night was going to become very chaotic and distressing. They would be seeking to escape oppression and may become cynical, but the command was to love each other. This is the mark of a Christian, to love the brothers. Life is hard and we have our own problems; it is often difficult to think of others, but Jesus said the servant is not above the master. As Christ served the disciples while facing betrayal and death, we should remember to help each other while facing the hardships of life.

Peter claimed he would give his life for his Lord. Jesus told him he would deny Him three times. Whenever we depend upon our own strength, we will fail.

John 14:1-6 How To Find Your Place In Heaven

One disciple left the fellowship to betray Christ, another disciple will soon deny Him three times and all the rest will fall away and hide. Knowing this, Christ sat down with His disciples to teach them. He taught them doctrine, yet He began with words of comfort and hope. He assured them the dark times to come were leading to glorious everlasting times ahead.

Christ's teachings in these chapters are for us, too. Christ said so, in His prayer to the Father. We do well to come to these words often, to read, study and meditate upon them. There is much life in these teachings and they will keep our hearts focused upon Him and less distracted by the world.

> I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. [17:20 ESV].
>
> **Read John 14:1-6.**

DON'T LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED

> **Do not let your heart be troubled;**
>
> **believe in God, believe also in Me [v1 NASB].**

This is a command; not a suggestion. If we want to be obedient servants, do not pass this by. Oh think what a difference life would be if these were our controlling words: Never to worry; always confident in the Lord; always speaking His name, acknowledging His sovereignty in all things, always declaring our hope. This is what I want my life to look like.

The Apostle Paul told us not to worry about anything, but to bring everything to God in prayer with thanksgiving and he said the peace of God, which passes all understanding will guard our hearts and minds (Php 4:6-7). When we trust God with thankful hearts, we honor Him and His sovereign authority over our lives. When we worry, we betray this trust and fail to give the honor due to Christ.

God takes things out of our control so we will look to Him in trust. We must always remember, God is seated on His throne; there is nothing out of His control. He is not waiting for you to do the right thing or ask the right question for Him to fix things. No. Everything happens as He plans and designs; and He designed it all before the creation of the world. God is sitting on His throne and the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy." [Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8].

The Prophet Isaiah wrote God will keep in perfect peace the one who keeps his mind on Him because he trusts Him (Isa 26:3). According to the Apostle Paul and the Prophet Isaiah, the benefit of trusting God is peace. The more we keep our minds on Christ, the more we understand He is in control. He is the Lord Almighty, the I AM, who was and is and is to come; and the whole earth is filled with His glory (Num 14:21; Psa 72:19; Isa 6:3; Hab 2:14).

When we worry, we are striving to seize control of situations which are out of our control. We set ourselves up as gods as we look and act for our sovereignty. We are not trusting in God's sovereignty, His design nor His power. This is sin.

> And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. [Zec 14:9 NASB].

When we worry, we do not have our minds upon Christ. It may be we have plans and goals; it may be we wish for good health for ourselves, family or friends; it may be we lack resources to meet our needs; or it may be a host of other reasons, but it boils down to one thing: we do not have our minds on Christ. When we worry, our minds are upon ourselves, they are not set upon God. This is the sin of worry.

Jesus gave the command not to worry. Believe in Christ and believe He is preparing a place for us. Our minds should not be dwelling upon this world. Our constant desire should be our time with Him, both now and forever. If our minds are upon Christ, then our troubles and trials will make us more determined to trust Him. Focusing upon Christ is proof we are not in control and we don't need to be. There is no trouble on earth which compares with the glory we will experience for all time in Christ.

> For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [Rom 8:18 ESV].

To remedy our inclination to worry, a good Scripture passage to read and meditate upon is Romans 8:18-39. In this passage, we see a clear picture of the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in our lives as God works to accomplish His will for our benefit. He works all things for good, to conform us to the image of His Son and nothing will ever separate us from the love of God.

Jesus' command not to be troubled is based upon who He is; He is God. Do not trust your heart; our hearts are deceitful and wicked (Jer 17:9); we can easily fool ourselves to think our circumstances are more dire than they are, but no matter how severe they are, we must discipline our hearts. Don't be

troubled, because the one who holds us in His hand is the Lord God, Himself. It is one thing to intellectually believe He is God; it is another to trust Him. If we trust Him, we have no cause for worry.

> Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. [Heb 10:23 NASB, ESV].

A PLACE PREPARED

The disciples were distressed, fearing their imminent separation from Christ. But He assured them, this parting is going to work for their glorious reunion (v2-3). Where He is going there are many mansions and He was going to prepare a place for them. He assured the disciples He will come again and gather them, so they will always be with Him.

This is a promise to us. Christ is preparing a place for us who believe and follow Him. How exciting is this? Our faith in Christ is more than a mere hope of eternal life; it is the knowledge He is eager to be with us and is preparing a place for us. The thought of this should cause us to leave the cares of this world behind and keep our minds steadfast on being with Him.

How do we keep this hope alive? How do we reduce the stress and worry in our lives?

1) Be in the Word, abiding in Him and preparing to be with Him (15:1-6);

2) Take up our cross and follow Him, as He instructed (Mat 16:24-26); and

3) Accept the hardships of life with gladness, knowing this world is not our home (Rom 8:18).

> keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. [Col 3:1b-4 NASB].

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE

Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house and they know the way (v2-4). Pay attention: In the last chapter, verses 33 & 36, Jesus said where He is going they cannot come. Now here, just a few verses later, He told them they know the way.

Here is the key: answering Peter's question, He said to the disciples, "you will follow later" (13:36). He was speaking of the grave. We die to this life and we will follow Christ to the grave. But we know where He is and this is where we are going. We are going to the place He has prepared for us.

He had been teaching the disciples for three years, revealing the way to the Father. Over and over He told them He is one with the Father. When Jesus said they know the way, Thomas, speaking for the group, claimed they did not know where He was going nor did they know the way (v5).

Without the Holy Spirit giving us wisdom, we cannot understand the things of God. He does not open all things to us immediately. The disciples had been listening to Him for three years, yet they still lacked understanding. This is the same in our walk with Christ. We have to read the Word many times, dozens-upon-dozens of time. We never have complete understanding. This is why we need to continually be in the Word. God opens up the Word to us little-by-little, as we dig into Scripture. The more time we spend in the Word, the more we study and meditate upon it, the more He opens up truth to us. As Christ said, if we abide in Him, then we will know the truth (8:31-32). So, too, with the disciples, Jesus opened up truth, step-by-step.

Jesus made a claim their limited understanding could not comprehend; He shook them up. He told them they could not come (13:33), but would follow later (13:36) and then He told them they know the way (v4). He may have set this up in order to raise the question. In answer, Christ was going to make one of the most profound statements about Himself.

> **I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. [v6 NASB].**

When we get distracted by the cares and problems of this world and we wonder where God is in all this, remember Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Our only hope of fellowship with the Father is through His Son, Jesus Christ (1Jo 1:5-9).

SIDENOTE: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" is one of the seven "I AM" statements by Christ in the Gospel of John. See also 6:48; 8:12; 10:9; 10:11; 11:25; 15:1.

JESUS IS THE WAY: He did not come to show the way; He IS the way. He was not merely a good teacher; He IS the Son of God. The Apostle John wrote He came to make the Father known (1:18) and here Jesus said He is the way to the Father.

> Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom

> also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. [Rom 5:1-2 NASB].
>
> For through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father." [Eph 2:18 ESV].

He is the ONLY way.

> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. [Act 4:12 ESV].

The writer of the Book of Hebrews described how we no longer come to God by way of the priests and ceremonies because Christ tore down the wall which divided or separated us from God. When He died on the cross, He tore the curtain of the temple separating the Holy of Holies, from top to bottom (Mat 27:51). Top to bottom, because God tore the curtain. This act signified the way to God was now open to man through Jesus Christ.

> Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. [Heb 10:19-22 NASB].

Christ alone is the way to the Father; by Him, we have direct access to the Father. No longer do we need a priest to be our mediator because Christ is in heaven making intercession for us.

> Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. [Heb 7:25 NASB].

He is the narrow way; Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father.

> Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. [Mat 7:13-14 NASB].

Many look for easy ways to God, they choose a "faith in Christ" based upon a view of God they feel comfortable with, rather than what the Word of God says. They convince themselves they are sincere. They go to church

and maybe even go to Bible studies and fellowship meetings. They make associations with believers. They think by their attendance and friendships they are following Christ; they feel like they have a relationship with Christ, but they do not follow Christ according to the Word. They profess to be Christian, but they are not in the Word and have little idea what the Bible says. This is the wide gate and the way to death.

Remember in Matthew 7:20-21 Christ warned many will believe they are saved, but are not. They made a decision for Christ, they go to church, they do "Christian" things, even doing great things for God, but they are hopelessly lost because they trust in what they do. They detest religion, not realizing trusting Christ for the work of salvation, repenting of their former life and walking in obedience to Him is religion in its purest form.

This is why Jesus warned us to enter by the narrow gate because He, alone, is the way. If we are saved, we will abide in Him (15:1-6), we will desire His Word like we desire food and drink (6:53-58) and we will take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luk 9:23). All this is of God if we are saved, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-10).

If we do these works to be saved, we are lost. But if we are saved, these works will be fulfilled in our lives through the work of Christ. Do not trust in what you do to be saved.

> There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. [Pro 14:12 NASB].

JESUS IS THE TRUTH: He is the personification of truth. His name is the Word of God (1:1; Rev 19:13). The Word of God is always true (17:17).

> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. [1:14 NASB].

Christ was with the Father; He is one with the Father. Christ came to make the Father known. He came to give understanding of the truth so we may know Him.

> grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known. [1:17-18 ESV].

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [1Jo 5:20 NASB].

The truth Christ gives sets us free.

> If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. [8:31b-32 NASB].

1. There is no truth, but God.
2. Our key to finding truth is to abide in Christ; which is to be in prayer and in the Word.

Many professing Christians believe they can find some truth in the world and they want to add the world's truth to God's truth. They do this because they believe it will make them successful in the world and acceptable by the world, but Christ said if the light within you is darkness, how great is the darkness and He said you cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:22-24).

The world thinks the wisdom of God is foolishness and God thinks likewise of the wisdom of man. The Apostle Paul makes clear God's wisdom does not even mix with the world's wisdom. You cannot syncretize the Word and the world. The whole purpose of worldly wisdom, psychology and positive motivation is to be a substitute for God. Self help is designed to replace God's help.

> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?. . . For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. . . Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. . . The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. . . Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. [1Co 1:18,20,25; 2:12,14; 3:18-19 NASB].

Therefore, if you want to be wise in this world, you cannot know the truth. If you do not know the truth, you cannot be saved.

JESUS IS THE LIFE: When Jesus was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die." [11:25-26 NASB]. Christ could rightly claim to be the resurrection and the life because He is the Author of life.

> the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. [Act 3:15b ESV].

> All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. [1:3 ESV].

> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. [Col 1:16 NASB].

In the act of creation, Christ brought life to the world, but mans' sin brought darkness and death. Christ died to pay the price for sin. In the act of His death and resurrection, He conquered death and brought life to those who were enslaved to sin.

> our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. [2Ti 1:10b NASB].

> When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions. [Col 2:13 NASB].

By dying He vanquished death. By rising from the dead, He brought life to those who were enslaved to sin. The Author of life brought life to those bound by death. Like Job, we can say, "I know my Redeemer lives." [Job 19:25]. Because Christ lives, we are called to leave the way of sin and death and walk in newness of life. To have life, we must turn from sin.

> How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. [Rom 6:2b-4 NASB].

> He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. [1Pe 2:24 NASB].

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, the life. He came to gives us a place in Heaven; a place with the Father. This is life and we cannot get there without Him; we cannot get there if we are following the world. Only through Jesus Christ can we find our place in Heaven. He is Life.

IN CLOSING

Jesus prepared the hearts of the disciples for His departure. He commanded them not to worry. He told them to keep their eyes on the main thing: to believe in God and believe He is God.

He told them He is preparing a place for them. He told them they know where He is going and how to get there, almost as if to beg the question, "how can we know the way?" Jesus' answer was the core of who He is and why He came: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." [v6 NASB].

Jesus is the way. He did not come to show the way; He is the way.

> And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. [Act 4:12 ESV].

Jesus is the truth. There is no truth apart from God. Christ came to make the Father known; to give understanding of the truth so we may know Him.

> If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. [8:31b-32 ESV].

Jesus is the life. In the act of creation, He brought life to the world. But man brought sin and sin brought death. In the act of His resurrection. He brought life to men who were slaves to sin and death. Those who follow Him will live forever with Him.

> I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. [11:25-26 ESV].

Christ, alone, is the way to Heaven; the way to the Father. Cling to Him. If we cling to the world or cling to our works, we cannot follow the Way, the Truth, the Life.

John 14:7-15 How To Discern The Works Of God

This night, Jesus began His teaching by explaining to the disciples how to have fellowship with the Father:

1. do not let your heart be troubled; keep your eyes on God; and
2. Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, the life.

There is no way to the Father, there is no truth, there is no eternal life, except through Christ. To believe in God and to believe Jesus is the Way, Truth and Life are the fundamentals of the faith. Now, He will tell His disciples how to know He is God and when a man's works are of God.

Read John 14:7-15.

BELIEVE THE WORKS

> **If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. [v7a NASB].**

Primary. Point. Jesus kept bringing this up: He is one with the Father. He said this often in public, but it seems the disciples needed to hear this again. Although Christ did amazing things and taught with great wisdom, the disciples needed to be reminded He was more than a man. He is God and He was their only link to eternal life: the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Christ came to make the Father known. He was sent from the Father. He is the one man who is equal with the Father. He is God come to dwell with man. He is the Messiah, the Promised One. Believe.

Reinforcing this idea that He is God, Jesus said, "from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." [v7b NASB]. The image here is not a picture or photograph. Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth as a man, while God the Father is a spirit. Jesus told His disciples He did what He saw the Father doing; He spoke what He heard from the Father (v10; 5:19; 12:49). The Father and the Son are one (10:30). They do the same things; they speak the same things. There is no difference between them; not even a slight variation of opinion. The writer of Hebrews said Christ is the exact representation or imprint of God's being or nature (Heb 1:3).

Philip did not understand: he was looking for the Father's physical presence in the physical realm. This prompted his request for Christ to show them the Father (v8). Christ's response was to rebuke Philip for not paying attention. For three years, Christ taught the disciples; He demonstrated His authority and revealed the Father to them in word and deed (v9).

> **Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? [v10a NASB].**

Many people want to deny Christ is God. They want to say He was a good man or even an extraordinary man. They want to contain Him in His manhood, as if He was mortal, like us.

The disciples wrestled with the claims of Christ to be God; they believed, but had doubts, for they knew Him as a man; as an extraordinary man. He was sinless; He was powerful in word and deed. They were convinced by the miracles, His wisdom and His sinless walk, however, they did have doubts because they thought He was going to set up His kingdom, but now He said He was going to die. So, to relieve their doubts, Christ brought Philip and the disciples back to the evidences:

1. The words He spoke were not His own, but the Father performed His works in Him (v10); and
2. He admonished them to believe because of the works (v11).

God's word and His works are not separated. When He created, He spoke His word and the works were done. Christ performed healings with the spoken word and He had recently raised a man from death. Here Christ said, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." [v10b NASB]. What God says and what He does are the same.

In His rebuke to Philip, Christ repeated the claim He made to the Jewish leaders after He healed the man crippled for 38 years. He told them He only did what He saw the Father doing (5:19). The disciples were there, saw the miracle and heard what Christ said.

> the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. [5:36b NASB].

When confronted by Jews who were going to stone Him for blasphemy, He told them the same thing: If you cannot believe, at least believe the works were from God. The disciples were there, saw the miracle and heard what Christ said.

> 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, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father. [10:37-38 NASB].

The works of Christ were no ordinary works. He performed many miracles of healing, including giving sight to a man born blind and raising Lazarus from the dead. If Christ had not come from God, He could not have done

these works. As Nicodemus confessed, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." [3:2 ESV].

Now He challenged Philip and the disciples to understand the past three years of teaching; the words and works, came from the Father. This is what He meant when He said I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. This is what He meant when He said if you have known Me, you have known the Father also.

> He is the image of the invisible God. . .For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. [Col 1:15,19 ESV].

The words of Christ and the works He did, are proof He came from the Father; they are proof He is God. Jesus was much more than a good teacher and all men will be judged by His words.

> 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. [12:48 NASB].

DO THE WORKS

Once again, He said "Truly, truly" (some translations "Most solemnly," "Verily, verily" and such). According to the New Testament Commentary by Hendriksen, this "expresses a conclusion to what has preceded." [WH vol 1, pg 110-111]. Some commentaries say this expression denotes an important point which needs to be attended to. In any case, these words mark out something important, to which we need to pay attention.

Jesus said those who believe in Him will do greater works than He did (v12). This is important (truly, truly), but this is most often taken out of context. There are two points we need to take into consideration:

1. What are the works Christ did? and
2. What are these greater works the believer will do?

People read these words and immediately they think Christ is speaking of miracles. In context, this is only partially true, for incorporated in the "works" are the words He spoke and the things He did. Remember: the words of God and the works of God are the same (v10).

Christ spoke the words from the Father and few believed. Peter spoke at Pentecost and 2,000 believed in Christ and were baptized. The words are very much part of these works Christ was talking about. This is an example of "the greater things he will do."

What is more important? The message of the Gospel or the power of miracles? Christ's miracles were evidence He had come from God. The manifestation of physical miracles was designed for the early Christian church to demonstrate the power of the Gospel; to give authenticity to the preaching; to give evidence their authority came from God.

After the time of the apostles, the Word of God in the New Testament was firmly established. We now have the complete Bible to attest to the authority of what we speak. The use of miracles and prophecies as standard faire are no longer necessary to communicate the Gospel.

> For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. [1Co 13:9-10 NASB].

Does God use miracles today? Certainly He does. Nonetheless, the purpose and time of "wholesale miracles," if you will, has passed. When we see preachers and televangelists promoting their power to heal, we know this is not from God. They do not do this for the glory of God. They may say this is for God's glory, but they do this for their own glory, money and airplanes. This is a blasphemous evil and it is not God's work.

So, when Jesus said the believer will do greater works, what did He mean? In view of the rebellious and hardened heart of man, the salvation of souls through the preaching of the Word must be considered the greatest of miracles. Therefore, people turning to Christ, even the possibility of the Gentiles coming to faith through the preaching of His Word, is the "greater works" Christ was speaking of.

The Hendriksen commentary suggests Christ was speaking of miracles in the spiritual realm. Christ was "in all probability thinking of those in connection with the conversion of the Gentiles." This conclusion is reached because He had referred to this when Philip and Andrew introduced Christ to the Greek men who wanted to meet Him (12:20-32) and later the night of this teaching where He prayed for all who would be saved through the word of the apostles (17:20). Until the Holy Spirit was poured out (Act 10:44-45), there was a wall of separation between the Jew and the Gentile so that, with few exceptions, the Gentile could not come to God. To proclaim this Gospel to the whole world is the greater works the believer do. (WH vol 2, pg273).

When Christ said the believer will do greater works, He was not speaking of works to our credit. He was not suggesting we would or could do great works for God. One sows and another reaps and this is for God's glory; so that we may rejoice together. This is what Jesus told the disciples after He spoke to the woman at the well. The disciples had done nothing to reap a

harvest, but He brought them into sharing in the harvest, as they spoke to the people of the town the next couple days and many believed.

> Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor. [4:35b-38 ESV].

All our works, are the work of God. We seek no credit for them.

> Since You have also performed for us all our works. [Isa 26:12b NASB].

We speak the Word (Mat 28:18-20) and the Holy Spirit changes hearts (3:8). This is the greater works.

ASK IN MY NAME

- "Whatever you ask in My name. . ." [v13].
- "If you ask Me anything in My name. . ." [v14].

When Christ said things twice, it was to emphasize the importance of it. Here, He told the disciples, and this instruction is for us, whatever we ask the Father in Christ's name, He will do it.

Many people use these verses and others like them to claim wealth, careers, fame, power and such. They wrongly believe God is interested in their personal prosperity and comfort. Jesus said the reason He will do what we ask is so "the Father may be glorified in the Son." [v13]. To this, many people wrongly believe their self-centered living somehow glorifies God.

Take a look at these two verses in context. They are sandwiched between two thoughts. The first thought is those who believe will do the works of Christ and even greater (v12). The second thought is if we believe, we will keep His commandments (v15). The sandwich is this: one slice of bread is our desire to spread the Gospel of Christ; and the other slice is our desire to obey the Lord, who is master of our life. The peanut butter and jam are whatever we ask in His name, He will do so that the Father will be glorified in the Son. Looking at this sandwich, what is it we would ask in Jesus' name and He would give it?

The Apostle James said our prayers go unanswered because we ask to satisfy our own coveting and lust; asking for selfish interests for our own glory (Jam 4:1-4). Is God glorified by our accumulation of worldly goods,

money, power or fame? By no means! The passage in the Book of James tells us if we be friends with the world we are enemies of God.

The work of God is the salvation of souls. Christ said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." [6:29 NASB, ESV].

Some professing Christians look for the power to do miracles and other such works because they want to be in the limelight and they seek their own glory. This was the sin of Simon the magician. When he heard the Gospel and saw the miracles performed by Philip, he believed, but he wanted the power to do great miracles and it turned out his believing was not a faith unto salvation (Act 8:9-24).

Jesus said the purpose for giving us what we asked for was for the Father to be glorified in the Son (v13). This is why He said a couple verses later, "If you love me, you will keep My commandments." [v15]. If we love God, we will not pursue our own glory; we will pursue His glory by keeping His commands. We are not saved by our works, but if we are truly saved, our works will reflect obedience to Him. This is something to pray for and He will give it.

The work of God is not money, possessions, power or fame. It is the salvation of souls and the sanctification of His people. These are things to pray for and expect to receive. If the works are of God, they give glory to God. Pray for this.

IN CLOSING

Jesus explained to Philip and the disciples, the works He did were proof He came from the Father; He revealed the Father to man through His words and works.

Jesus promised whoever believes in Him will do greater works than He did. This is not a promise of power, fame and fortune for the believer. This is power to preach the Word and watch as God brings people to repent and follow Him. If the works are of God, they give glory to God.

Receiving what we ask in prayer is sandwiched between 1) doing the works Jesus did, teaching and preaching to reach souls for Christ (v12); and 2) obeying His commandments (v15). If we are doing these two things, our prayers will be for God's kingdom and our walk with Him.

To discern the works of God:

1. Be in the Word and believe the Word.
2. Do the Word and spread the Gospel.

3. Ask in Christ's name for God's help in your walk with Christ.
4. Love God and keep His commandments.

John 14:15-21 If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments

In this chapter, Jesus explained what a saved person looks like. In this passage, He will explain how to know when we have come to God. This passage bookends with the statements,

- if you love Me you will keep My commands (v15) and
- he who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me (v21).

Read John 14:15-21.

TO BELIEVE IS TO OBEY

John the Baptist equated believing with obedience (3:36). Hebrews 3:18-19 says those who are disobedient do not believe and cannot be saved. If we truly believe in Christ, if we truly love Him, we will obey Him. This is what Jesus said in verse 15.

> **If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. [v15 NASB, ESV].**

Many professing Christians claim to love God, they feel like they love God, but they live to please themselves. They live in sin and walk in darkness. They believe they can be worldly and love God at the same time. They claim, "God knows my heart." They deceive themselves to believe they can live carnal while following Christ.

The idea of a carnal Christian is an oxymoron and the Bible never even tips its hat to this, but somehow this concept crept into the modern American gospel. But, a true believer is obedient; they cannot live a carnal or worldly life, which is to live in rebellion to God (Jam 4:4).

> the carnal mind is enmity against God. [Rom 8:7a KJV].
>
> What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it. [Rom 6:1-2 ESV].
>
> What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law, but under grace? By no means! Do you not know . . .you are slaves of the one whom you obey. . . [Rom 6:15-16 ESV].

Jesus said the people love darkness because their deeds are evil (3:19). The Apostle John told us we cannot have fellowship with God if we walk in darkness (1Jo 1:6-7).

> God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. [1Jo 1:5b NASB].

Some professing Christians live what appears to be a moral life and they think they love God. They do good works to win the praise of man or they do good works to earn their salvation or they think their good works contribute to their salvation. These people do good works of their own energy or effort, but they are not saved.

We cannot be saved by any work we do (Eph 2:8-9). Jesus told us He is the vine and we are the branches. We must abide in Him to produce fruit. If we abide in Him, He produces good fruit in us (15:4-5). This is what it means to love God and keep His commandments: if we truly love God, He will produce this work in us and we will keep His commandments. It is not the result of our effort, lest any man should boast.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In most major translations or versions, verse 16 begins with "And." This "and" connects the obedient (v15) with the promise of the Holy Spirit (v16). If we follow Christ, the promised Holy Spirit lives in us. This is important:

- First, we are commanded to obey; and
- Second, we do not have the power to obey with our own efforts.

This is why Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit; this is how or through whom Christ manifests His good works in us (15:4-5).

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will be with us forever (v16). This affirms the theology that when we are saved, we have eternal life. It is not something we gain later: we have it. The Holy Spirit is our seal of promise that we belong to God.

> In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. [Eph 1:13-14 NASB].

This idea of the Holy Spirit being with us forever also shakes off the false theology that we can be carnal and still be saved. For He cannot live in those who walk in darkness (v17; cf 1Jo 1:5-6). The Christian is warned not to wander from the faith, grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit, but those who leave the faith were never saved at all.

> Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [Eph 4:30 NASB].
>
> Do not quench the Spirit. [1Th 5:19 NASB, ESV].
>
> They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. [1Jo 2:19 NASB].

Jesus said, "you know Him because He abides with you." [v17]. Abiding is a reciprocal act: when Jesus referred to us abiding in Him, He reciprocated with Him abiding in us. For example, 6:56 says, "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." [NASB]. And 15:4 says, "Abide in me, and I in you." How do we know the Holy Spirit abides in us? We abide in the Word.

Jesus was leaving this world. His mission was soon to be complete. He promised not to leave His disciples as orphans. This Helper or Advocate (v16) is the Spirit of Truth (v17). The Helper, the Holy Spirit, is God, just as the Father and the Son are God. Christ was leaving, but God was not going to leave His chosen ones alone.

In His promise of the Holy Spirit, Christ revealed the full Trinity of the Godhead to the disciples. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

1) The Holy Spirit is given by the Father at the request of the Son (14:16);
2) The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father in the Son's name (14:26);
3) The Holy Spirit is sent by the Son from the Father (15:26).

Once again, speaking to election, Jesus said the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit (v17). This means the unbeliever cannot choose Christ of his own freewill. Only those whom God regenerates can see Him or know Him. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." [10:27]. The world cannot hear His voice, so they cannot see or know the Holy Spirit.

Who is the world, in verse 17? The world is every person who follows Satan's lies; everyone who is not a follower of Christ.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Truth (v17). Jesus said if we abide in His Word, we will know the truth (8:31-32). The Spirit guides us in the Word (16:13). The world cannot know the truth because the Holy Spirit will not reveal truth to them. If a carnal man were to spend time in the Word, he may read the words, but he cannot come to a full understanding.

> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [1Co 2:14 ESV].

> the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel. [2Co 4:4 ESV].

The Holy Spirit is truth. He reveals this truth to those who are His.

> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. [1Co 2:12-13 ESV].

Christ told the disciples they knew the Holy Spirit because He dwelt WITH them, but in the future He will dwell IN them (v17). The purpose of this distinction was the Holy Spirit did not come to dwell in man until after Christ ascended into heaven. This was recorded among the Jews in the second chapter of Acts, when the Holy Spirit came as tongues of fire upon those who followed Christ. In the tenth chapter of Acts, there is recorded the filling of the Gentiles with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inaugurated ceremonially or in official form, but after these events took place, the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers upon regeneration.

> In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. [Eph 1:13-14 NASB].

> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. [Tit 3:5-7 NASB].

The Holy Spirit is at work in all true believers. He guides us into all truth (16:13). His work in us produces fruit in our lives (15:4-5; Gal 5:22-23). Here are some more things we know from the Scriptures about the Holy Spirit.

1) The Spirit gives life; the flesh is no help at all (6:63).
2) It is a mortal sin to try to deceive the Holy Spirit (Act 5:9-10).
3) If you do not have the Spirit of Christ you do not belong to Him (Rom 8:9).
4) The Holy Spirit is God's seal upon us; the guarantee of our hope (2Co 1:22).
5) Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2Co 3:17).
6) God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, because we are sons (Gal 4:6).
7) The Holy Spirit helps us (Php 1:19).
8) Do not quench the Spirit (1Th 5:19).

Jesus promised to those who believe and obey, He will send His Holy Spirit. He sends His Spirit so that we will believe and open. He is our seal, guaranteeing our inheritance.

BELIEVERS ARE NOT ORPHANS

I will not leave you as orphans. [v18a NASB, ESV].

This is an amazing thought: The Creator of the world, who condescended Himself to dwell among men and die for those who are His, now dwells within His creation to keep those who are His. He is not willing to leave us alone. We are not orphans, but we are children of God (1:12-13); we are adopted as sons into God's family (Rom 8:14-17; Eph 1:4-6) and no one can snatch us out of His hand (10:28-29).

> He left us and yet we are not left orphans. He is our comfort and He is gone, but we are not comfortless. Our comfort is that He will come to us and this is consolation enough to sustain us through His prolonged absence. Jesus is already on His way; He says, "I come quickly." [Charles Spurgeon].

After Christ was crucified, the world would see Him no more (v19). Who is the "world" in this instance? This world is same world in verse 17: anyone and everyone who is not among the believers; those who do not follow and obey Christ. The world knows of Christ and the reaction to Him varies. Some believe He was a good man, a good teacher; some even believe He was the Son of God. Some deny He existed, His life was a tale; some say He was a fraud. Atheists are determined to prove He did not exist or does

not exist as God. The world cannot see Him and they will not see Him, except at the Judgment. Until then, they stumble in the darkness.

The disciples, however, would see Him again after the resurrection. They would seem Him again in eternity. Christ promised, "because I live, you also will live." [v19b]. This was His promise He would rise from the dead. This resurrection by Christ not only proved He is God, but it is also a promise to us, we will rise again and live with Him forever. Not only do we have a future hope, but we see Him in our daily walk. We commit our lives to Him and we watch Him work out His plan in our lives. He has not left us as orphans.

YOU WILL KNOW I AM IN THE FATHER

Jesus said there will be a day we will know He is in the Father and the Father is in Him and we are in Christ (v20). "In that day." What day is this? When Christ appeared after His resurrection; this is one day. When we all appear before Him in glory; this is another day.

On this day, we will know, firsthand, He is in the Father and we are in Him. We will see this; we will experience this. Until then, we know if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with God and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1Jo 1:7).

Knowing we are in Christ is a two-fold promise:

1. this is our promise of fellowship with God, and
2. this is our promise of eternal life with God.

Christ is in the Father. Jesus told the disciples if they have seen Him, they have seen the Father (v9). If we have known Christ, we have known the Father also (v7). He was not talking about physical characteristics; He was describing God's union. Christ and the Father have perfect fellowship and they have an eternal union. If we are in Christ, we will have this fellowship; fellowship now and perfect fellowship in eternity.

> **He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him. [v21 NASB].**

If we love Christ, we will keep His commandments (v15,21).

- The Holy Spirit will live in us.
- We will not be orphans.

- We will know Christ is in the Father and we will have fellowship with Him.

Christ gave a promise: those who love Him, those who obey Him will be loved by the Father. If Christ is in the Father and we are in Christ, then it follows whomever loves Him will be loved by the Father. This is the picture of fellowship with God.

IN CLOSING

How do we have fellowship with God? Jesus said, if we love Him, we will obey Him. To those who obey, He promised we will be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father.

Christ sends His Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth.

Christ promised not to leave us as orphans.

When Christ returns for us, our fellowship will be complete. Until then, it will be impossible to live a carnal life, if this is our hope. If our hope is to have fellowship with God, we will love Him and obey Him. Those who truly believe will seek this fellowship with God; they will not seek another master (Mat 6:24).

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. [v15].

John 14:21-31 The Fellowship Of God With The Believers

If we love Christ, we will keep His commandments (v15). We will seek to please Him; we will not seek to please ourselves. If we keep His commandments, we love Him and we will be loved by the Son and the Father (v21).

> if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:7 NASB].
>
> **Read John 14:21-31.**

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

In these verses, Christ promised fellowship with God to those who keep His commandments (v21). If we love God, if we are truly seeking His fellowship, we will live obedient lives. Christ promised He will manifest Himself to us, that is, He will make Himself known. This should be our prayer, to know Jesus and desire fellowship with God.

> let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. [Exo 33:13b NASB].

Jesus began the promise of being loved by the Father, by identifying the people of this promise as those who have His commandments and keep them (v21). Therefore, to be saved, we must be a follower of Christ; one who is obedient to His commands. This is not of our own effort, but this is God's work in us.

> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. [1Jo 2:3-5 NASB].

Getting saved is not an event of "accepting Jesus into your heart" or "saying the sinner's prayer" as preached by the modern American gospel. Being saved is to be born again. If we are born again, our hearts are regenerated so that we turn from sin and walk in obedience to what Christ has told us in His Word. This is the work of God, not of man (6:29). So repentance and walking in obedience is not a matter of works on our part; it is the work of the grace of God in our lives. Lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

> But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." [1Co 1:30-31 NASB].

The Apostle John wrote we love God because He first loved us (1Jo 4:19). God loved the believer first, before he believed, and regenerated his heart. The regenerated heart understood the Word and obeyed; showing love for Christ. The Father loves the regenerated heart and so does the Son and He will disclose Himself to bring him into fellowship.

MISTAKEN THEOLOGY

Judas (not the betrayer) asked Christ why or what happened that He would manifest Himself to the disciples and not to the world (v22). To the disciples, it seems their hope of Christ setting up His kingdom in Jerusalem was not going as planned. Here they were in Jerusalem, the Jews sought to kill Him, yet the disciples continued to believe the earthly reign of Christ was at hand, but now Jesus told them He is going to show Himself to them and not to the world. The reaction of Judas was essentially, "why are You changing plans at such a critical time?"

Christ did not spend any time addressing their mistaken theology, at least not as recorded in Scripture. As usual, Christ got to the issue of their greatest need: fellowship with God. Jesus' answer was to repeat what He just said; those who love Him will keep His Word and will be loved by the Father. "We will come to him and make Our home with him." [v23 ESV]. This is very important because Jesus said this twice in a very short span (verses 21 and 23).

1. Those who love Christ will obey His Word;
2. Those who love Christ and obey, will be loved by the Father;
3. The Father and the Son will have fellowship with the believer.

The disciples thought the most important outcome of this trip to Jerusalem was for Christ to set up His earthly reign. Jesus said the most important outcome of this trip to Jerusalem was so that those who believed could have fellowship with God.

SOUND THEOLOGY OF LOVE

Christ will reveal Himself and the Father to those who love Him and keep His commandments. This means, if we love God, we will obey Him and if we obey Him, we will have fellowship with Him. The Father and the Son will make their home with us; the Father will send the Holy Spirit to help

us and teach us. He is in us and will lead us into all truth (v23,26; cf 1Jo 1:5-9).

If we truly love Christ, we will be obedient, just as Christ was obedient to the Father. Our lives will glorify the Father, just as His life glorified the Father. Conversely, those who do not love Christ will not keep His Word (v24). This is a restatement of what He said when He told the disciples He would send the Holy Spirit: He said the world cannot receive Him (v17). In chapter 10 we learned His sheep hear His voice and follow Him, but the world cannot believe because they are not His sheep (10:26-27). The natural man is in rebellion to God and cannot obey Him.

Three times in this chapter, Christ said if we love Him we will keep His commandments (15,21,23). Many professing Christians proclaim their love for God, but they do not keep His commandments. They even encourage others in their sin, claiming God loves them and He understands them. They have made a god in their own image.

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. . .and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. [Rom 1:18,32 NASB].

This is the seriousness of keeping His words: The words Christ spoke were the words of the Father (v10,24,31). He did not speak on His own as a mere man. He spoke on the highest authority of God the Father who sent Him. Therefore, if these words are the commands of God, then those who cannot keep them are doomed.

In the first chapter, John wrote Christ came to make the Father known (1:18). The words He spoke made the Father known because they were the words of the Father. Those who love Him will hear His voice, but those who do not love Him cannot keep His words, the very words of God.

> He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God. [8:47 NASB].

To have fellowship with God, be in the Word and be doers of the Word. We know we love Christ, if we keep His Word. If you do not obey Christ, you do not love Him. It does not matter that you feel like you love Him with all your heart. If you are living in sin or toying with sin, you do not love the Lord and you are not saved.

THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL TEACH

Christ has spoken to us (v25); He is the Word (1:1). While He was in the world, He spoke the Word and made the Father known. When He left this Earth, the Father sent the Spirit to remind the disciples what the Son had taught them (v26). They recorded these words in the New Testament, so we have them to read and study. If we diligently study the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will teach us and He will bring the words to our remembrance.

> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [1Co 2:13-14 ESV].

What the Apostle Paul wrote is similar to what Jesus told disciples: the world cannot believe because they cannot hear His voice. Paul also made the point the epistles were based on revelation given by the Holy Spirit.

In the early church, it was necessary to have the Holy Spirit bring revelation to the apostles because the Scriptures were not complete. Today, the Scriptures are complete; there is no need for new revelation. Many professing Christian teachers claim the Holy Spirit gave them new revelations, but these revelations are false gospels, because those who claim to have "new" revelation always contradict Scripture. However, the Holy Spirit will never contradict the Word.

When Jesus said the Holy Spirit will teach us, the meaning is the Holy Spirit will open up the Word, giving us spiritual discernment, but we must be in the Word to receive this. Jesus taught the disciples, in person (v25). He teaches us if we diligently study His Word (15:4). He helps us remember His Word. The Holy Spirit will help us by bringing His Word to our remembrance. This is our fellowship with God.

CHRIST LOVES THE FATHER

Christ began this conversation with the admonition not to be troubled. In verse 27, He repeated this command and said He gives us His peace; greater than the world's peace, so do not be troubled. The Apostle Paul wrote if we bring our troubles to Christ with thanksgiving, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts (Php 4:6-7). God is in control: Let us bring our fears to Him. This is our fellowship with God.

Then Christ told the disciples again He was going away. If they understood the time, they would rejoice, but this would be a trying time because Satan

was on his way. He told them beforehand, so when this happens, they will believe (v28-30).

Once again, He said He did exactly as the Father commanded Him. This time, He said, "so the world may know I love the Father." [v31]. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." [Heb 5:8 NASB]. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief. . .He will see it and be satisfied." [Isa 53:10a,11b]. The Apostle Paul said Christ made Himself, in form, as less than God and suffered death on the cross. For this reason the Father has highly exalted Him and at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow (Php 2:6-11). When Christ "did exactly as the Father commanded," He fulfilled the eternal covenant, declaring His love for the Father and the Father declaring His love for the Son.

> Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! [Psa 2:12 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Three times Christ told the disciples if they love Him, they will keep His commands. He gave Himself as example: He obeyed the Father so all may know He loved the Father. Our love for Christ is displayed to the world by our obedience to Him.

Christ promised fellowship between Himself and His believers. He said as He is in the Father and the Father is in the Son, we will be in Him (v20). The size and scope of this fellowship is beyond our imagination. However, it is not something which is only a future hope, we are given His promise for this life, for He has not left us orphaned (v18). Let not your heart be troubled (v1,27).

As Christ declared His love for the Father by obedience, we declare our love for Him by keeping His commands (v15,23).

> if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:7 NASB].

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit who will lead us into truth; He opens the Scriptures to us; He leads is into fellowship with God. God wants those He loves to have fellowship with Him (v23). This chapter (John 14) is a prescription for fellowship with God:

1. Have no worries, but have complete dependence upon God.

2. If we love Christ, we will obey Him and be loved by the Father.
3. Christ will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit, who will lead us into all truth.
4. Do not let your hearts be trouble or afraid.

   The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock. [Isa 26:3-4 NASB].

John 14:1-31 Chapter Recap And Why Christ Told Them

This chapter begins and ends with the command to not let our hearts be troubled. Christ is the only way to the Father and He will send us His Holy Spirit, who will teach us His ways. So, keep your eyes on Him.

Read John 14:1-31.

THE BOOKENDS OF THIS CHAPTER

> **Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. [v1-3 NASB].**
>
> **Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. You 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. [v27-28 NASB]**

In this set of bookends, Christ admonished the disciples to believe and not worry because they have the assurance He will come again. By extension (17:20), this applies to us, also. In between the bookends, Christ explained:

1. He will come again (v3,18,28);
2. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life (v6);
3. He and the Father are one (v7,9-11,20);
4. If we love Him, we will obey Him (v15,21,23);
5. He will send the Holy Spirit (v16,26).

The bookends first showed up in the first three verses of this chapter: "Let not your hearts be troubled." In verses 27-28, Christ closed the bookends. He reassured the disciples of His peace, which He gives, far surpassing the world's peace (v27).

What is the peace the world gives? The world gives no peace, but people are seduced to believe they can find peace in money, wealth, fame and power. The world calls people to satisfy themselves; but there is no peace and there is no satisfaction.

The Apostle Paul said the peace of God surpasses all understanding and it guards our hearts and minds (Php 4:7). We can find comfort in knowing we can trust God; leaving everything in His control.

"Let not your heart be troubled" is a command. Jesus was going away and the disciples were feeling sorry for themselves. He said, "If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced." [v28]. What a rebuke! The disciples were thinking of themselves; they were not loving Jesus. If we love Christ our walk is not about how we feel; it is about glorifying the One in whom we have our hope.

Christ is with the Father making intercession for us and when He comes back, we will be with God forever. He is preparing a place for us (v2). Always keep this hope alive.

THE FATHER IS GREATER THAN I

Jesus told the disciples He was going to be with the Father, "for the Father is greater than I." [v28]. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: all three are God; one God, but three persons. Is one of them a lesser God? God forbid! Over and over, Christ told the disciples and the crowds, He and the Father are one. This seems to mean they are equal, so what is the meaning when He said "the Father is greater than I"?

> So the Father is God, the Son is God, and Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God. . . The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. . . And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another, but the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal. So that in all things, as said before, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped. [Athanasian Creed 15,16,21-23,25-27].

When Christ said the Father was greater, He was talking about His humanity, His earthly incarnation. Paul said He humbled Himself to become a man (Php 2:6-8). The Father is greater than Christ's earthly humanity, but Christ was returning to His former glory. Now, He is seated with the Father; sitting at His right hand; reigning in Heaven, equal to the Father.

> The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." [Psa 110:1 NASB].

So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. [Mar 16:19 NASB].

who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. [Rom 8:34 NASB].

He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. [Eph 1:20b NASB].

where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. [Col 3:1b NASB].

he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. [Heb 10:12b-13 ESV].

who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him. [1Pe 3:22 NASB].

WHY JESUS TOLD THEM THESE THINGS

In the last two chapters, Christ told the disciples He would be betrayed; He told them He was going to die; He told them He was going to be with the Father; and He told them He would send the Holy Spirit.

About His betrayal and death, He told them in the last chapter, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, so that when it does happen you may believe that I AM." [13:19]. About His going to the Father and sending the Holy Spirit, He said the same thing, in this chapter; this passage. So, He told them twice, He revealed these things to them so they would believe (v29; 13:19; cf 16:4).

Did the disciples believe at this moment? This is a good question because what we see here is a picture of a group of confused men feeling sorry for themselves. They had walked with the Messiah for three years, believing He was going to set up His kingdom on earth and rule from Jerusalem. They believed they were going to reign with Him. And now, He told them He was going to be betrayed and die. Jesus declared He told them these things, so that, when the events unfolded, they would believe (v29). In the coming days, they would witness and testify to the glory of God.

God has given us His Word. Everything in His Word comes true. God has made Himself known. He is a fool who claims not to believe (Psa 14:1).

SATAN HOLDS NO POWER OVER GOD'S PLANS

Jesus described Satan as the ruler of this world (v30). In another passage, Jesus said the ruler of this world will be cast out (12:31). This night was going to be a fearsome night. It would appear to the disciples Satan had unleashed his fury and would be in full control, but Christ reminded the disciples Satan had no claim on Him. Though Satan desired Christ's death, he had no power to bring it about. Jesus would do as the Father told Him. And, in fact, this night they would see the Son obedient unto death.

Satan was successful in causing one disciple to betray Christ; he also caused the remaining disciples to scatter; he caused great confusion and fear; and he stirred up the hearts of church rulers and the mob to crucify the Son of God. Nonetheless, he had no control over Christ nor the events leading to His death.

Many preachers falsely claim Christ died to ransom men from Satan. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here, Christ said the devil had no claim on Him (v30). And before this, He said Satan would be cast out (12:31). Here are some Biblical reasons why men were not ransomed from Satan.

- The devil could not call for Christ's death on any pretext of justice, for Christ was sinless; He obeyed the Law with perfection. Therefore, the devil had to work for Christ's death by deceit and through blinding the hearts of men, but even in this, Christ satisfied NO claim of Satan's.
- The devil could not call for a ransom for man, for although man is a slave to sin and Satan is the ruler of this world, it was God's wrath which had to be satisfied to redeem sinners. Only God had any claim calling for a ransom and the Son was willing to die to satisfy God's wrath against man.

Satan would work to bring about Jesus' death, but he had no control; he played into the hands of the One who is always in control. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. . . I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative" [10:11,17b-18a NASB]. Christ was in control and He voluntarily gave up His life to redeem sinners.

THE TIME HAD COME

All through the Gospel of John, mention is made of His time having not yet come, but in this conversation, Christ let the disciples know, the time had come. Everything is under God's control and everything is subject to His

timing. Even though the devil had come to murder Christ and he was successful in this endeavor, yet it was God's plan and purpose which was accomplished.

> Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. [12:31-32 NASB].

The Father demanded the death of His Son.

> Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush Him; He has put Him to grief. [Isa 53:10 ESV].

This is what the Father commanded: Christ, the sinless Son of God, would lay down His life to redeem a people chosen by the Father and given to His Son (2Co 5:21; Gal 4:4-5; Eph 1:4). And Christ said He was obedient "so the world may know I love the Father." [v31]. Christ died to show the world His love for the Father.

IN CLOSING

The bookends of chapter 14 are "Let not your hearts be troubled." Christ reassured the disciples of His peace; He gives this peace, but not as the world gives (v27) and He commanded them not to be troubled or afraid.

Christ told His disciples what to expect, so when the events came about they would believe. No matter how bad things were, Satan had no power because God is always in control.

God used the devil's nature of hatred and death to accomplish the goal of sacrificing His Son. What Satan intended for evil, God had planned for good and for His glory.

Christ never suggested we place our confidence in Him; He commanded us to believe in Him, so our hearts will not be troubled. This is a command which requires action.

John 15:1-6 Dwell In The Vine Or Burn Forever

Easy-believism or the modern American gospel claims if you say the sinner's prayer and sincerely mean it, you will be saved. You can change your mind tomorrow, but you can never lose this salvation; you are saved no matter how you live because, grace. For the "carnal Christian" this is known as fire insurance, but Jesus warned many who profess His name are not saved (Mat 7:21-23). The modern American gospel is patting people on the back on their way to Hell.

Christ presented a different path to salvation; the narrow path.

The Prophet Isaiah told the story of God's vineyard; a picture of the nation of Israel, which was God's chosen nation; a people set aside for Himself. They were called to honor Him, obey Him and be an example to the nations. Yet they chased after the false gods of the nations around them. They looked for acceptance and glory from their international peers.

This vineyard Isaiah described, did not produce good fruit and a touchy-feely gospel would say God would accept them anyway, just the way they were because God loves them, but the Bible tells us God's love is holy and His holiness demands justice. If His people were unwilling to glorify Him in their own land, He would send them off, in humility, shame and exile, to glorify Him in foreign lands.

> And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste. . .Therefore my people go into exile. . . Man is humbled, and each one is brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are brought low, but the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness. [Isa 5:5-16 ESV].

Seeking his own glory, mankind has created ten thousand gods. Man seeks a god who will satisfy him; he seeks a god who allows him be in control of his own salvation. In America, man seeks a god who will give him comfort and prosperity; a god who loves him and accepts him just as he is. Mans' religions are about mans' glory, but God calls all men to repent and this is for His glory (Act 17:30-31).

Like the false religions clung to by the chosen nation of Israel, the modern American gospel is leading the visible church away from God. This false gospel is convincing professing Christians they can serve God while winking at sin and following the false gods among their peers. The modern American gospel has created a god of its own imagination: a god who loves

people in their sin. America is full of pagan Christianity and preachers are patting people on the back, while on their way to Hell.

Read John 15:1-6.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Jesus began this portion of His teaching describing Himself as the true vine (v1). Professing Christians are the branches in the vine. I say "professing Christian" because not all who profess Christ are saved and, in verse 6, Jesus said some of these branches are going to Hell. We know those who are truly saved cannot lose their salvation, they cannot go to Hell, because Jesus said no one can snatch them out of His hand nor His Father's (10:28-29). So in this parable, the vine is filled with branches. These are those who profess to believe in Christ.

Jesus is the true vine, which is the root for the branches. He is life for the branches. The Father is the vinedresser; He is the one responsible to maintain the health of the vine. Like a gardener or vine grower, the Father maintains the health of the vine by removing the dead wood and pruning the productive wood so it will bear more fruit (v1-2).

The branches which do not bear fruit, the Father takes away (v2). What happens to the branches taken away? According to verse 6, they burn in the fire, that is, they suffer God's wrath in Hell. So just as every seed does not lead to life, in the parable of the sower (Mat 13; Mar 4; Luk 8), not every profession of faith leads to salvation.

It is clear, many who profess faith in Christ are not saved. Jesus said many will say, "Didn't we do this for you" or "Didn't we do that for you", but the Son of God will say, "Depart from Me; I never knew you" (Mat 7:21-23). Therefore, it is wise to heed the Apostle Paul's warning, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" [2Co 13:5a NASB]. Many who profess faith in Christ are not saved at all; they have entered through the wide gate (Mat 7:13-14).

The branches which bear fruit, the Father prunes (v2). Pruning is a description of the Lord's discipline. When we submit to God's discipline in our lives, we will bear more fruit.

> All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. [Heb 12:11 NASB].

People like the verse, "All things work together for good," but few stop to consider what this verse is really saying. [Rom 8:28]. The Apostle Paul did

not say in the working this would be pleasant or easy; nor did he mean every trial will work for our financial, familial or social prosperity. He said, in the next verse, these things, these prunings, work to conform us to be more like Christ (Rom 8:29). We bear fruit as we become more like Christ (v4). Sometimes, we need a lot of pruning.

BE IN THE WORD

In chapter 13, Christ said the disciples were cleaned or sanctified through the teachings of Christ. In this passage, Jesus affirmed again they were clean because of the word He had spoken to them (v3). The hearing of the Word is cleansing to the soul.

> Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. [17:17 NASB, ESV].

We are sanctified through the Word. The Apostle Paul wrote Christ cleanses the church, "by the washing of water with the word." [Eph 5:26 NASB, ESV]. The first verse of the Gospel of John says Jesus Christ is the Word. It is not frivolous that God equates His Son with the Word. Heed Christ's admonition to abide in the Word (8:31,32).

We may not have the benefit of the disciples, sitting under Christ's spoken teachings, but we have the Holy Bible, which are the written words of God. Therefore, we must be in the Word, so we can hear Him speak to us. As the saying goes, "If you want to hear God speak, read the Word; if you want to hear Him speak audibly, read the Word out loud." [Justin Peters].

How do we abide in Christ? Through the prayerful reading, study and meditation of the Word. Some professing Christians liken themselves to be prayer warriors, but they are not in the Word. How do we know what to pray for if we are not in the Word?

The Word is central to abiding in Christ.

> If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine. [8:31 NASB].

As we are in the Word, we know the Spirit opens up the Word to those who are His.

> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [1Co 2:14 ESV].

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true;

> and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [1Jo 5:20 NASB].

The command is to abide (v1). We make our home in Christ. Our lives revolve around Him; we want to know how to be like Him; He consumes our time. Are you wasting time or do you spend your time in the Word of God?

If you profess to know Christ, but are not satisfied with the fruit in your life, then spend more time in the Word. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine (v4b). Those who believe they can bear fruit for Christ through self-determination or positive motivation are deceived and they are not following Christ.

BEARING FRUIT

Bearing fruit is not a works-based religion. All through this passage, the emphasis is upon abiding in Christ or being in the Word; this is the work of God. The promise or the result is we will bear fruit. As we abide in the Word, God produces His work in us (v4-5; cf Rom 8:28-29).

The problem with a works-based salvation is, as the Prophet Isaiah warned us, all our good works are filthy rags (Isa 64:6). We can do nothing of our own to attain a righteous standing with God. The only righteousness we have is the righteousness of Christ which is given to us by faith.

> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law . . . the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. [Rom 3:20-22a ESV].

> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:21 NASB].

The Apostle Paul lamented in the seventh chapter of Romans the good he wanted to do, which he could not. He found himself doing the bad he did not want to do. He wrote he is wretched and cannot rid himself of his sin nature. It is only through Jesus Christ we will be delivered from this body of sin and death. Therefore, apart from abiding in Christ, spending time in His Word, we cannot bear fruit no matter how great our desire or intentions. The fruit is a result of time spent with Christ.

This is an important point because Christ said it twice.

1. Negative approach: In verse 4, He admonished us to abide in Him because, just as the branch cannot bear fruit without the vine, we cannot bear fruit without abiding in Him.
2. Positive approach: In verse 5, He took the metaphor one step further by saying He is the vine and we are the branches; the one who abides in Him will bear much fruit, but apart from Him we can do nothing.

In both verses, He promised to abide in those who abide in Him. This is a core principle: if we are not walking with Christ, we are not saved (Mat 16:24; Mar 8:34; Luk 9:23; 1Jo 1:5-9) and unless we abide in Him, we are not walking with Him. The Apostle James warned it is not enough to believe with a mere head knowledge, because even the demons know Jesus is God (Jam 2:19). They declared this as a fact, demonstrating that knowing is not a saving faith (Mat 8:29; Mar 1:24, 5:7; Luk 4:34).

> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [1Jo 2:3 NASB].

Christ said, if we do not abide in Him, we can do nothing, including keeping His commands. Too many professing Christians have defined salvation as an event, but to be truly saved is a lifestyle. To bear fruit, which is evidence of our salvation, we must abide in Christ.

CULLING THE BRANCHES

In verse 2, Christ said the Father will remove the branch which does not produce fruit. In verse 6, Christ said the removed branch will wither and all the dead branches will be gathered and thrown into the fire and burned. He said this twice and with greater emphasis the second time, so it is important. This is a warning to merely professing Christians: there is no fire insurance.

Remember in chapters 6 and 8, Christ addressed the crowd of believers and told them why they were not saved. Your profession of faith will not save you. If you are not bearing fruit, that is, if you do not see God producing fruit in you, you are not likely saved.

- Are you trusting in an event, such as getting saved when you said the sinner's prayer?
- Are you trusting in your work of "accepting Jesus Christ as your savior" or "making a decision for Christ"?
- Or, are you taking up your cross to follow Jesus Christ and abiding in Him?

The Apostle Paul's warning cannot be declared often enough. We must test our salvation according to the Word of God.

> Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? [2Co 13:5 NASB].

According to the teaching of Jesus in this passage, Jesus Christ abides only in those who abide in Him and He produces fruit in those who abide in Him. Like a branch to a vine. There are many professing Christians who do not have time for God and they have no fruit. According to Christ's teaching, these branches will be cast into Hell.

Do not be deceived by easy-believism. We are not saved by an event nor are we saved by our profession of faith. According to Jesus Christ, if we are saved we will be abiding in Him. In the sixth chapter, He told us we must desire Him like food and water; we must chew on Him and drink Him in. In this passage, He said we must abide or continue in Him.

We cannot straddle our lives between God's kingdom and our own; we cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24). If our desire is to be great in this world, if we are chasing after the wisdom of the world, then we cannot be saved.

> 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? [5:44 NASB].

> How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!, but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. [Psa 1:1-2 NASB].

SOME SCRIPTURES REGARDING BEARING FRUIT

1) The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

2) "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance." Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Mat 3:8-10).

3) You will recognize those who obey Christ by their fruits. Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Mat 7:16-20).

4) You will recognize those who obey Christ by their fruits. Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Mat 12:33-37).

5) A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, some seeds fell on rocky ground, some seeds fell among thorns, some seeds fell on good soil and produced grain. The seed which fell on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, which bears fruit (Mat 13:3-23).

6) A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is known by its fruit. The good person produces good, and the evil person produces evil. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Luk 6:43-45).

7) We have died to the law through the body of Christ, so we may belong to Him who has been raised from the dead, so we may bear fruit for God. While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions were at work to bear fruit for death (Rom 7:4-5).

8) As God supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, in us He will increase the harvest of our righteousness (2Co 9:10).

9) At one time we were darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light and take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph 5:8-11).

10) The Apostle Paul said it was his prayer that the believer's love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ (Php 1:9-11).

11) The Apostle Paul said the believer's gift was fruit that increases to their heavenly credit (Php 4:14-17).

12) The Gospel is bearing fruit in the whole world (Col 1:5-6).

13) Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work (Col 1:9-10).

14) All discipline seems painful, but it yields the fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it (Heb 12:11).

15) Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. This is the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name (Heb 13:15).

16) The wisdom from above is full of good fruits (Jam 3:17).

17) The merely professing Christians are fruitless trees, twice dead, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever (Jud 8-13).

IN CLOSING

Salvation is not obtained through an event, an "accepting" of Christ, a profession of faith or by saying the sinner's prayer. You are not saved because you "made a decision for Christ." To be saved, we are regenerated by God. If we are regenerated, we will desire to know more of Christ. Therefore, to know we are truly saved, we must abide in Christ; this is the work of God in our life. We must be prayerfully and constantly in His Word; this is what Jesus preached. It is proof of regeneration.

We are not saved by our works, but we cannot be saved without them. If we are saved, Christ will produce fruit in us. Jesus said we will judge the the true and the false believer by their fruit and, in this passage He said, the only way for good fruit to be produced in us is to abide in Him. Be in His Word. This is the work of God in our life.

As the branch needs to abide in the vine, we need to abide in Christ. Just as Jesus said in chapter 6, if we do not need Him like we need food and drink, if He is not our food and drink, we cannot be saved.

Those who profess to be saved, but their lives produce no fruit, these are the withered branches. These are the professing Christians living in sin; the carnal. These are the professing Christians trusting in their own works. They will all be cast into the fire; the fire of Hell. Examine yourself according to the Word to see if you are in the faith.

John 15:7-17 How Your Wildest Dreams Will Come True

The bookends of this passage tell us if we abide in Christ and bear fruit in our lives, whatever we ask of God will be done for us.

> **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [v7 NASB, ESV].**
>
> **that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. [v16b NASB].**

To have every request of God answered with material blessing or physical healing is the dream of the "Word of Faith" or prosperity gospel. The televangelists proclaim from their jet planes or their expansive mansion estates, God will give you whatever you ask as long as you have faith and send them some "seed" money.

But Jesus said this "light" is deep darkness, for we cannot serve two masters and we must trust Him for our provision and seek first the kingdom of God (Mat 6:22-34).

> **Read John 15:7-17.**

ABIDE IN ME

Two things to understand from verse 7:

1. "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you."

Christ has left us with His Word, the Holy Bible. If we love Christ, we will love His Word. If we love His Word, we will keep His Word. The Apostle John wrote we know we have come to know Him if we keep His commandments (1Jo 2:3) and to love God is to keep His commands (1Jo 5:3).

2. "Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

This does not refer to material gain. If you want to make this your best life now, your next life will not be in heaven with God. Jesus said, "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal." [12:25 NASB]. Christ commanded us to deny ourself and take up our cross and follow Him (Mat 16:24; Mar 8:34; Luk 9:23). Therefore, if you are in the Word, you will know Jesus' promise that we will receive what we ask for in prayer is not a prescription for worldly gain. Many professing Christians are frustrated because they pray and do not

receive; they continue to send televangelists money and keep hoping to receive. The Apostle James warned us not to desire the things of this world, lest we become enemies of God.

> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [Jam 4:3-4 NASB].
>
> If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [1Jo 2:15b NASB, ESV].

So, why the promise and what are we to ask for? In verses 1-6, Jesus told us to abide in Him and so produce fruit. We are to pray we bear much fruit, or pray for things which will help us bear fruit. By this we glorify the Father and prove ourselves to be true followers of Christ.

> **My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. [v8 NASB].**

God is glorified when we abide in Christ; when our minds are set upon Him; when we love our brothers; when we speak the Gospel; when we obey His commands. If we are regenerated, these are things which we desire, but our flesh battles against it. Therefore, these are things to pray for and God has promised to give it. The Apostle James said if anyone lacks wisdom, ask God and He will give it (Jam 1:5). God will give us whatever we ask which makes us more like His Son.

What about our needs? What about our health? Isn't it proper we pray for our needs? In His "sermon on the mount," Christ told us not to worry about our lives, what we will eat, drink and wear. He told us to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness in our lives (Mat 6:25-33). On the other hand, in the Lord's Prayer, He taught us to ask for our daily needs and He also told us our Father already knows what we need (Mat 6:11). As surely as God takes care of the grass, the flowers and the birds, we know He will take care of us. We ask, but we do not need to be obsessed with felt needs. God will supply our needs; we must be seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness.

Furthermore, if our prayers are an expression of our anxiety, we are not praying in faith. The Apostle Peter told us to cast our care upon Him, because we know He cares for us (1Pe 5:7). The Apostle Paul wrote we must not be anxious, but we must let our requests be made known to God with thanksgiving (Php 4:6). In the last chapter, Jesus told us not to let our hearts be troubled (14:1,27). This is a command and to worry is to sin.

The Apostle Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. Three times he pleaded with God to remove this. God's reply was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for [My] power is perfected in [your] weakness." [2Co 12:9]. What we learn from this is we need to seek God's purpose. Our desire, even what we think is our need, is not the same as God's purpose. This is why we request of God with thanksgiving; we know He is God, we know He is in control and He will accomplish His purpose. Furthermore, we know He works His purpose for our good to make us more like Christ (Rom 8:28-29).

Jesus said, "as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you." [v9a NASB]. Christ is loved by the Father worthily, because He is holy and righteous. He loves us, though we are unworthy and have no merit of our own. While we were still sinners and enemies of God, Christ died for us. [Rom 5:8,10]. He died for us because He loves us as the Father loves Him. God's love is perfect.

He bids us to abide in His love (v9b). This abiding is not passive. We know this because the next thing He said was keeping His commandments is essential to abiding in His love. This activity is not a works-based salvation; Christ was not saying if we obey we will be saved. He was affirming if we are saved, we will abide in Him and keep His commandments. Obedience is active; it is the work of God (v4-5).

Jesus said He keeps His Father's commandments and abides in His love. Christ is not the Son of God because of His works of obedience. Rather, He keeps the commandments because He is the Son of God. Here too, Christ abiding in the Father's love is not passive. Christ was obedient to the Father, even to His death upon the cross.

> If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. [Mat 16:24-25 NASB].

The nature of man is to serve; he will serve God or he will serve sin (8:34; Rom 6:16). While serving sin, a man may think he is serving himself, but sin is a cruel task master (Ecc 8:8). Serving Christ may seem to be hard, but in the end we find this is the law which brings liberty (Jam 1:25).

Jesus said He spoke these things to them so their joy may be full (v11). True joy comes from abiding in Christ and living in obedience to Him. We know we love Him if we keep His commandments; love for God is our true joy.

> All [who] love the Savior should continue in their love to Him, and take all occasions to show it. The joy of the hypocrite is, but for a moment, but the joy of those who

> abide in Christ's love is a continual feast. They are to show their love to Him by keeping His commandments. [Matthew Henry Commentary].

If we have a difficult time abiding in Christ, being in prayer and in the Word, Jesus said to ask what we will and it will be done for us (v7,16). So pray for this.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER - verse 12

Christ gave the command to love one another as He has loved us (v12). To love one another is a difficult thing to do because the inclination of our sinful nature is to be like the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35. This servant was forgiven an insurmountable debt, but could not forgive another who owed him a day's wage. This parable describes our natural heart; if Christ is not living in us, we cannot love others.

The disciples had been arguing over who was the greatest in the kingdom (cf Mar 9:33-37; Luk 9:46-48). On another occasion, the sons of Zebedee sought to be appointed to the highest places in Christ's kingdom and the rest of the disciples were indignant toward them (Mat 20:20-28). We all have aspirations and are no different from the disciples. The Apostle Paul warned us not to think too highly of ourselves, which is our natural tendency (Rom 12:3).

> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. [1Jo 4:11 NASB, ESV].

We see ourselves as the protagonist in this play called life. Our natural inclination is to look out for ourselves, to seek our fame, power and glory, but we are called to be like Christ. He, though being God, humbled Himself and became man so He could show us the Father and redeem those whom He came to save. The only way to take our eyes off ourselves is to keep our eyes on Christ; to abide in Him; to spend time with God in prayer and in His Word.

> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as

> a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross [Php 2:3-8 NASB].
>
> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. [Rom 12:10 ESV].

He commanded the disciples (and us) to love each other "as I have loved you." [v12]. How has He loved them? He showed them the Father, but there is more:

> **Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. [v13-14].**

Here, Christ told His disciples again He was going to die for them. For whom did Christ die? He died for those who do what He commands. He made this very clear: He was not going to die for the whole world; not for everyone in the world as most preachers claim. He died for those He loved; those He was willing to call His friends.

> for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours. [17:8-9 NASB].

Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do what I command you." [v14]. The modern American gospel has twisted this to mean Jesus is looking for a relationship; as if He just wants us to hang around because He needs friends. Jesus said if we are His friends, we obey Him.

> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [1Jo 2:3 NASB].

If we abide in Christ, we will produce fruit and one of the fruits is love for each other, which will be evident. Does this mean we are supposed to physically die for each other? If need be, but this is not usually the case. To lay down our life for our brother is to forsake our own gain and to help the brother in need.

> We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. . .We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, but whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? [1Jo 3:14,16-17 NASB].

If we do not help our brothers, we do not have God's love and have not passed from death to life. The Apostle Paul told us to, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." [Gal 6:2 ESV]. We demonstrate our love for each other by helping each other with physical and spiritual needs. When we love each other, this is evidence of our love for Christ; it is obedience to Him.

If we have a hard time loving our brothers, Jesus said to ask what we will and it will be done for us (v7,16). So pray for this.

SLAVES WHO ARE CALLED FRIENDS

Jesus said He called them friends because He made the Father known to them (v15; cf 1:18). Slaves do not know what the master is doing. We know what He is doing, because He has given us His Word.

We must keep this verse in context. Being friends with Christ is not a frivolous expression. We must not misconstrue this as the modern American gospel does: We do not have a casual relationship with Jesus nor does our relationship with God revolve around our feelings or desires.

By saying He no longer calls us slaves, but friends, Christ was promising fellowship with God. He said, we are friends if we obey; and slaves obey. The Apostle John wrote we have fellowship with God if we walk in the light (1Jo 1:7).

When Jesus said He no longer called them slaves, by context, we see He was NOT saying they were no longer slaves. For a few verses later, He reminded them they were, when He said a slave is not above His master (v20).

> He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done." [Luk 17:9-10 NASB].

Be warned: Never in the Scriptures did the apostles cling to this title of friend; they identified themselves as bond servants or slaves of Christ.

> Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. [1Co 4:1 NASB].

> Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. [1Pe 2:16 NASB].

We will serve God or sin; there is no middle ground and we cannot serve two masters. Those who obey Christ, serve Him. He calls them His friends: they are slaves who have fellowship with Him (1Jo 1:5-9).

If we have a hard time thinking of Jesus as a friend or if we have difficulty understanding our role as a slave, He told us to ask what we will and it will be done for us (v7,16). So pray for this.

YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME

Christ told them plainly the disciples did not choose Him; He chose them (v16a). Many professing Christians speak of their salvation as something they accomplished. They remember it as an event or a decision. Some can mark the date and the location; when and where they made a decision for Christ; of their own freewill, of course.

However, the Bible says we do not choose God. God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). We were chosen according to God's purposes (Eph 1:11). The Apostle John wrote we are not saved by our own freewill, but by the will of God (1:13). The Apostle John also wrote we love Him because He first loved us (1Jo 4:19).

We were sinners, enemies of God and powerless to save ourselves (Rom 5:6,8,10), we were slaves of sin (Rom 6:16). Did we have freewill? Yes, but how does a slave to sin choose to become a slave to God without the work of the Spirit changing his affections, so that he no longer desires sin, but desires God? The fact is, while we were slaves to sin, our freewill was bound to sin.

> there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it. [Ecc 8:8 NASB].

The natural man chooses to glorify himself with evil; "all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment." [Isa 64:6 NASB]. Christ chose us so we would bear fruit for His glory. This is what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians as to why God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, "that we should be holy and blameless before Him." [Eph 1:4b ESV].

The Apostle Paul also wrote we are saved by grace and not by works. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." [Eph 2:10 ESV]. We are saved by grace not by works, so that God's works may be seen in us.

> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light,

> for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed, but he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God. [3:19-21 NASB].
>
> work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. [Php 2:12b-13 NASB].

Jesus said He chose us so we would bear fruit and God will give us whatever we ask. When we ask of God, remember the admonition of the Apostle James to ask for wisdom, but ask in faith without doubting (Jam 1:5-6); and when we ask of God, do not ask to fulfill our covetous hearts because desiring the things of the world is to make ourselves enemies of God (Jam 4:1-10).

If our goal in our requests is to draw nearer to God so that we can bear fruit for His glory, He will do far more abundantly than all we ask (Eph 3:20). Jesus told us to ask what we will and it will be done for us (v7,16). So pray for this.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER - verse 17

After Christ explained they were chosen by Him, He repeated His command to love one another (v17). This bookends with verse 12. So, let us walk through verses 12 to 17 again. From "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you," to "This I command you, that you love one another."

- v12) Jesus gave a command: to love one another as He loved us.
- v13) There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for his friends; and this is what He was going to do.
- v14) We are His friends if we obey His command.
- v15) Jesus calls us friends because He has made known to us everything from the Father.
- v16) We did not choose Him, but He chose us, so that we might bear fruit and receive spiritual blessings from the Father.
- v17) Knowing what He has done for us should cause us to obey His command to love our brothers.

If we obey Christ, we will love our brothers. Loving our brothers is contingent upon obedience to Christ.

> By this we know we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. [1Jo 5:2 ESV].

Our love for each other is evidence we are walking with Christ.

> The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. [1Jo 2:9-10 NASB].

> We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. . .We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [1Jo 3:14,16 NASB].

> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. [1Jo 4:7 NASB].

So, once again, if you have a difficult time loving your brother and abiding in the Word, pray for this.

IN CLOSING

The bookends of this passage tell us whatever we ask of God will be done for us (v7,16). The first promise was made on condition we abide in Christ; the second promise was made on condition we bear fruit. Earlier in the chapter, Christ said we cannot bear fruit unless we abide in Christ.

Then, there is the another bookend within this passage and it wraps the main bookend: the command to love one another (v12,17).

Jesus said He no longer called the disciples servants, but called them friends. This statement tells us we can have fellowship with God, but it is not a license to view our relationship with Christ casually. Christ is still God; He is to be feared. The disciples never called themselves friends of Christ; they declared themselves to be slaves and servants.

God has promised to fulfill our wildest dream; He promised to give us anything we ask! What is this wildest dream? If we are abiding in Christ, our wildest dream will be to have fellowship with God and to obey His commands. By abiding in the vine, we will live obedient to Christ; we will love our brothers; we will bear fruit. These are things to request and God will give us what we request. I think I heard John MacArthur say something like this: when we grow in the Lord, He does not give us our carnal desires; He implants within us His desires.

So pray for this.

John 15:18-16:4 Do Not Seek Approval Of The World

The one sure sign a person has been born again is they obey Christ's commands. The one sure way to grow more obedient to His rule, His lordship, is to abide in or be in the Word.

You will be in the Word or you will be in the world. You cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24). In fact, Jesus asked the question, "If you seek the approval of man, rather than the glory of God, can you be saved?" [5:44].

> **Read John 15:18-27 and 16:1-4.**

PREPARE TO BE HATED

The world is opposed to God. From the beginning, man has been in rebellion to God. After God destroyed the world by flood, man still defied Him. Rather than spread out across the surface of the earth as commanded, they came together into one city, seeking to elevate Babel above their Creator and Lawmaker (Gen 11:1-9). Even after God confused their language, destroyed their work, scattered the people and tore the continents apart (Gen 10:25), which would have been a dreadful and frightening occasion for man, they continued to pursue their rebellion.

> Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed. [Psa 2:1-2 ESV].

The Apostle John wrote in Revelation 20, Satan would be bound during Christ's thousand year reign on earth, but after the thousand years, he would deceive the rulers of nations and lead them into battle against the Lord. They will be defeated, just as the psalmist described it in Psalm chapter 2, but the key thing to understand is this: after one thousand years of Christ reigning on the earth and the nations living in peace, Satan will turn the nations against Him, quickly and entirely. Such is the rebellious heart of man.

> **If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. [v18 NASB].**

Jesus said the world will hate those who follow Him as it has hated Him. Once again, we meet this word "world." Who is the world? Certainly not every last person; if this were so, it would include even the elect. The world, in this case, is everyone who is not following Christ and it is also the world system, in general. The world, in this case, is all who follow "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of

disobedience." [Eph 2:2 ESV]. The world includes many professing Christians who are not saved. When you stand up for the truth and it seems even Christians are pushing back against you, know they are of the world.

Many professing Christians are comfortable mixing their faith with worldly wisdom. They seek the favor of man; they want to be known as positive people. Jesus asked the question, "If you seek the favor of man, how can you be saved?" [5:44].

These people promote sayings and proverbs which seem to sound wise, may even sound Biblical, but they are lies. The wisdom of the world is designed to be a substitute for God. Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and they will not follow the voice of an imposter (10:5). If we cling to clever or positive sayings and ideals, which are based upon worldly wisdom, we are following the voice of an imposter. And this imposter, the prince of this world, is in opposition to the One we claim to serve.

> If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other. [Mat 6:23b-24a ESV].

Christ warned us against storing up worldly wealth (Mat 6:19-21). We should view all things in this life as passing. We are soldiers here and ambassadors for Christ. We build no kingdoms here because we are looking for and praying for God's kingdom (Mat 6:10). We do not seek the wealth down here, which is destroyed by moths and rust and eventually by fire. We are looking forward to a kingdom and "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." [1Pe 1:4 NASB]. We seek God's kingdom (Mat 6:10,33) and forsake our own (Luk 14:26-33).

Christ warned us, the world will hate us because it hated Him first (v18). He reminded us, once again, He chose us; choosing us out of the world (v19). We are no longer part of the world, therefore the world hates us. If you find the world does not hate you, maybe there is not much of Christ showing through you.

> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. [Eph 2:10 NASB].

We serve Christ as He serves the Father. Christ came to make the Father known. If we are servants of Christ, we will make Him known. He told us to make disciples and teach His commands (Mat 28:18-20). The world does not want to know Christ; they rebel against His Word; they do not want to follow His commands (Psa 107:11). Therefore, as the world hated Christ

for making the Father known, the world will hate us for making Christ known.

A slave is not greater than his master. [v20b NASB].

Although Christ called the disciples "friends" in verse 15, here, He reaffirms they are slaves. A follower of Christ is a slave to God; there are no casual Christians.

Expect persecution, for the world persecuted Christ (v20). Amidst affliction, there is also respite: When Jesus said, "if they kept My word, they will keep yours also" [v20], He was describing brothers in Christ. If we preach Christ, we will be persecuted, but we will also find brothers in Christ. The message of the Gospel draws those who love Christ.

Nonetheless, if we stand faithfully for the Word of God, we will face persecution. Often times, this persecution will come from other professing Christians. When someone is street preaching or handing out tracks or speaking the Scriptures in public, there is always the professing Christian on hand who is more concerned about how this looks to others. They claim the evangelizer is pushing people away from Christ or they say you need to build a relationship with people before you can witness to them or some other such nonsense in their attempt to shut up or humiliate the evangelizing believer.

The modern American gospel has accepted the easy-believism which is commonly preached from the pulpits. Most professing Christians seek worldly acceptance and the comforts of this world. A bold defense of the Scriptures or the true preaching of the Gospel are offensive to them and they will attack you. You may think of them as brothers, for they are professing Christians, but they will attack you, because they do not know the Father, just as Jesus said (v21). When this happens, do not be confused; just know, a profession of faith does not make a follower of Christ.

Most the world has the Word of God. People can choose to denounce and defame it or they can read and defend it. If you are a professing Christian, it is important to be in the Word. It is hard to fight against the Word if you feast on a constant diet of it. On the other hand, it is hard to defend it if you seldom study it. The preaching of the Word will draw some and offend others, but Christ came and gave us the Word so that no one will have excuse for their sin (v22).

The world is convicted and without excuse because Christ spoke the words of the Father and even now, the world has His Word (v22). Jesus did the works of the Father, which had never been done before or since and the world has a record of these miracles; but men still choose to hate Christ (v24). In the first chapter of the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote

those who refuse Christ suppress the truth, even though God made it plain to them. The world will be judged because Christ brought the Word and confirmed the Word with miracles, but the world hated Christ and the Father.

> We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true. [1Jo 5:19-20a NASB].

> but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. [1Pe 2:7b-8 ESV; quoting Psa 118:22 and Isa 8:14].

Whoever hates Christ, hates the Father also (v23) because, as Christ said, "I and the Father are one." [10:30]. God is one God in three persons. Those who refuse the Trinity do not worship the true God. Those who say they worship only Christ Jesus, do not worship the true God. If you despise any part of the Trinity, you despise all. Though God is three persons, He is one God. In this chapter, Jesus made it clear: there is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said this hatred for Him from the world is to fulfill the Scripture, "THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE." [v25 NASB, quoting Psa 35:19; 69:4]. And, truly it is without cause: For God is the Creator and He has given good gifts to those whom He has created (Psa 85:12; Jam 1:17). Even to those who reject Him, He provides food, clothing and other resources or common graces. Yet, their rebellious hearts despise His blessing and they rage against Him.

While man plots and schemes against Almighty God, His plan and His will cannot be defeated. According to Psalm chapter 2, this plan is for the Father to give His Son a kingdom and to bless all those who trust in Him. This is the eternal covenant. God's plan will come to pass.

Although the world will hate us because we follow Christ, God has not left us alone. Christ said He will send the Holy Spirit who will "testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." [v26b-27 NASB]. The Holy Spirit's work is to bear witness of the Son and He works in us so we will bear witness.

There is no private faith. If we believe in Christ, we will testify of His authority and glory to others (v27); we will make disciples and teach them to study and obey the Scriptures He has given. The Holy Spirit will help us accomplish this.

> All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. [Mat 28:18-20].

SPOKEN TO KEEP YOU FROM STUMBLING

Christ gave the disciples practical application of what this hatred from the world is going to look like. He explained this to keep them from falling away or keep them from stumbling (v1).

This is a rehash with amplification of what He said in chapter 15. He said in addition to the world hating them, the church leaders will put them out of the houses of worship (v2). He said they will kill His followers, thinking they are serving God (v2). He said they will do these things because they do not know the Father (v3). In chapter 8, Jesus said they serve their father, the devil.

Verse 1 and 4 are bookends: "I have said these things":

- to keep you from falling away (v1).
- so you may remember that I told them to you (v4).

First, Christ warned us so we may expect persecution to happen and not fall away when it does. This is why Jesus said to follow Him, we must count the cost.

> Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? [Luk 14:27-28 NASB].

Second, Christ warned us so when this happens, we will remember He told us. To know events will happen as He said, gives us assurance He is in control and assurance we are in His plan. Therefore, we can look forward to suffering for the sake of our Master.

> Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. [2Ti 3:12 NASB].

To be put out of the temple would be a difficult situation indeed. For the Jews, including the disciples, were raised to respect the authority of the temple leaders and to run afoul of them might cause some to second guess

themselves; and maybe fall away. This is why Christ warned them in advance, so they could know these trials were ordained by God.

Most professing Christian churches in our nation have fallen asleep. They preach a watered-down gospel; all about an easy grace with no mention of sin, Hell, repentance, following Christ, abiding in Him and producing fruit. We have a duty to stand up for the Word of God and we will run afoul of many church leaders and laymen who are quite comfortable with the modern, culturally pleasing theology in place. When this happens, do not second guess yourself; stay in the Word and stand strong in the Lord.

Jesus told them whoever kills them will think they are serving God, but they do not know God (v2-3). Some will persecute followers of Christ in the name of God, but they do not know God. The Jewish leaders believed they spoke for God, yet they cast those who followed Christ out of the temple; they imprisoned some; they killed some. They did this in the name of God.

The Apostle Paul was one of these persecutors before Christ regenerated him. He approved the stoning of Stephen. He was on his way to Damascus to persecute and take prisoners back to Jerusalem, when Christ called him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" [Act 9:4 NASB, ESV]. They will persecute followers of Christ in the name of God, but they do not know God.

The Apostle John wrote in his epistle, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." [1Jo 3:13 ESV]. The Apostle Peter wrote, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you." [1Pe 4:12 ESV]. Jesus warned the disciples so when the trials came they would remember and not fall away and the apostles continued this warning to us with, "do not be surprised."

Do you see clearly why a follower of Christ cannot seek the pleasures, comfort and approval of the world? Do you see why James said if we are friends with the world, we are enemies of God? Do you see why Jesus asked the question, if we are friends with the world, how can we be saved?

This last section, verses 1 to 4, is a test of our greatest desire. Do we desire Christ above all things? or will we fall away when persecution comes? If we desire the world, we cannot desire God; Jesus said we cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24). If we desire Christ above all things, we will rejoice in trials, knowing we are suffering as our Lord suffered at the hands of men.

> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them
> and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let
> them go. Then they left the presence of the council,

> rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. [Act 5:40-42 ESV].
>
> For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. [Php 1:29 NASB].

Therefore, if you follow Christ, prepare to be hated.

IN CLOSING

Chapter 15 in a nut is this: Abide in Me, love each other and if you do this, the world will hate you.

We have a choice:

- To follow Christ and be hated by the world; or
- To find our comfort and approval in the world and be an enemy of God.

There is no middle ground; we cannot serve two masters. We cannot be friends with the world and followers of Christ. We cannot mix the "good" or the "positive" of the world with the teachings of Christ. Any effort to make the Gospel attractive or relevant to the world, will always compromise the Gospel.

> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.
>
> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [Col 2:6-8 NASB].

A servant is not greater than his master. Christ was persecuted by men; they will persecute His followers, as well. If you do not suffer any persecution, maybe it is because the world cannot see Christ in you.

The world is without excuse because Christ performed miracles no one else has ever done. They saw Him and hated Him without cause. Many professing Christians claim we can win the world for Christ by concentrated effort. If the world could ever have been won for Christ, it was while He was on the Earth, but the world hated Him.

We are called to stand for the truth, Christ is responsible for the results.

Christ commanded us to bear witness about Him and He promised the Holy Spirit would help us. So, this is true: a follower of Christ cannot follow in secret. Stand for Christ and be hated by the world. Christ told us these things to keep us from falling away and in our last lesson, we learned these are things to pray about.

John 16:5-15 The Promised Work Of The Holy Spirit

Jesus taught the disciples to abide in Him and love each other. He warned the world will hate them. He was warning them because He would no longer be with them (v4).

Read John 16:5-15.

Christ was soon to return to the Father. He rebuked the disciples because they showed no interest; none of them asked Him where He was going (v5). They were feeling sorry for themselves and this blinded them to the significance of the events Jesus described and were soon to come (v6).

Earlier, at this dinner, Peter and Thomas had asked where He was going (13:36; 14:5). He told them they could not follow now, but they would follow later; He told them He was going to prepare a place for them; He told them He was the only way to the Father. Now, it was clear, they did not understand what Jesus was saying.

The disciples were not keen to return to Jerusalem, in the first place. They knew the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus. Regardless this danger, they still believed He was the Messiah and they still falsely believed He was going to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and rescue Israel from her enemies. When they experienced Christ's triumphal entry into the city, their hope was revived and the danger seemed less imminent. Now, at dinner, Christ told them He was leaving and their eyes were clouded by the prospect of losing Him. Christ said He was leaving at the time they were expecting Him to reveal His glory. This was a huge let down, indeed. Sorrow had filled their hearts (v6b).

WHY THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME

When Jesus spoke at the Feast of Booths, He said out of the believer will flow rivers of living water. (7:38). This was a promise of the Holy Spirit indwelling the follower of Christ. At that time, however, the Spirit had not yet come because Christ was still on the earth. Christ told the disciples, for this reason, it was to their advantage that He leave. He also said if He did not go away, the Holy Spirit would not come (v7). None of this seemed to arouse any expectation from the disciples.

Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, was living among man. Yet, He told the disciples, it was to their advantage He go away so the Holy Spirit will come (v7). It was hard to understand how God in the Spirit could be an advantage to having God in the flesh among them.

Consider though, while Christ was in the flesh, He dwelt among them, yet Peter still denied Him in the hour of severe testing. However, after Christ ascended and the disciples were filled with the Spirit, Peter and John boldly defended their preaching of the Gospel of Christ to the very leaders who had the power to kill them. The Holy Spirit opens the Word to us and gives us the power to stand firm for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a great advantage.

The disciples did not yet understand Christ had come to take God's wrath for mans' sin. They did not understand He came to die on the cross and would raise up to life again to reconcile man to God. They did not understand, rather than reign with the Messiah on earthly thrones, their mission would be to proclaim the authority of Christ to all people; calling people into a kingdom they could not see or touch. They did not understand to do this, they would need the help of the Holy Spirit.

Christ gave the disciples a quick review of what the Holy Spirit would do:

1. He will convict the world of sin (v8).
2. He will convict the world of righteousness (v8).
3. He will convict the world of judgment (v8).
4. He will guide believers into all the truth (v13).
5. He will not speak on His own authority, but what He hears from the Father (v13).
6. He will glorify Christ (v14).
7. He will take what is Christ's (the Word) and reveal it to the believers (v14-15).

Never once did Christ indicate the Holy Spirit would come to satisfy our earthly desires and give us possession of our idols. Christ gave no indication the Spirit would make people act like they were possessed, cause them to speak gibberish in public or speak new revelations and prophecies which contradict the Word of God. Christ said the Holy Spirit would come to convict the world and guide believers into truth. He would come to glorify Christ; He will not glorify man.

Beware of false teachers and prophets, beware of the prosperity gospel, Word of Faith and Charismatic teachings: Jesus said we will know them by their fruits (Mat 7:15-16).

Christ said this about the Holy Spirit: "He will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment" [v8 ESV], and "He will guide you into all the truth. . . for He will take what is Mine and declare it to

you." [v13-14 ESV]. On the one hand, God deals with the rebellious in judgment; on the other hand, He increases knowledge and understanding to those committed to following Him. This is why the Holy Spirit has come.

CONCERNING SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUDGMENT

> **Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me. [v9 NASB, ESV].**

Some people claim to believe, they tip their hat to God, but live with an attitude of unbelief. Some people claim they do not believe in God, but the Bible tells us God has made Himself obvious to man (Rom 1:19-20). So what is unbelief?

> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [Rom 1:21 NASB].

Unbelief is the character of willful unaccountability or rebellion toward God. Unbelief is the root which gives birth to sin and nourishes it; sin is the fruit. Unbelief sets people up for judgment.

> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. [Heb 3:18-19 NASB].

Scripture equates disobedience with unbelief. John the Baptist said those who believe have eternal life, but those who disobey remain under God's wrath (3:36). Disobedience is sin. We should not take disobedience lightly; God does not wink at our shortcomings.

This does not mean the believer will live perfectly righteous lives, but the true believer will not live a lifestyle of sin. He will have an attitude of repentance. When we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive (1Jo 1:9).

> **and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me. [v10 NASB].**

The Apostle Paul said Christ will judge the world in righteousness and the Father has fixed a day this will happen, "having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." [Act 17:31b NASB]. What greater evidence to the truth of Christ's claim to be the Son of God than the Father should raise Him from the dead? Would the Father have raised a blasphemer from the dead? Christ was the only man to live a perfectly righteous life and the

evidence would show forth when He would raise from the dead and go to the Father.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold God would send His Son to suffer for the many. He would bear their sins and account them as righteous.

> Out of the anguish of [Christ's] soul He shall see and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall the Righteous One, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities. [Isa 53:11 ESV].

The Apostle Paul wrote Christ was perfect, but made to be sin, so that we who are sin can take on the righteousness of God.

> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:21 NASB].

God sees the believer as righteous through Jesus Christ. Without righteousness, no one can stand before God. However, it is vain to follow the Law, because no one can keep it. There is no power in our own intention or resolution. This is why it is futile to look to any effort of our own, any decision we can make, any prayer we can pray. Nothing can make us righteous before God, except the blood of Jesus Christ.

> **and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. [v11 NASB].**

In another passage, Jesus said the ruler of this world, Satan, would be cast out (12:31-32). If the ruler of this world is judged, we can know Christ will judge all who follow the ruler of this world. Sin will be of a limited duration. Take warning all you who love your sin: There will be an end to it and there will be an end to those who follow sin.

For all who believe in Christ, He nailed our sins to the cross. He canceled our debt to God, while exposing Satan and his rulers to open shame. Satan and his empire were destroyed by the cross of Christ (Col 2:13-15).

> that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. [Heb 2:14b NASB].

> The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. [1Jo 3:8b NASB].

The work of Satan is to keep man in rebellion to God (Gen 3:1); to keep him in slavery to sin (Rom 6:16); to keep man blinded to God's promise of righteousness (2Co 4:4). Nonetheless, Jesus said all who are His will come to Him (6:37). When Christ was lifted up, He drew His people from every

nation to Him (12:32); the devil could not keep His people from Him. Satan has no power and he is destroyed.

The modern American gospel proclaims we are free to do what we want, for we are no longer slaves. It says we are not religious because God is looking for relationship. This is the lie of the devil to keep professing believers enslaved to sin. If we truly believe, then we are slaves to Christ; we cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24). If we truly believe, then we worship God in all things; we worship God with our lives (Rom 12:1-2). We come out from our sin and worship God: this is our religion.

As believers, we cannot take sin lightly; we cannot take the blood of Jesus, our Redeemer, lightly. If we are a new creation, then we will come out from under the yoke of the devil and take on the yoke of Christ (Mat 11:29-30). The Apostle Paul told us we are a slave to whom we obey (Rom 6:16). The price God paid to redeem man from sin was great. This is a serious and terrible matter; we must not wink at sin. The punishment of all who follow Satan is eternal fire.

The Holy Spirit has come to convict sinners of judgment and to reveal truth to those who follow Christ.

WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL TEACH

Now the lesson is over; though much is left to be said, the disciples could not bear it at this time (v12). One reason they could not bear more teaching was because they had not been listening; they were distracted by the news Christ was leaving. Earlier they were distracted by arguments of who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom, which, now looked like it was not happening. They may have been preoccupied with thoughts of ruined plans or they might have been fearing for their lives. Indeed, in the hours ahead, the disciples would be scattered, seeming to have forgotten everything Christ told them.

Christ's time was coming to a close, but He reminded them the Holy Spirit will come and will give them instruction (v13), guiding them in all truth. He was not going to leave them alone.

Describing the Holy Spirit, Christ said, "for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak." [v13 NASB]. This is the same thing Christ said about Himself: He only did what He saw the Father doing and only spoke what He heard from the Father (5:19; 12:49).

The Godhead has a hierarchy and they are obedient to the Father. If it is a serious matter and no small thing for God to obey God, how can we look at our "small" sins frivolously? Why are we so casual about obedience, as if grace is all we need?

Many take Christ's declaration, "He will declare to you the things that are to come" [v13c ESV], as authority for their own self-given prophecies. These are false teachers. The reason for early church prophecies and tongues was because the disciples did not have the New Testament Scriptures. Until this was completed, the Holy Spirit revealed what they needed to know and He authored the Scriptures to them to give to us. We, however, have the Word, so there is no need for additional revelation.

Just as the Son came to reveal the Father (Mat 11:27), the Holy Spirit reveals Christ. All the Father has belongs to Christ (v14). This is because He is the firstborn; He is the heir of all things. The Holy Spirit has revealed what is Christ's to His followers. The Holy Spirit has given us the Scriptures; which is the Word, which is about Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit has revealed this to us and glorified Christ.

Just as Christ only did and said what the Father was doing and saying, the Holy Spirit will do the same. The three persons of the Godhead are in complete agreement because the three are God and they enjoy everything together. The Godhead works together for God's glory. The Holy Spirit reveals Christ to those who are His, so we can know Him and enjoy Him. This is for Christ's glory (v14-15).

IN CLOSING

Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes, "He will convict the world." [v8]. We come upon this word, "world" once again. In this passage, there are several meanings:

- He will convict the world concerning sin because they do not believe in Him (v9). The world is every person who will not obey Christ: "he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." [3:36b NASB].
- He will convict the world concerning righteousness because He will go to the Father (v10). This world are the ones who follow Christ by faith. Christ is our righteousness (1Co 1:30; Php 3:9); He has satisfied God's wrath (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17); and He is making intercession for us to the Father (Heb 7:25).
- In convicting the world of righteousness, there is the view that wherever Christianity has gone, there has been a standard of righteousness or morality. No other of the religions of the world have left a conviction for godly living among all the people. In this regard, world could mean where ever the Gospel has been spread.

- He will convict the world concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged (v11). The world which will be judged is all who follow the ruler of this world, the devil; everyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life (Rev 13:8; 17:8).

The Apostle Paul wrote when we were dead in our sins, we followed the prince of the power of the air and were sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2). Jesus said when He is lifted up, the world will be judged and the ruler of the world will be cast out (12:31-32). The Apostle John wrote about the eternal destruction of Satan and his followers, "This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." [Rev 20:14b-15 NASB, ESV]. All who do not follow Christ, remain dead in their sins and are destined for eternal destruction.

Christ told the disciples He was going away, but He would send them the Holy Spirit. They were filled with sorrow. It is human nature to focus on what we want, our plans and how we feel. So often, our prayers echo our desires, rather than seek God's purposes. However, the Godhead works for God's glory. If we follow Christ, we will seek God's glory.

The Holy Spirit has revealed Christ in the Scriptures. To know more about Christ, we need to be in the Word. As we abide in the Word, the Holy Spirit will reveal truth to us and Christ will be glorified.

John 16:16-33 You Will Suffer, But I Have Overcome

Christ was almost finished with His teaching. Now, He will brief the disciples on the coming events and the need to keep their eyes on the Father. He will teach them again to ask the Father anything and, it is clear, this is in the context of facing difficulty and trials.

Read John 16:16-33.

The disciples were confused. Keep in mind, like all religious Jews at that time, they believed the Messiah would come to set up His kingdom in Jerusalem. In spite of the Jewish leaders' desire to kill Him, He just had a triumphal entry into Jerusalem; like a hero returning from battle. The time seemed to be at hand, but now He was telling them He would be leaving soon. This did not seem to be in harmony with the plan; and where was He going to go?

IN A LITTLE WHILE

Christ's statement He is going away and returning is restated and repeated three times. There appears to be a wrenching, an agony within them. They felt such exhilaration during Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and every hope they had of reigning with Christ seemed to be falling into place, but now death and gloom hung over them like a cloud. The disciples were unsettled and confused.

> **A little while, and you will no longer see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.**
>
> **Some of His disciples then said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?"**
>
> **So they were saying, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is talking about."**
>
> **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 see Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?" [v16-19 NASB].**

Christ was soon to die and the disciples would not see Him. Soon after, He would rise from the dead and they would see Him. When they did not see

Him, they would experience a heavy loss. When He rose from the dead, they would know unspeakable joy.

YOU WILL WEEP WHILE THE WORLD REJOICES

Jesus answered the disciples' bewilderment with a prophecy. He began by telling them to pay attention: "truly, truly." He said the disciples were destined to weep while the world rejoiced; their sorrow, however, would turn into joy (v20).

The world rejoiced at the death of Christ because the world hated Him. The people falsely believed they could murder the Truth. Today, the world still believes it can squelch the truth; it believes it can destroy the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but Jesus said those who are His, will come to Him (6:37). No amount of censorship and persecution can silence God's Word.

Christ described His impending death as like a pregnancy; after the agony, there would be a new revelation; a new hope for man. As the agony of pregnancy gives way to joy in the new birth, the agony of the crucifixion would give way to the joy of Christ's resurrection (v21-22).

> But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. [Isa 53:10-11NASB].

The disciples, too, were pregnant with agony as Jesus talked about His coming death and His departure. They had spent three years with the Messiah, hoping to reign with Him and now it appeared everything was for naught and their lives were at risk. Nonetheless, Jesus promised their sorrow would be turned into joy, but they could not understand.

It is human nature to focus on the immediate circumstances. This is why, when God brings trials, we grieve, we sorrow, we worry; we forget everything is under God's control. Jesus told the disciples these things, so when it happened, they would understand He is God and He is in control. We have these lessons in the Word to help us; we need to learn from them and trust God with every detail in our lives; through trials and blessings.

ASK WHATEVER YOU WILL

Asking nothing of Christ (v23) is a reference to the coming of the Spirit (Acts 2). They will need ask nothing of Christ because the Spirit will be with them, guiding them into all truth.

> 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. [14:26 NASB].

Before the Scriptures were complete, the disciples and early Christians relied upon the Spirit to speak to them directly, often through tongues and prophecies. Today, we have the Word complete, but many people, rather than spend time in the Word, are looking for something special, that is, special for them and easier than studying the Word. Too often the spirit they are listening to is not the Holy Spirit.

Does the Spirit speak today? Yes, but most times He speaks through the Word, giving us understanding (1Jo 5:20) and, whenever He speaks by other means, He will never contradict the Word. There are no new messages or revelations to be discovered. The Word has been given to us and it is complete.

> but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. [1Co 13:10 NASB].

> Of old I have known from Your testimonies that You have founded them forever. [Psa 119:152 NASB].

Many people cling to what they believe are manifestations of the Spirit today. They chase after a secret knowledge. These revelations, so often, are opposite to what is declared in the Scriptures. Maybe they appear the same, but are just a little bit different, which is false. The Holy Spirit will never contradict Scripture; so we can be certain these phenomena are false. We should seek nothing more than God's Word.

> The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law. [Deu 29:29 NASB].

Asking nothing of Christ (v23) is a reference that man can now approach the Father directly. The veil in the temple was torn (Mat 27:51), the temple abandoned (Act 17:24) and we no longer go to the Father through the priests (Heb 10:19-20).

He told the disciples to ask anything of the Father, praying in His name and it will be given (v23-24). This seems to be a running theme throughout His teaching this night of the Last Supper.

> Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. [14:13-14 NASB].
>
> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. [15:7 NASB, ESV].
>
> You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. [15:16 NASB].
>
> **In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full. [v23-24 NASB].**

Many professing Christians use these verses to appeal to God for money, possessions and comfort; "that their joy may be full." Jesus was talking about asking the Father to help us in our walk with Him and understanding His revealed Word. God will freely give us all things so we can grow in Him and glorify Him with our lives.

> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. [Jam 1:5 NASB].

Many professing Christians seek their own glory; they seek comfort in this life for their own glory. God is exalted in His glory. He does not seek our glory. Even our salvation is for His glory.

Jesus instructed us to pray for God's glory and His kingdom (Mat 6:9-10). Surely, we can pray for our needs, but we pray knowing God knows our needs (Mat 6:8,25-32). So, we thank Him and we seek first the kingdom of God and do not worry about our needs (Mat 6:33-34). When we focus on ourselves, we go beyond our needs and covet for our wants. We cannot bear fruit for God when our minds desire comfort and wealth in the world. Jesus said we cannot serve God and our possessions; we cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:24).

> What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [Jam 4:1-4 NASB].

Jesus said to ask so our joy may be full. If we are truly seeking God, we cannot find joy in this world. We might find some things which make us temporarily happy, but there is no lasting joy down here. Our joy comes from having fellowship with God and bearing fruit for Him. He has promised to work out this fellowship and the fruit if we ask Him.

The disciples were soon to be torn away from the Lord. Things were about to get violent and there would be turmoil as they went into hiding. Several times in this conversation, Jesus told them to ask what they want. We can see from this context Jesus was telling them to ask for faith, for strength, for a closer walk, for perseverance and such. When trials come our way and life gets hard, rather than pray for the trials to leave, we can ask for God's Word to grow in our hearts and for Him to make us more like His Son. We can pray for wisdom, patience and strength to overcome our trials. He promised to give it.

CHRIST SPEAKS CLEARLY

Proverbs and parables had been the standard method Christ used to impart spiritual truth to the crowds and sometimes to the disciples. Christ said He would now speak plainly (v25). As if in an immediate turn around, in verse 29, the disciples said now He was speaking plainly.

This turn around was not the result of an immediate change in style on Christ's part; this was because their eyes and ears were opened to understand. We know this by context; for in verse 30, they said, "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." [NASB]. They could not have made this declaration from one paragraph of exposition or even one conversation with Jesus. All the things they saw and heard for the last three years suddenly came together into a clear understanding.

Then, Jesus reiterated what He had told them several times already: Ask the Father in My name. This is the pattern of prayer as Jesus laid out: we pray

to the Father in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. The disciples must have grasped this because they responded, "now you are speaking plainly." [v29].

The context of this asking and the Father giving is for wisdom and understanding:

1. In that day you will no longer ask Me, you will ask the Father in My name (v23).
2. I will no longer speak figuratively, but plainly. You will ask the Father in My name (v25-26).

Regarding asking the Father, Jesus said, "I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf." [v26b ESV]. We know Jesus is making intercession for us (Rom 8:34) and He promised whatever we ask in His name will be given (15:16). So, it does not appear He was saying He will not ask the Father on our behalf. From the context, it seems the meaning is He does not have to coerce a reluctant or unwilling Father to grant our request, for the Father loves us (v27).

If we love Christ and believe He was sent by the Father, the Father loves us (v27). He is more than willing to grant our requests because of our love for Christ. We know we love God if we keep His commandments (1Jo 2:3; 5:3). The Father is eager to fellowship with those who believe and obey (1Jo 1:5-9).

> If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. [14:23b NASB].
>
> but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:7 NASB].

Jesus told them He was leaving the world and going back to the Father (v29). This, too, had been a running theme in this conversation. He returned to the Father to make intercession for the believers; He is making intercession to a Father who is willing to forgive us and to love us. The Apostle John said if we confess our sins, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness." [1Jo 1:9 ESV, emphasis added]. This demonstrates a willingness on the part of the Father to forgive us and keep us in fellowship with Him.

After Jesus said these things, the disciples said now He was speaking plainly and now they knew He knew all things and came from God (v29-30). As we said before, this was not the result of Jesus saying He would speak plainly to them in the future and suddenly they heard plainly. God's

Word is spiritually discerned (1Co 2:14). God opened their minds to understand what they had been taught. In the hours to come, they were going to need this.

THE DISCIPLES WILL BE SCATTERED

Though Jesus spent much time teaching the disciples and they believed He was the Son of God, the Messiah, they were still slow to understand. They still wanted to call down lightning upon the Samaritans (Luk 9:54), hinder children from "bothering" Christ (Mar 10:13; Luk 18:15-18) and they were arguing who was the greatest among them (Luk 9:46; 22:24-27). They still had this mindset Christ would rule and they would be great.

Jesus told them the hour was coming when the disciples would be scattered (v32). He did not say the day was coming. The time was now upon them and the hour was imminent.

Jesus warned them not to rest upon their feelings, but to know He has overcome (v33). In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus told the disciples they would be scattered, but the disciples, led by Peter, vowed they would die for Him, they would overcome (Mat 26:31-35; Mar 14:27-31). When they were scattered and hiding for their lives, how they must have reflected upon their words.

> Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones. [Zec 13:7b NASB].

We can do nothing by our own strength. Though we may feel as bold as a lion, human nature is cowardice. It is God, alone, who gives courage. No matter the turmoil going on around us, if we keep our eyes on Christ, we will have peace and we will know He has overcome (v33).

Christ was sent by the Father and Christ came to do His will (6:38). Though the disciples would scatter, the Father would not leave Him (v32). The Father was with the Son during the trial, the mockings and the crucifixion. Though Christ would feel abandoned by the Father as He poured out His wrath upon His Son (Mat 27:46; Mar 15:34), yet the Father would be with Him (v32).

> My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me? [Psa 22:1a NASB, ESV].

DID THE FATHER ABANDON CHRIST ON THE CROSS?

Many preach Jesus was separated from the Father when He suffered on the cross. This cannot be so, because Jesus said the Father would be with Him (v32).

One argument made for God abandoning Christ on the cross is He cannot look at sin (Hab 1:13). This was the cry of Habakkuk as he saw the wicked prosper and he sought to remind God of the favor these men appeared to receive, but, in fact, this very God "who cannot look at sin," became sin for us. So, this was Habakkuk making a case from human understanding.

When we examine whether God can look at sin, the Scriptures seem to indicate the meaning to be God cannot look upon sin with favor; He cannot give approval to sin. The Bible says the wicked will not stand in the judgment (Psa 1:5) and the boastful shall not stand before God (Psa 5:5). However, the Bible says every knee will bow before Him (Rom 14:11; Php 2:10). This means sinners, full of sin, will be looking upon Christ while kneeling, not standing and God will be looking upon these sinners. The Bible says they will perish; they will be destroyed (Psa 1:6; 5:6). Those who practice sin cannot stand before Him, because God will not approve sin.

The Bible says Christ became sin for us (2Co 5:21). He did not become a sinner; He did not become sinful; He never practiced sin nor did He sin even once (Heb 4:15; 1Pe 2:22). The Scriptures say He took our sin and nailed it to the cross (Col 2:14). This means when Christ was nailed to the cross our sin was nailed with Him. He bore God's wrath and He paid our debt.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote it was the will of God to crush Him (Isa 53:10-11). God's wrath was poured out on Jesus Christ while on the cross. The Bible says He is our propitiation (Rom 3:25-26; Heb 2:17; 1Jo 2:2, 4:10). To be our propitiation means He satisfied God's wrath. We are saved from God's wrath through Christ's blood (Rom 5:9). This is how God saved us from Himself.

So, was God angry at Christ? and did He turn away?

God's wrath originates from His holiness and demonstrates His justice (Rom 1:18; 2:5; 3:25-26; Rev 19:15). When God exercises His wrath, does He turn away or does He look upon His enemies in triumph? The Bible says, those who worship the Beast will suffer torment, God's wrath, forever. They will suffer in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb (Rev 14:10). Forever, Christ will look upon His enemies in triumph. If God looks upon His enemies while pouring out His wrath, could God's wrath be satisfied if the Father turned away while He crushed His Son who was

made sin on our behalf? If God was executing His wrath upon His Son for all the sins of His people, would He not look upon the Son as He executed His wrath?

> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? [Psa 22:1 ESV].

Does this question, "why have You forsaken Me?" describe the Father as turning away? The second half of the verse complains of lack of salvation or help from the torment of this wrath. This was the "forsaking." Psalm 22 describes the agony of Christ on the cross and declares the Father has not hidden His face from Him.

> For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him for help, He heard. [Psa 22:24 NASB].

There is much to consider here. Some who argue the Father and the Son were separated at the cross make some humanly reasonable arguments. However, the Trinity of God has never been separated. God is One; the three persons of the Godhead are one and nothing can separate Them. Furthermore, Jesus said He was not alone because the Father was with Him (v32). He said the disciples would scatter and leave Him, but the Father would be with Him; this means the Father would not leave Him nor turn away.

SIDENOTE: Many professing Christians shy away from speaking about the wrath of God, but God's wrath against sinners is terrible and real. To redeem man His wrath must be satisfied. Christ took this wrath upon Himself (10:11). To those who disobey Christ, God's wrath remains upon them (3:36). His wrath will remain upon them forever; it will never be satisfied. We must warn the unbeliever, he will face the wrath of God if he does not repent.

PREPARING THE DISCIPLES FOR TRIAL

These things He said to the disciples that night (v33): He taught them to serve; He warned He would be betrayed; He gave them a commandment to love each other; He promised them He will prepare a place for them with Him in Heaven; He told them He is the only way to the Father and He told them He is life and truth; He told them if they have seen Him, they have seen the Father; He told them He chose them; He promised to send the Holy Spirit after Him who will teach them; He told them if they love Him, they will keep His commandments; He told them they cannot produce fruit unless they abide in Him and if they do not produce fruit, they will burn in

Hell; He told them the world will hate them just as the world hates Him; He told them they would be scattered, but the Father would be with Him. He told them all these things so they would have peace; so they would think on these things and have peace through Him, while He overcame the world.

Before He left, before things got crazy, before they were scattered, He gave them assurance in Him and gave them a foundation of sound doctrine. When everything seemed chaotic and wrong and they would be overwhelmed by events and authorities, He wanted them to remember these things. As He hung, dying on the cross, He wanted them to remember He had overcome the world.

When we focus our eyes upon what we want in the world and the problems we face here, we cannot have peace, but when we seek God, as the Apostle Paul taught, "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving," we will have "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." [Php 4:6-7]. God, alone, is our sanity in an insane world.

In chapter 8 of Romans, the Apostle Paul wrote everything works for our good, because God is conforming us into the image of His Son (Rom 8:28-29). This means there are no frivolous trials, temptations or persecutions. This is why Paul asked the question, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" [Rom 8:31b ESV].

If God spared not His own Son on our behalf, will He not give us all things to keep us in Him? Can anyone bring a charge against us before God, when He has justified us and Christ is interceding for us? Can anything separate us from God's love? Tribulation, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger or sword; even if we are killed, can we be separated from God? NO! NO! NO! We are more than conquerors through God who loves us and nothing can separate us from Him (Rom 8:28-39).

God did not spare His Son; Christ died to bring us to God (Rom 8:32; 1Pe 3:18). When the world overwhelms us, remember Jesus said He has overcome the world and Paul said we are more than overcomers because of what Christ has done for us (v33; Rom 8:37). God works everything for good, to make us more like Christ (Rom 8:28-29).

Remember in trial, our hope is in Christ.

> You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. [1Jo 4:4 NASB].

> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. [1Jo 5:4 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Jesus was giving His final teaching before He would leave the disciples. He told them He was leaving and they would see Him no more, but a while later, they would see Him again. He was going to die on the cross, but He was going to rise again. Death was not the end for Christ.

Christ compared their coming sufferings and His death to a pregnancy. There is much agony in the process, but there is great joy when new life springs forth.

Jesus told the disciples to ask the Father in Jesus' name. The context is in seeking wisdom to grow in our relationship to God. The Apostle James wrote if we lack wisdom, ask of God and He will hold nothing back (Jam 1:5).

Jesus warned the disciples they would be scattered, but He would not be alone, for the Father would be with Him. This was their assurance God is in control.

He told them they would have trouble in the world, but He has overcome the world. In the world, we will have trouble, but no trial, no temptation, no oppression is frivolous. Christ has overcome the world and God uses everything for good to make us more like His Son. Seek after Christ and the Father has promised to give us anything we ask. The more we become like Christ, the more we become overcomers.

> And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. [Rev 12:11 NASB].

John 17:1-8 Christ Revealed God's Glory To The Elect

At the Last Supper, Jesus began His recorded teaching with, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." [14:1 NASB]. He ended with, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." [16:33 NASB]. Peace is the result of taking our eyes off the world and trusting in Christ.

> You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. [Isa 26:3 ESV].

So now His teaching is ending and the time to give up His life is close at hand. He closed His teaching with a prayer to the Father. He prayed in the presence of His disciples, for their benefit, and in this prayer He confirmed solid doctrine.

Some professing Christians want to dispute or water down some of these doctrines Jesus professed in His prayer. This is absurd if not blasphemous. How can we think we can refute what God said when He talked with God? If you feel inclined to disagree with some of the doctrines Jesus taught, you might want to examine yourself to see if you are in the faith (2Co 13:5). It matters not that some heavy hitters might agree with you: it is a dangerous thing to question what God has made clear.

> **Read John 17:1-8.**

GOD DOES ALL THINGS FOR HIS GLORY

> **Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You. [v1b NASB].**

The hour had come for the Son to glorify the Father by His obedience unto death. The Father would glorify the Son by raising Him from the dead.

The eternal covenant: The Son glorifying the Father by His obedience; even to His death upon the cross (v4). The Father glorifying the Son by giving Him authority over all mankind and a people of His own (v2). For this covenant, the Son became man and the Father exalted the Son to the highest authority.

> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the

> point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Php 2:6-11 NASB].
>
> Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 NASB].
>
> All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [Mat 28:18 NASB].

In chapter 12, when some Greek men asked to be introduced to Jesus, He replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." [12:23 NASB, ESV]. He described His imminent death as a seed which dies and bears much fruit. His death was soon to bring much fruit, even among the Gentiles. In the current passage, the context for His imminent glorification is the Father had given "Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life." [v2 NASB]. He was glorified in His death by overcoming death and giving life to those who are His.

> so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. . .For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself. [5:23,26 NASB].

Everything Christ did was for the glory of the Father. And the Father has glorified the Son. "I and the Father are one." [10:30]. God does everything for His glory; His purpose is for His glory.

> **I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. [v4-5 NASB].**

CHRIST IS GLORIFIED WITH AUTHORITY

> **You have given Him authority over all flesh. [v2a ESV].**

In the Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20), Jesus said all authority was given to Him. Therefore, or because of this, we are commanded to make disciples and teach all nations to obey His commands.

He is the highest authority; He is to be feared. Yet, the modern American gospel teaches sinners that Jesus wants to be their friend, who requires nothing of them. As if Christ will hang out with them in their sin. They proclaim a Savior, while forgetting He must first be LORD.

With this authority over all flesh, He gives life to those whom the Father has given Him (and, implicitly, condemns those who disobey). The Son was glorified in His death, because the fruit of His death is life; life for all to whom God has given the Son.

> But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief;
>
> If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.
>
> As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.
>
> Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors;
>
> Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. [Isa 53:10-12 NASB].

This is why Christ is called the Firstborn: He rose from the dead and His offspring are those given Him by the Father; those whose sins He took upon Himself. He is the firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29).

> the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood. [Rev 1:5b NASB].

The One who has all authority, came to earth to be crushed by the Father, so that, He could bring life to those the Father chose in Him from before the creation of the world. This is an amazing thing and we do well to meditate upon this daily. Everyday.

ELECTION IS FOR CHRIST'S GLORY

Christ stated plainly the doctrine of election. He did not say He would give eternal life to all who accepted Him into their heart or who made a decision for Christ. He said He will give eternal life to those whom the Father has given Him (v2).

The Apostle Paul wrote, the Father chose us in Christ before He created the world (Eph 1:4-11). The Apostle John wrote those who received Him did so because of and by the will of the Father (1:12-13). Salvation is by God's grace alone, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9). To be elect, is a gift from God.

> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. [10:28-29 ESV].

THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE: TO KNOW GOD GLORIFIED

And eternal life is this: to be caught up in this circle of love and glory between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; to know the only true God and His Son whom He has sent (v3). God had all this in Himself. He needed nothing else, but He shares this glory and eternal life with us whom He has chosen.

> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:7 ESV].

The Apostle John wrote Christ has made the Father known (1:18). Jesus Christ has come in the flesh and dwelt among man so we may know God and, thereby, have eternal life. John wrote later to the Christian Jews, Christ has given us understanding so we may know Him who is true; we may know the Father (1Jo 5:20).

But whom do we seek to know? Most professing Christians seek to know a god acceptable to the world. They compromise the Gospel to make it pleasing to their worldly peers; to make Jesus relevant, but, be warned: Jesus condemned those who worked for the praise of man rather than the glory of God (5:44). He said these people cannot be saved.

The foundation of God's glory is His holiness and righteousness. Anything which impunes His glory is an attack against Him. Yet, so many professing Christians think God winks at sin. They claim God "knows my heart." They do not fear God. They think frivolously of His holiness and His wrath. Eternal life is this: to know the Father and the Son; to know the true God.

Our attitude should be the same as the Prophet Hosea. We should strive to know the God of the Bible.

> So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. [Hos 6:3a NASB].

Press on to know God. Abide in Christ and persevere to the end. There is no coasting or retirement in the faith. If we do not abide in Christ, in the Word, then, like the branch, we wither. If we wither, then we will be tossed into the fire. Those who do not persevere cannot be saved (Mat 24:13).

GOD SEEKS HIS OWN GLORY

God is ultimately and intimately interested in glorifying Himself; every member of the Godhead glorifying each other in their eternal love for each other. In verses 4 and 5, Christ continued His request for the Father to glorify the Son, which began in verse 1. He affirmed to the Father He glorified Him on earth by accomplishing the work He gave Him to do. Christ was obedient, even to His death on the cross (Php 2:8).

Christ desired the glory He had in the Father's presence; the glory He had with Him before the world was created. Before the world began and through all eternity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rejoiced and gloried in their love for each other. Everything they do is for the glory of the Godhead. There is no neutral activity among them.

God's provision for salvation and eternal life is not about the glory of man nor is it about the value of man; this is for the glory of God. The eternal covenant. God will exalt His holiness and righteousness in salvation.

These first five verses affirm, the Persons of the Godhead do everything to glorify each other. In all they do, they glorify each other. Now, before Christ prayed for His people, He prayed for the glory of the Father and the Son. This is His priority.

> Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory. [Isa 6:3 NASB].

THE ELECT BELIEVE FOR GOD'S GLORY

Those who follow Christ and believe, the disciples and everyone after them, were given to the Son by the Father. For the Father to give the chosen to the Son implies they first belonged to the Father (v6).

The elect are not a mere foreknowing of God. For these have been chosen and they belong to the Father, who gave them to Christ. Can the doctrine of

election be more clear than the plain words of Christ? Nothing God does is by chance; everything happens for God's purposes (Eph 1:11).

Christ manifested the Father to the disciples. He showed them the Father through His miracles and His teaching. Christ said He only spoke the words given Him by the Father and He only did the things He saw the Father doing. In turn, it was clear to the disciples, the miracles and the teachings of Christ were from the Father (v7).

> Truly, truly, I say to you, 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. [5:19 NASB].
>
> 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 I speak to the world. . .I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. [8:26,28b NASB].
>
> For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. [12:49 NASB].
>
> No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. [15:15 NASB].

Christ said He revealed the Father to those the Father had given Him (v6). The Apostle John said He has made the Father known (1:18). He spoke to the crowds, but the multitudes did not hear. The Apostle John explained God hardened their hearts lest they believe and be healed (12:49). To understand the Word, is the work of the Spirit (6:29); to the unbeliever, the Word is foolishness (1Co 2:14). Jesus rebuked the unbelievers, saying they could not hear Him because they were not of His sheep (10:26).

"They have kept Your Word." [v6b]. Christ manifested the Father to His followers, whom the Father had given to Him, and the result was they kept His Word; they honored Him with obedience. They were doers of the Word and not just hearers (Jam 1:22). True faith results in action. If we truly believe, Christ produces fruit in us (15:1-6). How do we know if we are truly saved? We keep His Word. This is God's doing (6:29). This is for God's glory.

What does it mean to "keep" the Word? Doesn't the word "keep" have to do with care and feeding, preserving, maintaining and such? So the idea of

keeping would be to feed upon, protect and obey, would it not? This is the sign of a true follower of Christ: they abide in the Word, they obey the Word and they defend the Word. They do not question it; they do not water it down; they do not compromise; they do not seek mans' approval. This is what Jesus meant when He said we must eat His flesh and drink His blood in chapter 6: we need His Word and we feed upon it.

> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. [1Jo 2:3-6 NASB].
>
> **for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. [v8 NASB].**

The Apostle James wrote if we hear the Word, but do not do what it says, we are deceiving ourselves (Jam 1:22). Our obedience is not a legalism nor is our salvation by works; for no one can be justified by what they do (Rom 3:20).

Jesus told us to abide in Him. He said if we abide in Him, He will abide in us and, just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can we produce fruit unless we abide in Him; for it is He who produces fruit in us (15:1-6). The Apostle Paul built upon this when he wrote telling us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. He said it is God who works in us (Php 2:12-13). If we are truly following Christ, God will produce this fruit in us; we will abide in the Word, we will obey the Word and we will defend the Word.

IN CLOSING

God does all things for His own glory. Christ came to man to make the Father known and He glorified the Father in His death. The Father also glorified the Son by raising Him from the dead.

All authority has been given to Christ. He is God, yet He chose to become man in order to redeem the elect for God. Having been raised from the dead, all authority has been given to Him. It is upon this authority, we are commanded to teach all people to repent and obey Christ.

Those whom God has chosen to receive Christ, do so for His glory. The elect are a gift from the Father to the Son.

Jesus clearly spoke the doctrine of election: "the people whom You gave Me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me." [v6]. How can this doctrine be denied or watered down? The Scriptures are clear the Father chose His own before the creation of the world and He has given them to His Son. This is the eternal covenant.

This doctrine was reiterated in Jesus' prayer to the Father. Therefore, you could say it was spoken by God to God, yet some professing Christians take offense and will deny the words of Christ.

The definition of eternal life is to know the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. To have fellowship with God is eternal life.

We see in this picture, God is ultimately and intimately interested in glorifying Himself; every member of the Godhead glorifying the others. Everything God does is for His own glory. Even the death of the Son and the salvation of man, was done for the glory of God.

John 17:9-19 Christ Prays To Sanctify And Preserve Believers

In the opening of His prayer to the Father, the Son confirmed He had come to glorify the Father. Among the several ways given, He said He glorified the Father by giving life to those the Father had given Him.

Read John 17:9-19.

GOD LOVES THOSE WHO ARE HIS

> **I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me. [v9b NASB].**

Christ's love is toward those who believe; not to the world. Verse 20, which bookends nicely with verse 9, Christ continued this prayer regarding all those who will believe in Him through the extended word of His disciples. Christ loved and prayed for every person the Father has given Him. In this verse (9), He said He does not pray for the world.

In this verse, the meaning of "world" is everyone who does not belong to Christ. And here He said in plain words, He is not praying for the world; for those who do not belong to Him (v9). If you think the meaning of 3:16 is God loves everyone in the world, Jesus just betrayed this idea by specifically saying He is not praying for any who are not His.

We know Christ makes intercession for the believers constantly before the Father (Heb 7:25), but He makes no request to the Father for those who do not follow Him; and He affirmed this here. Therefore, it is a lie to tell the unbeliever, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Jesus said He will not even pray for them. This was stated by the Son to the Father; said from God to God. The psalmist said God is indignant toward the unbeliever everyday (Psa 7:11). Therefore, we must conclude God does not love the unbeliever.

When Jesus said, "All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine" [v10], this claim, once again, put Him on equal footing with the Father. We can pray "all that is mine is Yours," but we cannot pray "all Yours are mine." We receive from God, but we can give nothing to Him. Only Christ, who is equal to the Father, can make this claim.

Those who believe belong to the Father and to the Son. We are God's possession. We serve Him, we do not serve ourselves. We seek His glory, not the glory of our own. We will persevere to the end, because no on can take us from His hand (10:28-29). We are His possession and here we see, Christ prays for those who are His.

THE GLORY OF THE SON

In this passage we see the love of the Father and the Son working in unison to preserve those who are His. This should give us great joy, for we know Christ is working to intercede for us constantly before the Father (Rom 8:34), but it is not as if the Father is hostile toward us. On the contrary, here we see the Father, who is holy, righteous and just, is nonetheless determined for us to persevere and no one can take us from His hand.

This also gives us a glimpse into the purpose of creation when Jesus said He is glorified in those who belong to Him (v10). We who believe are the glory of Christ and we have been given to Him for this purpose. This should be a clear message and a reminder, salvation and eternal life are not about us and our glory; God did not save us because there was anything good or unique in us. The mystery why God saved any man and gave to anyone eternal life is for the glory of God.

Christ spoke as if His work was done: "I am no longer in the world." [v11]. God is not bound by time and it was determined before the creation of the world Christ would die to redeem His own. He will not turn back from His task nor is He bound by time, therefore, He could speak as if the work was already done.

The wording of this statement also indicates He was looking forward to returning to the Father. The Apostle Paul wrote the Father raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named (Eph 1:20-21). No name is greater than His (Act 4:12) and He was looking to return to His glory.

> And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. [Isa 2:11b NASB].
>
> And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. [Zec 14:9 NASB].

TO SANCTIFY AND PRESERVE

He was leaving, yet His concern was for those He was leaving behind. He prayed the Father would keep those He had given Him. He gave a reason: "that they may be one, even as We are one." [v11b]. When we look at the visible church, we see fractured unity; there are many denominations. As for individuals: some are walking with Christ and others are promoting sin. This is more fractured unity. This used to bother me considerably, but I came to realize many people within the visible church do not follow Christ. This is what Jesus taught in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mat

13:24-30). Nonetheless, those who are truly His, do enjoy sweet fellowship and brotherhood together. Not in perfection, because we all have a sin nature, but we take seriously the admonition in the Book of Hebrews not to forsake the gathering together. We seek to be with our brothers and sisters to encourage each other in the faith (Heb 10:24-25).

"Keep them in Your name." [v11). Those the Father has given Him truly believe and no one can ever take them out of His hand (10:28-29). If we abide in Christ, we are assured we will persevere to the end because God holds us and guards us with His hand.

When Jesus said He had lost none "except," He did not mean somehow one got away (v12). Although he was one of the twelve, Judas was never chosen for life. His purpose was to betray Christ, thus fulfilling prophecy (Psa 41:9; Zec 11:12-13).

In regards to Judas, who was not His, Christ spoke clearly the doctrine of election (v12). He called Judas the "son of destruction," which is also translated perdition, condemnation or damnation. Some people are not chosen in Christ; they are "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction." [Rom 9:22]. It is important to understand, though he was destined for destruction, yet he was not destined against his will. Christ taught this, therefore, we should look closely into it, rather than be offended.

Many pastors proclaim they do not teach doctrine because it divides, but Christ said His teachings or doctrines bring joy (v13). Even as He knew He was on His way to die, He spent this last evening fellowshipping with those He loved and instructing them in sound doctrine. The study of what God has given us in His Word and wants us to know, leads to joy. A man-centered gospel may give hope of fulfillment for this earthly life, but a God-centered Gospel gives hope and excitement for eternal life. There can be no greater joy than to know God is in control, we are His and we will be with Him forever, but this joy cannot come without sound teaching. We must be in the Word and we must seek to understand sound doctrine, so our joy may be full.

Many hear the Word of God, but it does nothing for them; it makes no change in them, but some are given the Word (v14); this means the Holy Spirit has given them understanding of the Word (1Co 2:14; 1Jo 5:20). Those who have been given the Word will speak the Word. This is not of the world. The world loves those who speak the world. Those who speak the Word are repulsive to those who speak the world; "the world has hated them." [v14].

When Jesus said He had given them the Word and the world hated them, this is another indication that you cannot have a private faith. If your faith is true, you will speak the Word.

> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. [Rom 1:16a NASB].

If we have been "given the Word," this implies we will spend time in the Word. We will not be attracted to worldly wisdom. The more time we spend in the Word, the more repulsive becomes the psychology and positive motivation of the world and the more the world hates us. When we cast off the world's wisdom, we demonstrate we are not of the world.

If the world's wisdom, such as positive motivation or eastern thought, is appealing to you, then you are of the world and are not following Christ. You cannot serve two masters and if the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness (Mat 6:23-24).

Many preachers and professing Christians try to make the Gospel appealing or relevant to the world. If we truly love Christ, why would we compromise His Gospel for the world's approval? Many professing Christians claim preaching God's holiness and man's need to repent is repulsive and hinders people from coming to Christ, but didn't Jesus say no one comes to Him unless the Father draw them (6:44)? And, didn't Jesus say all whom the Father has given Him will come to Him (6:37)? Will we take God at His Word or will we trust in our own devices to bring man to God?

To change the Gospel or make it relevant is to change who Jesus Christ is. Many professing Christians seek to win people to a Jesus Christ made in their own image: an acceptable Christ. They are not willing to be hated by the world or by their friends and close associates. So they compromise Christ and delude themselves with the lie they are leading people to Him. If you fit this bill: know that you are not likely saved. You are patting sinners on their backs while on their way to Hell, and you, also, are likely traveling the same direction.

> If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 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, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. [15:18-20 NASB].

The world loves those who are of the world, because men are focused upon creating their empires here on earth. They enrich each other with opportunities for worldly pleasures. "Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours?" [Gen 34:23]. This is the world's view; this is the world's wisdom. On the other hand, those who have been given God's

Word, who view their life as a sojourn in enemy territory, as ambassadors for Christ, cannot be loved by the world. The truly saved know their home is in Heaven and they value nothing of this world.

The follower of Christ takes to heart the admonition of Christ, "A servant is not greater than his Master." [13:16; 15:20]. Because the world hated Christ, if we truly follow Him, we expect to be hated by the world and we will not seek to win the approval of the world nor fill our lives with the pleasures thereof.

In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus said the evil one looks to snatch away the Word which has been sown (Mat 13:19). One of the most effective ways the devil has of doing this is by corrupting the company one keeps. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Bad company corrupts good morals." [1Co 15:33b NASB]. Another effective means is false doctrine: "a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough." [1Co 5:6b NASB]. Jesus said He did not ask the Father to take His people out of the world. He asked for their protection from the evil one (v15). Those who follow Christ are protected from bad company and false doctrine. A truly saved person cannot continue in them.

> We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. [1Jo 5:18 ESV].

Stated twice, verse 14 and 16: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Between these two, Christ prayed for our protection from evil, so we will persevere without being corrupted. Many professing Christians do become corrupted and they fall away. They are not saved (1Jo 2:19), but those who are His will persevere (Heb 6:11-12). Paul admonished us to keep alert with all perseverance, praying for each other (Eph 6:18).

If we are not of the world, what does this do with the oft stated slogan by professing Christians, "God loves you the way you are"? If we are truly of Christ, we will stand out from the world. For God has regenerated us so that we no longer take pleasure in the world, but we conform to the image of Christ.

> **Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. [v17 NASB, ESV].**

Sanctify means to set apart or declare holy; to consecrate or purify. Sanctification is God's work in us to conform us to the likeness of His Son (Rom 8:28-29). Through sanctification, we become more like Christ (1Jo 3:2-3). When we are regenerated, God turns our hearts away from the world

and toward fellowship with Him. Day-by-day we grow in sanctification; that is, we become more holy.

In this passage, Jesus said we are sanctified through the Word. This is not a once-over; this is a daily life in the Word, as part of taking up our cross to follow Christ. Jesus told the disciples, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." [15:3 ESV]. We are sanctified by the Word of God (v17). God's Word purifies us; exposure to the Word creates a desire to obey the truth, to be holy (1Pe 1:22).

> The sum of Your word is truth. [Psa 119:160a NASB, ESV].

God's revealed Word, the Scriptures, is truth (Eph 1:13; Col 1:5). The more we are in the Word, the more we are exposed to the truth; we desire it and this works toward our sanctification. Those who are sanctified are not taken out of the world. We are protected from evil (v15) so we will not be corrupted (v16). Christ said He sends us into the world, just as the Father sent Him into the world (v18).

1. We have been given the Word; we are not of the world (v14).
2. God protects us from the devil's corruptions (v15).
3. We are not of the world, but are sanctified in the Word (v16-17).
4. God sends us into the world to proclaim His Word (v18).

> All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. [Mat 28:18b-20 NASB].

As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends us. The Father sent the Son to make Him known (1:18; 7:26). We are sent into the world to make Christ known (v18). Though we are in the world, we are not of the world. We are sent into it to testify of Christ's work.

At another time, Jesus said He was sanctified or consecrated by the Father (10:36). Here Christ said He sanctified Himself for the sake of the elect, so they may be sanctified in truth (v19). Therefore, the Father and the Son are in agreement, Christ, though a man, was set apart as sacred. His work in redeeming His people was a sacred work. He gave Himself to the cross; He gave Himself to die for our sin, to sanctify or set apart as holy those whom He has redeemed. God is glorified in His holiness and He glorifies Himself

by setting apart a people whom He rescued from sin and death and saved according to truth, to live holy lives.

> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. [Tit 2:14 NASB].

The modern American gospel says God loves you the way you are and Christ died so you can go to Heaven, but the Bible says Christ died to redeem us from sin. He did not die so we could remain in our sin. He died to purify us and make us zealous for good works (Eph 2:10). He died to sanctify us and make us more like Himself (Rom 8:29). If we are happy in our sin or if we take pleasure in what we consider to be small sins, we might want to examine ourselves; we might not be saved (2Co 13:5).

IN CLOSING

In the ninth verse, the meaning of "world" is everyone who does not belong to Christ. And here He said in plain words: He did not pray for the world. That is, He did not pray for those who do not belong to Him. When people say 3:16 means God loves every person in the world, even those who do not believe, it is because they do not understand the meaning of the word "world" in proper context.

Those who believe, belong to the Father and the Son. Jesus said they were given to Him from the Father and He is glorified in those who are His (v10). If they were given by the Father to the Son, they belonged to the Father; they were His to give. In plain words, the elect were claimed by God and chosen for life. As the Apostle Paul wrote, we were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world for His glory (Eph 1:4,11).

When speaking of Judas, Christ confirmed some are chosen for destruction. This is irrefutable doctrine, because the Bible records that God said this to God.

Jesus said He has given us His Word and the world hates us. This means, if we have His Word, we will speak it. For the world cannot hate us if it does not know we have His Word. You cannot be a secret Christian.

We are in the world, not of it. For we are sanctified in the Word. Christ sanctified Himself so we may be sanctified. His sanctification was His perfect, sinless life and His death on the cross for our sins. He proved His holiness when He rose again, conquering death. Our sanctification is to be in the Word; learning of Him and loving Him.

> 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. [15:10 NASB].

For our sanctification, Christ has left us in the world. He has sent us into the world, not to be like the world, but to be a witness for His Gospel of salvation. The salvation which declares we can be rescued from our sin to live in truth and holiness. Christ has performed a sacred, sanctifying work and He is setting aside a holy, sanctified people to declare His salvation. We are sent into the world, not to be of it, but to be ambassadors for Christ (2Co 5:20).

To be in the world and not of it requires perseverance. This is why the Apostles wrote admonishing us to persevere (Rom 5:3-4; 2Th 1:4-5; Heb 12:1-2; Jam 1:2-4, 12; Jud 1:20-21). This is the work of God (10:28-29).

> For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. [Heb 3:14 NASB].

> But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. [Mat 24:13 NASB].

John 17:20-26 I Made Known To Them Your Name

Christ prayed for those whom the Father had given Him, so they would be sanctified in the Word and protected from the evil one. Then, He made clear, His prayer was for all the elect; not just the twelve, but even future disciples. The Apostle Peter wrote that God is not willing for any of the elect to perish (2Pe 3:9) and He knows how many this will be (Rom 11:25).

> **Read John 17:20-26.**

BELIEVING COMES THROUGH THE WORD

When Jesus prayed for those who would believe as a result of the testimony of the disciples, He prayed for all believers, throughout all generations (v20).

There is a saying, "Preach the Gospel; if necessary, use words." This is a false doctrine, because the Bible tells us it is the preaching of the Word, the testimony of the believer, which brings man to Christ.

> How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? [Rom 10:14 NASB].

Here, Christ affirms this doctrine by saying He is praying for those who believe in Him through the word of those who spoke it. In the fourth chapter of John, the people of the town first believed because of the testimony of the Samaritan woman. After Christ taught them, they believed because of His words (4:39,41-42).

Does God use our lives as a testimony? Certainly, but at best our lives are a confirmation of our words. Our lives cannot declare the Gospel, they can only give evidence of it. So, as we have said before: if you truly believe in Christ, you will speak the Gospel. You cannot have a private faith.

UNITY IN TRUTH

> **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. [v21 NASB].**

In verse 11, Jesus prayed the Father keep them in His name, "that they may be one, even as We are one." In this keeping, He had already prayed the Father not take them out of the world, but protect them from evil and sanctify them in His Word.

There is no room for carnality or sinful lifestyles among the believers, because He prayed they may be in the Father and the Son (v21).

> Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. [Col 3:17 NASB].

> whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. [1Co 10:31b NASB].

He prayed for all believers, in all generations. He prayed for God's keeping and He prayed for our unity. This unity is not built upon all professing Christians getting along. The tares and the wheat cannot get along. Our unity is built on persevering in righteousness and in truth: "as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us" [v21b NASB].

> God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. [1Jo 1:5b-7 NASB].

Jesus prayed for this unity so the world will believe the Father sent the Son (v21). We do not see the world being saved, but Christ was not praying the world believe unto salvation. If the whole world being saved was the end goal, He would not have said He was not praying for the world (v9). The belief of the world, to which Jesus was referring, is that by our witness they will know the truth and be without excuse.

Our Christian unity must be build on the truth, then the world will know what the Scriptures say about Christ is true.

UNITY LEADS TO GOD'S GLORY

> Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. [v11 NASB].

Our unity is the work of God and it is only in His name (v11). Any effort to promote unity among the visible church at the expense of the truth or the unity of the Father and the Son is false. Christ has given us His glory so all the elect may be one as the Father is with the Son (v22). There is no falsehood in it.

If we truly follow Christ, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. The Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son, so too, we have this fellowship in

us. John MacArthur said we participate in all the attributes and essence of God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Study Bible, at v22). The Holy Spirit works in us to sanctify us and make us more like Christ, perfecting us in unity (v23).

> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. [Rom 8:29-30 NASB].

Those who are His, He predestined, He called, He justified and He glorified. We have this glory in the Holy Spirit's work in our lives and we have a future glory, which is our hope.

> to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [Col 1:27 NASB].

> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. [2Pe 1:3-4 ESV].

Jesus said everyone will know we His disciples by our love for each other (13:35). Here, Christ said God perfects His people in unity so the world may know the Father sent the Son and that the world may know the Father loves His people as He loved His Son (v23). God will use our unity, imperfect as it is, for His glory. This should be our aim: God's glory.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST AND THE BELIEVERS

Christ desires for His people to be with Him, to see His glory (v24). This is more than I can comprehend; it gives me great hope. We who truly believe will be there and will glorify Him because He is the one who died for our sins to satisfy God's wrath (Isa 53:5-11) and He imputed His righteousness upon us (2Co 5:21), so the Father will receive us. He chose us or predestined us before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4), He called us, He justified us and He glorified us (Rom 8:30). Though we see this glory veiled in this fallen world, this is our hope and we should be eager for it. We should be eager daily to see Christ; He is anxious for us to be with Him.

Christ's glory, which He desires His people to see, is very great. This glory was given to Him by the Father, because they loved each other before the creation of the world (v24). Before creation, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were rejoicing and fellowshipping in their love for each other. This is True Love. God had all He needed in Himself. This false teaching that God was lonely or that in some other way needed man is blasphemy. But He created man for His glory and He wants His people to share in this glory. The glory of the Son is great and He is desiring for the elect to see it and celebrate it with Him.

I HAVE MADE YOU KNOWN

When Christ said He knows the Father, this was not the same "knowing" we have of Him. He was with the Father before the beginning of time. He loved the Father and celebrated with Him; He partook of the amazing things which go on in Heaven. He knows the Father (v25). Christ ended His prayer with His acknowledgment of the Father. Though the world does not know the Father, those who are in the Son know He is sent from the Father (v25).

Why cannot the world know the Father? Because the Father is righteous and this is how Christ addressed Him, "O righteous Father." [v25]. He said those who follow Him, know the Father has sent Him (v25). How do we know the Father? Jesus said He made the Father known and we know Him through His Word..

When Christ said, "I made known to them Your name," [v26]. He affirmed we did not come to Christ on our own; it is the work of God. He made the Father known to us; we were not seeking. He regenerated us, He took us out of the power of the evil one, so we could know and understand (1Jo 5:19-20).

It is the work of God we are in the world, but not of it; we persevere as He continues to make God's name known to us. His goal is for the love which the Father has for the Son may be in us, His followers (v26). This is fellowship with God. We cannot love God and the world (1Jo 2:15; Jam 4:4). We must be careful not to build our empires down here; for where our treasure is, there will our heart be (Mat 6:21).

> Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. [1Ti 4:16 ESV].

Keep a close watch means our walk with Christ must be deliberate and it must be our priority. Many professing Christians think the Christian walk is to make a decision for Christ, go to church and maybe spend a few minutes

a week in the Word. This is foolishness. We must take time to check our lives according the Word (2Co 13:5); we must be in the Word and live our lives to glorify God alone.

IN CLOSING

In this closing section of His prayer to the Father, Christ expressed His desire for all believers, in all generations, so we may be one as He and the Father are one. His desire is for His people to be united in truth and a witness to the world, so the world will know the Father sent Christ into the world.

Christ has given His glory to us, so we may be one. One with God, not in the world. This too, is a witness to the world, so they may know the Father sent the Son and that He loves those who follow Christ.

Christ desires for those who love Him to be with Him and see His glory. This is a glorious hope. The world does not know God. We who are elect of God, know Him and believe. Christ has made this known to us and He will continue to reveal this to us, so the love of God will be in us.

Be in the Word.

> If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. [8:31-32 NASB].

What Christ Taught Us As He Prayed

The final night together for Jesus and the disciples, before His crucifixion, is presented in the Gospel of John beginning in chapter 13. The night began with Jesus washing the disciples' feet. After this, Jesus announced one of them would betray Him; He gave a command to love each other; and He foretold Peter's denial.

After these things, in chapters 14 through 16, He imparted solid doctrine. Christ told them He is preparing a place for them and He wants them to be with Him. He told them He is the only way to the Father and He is life and truth. He promised to send the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth. He told them they could not bear fruit unless they abide in Him and He promised whatever they asked in His name He would do. He warned them the world would hate them, but assured them He has overcome the world. And, He reaffirmed He would send them the Holy Spirit.

Then, seamlessly, the teaching rolled into Christ's high priestly prayer (ch17): "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come. '" [v1a NASB]. He began His prayer in the presence of the disciples; teaching them to pray in agreement with sound doctrine.

Read John 17:1-26.

Many professing Christians have trouble with certain doctrines in the Bible, even though these doctrines may be stated in plain, clear words. For example, many find the doctrine of election, as presented in Romans chapter 9 or Ephesians chapter 1, to be offensive or difficult to accept, although the doctrine is stated clearly. So, they do not fully deny the doctrine, but they feel the need to explain it away or water it down. However, in this chapter, Christ iterates the doctrine of election as well as other doctrines in His prayer to the Father and the words are plain and clear. Therefore, it is a dangerous matter to parse these words, for these words were spoken by God, to God.

In His prayer to the Father, Christ expressed His love for His disciples and He reiterated the doctrine He had taught them that night. Here is a partial list of the points of doctrine in chapter 17. This list cannot be considered to be comprehensive for there is so much more to mine from this passage.

1) "The hour has come." [v1]. God designed a specific time and place for Christ to die. Several other times people tried to arrest Him or kill Him, but it did not happen because His hour had not yet come. God is sovereign, He is always in control and He always accomplishes His purposes (Isa 46:10).

2) Jesus sought glory from the Father and sought to glorify the Father (v1). Before the creation of the world, throughout eternity past, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit lived in perfect love and unity, glorifying each other. Christ left this glory and came to earth to make the Father known and redeem His people. Still and always seeking God's glory. God always seeks His own glory.

3) About His imminent death on the cross, Jesus asked to be glorified (v1). When He took on our sin and gave us His righteousness, He was glorified. Christ satisfied the wrath of God, for the glory of God. Our salvation is for His glory.

4) The glory of the Son, glorifies the Father (v1). The Apostle Paul wrote every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Php 2:10-11). When Christ is glorified, the Father is glorified.

5) All authority has been given to Jesus (v2; Mat 28:18-20). This means He is Lord; we do not make Him Lord (Rom 14:11). The Father has already made Him Lord (Act 2:36). Jesus is Lord over all; He is King over all; He is Master over all. We bow to Him now and follow or we will bow in the end and be judged. As Paul wrote to the Philippians, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess (Php 2:10-11).

6) The Son gives eternal life to all those given Him by the Father (v2). This is part of His authority. Though no one comes to the Son unless the Father draw Him (6:44), no one comes to the Father except through the Son (14:6).

7) What is eternal life? It is knowing the Father and the Son (v3). How do we know the Father and the Son? By spending time in the Word and in prayer. This wreaks havoc on the false doctrine of fire insurance, given by the modern American gospel. The whole point of going to Heaven is not salvation from Hell; it is to be with God. If you do not have time for God down here, why would you want to spend eternity with Him?

8) Christ came to do the work the Father sent Him to do and He finished it (v4). He came to make the Father known (1:18) and He came to save sinners (1Ti 1:15). He finished the work.

9) The cross was imminent, but Christ spoke as if the work was done (v4). God is not constrained by time, but in the context of time, there was no question whether Christ would complete the work. This is the eternal covenant.

10) Now the work was done, Christ desired His glory once again (v5). He had this glory before the creation of the world; He left this glory to come to earth as a man. When Christ humbled Himself to become a man, He did not set aside His divinity, as some blasphemously proclaim. He set aside His glory, with the promise or covenant He would be glorified again (Php 2:6-11).

11) Christ revealed the Father to those the Father gave Him (v6). Those who are saved were chosen in Christ before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4).

12) The elect were given Him by the Father (v6); they belonged to the Father. Their salvation is not a random "coming to Christ." As He said, "all the Father gives Me, will come to me." [6:37].

13) Those who are saved obey God's Word (v6). Jesus taught the disciples, whoever loves Him will keep His Word (14:23). This is evidence of following Christ, as well as a practice.

14) Those who are saved know everything Christ taught came from the Father (v7). They do not mix the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God (1Co 3:18-19). Jesus said His sheep hear His voice and will not listen to the voice of another (10:4-5).

15) Those who are saved know the Word of God is infallible and sufficient, because it came from the Father through Christ (v7).

16) Christ gave His people the words the Father gave Him (v8). Jesus is the Word (1:1). He has given us His Word in Scripture; this is why we must be in the Word to know Him.

17) The truth is Jesus Christ came from God the Father (v8). He was with Him through all eternity. He is the Truth.

18) Those who follow Christ receive the words and know the truth (v8). This is not a head knowledge. This receiving and knowing are signs of taking this Truth as their life. It is a knowing which changes the life. It is a believing unto salvation (3:36).

19) Christ did not come to save the world; in His prayer He specifically did not pray for the world (v9). Christ prayed for those given Him by the Father and this prayer continues as He is in Heaven making intercession for us who believe and are saved (Heb 7:25).

20) Once again, those the Father gave the Son, belong to the Father (v9).

21) All Mine are Yours and Yours are Mine (v10). If we are saved, we belong to God. We do not give ourselves to God because we

already belong to Him. We were chosen by the Father in Christ before the creation of the world (Eph 1:4). Those who are saved, belonged to the Father and the Son from the beginning.

22) The reason we are saved is to glorify God (v10). We belonged to God and He saves us for His glory. This idea we are saved to keep us from Hell or to have a relationship with God or to help us with our life is a man-centered religion; it is the modern American gospel. If we are saved, we seek to bring glory to Christ. Sure we want to be saved from Hell, but if this is the full scope of our faith, we are not saved. Jesus said those who are saved "have kept Your Word." [v6]. The saved are obedient; they bring glory to Christ and desire to be with Him. To abandon ourself and to seek God's glory is our religion.

23) "I am no longer in the world." [v11]. Once again, God is not constrained by time, but in the context of time, there was no question whether Christ would complete the work.

24) They are in the world. . .keep them in Your name (v11). Jesus said no one can take His people from His hand, nor take them from the Father's hand (10:28-29). If we follow Christ, we belong to God and cannot be taken from Him. This is the reason and the how we persevere: He keeps us to the end.

25) He helps us persevere in unity so we may be one as God is one (v11). Those who are truly saved are in unity. This is God's doing; it does not come about by good feelings or good intentions; it is the work of God. Why do we see division in the visible church? Jesus explained this in the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mat 13:24-30). Many in the visible church do not belong to the bride of Christ; but we who belong are united with others who do.

26) While Christ was on earth, He kept those who were His (v12). Now, He was leaving and looked to the Father to keep them. We can never be separated from Him (10:29).

27) Christ allowed Judas to betray Him (v12). Judas was the only one lost of the disciples and this was in fulfillment of Scripture. This confirms the teaching in Romans 9; some are destined for or created for destruction. Jesus called Judas "the son of destruction."

28) Christ was going back to the Father (v13). He is seated at the right hand of the Father, ruling with Him in Heaven (Rom 8:34).

29) Christ spoke to bring joy to His followers (v13). Do we take joy in the Scriptures? If we do not find ourselves desiring the Word, we

need to examine ourselves to see if we are saved (2Co 13:5). "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." [15:11 NASB].

30) Christ has given us His Word (v14). He taught the disciples and He has left the Scriptures with us. His Scripture and teaching continue to this day. If we are following Him, we will prize this gift; we will be in His Word.

31) The world hates those who follow Christ because we are not of this world (v14). The world hates Christ and it will hate those who follow Him. Jesus explained this in chapter 15. Those who love the world are enemies of God (Jam 4:4). This should cause us to examine ourselves to see if we love the things of this world more than we desire to spend time with Him.

32) Christ is not of this world (v14). He was not a mere man who lived and died. He lived in eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit; He lived in perfect glory (v5, *et al*), but He left all this unspeakable glory to come down to earth (2Co 8:9; Php 2:6-8). He is God (1:1), but He became man (1:14). He is fully God and fully man (Col 2:9; Gal 4:4).

33) Jesus prayed the Father to protect His followers from the evil one (v15). He did not pray we be taken out of the world. We remain here to overcome. "And they overcame [Satan] because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death." [Rev 12:11 NASB]. It is natural to want God to remove trials from our lives, but even Christ had to go through trials. Therefore, our prayer should be God help us overcome temptation and not deliver us over to evil (Mat 6:13).

34) We are not of the world (16). Christ is not of this world, therefore, those who follow Him are not of this world. We are in the world, but not of it. We are here to declare Christ's authority and His glory (Mat 28:18-20).

35) We are sanctified in truth; not in how we feel about God (17). Sanctification is the process of the Holy Spirit making us more like Christ. Many professing Christians have a sappy view of Christ and believe we are called to be a kinder version of the world. Nothing could be further from the truth.

36) God's Word is truth (v17). All of Scripture is truth and it is all the truth we need.

37) We are sanctified through the Word of God (17). Jesus told the disciples they were clean because of the word He had spoken to them (15:3). He said if we abide in His Word, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free (8:31-32). The more we are in the Word, the more we become like Christ. The Word sanctifies us.

38) Christ sent us into the world as the Father sent Him (v18). He came to make the Father known (1:18). So, too, we are here to declare Christ (Mat 28:18-20). We are not here to have our best life now; we are here to proclaim Christ's Word (Rom 10:14-15).

39) Christ set Himself apart so we may be sanctified (v19). Christ died to ransom those who are His. Those who are His, He sanctifies; He sanctifies them through the Word. He doesn't take us out of the world, yet we are not of the world. If we seek the pleasures of the world and do not seek the Word, we are not set apart; we are not sanctified. If we are not sanctified, we are not saved.

40) Those who believe will declare the truth to others (v20). Christ prayed for those who followed Him and for those who would believe through their word. This is ongoing and it was prayed as if those who believe will tell others, who will believe and tell others. . . Jesus said His believers are a city on a hill and do not hide their light under a basket (Mat 5:14-16). The world was in darkness when He came as the Light (1:4,5,9). If we have this Light, we cannot hide it.

41) Christ's work spans the generations of man (v20). Christ prayed not only for those who followed Him when He was alive, but also for those who would believe through their testimony.

42) Faith in Christ comes through the Word (v20). "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" [Rom 10:14-15a NASB]. We are sent by Christ to proclaim salvation and the authority of Christ.

43) Unity in the body of Christ must be based upon truth (v21-23). We are one as the Father and the Son are one. Christ told the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30. There will be tares in the visible church. If we seek unity among all those in the visible church, the believing and the unbelieving, the obedient and the disobedient, the truth will compromised. Our unity must be based upon the Word of God, so we may be one as the Father and the Son are one.

44) Christ's desire is for all who follow Him to be in unity (v21). This spans the generations and this is the Bride of Christ. Our unity is expressed in our love for Christ and our declaration of His Lordship (Rom 10:8-13).

45) One of the purposes of unity among believers is so the world may believe the Father sent the Son (v21). He did not say, so the world may come to a saving faith. Many in the church want to compromise the Gospel: they think by being inclusive we have unity and by this (false) unity, we can attract the world, so the world can be saved, but if we compromise the Gospel, we are proclaiming a false god; a false christ; a false gospel. This is not what God is looking for. The fact is true believers, those who are obedient to Christ, are in unity; the world sees this and is convicted. They will believe, but they will resist a saving faith.

46) The glory the Father gave the Son, the Son has given those who follow Him (v22). Everything Christ said and did was prepared by the Holy Spirit. The work He performed was the work of the Holy Spirit. As the Father gave the Spirit to the Son, the Son has given the Spirit to those who follow Him. "Do not quench the Spirit." [1Th 5:19].

47) The Holy Spirit works for our unity (v22). Christ gave us the Holy Spirit "that they may be one as We are one." Unity among the brothers is based upon truth. The Holy Spirit does not bring new revelation; He will never contradict the Word of God. He bears witness of Christ and guides us into truth (15:26; 16:13).

48) True followers of Christ will be in unity. "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity." [v23a NASB]. The divisions within the visible church are the conflicts between the wheat and the tares. Those who follow Christ are united upon the truth of the Word of God. Though our unity is not yet perfect, when the Bride is presented to Christ, she will be perfect.

49) Another purpose of unity among believers is so the world may know the Father loves those who follow Christ as He loves His Son (v23). The world loves those who are of the world. Yet, it is a selfish love; everyone is looking to build their wealth or comfort on the back of someone else (Gen 34:23), but the love among the brothers is pure; we do not build our life here and we look to help each other (Gal 6:2; Php 2:3). The world notices this difference; they know this is from God; and they are convicted.

50) Christ desires all who follow Him to be with Him (v24). This is exciting to know He is anxious for us to be with Him. This should

be our thought everyday, to desire to be with the One who desires us to be with Him.

51) Christ desires all who follow Him to be with Him and see His glory (v24). He loves His glory and wants His followers to see it and celebrate it with Him.

52) Christ's glory was before the foundation of the world (v24).

53) The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were rejoicing together in perfect love before the creation of the world (v24). God did not create man because He was lonely, far from it. Put aside all these man-centered reasons for salvation. The Trinity possessed all glory and they rejoiced together in perfect love and unity. We must conclude man was made for this glory and salvation was brought to man for this glory. All glory and honor and power belong to God.

54) The Father is righteous (v25).

55) The world does not know the Father (v25). Christ came to make the Father known; known to those whom the Father had given Him. Just as Christ did not pray for the world (v9), He did not give the world understanding of the truth (12:40).

56) Christ knows the Father (v25). To declare He knows the Father, He must have been with Him. In the beginning Christ was with God and was God (1:1).

57) Those who follow Christ know the Father and know He sent the Son (v25). Christ came to make the Father known (1:18). Though the world does not believe (1:10-11) some believe (1:12-13). Jesus said if we know Him, we know the Father also (14:9).

58) Christ made the Father known to those who follow Him (v26); for they were given to Him (v6). Many claim to have made a decision for Christ, but the Apostle Paul tells us we were saved by grace, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

59) Christ will continue to make the Father known to those who follow Him (v26). He has given us His Word (v17) and His Spirit (v22). The Holy Spirit will lead us into truth (16:13). How does He lead us? The Spirit does not speak on His own authority, but, like the Son, He speaks what He hears from the Father (16:13). The Father has left us His Word. We must be in the Word for the Holy Spirit to reveal truth (8:31-32). Christ continues to make the Father known to us as we continue to be in the Word.

60) If we follow Christ, the love the Father had for the Son will be in us (v26). The Father will love us because we love the Son (16:27). Yet, we know, He loved us before we loved Him (1Jo 4:19).

61) If we follow Christ, He will be in us (v26). Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col 1:27). If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God and are forgiven of our sin (1Jo 1:5-9).

62) Christ is glorified by making the Father known and those the Father has given to Him know and believe. We are loved by God and Christ dwells in us. All this is for Christ to be glorified and Christ is glorified for the Father's glory (v1-26).

IN CLOSING

John chapter 17 is a chapter of prayer and doctrine. A prayer from the Son to the Father; from God to God. Many call it Christ's high priestly prayer.

God is glorified in Himself and he saves man to glorify Himself. The doctrines of election, sanctification and perseverance of the saints are irrefutable as they are clearly put forward in the words of the Son to the Father.

Our salvation is for God's glory. It is not man-centered, but it is God-centered. We can argue all the nuances of Scripture, but it is a dangerous thing to argue against the plain words of Christ, which He spoke to the Father. Words spoken by God, to God.

John 18:1-12 The Betrayal And Arrest Of Jesus Christ

Christ's teaching was over. His ministry was complete. The time had come to give His life as a ransom for His people (Mat 20:28; 1Ti 2:6).

Read John 18:1-12.

CROSSING THE KIDRON BROOK

Jesus and the disciples crossed the Kidron to go to the garden. The Kidron Brook is directly to the East of Jerusalem, opposite the Temple; between the city and the Mount of Olives. Not far; close distance. The garden which Jesus and the disciples frequented, on the Mount of Olives, was called Gethsemane. The Gospels mention traveling to the Mount of Olives on several occasions, but this is the only mention of crossing the brook to get there.

The Kidron is significant. This is the same brook David crossed when he fled from his son Absalom (2Sa 15:23). This is the same brook Solomon forbade Shimei from crossing on pain of death (1Ki 2:37). Beside the Kidron Brook is where the Israelites would burn their garbage. There are a few mentions in the Old Testament when idols were removed from the Temple by Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah (1Ki 15:13; 2Ch 29:16; 2Ki 23:6). On these three occasions, when the idolatry was cleansed from the Temple, the filth was burned by the Kidron Brook. This is where the priests killed and cleaned the lambs for sacrifice. On the night of Christ's crucifixion, the brook flowed with water and blood. The Kidron Brook represents cleansing.

> Historical records of Jesus' time indicate that as many as a quarter-million lambs were slain in a typical Passover season, requiring hundreds of priests to carry out the task." This is a lot of blood. The blood from the slaughtered lambs would be carried by the priests and dumped in the brook to flow down this valley. So, here we have water and blood. [John MacArthur; "Experiencing the Passion"].
>
> But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. [19:34].

MEETING IN THE GARDEN

About this night, Matthew and Mark wrote in their gospels, "When they had sung a hymn, they went to the Mount of Olives." [Mat 26:30; Mar

14:26]. Christ finished His teaching and His prayer, they sung a hymn and went to the garden to pray and wait.

Gethsemane was an intimate location; a place Jesus and the disciples had often shared fellowship. Jesus talked with them and taught them here. It was a place of fond memories, if you will. Judas knew the place. He came to betray, while the rest of the mob came to arrest Jesus (v2-3). Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote Judas betrayed Christ with a kiss (Mat 26:48-49; Mar 14:44-45; Luk 22:47-48). The people Judas brought with him, brought lanterns, torches and weapons (v3). Matthew and Mark wrote they also brought swords and clubs (Mat 26:47; Mar 14:43;). Peter had a sword (v10).

If it had been the intent of Christ to avoid His crucifixion, He would have "hid out" somewhere else. He made it easy for Judas to find Him and Judas would betray Him at a location intimate to Christ and the disciples. He went to the garden to pray and waited, for His time had come. As He said before, He laid His life down willingly (10:18). Everything was coming together as the Father had planned, for God always accomplishes His purpose.

When Judas came with soldiers, Christ did not try to escape. He stepped forward and asked, "Whom do you seek?" [v4]. The answer came back, "Jesus of Nazareth." [v5]. Jesus answered, "I AM." [v5]. In most major Bible translations, the word "He" (I am *He*), in this verse, is in italic. As the introduction to each translation will explain, the purpose of italic is to designate an added word. The word is usually added for clarity, to fix grammar structure and such. So, the answer from Jesus was not "I am He," as we would respond with proper grammar. Jesus answered, "I AM."

THE AUTHORITY OF I AM

I AM is a name for God. He gave this name to Himself. It is a name expressing His authority and His eternity. This is one of the seven I AMs in the Gospel of John. Therefore, when Jesus answered, "I AM," He was expressing His authority and declaring all the events taking place were under His control.

When Jesus said, "I AM," the soldiers and those with them, including Judas, fell backward to the ground (v6). Christ's authority was overwhelming. In a subtle, yet paralyzing way He displayed His power over them. He had all power; the crowd had no power; all they could do was fall to the ground. Though overpowered and humiliated, they were still determined to take Him by force.

He asked them again, "Whom do you seek?" [v7]. In this, some commentaries say Christ may have given them the opportunity to recant their mission, having encountered the power of God. Regardless, they proceeded with their mission; but no longer in blind ignorance, they now knew full well they were opposing the hand of God. Consensus cannot save you, so do not trust a plurality of opinion. Seek the Word of God.

Hard is the heart that refuses to repent. The leaders of the band were the Chief Priest and his entourage of high ranking Pharisees. They studied the Word; they taught the Scriptures. Yet, they were opposed to God, who would not conform to their image. Many, so many are the professing Christian, daily in the Word, yet professing a god in their image and opposing every Scripture which does not meet their approval.

To Jesus' question, the second time, they answered back the same as before, "Jesus of Nazareth." [v7]. Again, Jesus answered, "I told you I AM." Then He added, "So, if you seek Me, let these men go." [v8]. John MacArthur, in his Study Bible wrote, Jesus asked this question twice to force "them to acknowledge that they had no authority to take the disciples. . .the force of His demand was established by the power of His words." [at 18:4-8]. In other words, though they took Jesus, they could not take the disciples, because Jesus forbid them. Verse 12 tells us this was a battalion of Roman soldiers with the mob. So it is clear they intended to capture Christ and all his followers. The same voice which spoke creation into being, forbid the capture of His followers and the soldiers and the angry mob were powerless to overcome Him.

The Apostle John wrote Christ commanded them to let His disciples go, to fulfill what He had said previously, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one." [v9b, quoting 17:12]. That Christ would lose none of all the Father had given Him, had a temporal physical meaning at this moment, but it has a permanent spiritual meaning as well.

> 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. [6:39 NASB].

THE DISCIPLES' LAST STAND

The disciples were in fear. They did not want to come to Jerusalem, in the first place, because the Jews were actively seeking to kill Jesus. Yet they had not rid themselves of the idea Christ, the Messiah, would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem and reign over the nations. When they witnessed the triumphal entry of Christ into the city, just days before, their hopes were revived. Now, with this turn of events, they were faced with intimidating soldiers, angry officials and a bitter mob. It did not appear Christ was in

control nor did it appear He was about to be made king. Nonetheless, before regime change, there must be a battle; and, in desperation, Peter made an awkward attempt toward this end. He drew his sword and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear (v10).

All four Gospels have the record of one of the disciples striking the ear of a servant of the high priest. The Gospel of John names both the disciple (Peter) and the victim (Malchus). The Gospel of Luke recorded Jesus healing the servant's ear.

> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear, but Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched his ear and healed him. [Luke 22:49-51 ESV]

In this passage from Luke, we can see the stress level was getting high. Those around Christ "saw what would follow." If Christ was going to reign, if He was going to show His power, this was the moment, otherwise, they were doomed. So Peter drew his sword, but Christ did not follow Peter's lead. According to the Gospel of Luke, Christ healed the man's ear and He told Peter to put away the sword because He was perfectly willing to drink the cup the Father had given Him (v11).

OBEDIENT TO THE END

The Apostle Matthew gave the account of Christ wrestling with the Father in regards to this cup (Mat 26:39-42). Nonetheless, Christ concluded, "Your will be done." [Mat 26:42]. Many professing Christian think the death of Christ to be a frivolous matter. They think because He was God, it was an easy task to die for mans' sin, but here we see, in this passage and others, to be obedient unto death was a very difficult and stressful matter.

> And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. [Luk 22:44 NASB].

> In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death. [Heb 5:7a NASB].

Nonetheless, because of His love for the Father, Christ was obedient and would not turn back, even when Peter gave Him the opportunity by provoking a war. On several occasions, Jesus said, "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." [5:30, cf 4:34; 6:38; 12:49; 14:31]. The Apostle Paul wrote He was "obedient to the point of death, even death on a

cross." [Php 2:8 NASB, ESV]. Christ came to do the Father's will and He was willing to die for sinful man; and now the time had come.

> Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation. [Heb 5:8-9 NASB].

THE ARREST OF CHRIST

When the crowd came with Judas to arrest Jesus, twice, Christ showed His power: First, He overwhelmed the crowd with His authority, causing them to fall back at the mention of His name; and Second, He demonstrated His healing power by restoring the servant Malchus' ear. Despite this display, the mob was determined to press on. There can be no doubt at this point, Judas and his entourage knew they were going up against God and, it became obvious, Christ was a man sent from God.

So, the soldiers arrested Jesus and bound Him (v12). Though the disciples had displayed a willingness to fight, Christ did not resist the arrest. For His time had come.

The Creator of all mankind and of everything that exists, allowed these hateful men to bind Him, try Him and kill Him.

But our fingers cannot point to these men; for just as surely as the Fall of Adam was a personification of us all, so too, these men represented every human being. There is no difference between this mob and every unregenerated heart today.

Many still come against Christ with swords, clubs and other weapons, if you will. They seek to defame Him and rob Him of His glory. Some attack Him with words and intellectual arguments; others by rape, torture, murder and pillage of those who are His. Just as the psalmist described in Psalm 2, the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain. Our hearts are rebellious and it is our nature to defy the eternal God. Paul wrote to the Romans, Christ died for us while we were enemies of God (Rom 5:10). Christ had come willingly, to die for those who were unable to save themselves (Rom 5:6,8).

The Apostle Paul wrote "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [Php 2:9-11 NASB]. God's purposes will stand. He gives hope to those who cling to Him (Rom 5:1-11; 8:1-11) and laughs at those who mock Him as He pours His wrath upon them (Psa 2:4-5).

Do you seek the one who will save you from God's wrath?

> Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!"
>
> He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain."
>
> "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'"
>
> Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! [Psa 2].

The nations rage against Christ; the soldiers and the mob came to carry Christ to His doom, but these same people who scoff and deride will one day bow. As the psalmist revealed, the Father and the Son have an eternal covenant (decree) and the Son will rule over the nations.

IN CLOSING

After the last supper Christ and the disciples left the upper room, went out of the city, crossed the Kidron Brook, which was flowing with blood and water, an image of Christ's atoning death, and went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ went to pray and wait, for His time had come.

Soldiers and a mob came to take Christ away. They were eager to see Him put to death. He had done nothing wrong. He had done nothing deserving death, but those of the world hate the things of God.

What could be a greater display of God to man than the Son of God Himself? Could anything incite more hatred of God within man than the Son of God come to dwell with man?

> There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. [1:9-11 NASB].

Though the disciples had displayed a willingness to fight, Christ did not resist the arrest. For His time had come. God was in complete control and, at just the right time, the hour had come. The Creator of all mankind had come to die to satisfy God's wrath, while we were helpless to save ourselves.

Do you seek the one who can save you from God's wrath or do you still resist Him and seek to tear Him down?

John 18:12-40 The Trials Of Christ And Peter's Denials

This would be a night of trials. The Jews were eager to have Christ convicted and hung before the festivities of the Passover, they would not wait for the day, when the trial would be public.

Read John 18:12-40.

TAKEN TO ANNAS

Jesus was arrested and bound by the soldiers and officers of the Jews (v12). They took Him to Annas, who was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest (v13). It appears, from other Scripture, Annas and Caiaphas may have had a co-regency (Luke 3:2; Act 4:6). It was Caiaphas who prophesied "it would be expedient that one man should die for the people." [v14 ESV].

> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." Now he did not say this 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 in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. [11:49-52 NASB].

Here is an example where God used an evil person to prophecy what He was going to do. The office of the high priest was to be honored even when an evil man was in this office.

> The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. [Mat 23:2-3 ESV].

PETER'S FIRST DENIAL

Peter and another disciple were following Christ (v15). We know this anonymous disciple was John because the writer of this gospel always referred to himself in the third party.

Peter and John followed Christ. The Gospel of Matthew says Peter was following at a distance (Mat 26:58). John was known by the high priest (v15); that is, John probably had privileged family connections. So, he went into the courtyard while Peter stood outside the gate (v15-16). Later, when Peter and John ran to the tomb, this situation will be reversed. John was

faster and arrived first, but Peter went into the tomb, while John stood outside (20:3-6).

John went to the servant girl, who kept watch at the gate, to see about admitting Peter (v16). She let him in, but questioned him whether he was a disciple. Peter denied it (v17), although he was probably in no danger; for it appears she knew John was a disciple and he was under no threat. Furthermore, John entered the courtyard with Jesus (v15) and was not restrained. Here, Peter denied a fact which was known and obvious. The affirmative answer to this question would put him in no immediate danger, yet he feared and denied knowing Christ.

Remember, Christ had forbid the Pharisees, the soldiers and the mob from taking captive any of the disciples. Regardless what they wanted to do, they were powerless. Therefore, though the disciples feared, they were in no immediate danger.

As they had followed Christ into this courtyard, Peter was probably within earshot of the Lord.

The servants and officers of the high priest had made a charcoal fire to warm themselves. These are likely the same group of people who had arrested Jesus. John and Peter warmed themselves at the fire with them (v18). The Mark and Luke accounts claim the servant girl confronted Peter at the fire (Mar 14:66-68; Luk 22:56-57). The fire was likely close to the gate and Peter was likely through the gate and near the fire by the time she asked the question.

TRIAL BY THE HIGH PRIEST

Parallel texts in the synoptic Gospels: Matt. 26:59-68; Mark 14:55-65; Luke 22:63-71.

The high priest, Annas, questioned Christ about His teachings and what He said to His disciples (v19). Most likely to set a trap or to glean any misspoken word because they had no real evidence against Him. Failing to produce evidence, they demanded He incriminate Himself. Jesus exposed their obvious hypocrisy; declaring He had always spoken publicly and taught in the synagogues. With all this potential, they had obviously failed to round up any witnesses to His alleged crimes (v20-21).

Among "those who have heard Me" [v21] were the accusers themselves. In this way, Christ's defense was also an accusation. They had nothing on Him and Christ exposed the fact they had nothing on Him. Jesus said, "I have spoken openly. . .I have said nothing in secret." [v20].

> I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, "Seek me in vain." I the Lord speak the truth; I declare what is right. [Isa 45:19 ESV].

> Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there. [Isa 48:16 ESV].

God has not kept the truth secret; He has made Himself known and evident (Rom 1:19-20). Christ came revealing the Father to man (1:18; 14:9; 15:24). He promised if we abide in Him we will know the truth (8:31-32). Nonetheless, the leaders of the Jews, who considered themselves the gatekeepers of the truth, refused the truth. Though God made the truth obvious, they preferred their temporary positions of power more than the eternal riches of the Almighty God.

> But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. [Mat 23:13 ESV].

The Apostle Paul wrote about the wrath to come on those who refuse God's revealed truth and pursue self-centered lives.

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. [Rom 1:18-21 NASB].

After Christ challenged this kangaroo court, a court intent on a lynching, one of the officers struck Jesus and demanded respect for the high priest (v22). As always, Jesus responded with the core issue: "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" [v23].

The officer demanded respect for a foolish and ungodly high priest. It is true, though the high priest was an evil man, he was God's representative and the office demanded respect. However, at this moment, God Himself was facing this official and calling him out for his evil and hypocrisy. The man who slapped Jesus is a bad example of a man "just doing his job." Many professing Christians would justify this man, saying we are supposed

to obey and honor our government, without thought to whether those in office are violating God's authority.

Annas, the former high priest or co-regent, sent Christ bound like a prisoner to Caiaphas the current high priest (v24). Some commentaries claim this was after the fact, explaining He had already been sent and this current line of questioning was actually in front of Caiaphas. However, the account of the trial of Jesus in front of Caiaphas is different in the other gospels from the account John gave of the trial before Annas. In the three synoptic accounts, Christ admitted to Caiaphas to being the Son of God. Therefore, it is more likely the questioning of Christ in this passage was in front of Annas prior to sending him to Caiaphas, chronologically, just as John gave the account. John gave no account of the trial before Caiaphas, likely because he had nothing to add to the Synoptic accounts.

PETER'S SECOND AND THIRD DENIAL OF CHRIST

Peter was standing around the fire (v25), warming himself. He was probably standing due to his anxiety. If he had been seated, he might not have been as noticeable and might have remained anonymous. Among the others gathered around the fire were those who came to arrest Jesus in the garden. They asked Peter whether he was a disciple. Peter denied it (v25). However, one of the men, who was related to the man whose ear Peter cut off, recognized him and claimed he was there (v26). Again, Peter denied it and immediately the rooster crowed (v27); just as Christ told him would happen (13:38).

When Peter said he was willing to die for Christ, he was relying upon his own strength (13:37), but when tested, he did not have the strength to face his accusers because he feared his life was on the line. He vowed loyalty when he was strong of feeling and emotion, but he could not remain strong in his own strength.

On another occasion, when Peter asked Christ to let him walk on the water, he did well while his eyes were on Christ (Mat 14:22-33), but feeling the wind and seeing the waves and hearing them roar, caused him to be distracted and he took his eyes off Christ. This brought on fear and despair. This is human nature. This is the difference between faith and feelings: true faith will not lose sight of God, no matter the hardship and chaos going on around us. This is how we know faith is a gift and not a product of self-determination.

CHRIST IS QUESTIONED BY PILATE

The synoptic Gospels covered Caiaphas' questioning of Christ; John did not. John wrote Jesus was taken from Caiaphas to the Praetorium (v28), which is the governor's mansion. John said it was early; the synoptic gospels say it was in the morning. This was Friday morning.

The Jews would not enter the governor's mansion because Pilate, the governor, was a Gentile. It was unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit in the home of anyone of another nation; to do so, would make them unclean (Act 10:28). If they should enter the building, they would be unclean and would not be allowed to eat the Passover feast (v28).

Marcus Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor over Judea, appointed by the Emperor Tiberius. He was not an empathetic ruler; he was a tyrant and ruled with an iron fist. Nonetheless, the high priest held much political clout and he came to Pilate with a mob. So, this case had to be heard.

Pilate went outside to meet them and asked what charge they brought against Christ (v29). They answered with vague generalities: "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." [v30]. These men were men of law, but they had no case, so rather than clarify the charge, they answered defensively. It was obvious to Pilate, these grown men and legal experts were having a temper tantrum and he wanted nothing to do with it. So he told them to take Him away and judge Him by their own law (v31a).

The Jews replied it was not lawful for them to put anyone to death (v31b). However, the fact of the matter was they had a history of stoning people and the Romans usually paid no attention. Several times before, they took up stones to stone Jesus, but His time had not yet come. To stone Him now, while all Israel was in Jerusalem, would cause a riot, for Jesus was a high profile figure and popular. As Caiaphas had previously pointed out, they would do so at the risk of losing their position and possibly their lives (11:50; 18:14). At the very least, they would raise the ire of their own people. Therefore, they brought Him to the Roman authorities to put Him to death, because they did not want to answer for His blood.

In John's account, the Jews brought no charges against Christ when they brought Him to Pilate. Pilate scoffed at this. In the Luke account, the charges which were finally brought were obviously designed to incite the jealousy of Rome (Luk 23:1-3), forcing Pilate to take the case.

1) They charged Christ had forbidden monetary payments or tribute to Rome; and

2) They charged Christ had claimed to be a king in defiance of Caesar.

This was the circumstance by which the Jews brought Christ to Pilate. It is clear, all is directed by God and the purpose was to fulfill Christ's prophecy regarding the type of death He would suffer (v32). If the Jews killed Him, it would be by stoning; if the Romans put Him to death, it would be by crucifixion. Christ's prophecy was to be lifted up, a term signifying He would be crucified (3:14; 8:28; 12:32). The people knew the term and they knew, when He said it, it meant death, which confused them because they thought the Messiah would remain forever (12:34).

> "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. [12:32-33 ESV].

Pilate went inside and called Jesus in after him. He asked Him if He were the King of the Jews (v33). By this time the Jews had claimed, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." [Luk 23:2 NASB]. This might have led to this line of questioning by Pilate. Jesus cut to the core, exposing Pilate's motive for taking the case. This case was not going to entertain, nor was it going to satisfy Pilate's animosity toward the Jews.

> **Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me? [v34].**

Jesus' question was more than rhetorical; it was an important question. For if Pilate were to consider Christ's claim of kingship to be political, he had an obligation to prosecute this on behalf of Rome. However, if Pilate were to consider His claim to be religious, this would be a matter for the Jews to resolve. This upset Pilate and he answered back, "What did you do to make your own people so upset that they have handed you over to a foreign government?" [v35]. There can be no greater rejection from your own people than for them to hand you over to a foreign government to be tried, sentenced and executed, but, the record of the Apostle John states He came to His own people and they did not receive Him (1:11).

Jesus was not intimidated. Standing before Pilate was the King of kings and He answered Pilate's criticism stating His kingdom is not of this world (v36). On another occasion, He told the Jews He was not of this world: "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." [8:23]. On this occasion, He proclaimed He is the king of the world He came from. This would give Pilate cause to fear, for the Romans believed in men who were half-god and half-man, who ruled in ethereal realms.

Christ told Pilate if His kingdom was of this world, His servants would have been fighting for Him (v36). Christ said if He asked, His Father would send Him more than twelve legions of angels (Mat 26:52-54), but on Earth, there would be no fight, for Christ was willing to lay down His life.

So you are a king? [v37a].

With this question, Pilate does not appear to be mocking Christ. He was, no doubt, influenced by Christ's demeanor and was contemplating the seriousness of all the forces at work here. He was considering the possibility Christ may be a king in another world. Jesus noted the direction of Pilate's understanding in His response, "You say I am a king." [v37b].

When He said, "for this I have been born. . .have come into the world" [v37], this was a proclamation He existed before He was born as a man (1:1-3,9-10). He is eternal. He told the disciples He came from the Father and has come into the world (16:28). To fulfill His purpose, He had to be born, but His birth was like no other. This was the eternal Son of God, alive before birth, coming to man, bringing light and life.

Christ declared it was for this reason He came to the world: to bear witness to the truth (v37). To bear witness is to testify to what a person has seen and heard. Before Christ came into the world, He was eternal, in the eternal fellowship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There was no facade, all was truth. Jesus said He is the Truth (14:6). He alone could testify to the Truth.

He came to bear witness to the truth. He came to make the Father known to man (1:18), but man was not ready to listen. Even those who searched the Scriptures, looking for the Messiah, were not ready to listen. It was in this context, Christ rebuked Nicodemus:

> Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony. [3:11 NASB].

Regarding His claim everyone who is of the truth listens to His voice, He said His sheep hear His voice (10:27).

> We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. [1Jo 4:6 NASB].

Pilate did not deny nor did he affirm Christ's kingship; he did not hear Christ's voice, if you will. His answer was cynical: "What is truth?" [v38]. This is the question of the ages; it was first posed by Satan when tempting the woman in the garden, "Did God really say?" (Gen 3:1). It has always been the tendency of the sinful heart to look within for truth, defying the

God of Truth. Here, God stood face-to-face with Pilate, declaring truth, but Pilate could not hear. Most people who claim to be in pursuit of the truth are not seeking God. They seek a truth which fits their own bias. Many are as the Apostle Paul described, "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." [2Ti 3:7 NASB]. No one is seeking truth, unless the Father draws him (6:44).

> THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD. [Rom 3:11 NASB].

Christ's claim to be king found affinity in Pilate's cynicism. Pilate's misgivings against his own government and the people he governed was greater than his apprehension of this man on trial before him. With this, he went outside to the Jews and declared he found no guilt in the man, Christ (v38). In other words, he told the high priest and his toadies, he found their claim to be petty.

Pilate offered to release Him. He may have thought this a good way to relieve the tensions of the mob. The Gospels say the custom was to release one prisoner at the Passover, but his offer did not reduce the stress at all. The Jews demanded he release Barabbas and crucify Christ (v39-40).

Barabbas means son of the father. So here we have a choice: the Son of the Father or the son of the father. The choice is between God and man. Man has been in rebellion to God from the beginning. When given a choice between man and God, the unregenerate man will always choose man.

Man seeks to make God in his own image and here is an example where man chose to redeem one who is evil, like himself, and crucify the true and righteous God. You could say, freewill chose to crucify Christ.

John stated Barabbas was a robber (which could also be translated insurrectionist). In his sermon to the Jews, Peter claimed he was a murderer (Act 3:14-15). Therefore, the Jews released a very bad man, a killer, in order to murder their Creator, who had come to give them life.

Here is a paradox: In this scene, the secular man, a ruler and philosopher, one who had difficulty grasping the truth, could see clearly the innocence of the Son of God. While the Jews, the self-professed keepers of the truth, were determined to bring the Truth to His death.

> Who is the liar, but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? [1Jo 2:22 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Earlier this night, Peter declared his undying allegiance to Christ; he was willing to die for Him, but as Peter followed Him to trial, three times he was identified as a disciple of Christ and three times he denied knowing Him. Though he felt so strong and committed earlier in the evening, when the battle became intense, he folded.

Peter's was relying upon his own strength. He was a rugged, strong man; he was proud and thought he feared nothing. He was willing to start a war in the midst of the hostile crowd, cutting off a man's ear, but without the Lord by his side, he had no strength at all. One thing we learn here: we can win no spiritual war with our own strength; we must have our eyes fixed upon Christ.

Jesus endured a kangaroo court trial. He was shipped between Annas and Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate. It seemed to those around He had brought this upon His own head. Or as Isaiah phrased it, "we thought He was stricken, smitten and afflicted by God" (Isa 53:4b).

All through the trials, it was clear Christ was innocent, but the forces of evil were determined to put Him to death. Those who represented truth, the religious leaders, wanted the death of an innocent man, the death of God; while the secular man who had no regard for God clearly saw His innocence. The religious leaders could not recognize Jesus was God, for they had made God in their own image. They did not worship the God of the Bible, though they professed to do so. They served a god who suited their lust for power and authority. They were looking for a Messiah who would give them authority over Rome.

People today worship gods who fit their worldview. Most professing Christians worship a kind and gentle Jesus; a god who "knows their heart" and winks at their "small" sins. They do not know nor do they worship the God of the Bible. They cannot know the truth, because they are not in the Word. They are deceived to believe a profession of faith can save them.

Speaking of a kind and gentle Jesus: when people met Jesus, He confronted them with their sin and their need to repent. He was not unkind about it, but He was not soft and fuzzy either. At one of the trials, Jesus rebuked the man who struck Him. In this, He rebuked the entire kangaroo court, for He said if He had done wrong, they should speak it out, say it, but if what He said was right, they had no reason to assault Him (v23).

Pilate was impressed with Christ. He was impressed by His confidence and authority; Christ had the bearing of a king. When Pilate asked the question, "What is truth?" [v38], he was expressing the cynicism he had acquired from his ruthless pursuit of power. He lived his life surrounded by liars,

hypocrites, back-stabbers and such; people seeking their own power and whom would gain it at the cost of truth and justice. When Jesus, the man in front of him, said, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice," he could only respond with his disenchantment.

> If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. [8:31b-32 NASB].

Pilate gave the Jews a choice between setting free an innocent man or setting free a robber and murderer. Their choice proved they were evil; the natural man is an enemy of God. They were blind to the truth; they preferred darkness to light.

> This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. [3:19 NASB].

It is easy for us to sit in judgment of the Jewish leaders, the crowd, Pilate and Peter, for their actions on the night Christ was crucified. We can read the account in the shelter of our own living room, maybe sitting by a warm fire or with a cup of coffee. However, like all men before us, we too, have expectations; some seek comfort, some seek wealth, some seek power. Some envision their power for world domination, while many are satisfied with small domains. We all have this sin against us: even those who desire to exalt God's kingdom, are guilty of building their own. We are fallen men, living in a fallen world.

We must be in the Word to understand God's truth. If we are not in the Word, we will deny Him or we will stumble over Him; as did Peter, Pilate, the Jewish leaders and the crowd on this terrible night when Jesus was sentenced to die.

John 19:1-16 The Sentencing Of Christ, Behold Your King

Pilate was cynical of truth, but he understood clearly Jesus Christ was innocent of the charges raised against him (18:38).

Read John 19:1-16.

HAIL! KING OF THE JEWS!

Pilate determined Christ was innocent. So he had Jesus flogged, to punish Him before setting Him free (v1). This was the Roman way; once charged, no one got off without some penalty. However, in this case Christ would suffer this flogging and still be crucified. This was as Jesus foretold, He would be "mocked and flogged and crucified." [Mat 20:19].

The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns (v2). The thorns woven together for a crown mocked Christ's majesty. Thorns were symbols of futility and decay (Gen 3:18; Rom 8:20-21). So the mockers intended the crown to represent authority over a futile or dying kingdom.

Satan would goad Christ to bring Him to a bitter end, but the devil was not in control and Christ was not deterred nor discouraged, for God's purposes were set into motion. Christ willingly bore the abuse of man and principalities to accomplish God's glory.

SIDENOTE: The crown of thorns was a crown of decay and death; but it crowned the King who would die to conquer death.

The regal robe Christ was adorned with (v2) was likely the same one Herod placed upon Him when returning to Pilate (Luk 23:11). According to Matthew and Mark, the whole battalion was called in to take part in the mockery ceremony (Mat 27:28; Mar 15:16). The Gospel of Matthew also records a reed was placed in His hand as a scepter and the soldiers bowed their knees to Him in jest (Mat 27:29). All four gospel accounts tell us they mocked Him, spat upon Him and hit Him.

Not one of these mockers realized they were spitting upon the very One who created them and placed them in their mothers' womb. The Creator suffered at the hands of His creation without so much as a rebuke or raising a threat. Like a lamb, He went to be slaughtered. If Christ had merely been a good teacher, why was He treated with such contempt?

> He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not

> open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away. [Isa 53:7-8a NASB].

All the forces of evil thought they had Christ at a vulnerable moment and believed they could destroy Him; mocking Him to His death; hoping to bring Him to despair. How could these principalities think it possible to overcome the author of life by putting Him to death? They were blind to think that God, as a man, was vulnerable to the flesh. For as surely as He was going to die, He was destined to rise again.

> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. [1:4 NASB].

Then, Pilate declared to the crowd he found no fault in Christ; there was no reason to put Him to death (v4). He brought Christ out in the robe, with the crown of thorns on His head. He had been flogged and tormented. He looked wretched. It was in this humiliated state, Pilate displayed Him to the people, declaring, "Behold, the man!" [v5].

"Look at this man!" Quite possibly Pilate had hoped this public disgrace of Christ was enough to satisfy the crowd of His offense. Perhaps he thought they would laugh at Him and jeer Him and call off their intent to kill Him, but the Jewish leaders were all the more intent, crying out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" [v6].

HE MADE HIMSELF OUT TO BE THE SON OF GOD

Pilate refused and told them to kill Him themselves because there was no guilt in this man (v6). The Jewish leaders yelled back they have a law which says Christ must die for declaring Himself to be the Son of God (v7). This distressed Pilate even more (v8).

This was the Jewish law:

> Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. [Lev 24:16a NASB].

The rest of the verse required death by stoning. The Jewish leaders left that part out.

When the priests asked Jesus whether He was the Son of God, He replied, "You say that I am." [Luk 22:70-71; cf Mat 26:63-65]. To this they replied, "We have heard it ourselves from His own lips." So, you see, they were anxious for a charge against Him. They despised Him, though they knew from the miracles He was sent from God (12:37).

There are no atheists; God puts eternity in our hearts (Ecc 3:11), that is, He puts a knowledge of Himself within all men (Rom 1:19-20), but men refuse to believe because they refuse to obey their Creator.

Was it the claim Christ had broken Jewish law which made Pilate "even more afraid" (v8)? No. It was the words, "He has made Himself the Son of God" (v7).

As the trial progressed, Pilate was more and more convinced and fearful this Christ may truly be the Son of God or the son of a god; at least a man-god in the Roman tradition. He listened with amazement as he interviewed Christ and He was interested in Christ's claim to be a king; and not of this world. These claims to authority were reinforced by Christ's composure in the face of His prosecutors and Pilate's fear was further reinforced by warnings from His wife to have nothing to do with this man (Mat 27:19). Pilate wanted nothing to do with the death of this man; he feared raising the ire of the gods.

Pilate went back inside to question Jesus and asked Him, "Where are you from?" [v9]. Pilate was very stressed at this point, but Jesus gave no answer. There was nothing more for Christ to say and He certainly had no reason to appease Pilate. For man held no control over His life and He had already proclaimed He was sent by the Father to die.

NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD

When Christ did not answer, this pricked Pilate's pride and he was already in an agitated state of mind. Pride can trump a man's conscience and in Pilate's mind, though Christ may have been something in another world, Pilate had the authority down here or so he thought. He demanded Christ's respect, he had the power to set Christ free or have Him crucified (v10), but Pilate was deceived to imagine himself a man of power.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God." [Rom 13:1b NASB]. Daniel declared God removes kings and sets up kings (Dan 2:21). Now, the Creator, facing His earthly judge, told Pilate he would have no power unless it had been given him by God (v11).

Man seeks power over man; sometimes in grand ways, sometimes in small. This may be as simple as among friends and family or it may be a position at work or in a government job or as an elected official. Man falsely believes he can have power, even ultimate power. Most who have great power, exercise their powers in selfish and brutal forms, but Jesus made it clear, no one has any authority, unless this was granted from the God of all authority. This is a fearful matter, for what will happen to the one who has

abused his authority over another, even a professing Christian who has abused his power, when he comes face-to-face with God (Mat 24:45-51).

So, we see Pilate was agitated and demanded respect. He compelled respect from his Creator and Lawgiver, who was standing before him. All the while, Christ, whom Pilate mistakenly thought was under his authority, was not afraid of his threats, but reproved him for abusing his limited authority and this only added to Pilate's fears.

WHO DELIVERED ME HAS THE GREATER SIN

Jesus said those who delivered Him to Pilate had committed the greater sin (v11). Who was it who delivered Jesus over to Pilate? It was Caiaphas, the high priest and all the Jewish leaders and all the crowds of people with him. Though he was God's agent, by position, Caiaphas acted upon evil and selfish intent and he stirred up his people to do the same. Caiaphas had arrested Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate to be crucified. In this, he represented the nation: Jesus came unto His own, but His own did not receive Him (1:11).

The Jews prided themselves on their knowledge of Scripture, but they could not see they were blind to the truth. Jesus told them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains." [9:41 NASB].

The chief priest and his accomplices had acted with premeditation (11:47-53); Caiaphas predicted Christ would die for the nation (18:14). Murdering Christ was carefully planned and plotted, in defiance of all the evidence given for the Messiah in Scripture. The Jews had knowledge of the Messiah, but they despised Him and deliberately set out to kill Him. Therefore, they had the greater sin.

NO KING BUT CAESAR

Christ said nothing in His defense, but when He spoke, the more Pilate was convicted He was an innocent man and quite possibly a son of the gods. Pilate was more determined than ever to release Christ (v12a), but authorities seen are more felt than authorities unseen and when the Jews warned him he would be opposing Caesar (v12b), this was a direct threat of impeachment. So, Pilate was in quite the pickle. Fear of man is the stumbling block of all men without Christ.

> It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes. [Psa 118:8-9 NASB, ESV].

Here was Pilate, a secular man, caught in this quandary of choices. He had no convictions, save self preservation, because he had no foundation of truth. He was skeptical of truth. So, he was forced to choose between protecting an innocent man, who may be a son of a god, or satisfying immature, yet important people, to protect his position of authority.

Every man faces this choice many times a day, though most times, we do not recognize it: Will we please man or please God? The natural man is motivated to please his peers; to be accepted and praised; for this, Jesus asked the question: "how can you be saved?" [5:44].

Pilate resisted their threats. His next strategy was to bring Christ out once more, in His humiliated state, hoping the Jew's zeal for His death would be appeased by the sight of Him in such a miserable condition. Pilate sat himself down on the judgment seat at the Stone Pavement (v13). This was an act of authority; the act of a sitting judge. "Look at your king," he said [v14b].

It was getting on toward noon and it was the day of preparation for the feast (v14). Pilate may have hoped if he resisted long enough, the Jews would be happy to end this and get on with their celebrations.

Three possible reasons for proclaiming, "Behold your king!" [v14b].

1. In contrast to the humiliating spectacle of the Christ, maybe the people would laugh and this would break the tension.
2. He was expressing his contempt for the Jews.
3. He was convinced Christ was a king.

Nonetheless, Pilate's declaration did not change the mind of the Jews. They continued their call for His death by crucifixion. Pilate asked them whether he should crucify their king (v15); still referring to Christ as king. The Jewish leaders, who previously denied their enslavement to Rome (8:33) and who were looking for a Messiah to free them from Rome (12:13), now proclaimed, "We have no king, but Caesar!" [v15b].

They openly declared they would accept the tyranny of man before they would receive the Word of God. In the account of Matthew, Pilate washed his hands of this innocent man's blood in front of the crowd and they shouted, "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Mat 27:24-25). They hated Christ so much, they flippantly brought a curse upon their children, but, the lack of the fear of God, does not negate the power of God. God brought this curse to fruition forty years later, when Rome sacked Jerusalem, killing more than one million of their children and laying the city desolate for 2000 years.

> **for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin. [v11 NASB].**

Pilate could stonewall no longer. Though he believed Christ to be innocent, though he feared the Roman gods, though he had been warned by his wife to have nothing to do with this man, in the end, Pilate sentenced Jesus to death on the cross. He capitulated to the gods of this world and they took Him to be crucified (v16).

IN CLOSING

Pilate had determined Christ was innocent. So he had Jesus flogged, to punish Him before setting Him free. Christ was tormented, humiliated and disgraced. In this condition, He was paraded before the hateful crowd and the crowd continued to demand His death.

Pilate could find no guilt in Christ, but he was pressured by social and political constraints to hand Him over for execution. He capitulated because he was unwilling to sacrifice his position of power for the Truth standing in front of Him. One time, when confronting the Jews, Jesus asked the question, "If you desire the praise of man rather than the glory of God, how can you be saved?" (5:44).

The Jews claimed to love God, but hated Him in their presence. They had made God into their own image and the Messiah, Jesus Christ, did not fit this picture. When confronted with "their king," they rejected their Messiah and claimed they wanted no king but Caesar, whom they detested. They chose to serve the prince of the world, rather than serve God.

We justify ourselves by judging the Jews and Pilate, but we have the same sinful nature as these men. Our sin causes us to be blind to God's leading. It causes us to focus on our worldly desires and goals rather than the Messiah. Just like the Jews, we have a choice to make. Will we surrender to the Messiah, abandon ourselves and follow Him or will we crucify Him and continue on with our dreams and aspirations?

Lest this question be merely rhetorical and lost in the daily minutiae, you can find the answer by examining whom you seek to please everyday.

John 19:17-42 The Crucifixion, Death And Burial Of Christ

Though the Jewish leaders studied the Scriptures, they were unwilling to accept a Messiah who did not conform to their bias. They valued their power more than they valued God's promise. If to receive the Messiah meant they must surrender their authority or sacrifice their fame and glory, they preferred the Son of God to be dead.

Pilate believed Christ to be innocent and even feared He may be a son of the gods, but he finally caved to the pressure and threats of the Jews. He handed Jesus over to be crucified.

Read John 19:17-42.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

God gave Abraham a son of promise. He waited years for this promise, who was finally born when he was one hundred years old. Then God told him to sacrifice his son. Abraham set out to obey God. He set out to sacrifice his son to God (Gen 22). His willingness to sacrifice his son of promise, is a picture of the Father willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son.

Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice, is a picture of Christ carrying His cross. God providing Abraham a substitute ram to sacrifice in place of his son, is a picture of Christ dying in our place.

Though Christ is fully God, He carried the cross and died for our sins as a physical man. And this man had been tortured so badly, there was not much strength left to carry the cross alone. In the synoptic Gospels, Simon of Cyrene, helped in this carrying of the cross (Mat 27:32; Mar 15:21; Luk 23:26).

The cross and the tomb were outside the city, at Golgotha, the Place of the Skull (v17). This was a picture of Scripture requiring the refuse of the sin offering to be disposed outside the camp (Exo 29:14). As the writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote:

> For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. [Heb 13:11-12 NASB].

Christ was crucified between two criminals (v18), as Isaiah prophesied:

> He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. [Isa 53:12b NASB].

Christ, the sinless one, was counted as a criminal and sentenced to die a gruesome death. Yet, He suffered God's wrath to satisfy God's indignation against man; to reconcile His people to God.

> But the LORD was pleased to crush Him. . .He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. [Isa 53:10a,12c NASB].

> you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins. [Mat 1:21b NASB, ESV].

> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. [Rom 5:10 NASB].

> God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them. [2Co 5:19b NASB].

We speak of His ongoing intercession for the believer. The long term, but, in the short term sense of the word, He made intercession for sinners while on the cross, when He said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." [Luk 23:34 NASB].

Pilate carved a plaque and put it on the cross (v19). It said, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." This plaque was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek; it was written for the whole world to read (v20). It must have been a large sign. This made the Jews upset. They wanted Pilate to change the wording to say Jesus claimed to say this. They did not want to have this stated as fact (v21), but Pilate refused to change it (v22).

Pilate may have refused the request to spite the Jews. They pressured him to crucify Christ against his will, they threatened his high position, so he would not sacrifice what little joy he could get out of this. Furthermore, he knew Christ to be more than the Jews would give Him credit. So, Christ was crucified with a sign on the cross declaring to the world who He was.

THEY DIVIDED MY GARMENTS

> **When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. . . [v23].**

The soldiers divided Jesus' garments, but they cast lots for the tunic because it was woven in one piece and they did not want to damage it (v23-24).

This is in accord with what the psalmist wrote hundreds of years before: "they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." [Psa 22:18 NASB, ESV].

At His crucifixion, Jesus suffered the curse of nakedness. When Adam sinned, he discovered he was naked. He was afraid and embarrassed and hid himself from God (Gen 3:9-11). Then God made for Adam and his wife garments of animal skins to clothe them (Gen 3:21). God made clothing to cover sin, in anticipation of Christ's atoning work. And when Christ was made sin for us, He was stripped naked and humiliated. There was nothing to separate Him from the Father's wrath.

The Apostle Paul compared our earthly bodies to what God has prepared for us. Those who follow Christ have an innate desire not to be left naked and we will be clothed with our new bodies in Heaven (2Co 5:1-6). In heaven, those coming out of the Tribulation will be clothed in white (Rev 7:13-14). God has put into our hearts the desire to be clothed; to have our nakedness covered, but Christ was stripped of all clothing and dignity and His torn flesh was exposed to the world as He suffered for our sins and became our covering for sin.

STANDING BY THE CROSS

While Christ hung on the cross, suffering the wrath of God, the crowd expressed their hatred for Him. This, too, was a fulfillment of prophecy. The synoptic Gospels mention how the people derided Him, scoffing and mocking Him (Mat 27:39-43; Mar 15:29-32; Luk 23:35-39). Isaiah 53:4 says we saw Him as smitten of God or that He had brought this suffering upon Himself, deserving punishment.

> All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head. [Psa 22:7 NASB].
>
> I also have become a reproach to them; when they see me, they wag their head. [Psa 109:25 NASB].

While the people reviled Him, Christ, in His love, warned the people of coming destruction as He hung on the cross.

> Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.' For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry? [Luk 23:28-31].

Christ's warning came to fulfillment 40 years later. Ironically, it was during the passover in AD 70, Jerusalem was sacked. The city was full of people and more than one million were slaughtered. The scorn they rendered to Christ was then heaped upon themselves, as foretold by Jeremiah (Jer 18:16; Lam 2:15).

SIDENOTE: At least three women named Mary were present at the cross. Mary, the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus (v25).

While He was suffering on the cross, Christ reaffirmed His concern for His mother and His affection for John. Although John's mother was with them, at the cross (Mat 27:56; Mar 15:40), Christ charged to John to look after His earthly mother. John obeyed and took Christ's mother into his home, as his own mother (v26-27).

JESUS' DEATH

All through this Gospel, John made note: "the time had not come" or "the time had come." Now he wrote "Jesus knowing all was finished." [v28]. These phrases speak to the fact God is in control; even of the moments. This phrase also reaffirms to us the sacrifice of our Savior was voluntary, in fact it was planned by God before the creation of the world.

Now, knowing all was finished, Christ fulfilled one last prophecy before He died: He said, "I thirst." [v28].

> my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. [Psa 22:15].

Jesus, the Living Water (4:10-14; 7:37-39) was thirsty (v28). When He thirst, they filled a sponge with sour wine or vinegar and put it to His mouth (v29). The Apostle John said this was to fulfill Scripture. The Scripture fulfilled was Psalm 69:21b: "for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Even in His thirst, Christ fulfilled prophecy.

> **It is finished. [v30b].**

All things were fulfilled and Christ announced this. Christ had satisfied the wrath of God against those who had been chosen in Him before the creation of the world. He paid the ransom for these, so that they may be with Him in glory forever.

> What is finished? The Law is fulfilled as never before, nor since, in His "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross" [Ed. Php 2:8]; Messianic prophecy is accomplished;

> Redemption is completed; "He hath finished the transgression, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, and sealed up the vision and prophecy, and anointed a holy of holies" [Ed. Dan 9:24]; He has inaugurated the kingdom of God and given birth to a new world. [JFB].

Some commentaries make note that if Christ cried out, He was still strong and chose to die before nature had taken its course. Other commentaries point out the Apostle Paul's claim, "He was crucified in weakness." [2Co 13:4]. Some claim many a martyr has had the energy to cry out in proclamation immediately before their death. Therefore, the crying out did not indicate there was a lot of life left. His crying out proves nothing about how much strength He had remaining, but the Bible says He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (v30). This means, whether weak or strong, He voluntarily died. He controlled the time of His death. He gave up His spirit. This was not a matter of His flesh expiring; it was a matter of Christ setting His life aside.

> Into Your hand I commit My spirit. [Psa 31:5a NASB, ESV].

Death by crucifixion would often drag on for days, but the Jews did not want the bodies up on the Sabbath during the Passover celebration. So they requested the legs of the men be broken (v31). Without support from the legs, the weight of the crucified man would be placed upon his lungs and he would suffocate to death.

But there is another reason why Christ's body had to be down; not that the Pharisees cared about this: God gave Israel a law those hung on a tree must be buried the same day. In this, Christ would fulfill the law even in His death, by dying and being buried the same day.

> And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. [Deu 21:22-23a ESV].

When the soldiers went to break the legs of the men, they found Christ had already died, so they did not break His legs, but pierced His side (v32-34). When they pierced His side, blood and water flowed.

> It is now well known that the effect of long-continued and intense agony is frequently to produce a secretion of a colorless lymph within the pericardium (the membrane enveloping the heart), amounting in many cases to a very

> considerable quantity." [JFB, quoting Webster and Wilkinson].

So we see, the death of Jesus Christ was not questioned. When they came to Him, it was obvious He was dead. However, to make sure of it or produce evidence of it, one soldier pierced His side with a spear. The outflow of blood and water confirmed Christ was dead and gave evidence He had suffered much agony.

In verse 36, John pointed out not breaking Christ's bones fulfilled the prophecy that not one of His bones will be broken (Psa 34:20). This also fulfilled an ordinance regarding the sacrifice of the Passover: they were not to break any bones of the Passover lamb (Exo 12:46; Num 9:12). Christ was the perfect Lamb; the perfect sacrifice and the temporary Passover lamb typified Him in every way; even in preserving the bones from being broken.

> But though we are to see here the fulfillment of a very definite typical ordinance, we shall, on searching deeper, see in it a remarkable divine interposition to protect the sacred body of Christ from the last indignity after He had finished the work given Him to do. Every imaginable indignity had been permitted before that, up to the moment of His death, but no sooner is that over than an Unseen hand is found to have provided against the clubs of the rude soldiers coming in contact with that temple of the Godhead. [JFB].

The piercing of Jesus' side (v37), by fulfilling prophecy, left another prophecy yet to come: The prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled in part, in that, he prophesied Christ would be pierced 500 years before Christ was crucified, but the prophecy will be fulfilled in full when Christ returns to reign in Jerusalem and Israel turns to Him and mourns for what they did to Him.

> they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. [Zec 12:10b NASB].

In writing the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John prophesied those who pierced Him (the collective Jews, not just the singular soldier, who acted upon their behalf) would see Him again.

> BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of

the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. [Rev 1:7].

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN

In concluding the events of Christ's crucifixion and death, John testified he was a witness and he testified to the reliability of his testimony (v35). His purpose for establishing his reliability was so everyone reading his account may believe in Jesus Christ.

1) "He who saw it has borne witness"; this was the Apostle John. [v35 ESV].
2) "His testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth." [v35 ESV].
    a) "This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true." [21:24 ESV].
3) "That you also may believe." [v35 ESV].
    a) "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." [20:31 ESV].

John said these things came to pass to fulfill Scripture. This was further assurance that the account of these events were true.

At the time of this writing, John was an elder in the church; a well known elder. He was the last of the Apostles. There were some who were trying to undermine the Gospel and he warned of them in the epistles he wrote. It was in this context he wrote confirming his witness and that his witness is faithful, so the reader can believe what he wrote.

JESUS' BURIAL

After Christ was confirmed dead, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took His body and prepared it for burial with the customary herbs and spices; approximately 75 pounds of it (v38-40). The KJV and NASB say one hundred pounds. The Greek is one hundred litras; a litra was a Roman pound, weighing 11.5 to 12 ounces. Therefore, one hundred litras is approximately 75 US pounds.

John described Joseph of Arimathea as one "being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews." [v38 NASB]. He described Nicodemus as the one who had come to Jesus by night (v39). Both men believed, but were

afraid to be counted with Him publicly. It appears they were not alone, for John wrote, rebuking such men, in an earlier passage:

> Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God. [12:42-43 NASB].

There was a new tomb in the garden, near to where Christ was crucified. This tomb was hewn out of a rock and had never been used. It is fitting for the King of Glory to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt which had never been ridden (Mar 11:2) and that He be buried in a tomb which had never been used (v41; cf Luk 23:53). This is a picture of God's holiness.

Matthew claimed the tomb belonged to Joseph (Mat 27:60). Joseph and Nicodemus took the body of Christ there. Because the time was at hand for the Passover celebration, they placed the body in the tomb partially prepared, with the intention to finish the job after the festivities (v41-42). Joseph rolled a large stone in front of the entrance of the tomb and went to the passover (Mat 27:60).

The crucifixion of Christ was an inconvenience at the time of the Passover feast. Joseph and Nicodemus were concerned for the proper burial of Christ. Nonetheless, they had to get to the feast, so "they laid Jesus there."

THE PARADOX OF A PRIVATE FAITH

Like Joseph and Nicodemus, many professing Christians are afraid to face the ridicule or judgment of their peers and will claim their faith is a private matter. Is it possible to have a "private faith" and be truly saved? Here are five reasons why the answer is "NO":

1. In chapter 3, when Christ was talking with Nicodemus, He told him about the work of the Spirit and said, "You hear its sound." [3:8]. Meaning, when the Holy Spirit indwells in us, we cannot have a "private relationship" between us and God. Furthermore, Jesus said what is in the heart will come out of the mouth (Mat 15:18).

2. John the Baptist said, "Whoever receives His testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true." [3:33]. To set a seal is to publicly certify.

3. The Great Commission (Mat 28:18-20) is a command for all Christians to disciple others and teach the Gospel. The Apostle John recorded some of Christ's parting words, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." [20:21 NASB]. The

Father did not send the Son in private. So, we too, are not sent to keep our faith private.

4. The most common reason for holding to a "private faith" is the fear of man; whether this be fear of death or fear of ridicule. Jesus commanded, "What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." [Mat 10:27-28 NASB; cf Psa 118:8-9].

5. Beware, lest we seek approval and glory from man, Jesus warned, "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?" [5:44 NASB].

CHRIST SATISFIED GOD'S WRATH

> But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. . .the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief. [Isa 53:5,10a NASB].

Christ suffered for us; He paid for our sins by suffering the curse of death on the cross.

> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE" [Gal 3:13 NASB].

The Apostle Paul based this account in Galatians upon Deuteronomy 21:23, "he who is hanged is accursed of God" Here is an example of a law established in the Scriptures used as a foretelling of Christ. Christ took our curse upon Himself and suffered. He is our propitiation. He satisfied God's wrath.

> whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. [Rom 3:25a NASB].

> He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. [1Jo 2:2a NASB].

> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [1Jo 4:10 NASB].

At the right time, God sent the sinless, perfect man, the Lamb without blemish to die for man and satisfy His wrath (Gal 4:4). Sheep and cattle had been temporary sacrifices; required year-after-year. These would appease God's wrath, but Christ was the permanent sacrifice; satisfying God's wrath once and for all. God's justice would be made right and displayed to all. This is why Isaiah said it pleased the Father to crush His Son (Isa 53:10).

> This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. [Rom 3:25b-26 NASB].

This is why we cannot be saved by anything we do: Jesus satisfied God's wrath and we cannot. This is why we must repent of our sins and follow Christ to be saved, for He alone could satisfy God's wrath.

> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. [Act 17:30-31 ESV].

Christ became sin for us, so God would see us as righteous through Him. The Bible says Christ paid our debt and nailed our sins to the cross (Col 2:14). And the Apostle Paul declared Christ has given us His righteousness. If we follow Christ, our sins are canceled and God sees us as righteous through His Son. Praise God!

> He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:21 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Christ died for our sin. Many preachers like to make a big deal of the physical torture He suffered, which He did suffer much; but His greatest suffering and agony was at the hands of the Father, bearing God's wrath on our behalf, which few preachers will speak about. Too many preachers neglect the part of the Father crushing the Son, because this does not fit their image of a loving God. The fact is, on our behalf, Christ took upon Himself all the wrath of a holy and righteous God. The physical tortures did not hold a candle to this agony.

The modern American gospel says God loves you unconditionally; just believe. There is no call for repentance and leaving our lives of sin, but this leaves us with a nagging question: Why would the perfect, sinless Son of God, who enjoyed perfect love and unity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, why would He take my sin upon Himself and suffer God's wrath, so I could remain in my sin?

In Romans 6, the Apostle Paul asked two questions and gave three answers:

> Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? BY NO MEANS! If we died to sin, how can we still live in it. [Rom 6:1-2 ESV emphasis added].
>
> Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? BY NO MEANS! . . .you are slaves of the one whom you obey. . . [Rom 6:15-16 ESV emphasis added]
>
> The wages of sin is death. . . [Rom 6:23].

Christ satisfied God's wrath on behalf of those who belong to Him. He paid the price, settled our debt and nailed our sins to the cross. Those who follow Christ, God sees as righteous; not through any work of our own, but through the blood of Christ. Only what Christ has done for us can save us, but if we think this means we can remain in our sin, we are not saved.

> "It is finished." How terribly have these blessed words of Christ been misunderstood, misappropriated and misapplied! How many seem to think that on the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished a work which rendered it unnecessary for the beneficiaries of it to live holy lives on earth. So many have been deluded into thinking that, so far as reaching heaven is concerned, it matters not how they walk provided they are "resting on the finished work of Christ." They may be unfruitful, untruthful, disobedient, yet (though they may possibly miss some millennial crown) so long as they repudiate all righteousness of their own and have faith in Christ, they imagine they are "eternally secure." All around us are people who are worldly-minded, money-lovers, pleasure-seekers, Sabbath-breakers, yet who think all is well with them because they have "accepted Christ as their personal Savior." In their aspiration, conversation, and recreation, there is practically nothing to differentiate them from those who make no profession at all. Neither in their home-life nor social-life is there anything save empty pretensions to distinguish them from others. The fear of God is not upon them, the commands of God have no authority over them, the

> holiness of God has no attraction for them. "It is finished." How solemn to realize that these words of Christ must have been used to lull thousands into a false peace. Yet such is the case. We have come into close contact with many who have no private prayer-life, who are selfish, covetous, dishonest, but who suppose that a merciful God will overlook all such things provided they once put their trust in the Lord Jesus. What a horrible perversion of the truth! What a turning of God's grace "into lasciviousness"! (Jude 4). Yes, those who now live the most self-seeking and flesh-pleasing lives, talk about their faith in the blood of the Lamb, and suppose they are safe. How the devil has deceived them! [Arthur Pink, "It Is Finished"].

"It is finished." Christ paid the price for those who die to their sins.

John 20:1-18 The Sunday Morning Resurrection Of Jesus Christ

From the beginning of His ministry, Christ professed He would die and rise up from the dead (2:19, *et al*). Now, Christ had died. To the disciples and those who loved Him, it was a discouraging time, for they saw His life as over and had not understood His promise to rise again. Then, Christ accomplished His resurrection, as He promised. When this took place, the disciples were at a loss to react, because something like this had never happened before.

Read John 20:1-18.

MARY AT THE TOMB

The Passover celebration was completed and the Sabbath was past. Now it was Sunday morning and Mary Magdalene went to the tomb before dawn (v1). She had likely come to finish applying the herbs and spices to Christ's body so He would have a proper burial. When she arrived, she found the tomb was no longer sealed for the stone was rolled away.

This was most unsettling to find the stone rolled away and she presumed the body was stolen. So, she ran to find Peter and John and told them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." [v2 ESV].

She still called Him "Lord." Although she, along with the disciples, had high hopes for the earthly reign of the Messiah; and although she was utterly crushed by His crucifixion, which seemed to fail her hopes, yet she still called Him "Lord." God, in the flesh had died; though she was crushed, she clung to the hope Christ was whom He said He was.

PETER AND JOHN AT THE TOMB

Peter and John ran to the tomb. John got there first. He did not go in, but he looked inside and saw the linen cloths. When Peter got there, he went inside. He also saw the cloths "and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself." [v7 NASB].

> not loosely, as if hastily thrown down, and indicative of a hurried and disorderly removal. [JFB].

There has recently arisen an urban legend which says this folded towel (face cloth) was a sign left by Jesus meaning He will come again. There is

no support for this theory and the promoters have never given proof of this "Jewish tradition."

The way the linen and cloth lay were evidence of Christ's resurrection. In the last chapter, Scripture says Joseph and Nicodemus had bound or wrapped the body of Christ in linen cloths (19:40). When His body was resurrected, He came out of the cloths. The cloths lay there as if the body had come out. The face cloth was rolled and set aside, as if the cloth had come out of the linen cloths with the body and was removed separately. This was proof of a resurrected body; no one had come to the tomb to unwrap the body of Christ.

Then, John went into the tomb "and he saw and believed." [v8]. He could see the body had not been stolen, for all the cloths were lying there, still wrapped; just no body inside. If the body was stolen, it would have been stolen with wraps and all. If Christ's body had been unwrapped, the cloths would have been in a pile. It was obvious the body had come out of the cloths. The evidence was Christ had arisen just like He said He would.

John saw and believed, but up until this time, he did not understand (v9) and even now, he must have had a multitude of questions in his head. This passage does not say whether Peter believed or was confused. He had much to sort out, for this Messiah whom he had believed in, he also had denied, three times. There was much to sort out. So, Peter and John went home or, "back to their homes." [v10].

Neither disciple had a home in Jerusalem and it does not appear they had yet returned to Galilee. So the term, "back to their homes" most likely meant they went back to where they were staying, which was probably the home of a friend. The point made is they went away from the tomb, they went back to where they were staying to discuss and to contemplate what they had seen.

MARY CONFRONTS THE GARDENER

Mary Magdalene, after declaring to the disciples the tomb was empty, followed Peter and John back to the grave. Apparently, neither of the disciples had explained to her what they saw as they left. When they returned home, she was left there, by herself, crying. As she wept, she looked into the tomb (v11).

SIDENOTE: John and Mary had to stoop to look into the tomb (v5,11). When you see illustrations of the tomb, with a stone eight or ten feet tall, you can rest assured, the artist exaggerated the size of the tomb.

When Peter and John looked into the tomb, they saw linen. When Mary looked in, she saw two angels. The angels were dressed in white and sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the feet (v12).

The first time Mary came to the tomb, she saw the body of Christ was missing and presumed it had been stolen. The second time, she saw two angels as if to satisfy the question, "What happened to the body?" but she failed to understand the glory in what she saw. For when the angels asked her why she was crying, she replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." [v13 NASB, ESV]. This the same thing she told Peter and John. Her grief must have been intense.

She turned around and saw Jesus, but she did not know it was Him (v14); she thought He was the gardener (v15). When He asked her why she was crying and for whom was she looking, she did not answer His question, but she prevailed upon Him to disclose where He put the body (v14-15). She had a one-track mind. She was determined to recover Christ's body; she claimed she would bring the body back. Her grief was intense, indeed.

"Woman, why are you weeping?" [v13,15]. This was the same question asked of her by the angels and by Jesus, whom she mistook for the gardener.

MARY RECOGNIZES HER LORD

Then Jesus called her by name. He said, "Mary." Her heart stirred and she recognized her Lord and in great excitement called Him, "Rabboni," which means Teacher (v16). Here is a picture where Christ was compassionate toward her, though He did not reveal Himself right away.

Evidently she had thrown herself upon Him, because He stopped her, saying, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father." [v17 ESV]. Many wonder why Jesus told Mary not to cling to Him, but told Thomas to touch Him (v27). Matthew gave an account similar to John's with Mary Magdalene and another Mary at the tomb (Mat 28:9). They took hold of His feet and worshiped Him, but Matthew did not record Jesus' rebuke. When Christ told Mary not to cling to Him, it may have been a signal their relationship had changed. No longer could she cling to Him, as if to physically keep Him here; for He was going to the Father. No longer could she cling to Him to confirm His physical presence; she would soon have to cling to Him by faith and not by sight.

> Old familiarities must now give place to new and more awful yet sweeter approaches; but for these the time has not come yet. This seems the spirit, at least, of these mysterious words. [JFB].

Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, He had come as a man, and His friends and disciples were familiar with Him in this context, but He was now risen and His flesh was no longer the same as His peers; His body was transformed. He was no longer their earthly companion; He was Lord and He was on His way to the Father.

MARY TESTIFIED OF HER RISEN SAVIOR

Jesus told her to "go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" [v17b NASB]. Hebrews 2:11 says Christ is not ashamed to call those whom He is sanctifying "brothers." Before His death He called them friends (15:15) and after His death, He called them brothers.

Many professing Christians are casual in their reference toward Christ. They flippantly call Christ "brother" or call the Father "daddy" and such, but this was the purpose of Christ's warning to Mary about clinging: we cannot be casual toward Him as if He is one of us. Though He called the disciples friends on one occasion, and brothers on another, they never returned the casual reference or greeting. He was always their Lord and Master and they referred to themselves as bondservants or slaves. Though He calls us brothers, we cannot bring Him down to our level by calling Him the same. To the believer, He is Lord and Master; He is God.

> Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty." [Luk 17:9-10 ESV].
>
> Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. [1Pe 2:16 NASB].

Regarding "My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (v17), Jesus made a glorious pronouncement: This same Father to whom He was ascending was now their Father, too; and the God whom He had revealed to them was now their God, too. This is our hope: those who follow Christ are now part of God's family. The Apostle Paul wrote, "we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." [Rom 8:23 ESV]. Like Christ, we will have new bodies; bodies free from the bondage to corruption or decay (Rom 8:21).

Mary obeyed and told the disciples all the Lord had spoken to her (v18). John wrote she declared or announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." [v18]. She told them everything the Lord had told her.

IN CLOSING

Christ arose from the grave on Sunday morning.

When Mary Magdalene discovered Christ's body missing, she was distraught. She told the disciples. Peter and John ran to the tomb. When they saw the empty tomb, John believed. John and Peter went home, probably to talk this out and sort what had happened, with the words which Christ had left them the night before He was crucified.

Mary looked in the tomb again. She saw the angels, but her distress was so intense, she was not ready for the good news they had for her. She turned and saw Jesus; thinking He was the gardener, she wanted to know where she could find the body; and she would bring it back, herself, if need be. Then Jesus spoke her name and she saw Him. He warned her not to cling to His body. She was now going to have to cling to Him by faith. She spread the news, telling the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." [v18].

Jesus has called each of us by name. Our proper response is to cling to Him by faith and spread the news He has risen and has conquered death.

John 20:19-29 Jesus Appeared To The Disciples On Sunday

Christ appeared to the disciples on the evening of the first day of the week; the same day He arose from the grave. This was Sunday.

Many people want to explain the change of the worship of the Lord to Sunday as come from conspiracies of many evil kinds, but it was the Lord who established Sunday worship; as He arose on a Sunday and the first two times He met with the disciples, were both on a Sunday; and when they met, the disciples worshiped Him. Christ never returned to the temple to teach on the Sabbath. Furthermore, there is mention in Acts and in the writings of the Apostle Paul, indicating Sunday worship.

Read John 20:19-29.

THE FIRST SUNDAY APPEARANCE

John did not say Christ came through the locked doors; he did not describe Jesus as walking through the walls or the doors. He claimed the doors were locked, but Christ came and stood among them. In Luke's account it is the same thing (Luk 24:36-49): as the disciples were talking, Jesus stood among them. Luke also wrote the disciples were startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. In both accounts, He did not mysteriously appear, as in fading into view. John and Luke said, in essence, "there He was."

"Peace be with you." [v19]. The first thing He said to them after He arose was one of the last things He said to them before He was crucified. And peace it is, for Christ has satisfied God's wrath, bringing peace with God to His chosen people.

> we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [Rom 5:1b NASB].

After appearing to them by such miraculous means, Christ did not need to give proof it was He. Nonetheless, so the disciples could know He had done what He said, that He died and arose from the dead and He arose on the day He said it would be done, He showed them the scars in His hands and side (v20). Christ wanted them to know, beyond all doubt, it was He and He was alive.

Luke described this gladness of the disciples like this: "they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement." [Luk 24:41a NASB]. They were marveling, they could not believe what they saw. This was not a rebellious unbelief; this was a rejoicing, overwhelming belief; a belief in

something which was too good to be true; too hard to understand, but they knew it to be true. Confronted with too much for their minds to sort out, they were in awe of Christ.

They had seen their Lord, their Messiah, crucified. He was dead and buried; they never expected to see Him again and their sorrow was very great. While they were mourning, feeling sorry for themselves and fearful the Jews would come for them, suddenly, He was there among them and He spoke to them.

> **Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. [v21b NASB].**

While they marveled and collected their thoughts, Christ gave them a commission. Just as He taught them in Sychar (ch4), "It is time to go to work." The first thing He said to them after extending His peace, was He was sending them to tell others. If we are saved, our mission is to tell others the good news that Christ died and rose again.

When Christ gave the great commission, He said, all authority had been given to Him, therefore or because of this, go teach and disciple (Mat 28:18-20). Christ brought peace, so we must go and proclaim this peace to others.

> Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2Co 5:18-21 NASB].

We know He discussed more doctrine with them for how can they speak of what they do not understand? Luke wrote of this same meeting, "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." [Luk 24:45 NASB].

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true. [1Jo 5:20a NASB].

Just as Christ found it important to impart sound doctrine to His disciples before His death, He made it a priority after He arose from the dead. Peace comes from understanding the Word, for the Scriptures give us sound

doctrine and instruction for living lives reconciled to God. How can we serve the Lord, unless we know how to rest in His peace? We need to be constantly in the Word.

Christ then breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." [v22]. Just as God breathed life into the lungs of the first Adam (Gen 2:7), through the second Adam (Christ), God now breathes the life of the Holy Spirit into those who are His. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and all who follow Christ have the Holy Spirit within them.

> "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water,'" but this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. [7:37b-39 NASB].

JUDGING TRUE REPENTANCE

The next verse has been misinterpreted by many and misunderstood by most. I remember from my charismatic youth, getting filled with the Spirit was about power. He gives me power to do this; power to do that; and many thought they had the power to forgive sins because they had the filling of the Holy Spirit.

> **If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained. [v23 NASB].**

This verse was never interpreted literally, as interpreted in the English, by the apostles and the authority to forgive or retain sins was never instructed in the New Testament epistles. Clearly, no man can intercede nor interfere between God and man. This verse is a charge to judge sound doctrine and exercise church discipline for the sake of sound doctrine (cf Mat 7:15-20; 1Co 5:5-7).

> This verse does not give authority to Christians to forgive sin. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner's forgiveness by the Father because of the work of His Son if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer with certainty can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God's forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are not forgiven. [The MacArthur Study Bible].

The appropriate interpretation of this Scripture is, we will know. Jesus said we will judge them by their fruit (Mat 7:16). We will discern between fruit

which is an outward facade and fruit which is evidence of a soul anchored in Christ.

THOMAS DOUBTS

Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus first appeared to them that Sunday evening (v24). Like the other disciples, he had spent his days and nights since the crucifixion pondering in fear and doubt. So, when the other disciples told him they had seen the Lord, his first reaction was to express his doubt (v25).

Only two other times in the Scriptures do we hear from Thomas and both times are in the Gospel of John.

1) When Jesus was going to Jerusalem to raise Lazarus, Thomas, knowing the Jews wanted to kill Him said, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." [11:16].

2) When Jesus said, "you know the way to where I am going." [14:4]. Thomas said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?" [14:5].

We can see from these two incidents, Thomas had difficulties trusting what Jesus said. He was more of a negative or cynical thinker; he was resigned to doubt.

When the disciples described their encounter with Christ, they probably told Thomas about the marks of the crucifixion, which were still in His hands and His side. Thomas did not say if he saw the marks he would believe. He spoke as if he was inclined NOT to believe: "unless. . .I will never believe." Nonetheless, though he may have been more resolute in expressing his doubt than the others, he was not alone. All the disciples had experienced difficulty believing.

> Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. [Mar 16:14 NASB].

Think about his experience and what formed the mindset of Thomas: He, along with the rest of the disciples, had been following Christ for three years. They believed He was the Messiah, but they believed wrongly He was going to establish His kingdom in Jerusalem and they believed wrongly they were going to be a part of this. After Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, they were probably euphoric with anticipation, but then, instead of setting up His kingdom, the Messiah was taken captive and

crucified. Many of the disciples were gathered together, but they were gathered in fear. Thomas was not with them; he may have been trying to get on with his life or he may have been elsewhere simmering in his doubts. Nonetheless, worry and doubt caused Thomas and the rest of the disciples to forget Christ's promise to rise again.

THE SECOND SUNDAY APPEARANCE

Eight days later, Christ joined the disciples again. Eight days is one week. The Hebrew way of counting was to include both the start and end date in the count. So, Sunday to Sunday was eight days; just as Friday to Sunday was three days or "three days later." They included the current or first day in the count.

The following Sunday, eight days later, Thomas was with the rest of the disciples when Christ appeared again. Just like the last time, the doors were locked, but Christ did not come through the locked doors. Christ appeared and He greeted them again with "Peace be with you." [v26].

Christ met Thomas on his terms. He showed him the scars and told him to place his finger on them and believe (v27). This is one of the few times in the Scriptures where God met man on the man's terms. Do not take from this passage we can make demands of God; that we can challenge Him to prove Himself. Usually these kinds of thoughts are brought about from our own self-pity or pride, which is sin. And Thomas was sinning, but Christ met his terms for His own purposes.

Thomas' reaction to Christ's compassionate challenge was to be awed. He did not touch Jesus or examine the wounds, as he had said he must do. His pride and doubt were cast aside as He was overwhelmed with the presence of the Son of God. His response was to declare Christ to be his Lord and his God (v28). Once firmly entrenched in doubt, his doubt was now completely defeated by Christ's glory.

Although Thomas expressed belief and praise toward Christ, Jesus answered him with a rebuke. "Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." [v29b NASB]. The rebuke was well deserved. Thomas' disbelief originated from not accepting the plans of God because he had plans of his own. So, he wanted tangible proof of God's plan. How often we ask God to perform according to our plans rather than accept our lot as He provides. Christ's rebuke to Thomas extends toward us when we resist His plan or seek tangible evidence rather than trust God in faith.

Understand this another way: When Christ said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" it was a great promise to us, but it was also a warning. For, in His rebuke to Thomas, we are also rebuked. So

often we, like Peter when walking on the water, become affected by what we feel and see and we begin to doubt. God is always in control and we are in His care. Cast aside all doubt and believe.

> though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. [1Pe 1:8-9 NASB].

> for we walk by faith, not by sight. [2Co 5:7 NASB, ESV].

Church tradition tells us Thomas so firmly believed, he went beyond the safety of the Roman Empire to proclaim God's Word to India and the Far East, establishing churches there. Years later, he was pierced with a spear and died in 72AD. This is demonstrative of the courage God had given him to replace his fear and doubt. He was a new creation in Christ.

THE ORIGIN OF SUNDAY WORSHIP

Why did Jesus wait a full week to confront Thomas? Or, even yet, why did Jesus wait a full week before visiting the disciples the second time?

> They probably met every day during the preceding week, but their Lord designedly reserved His second appearance among them till the recurrence of His resurrection day, that He might thus inaugurate the delightful sanctities of THE LORD'S DAY (Rev 1:10). [JFB].

In other words, Christ was getting the disciples used to the idea of worshiping Him on the first day of the week: the day He rose from the dead and brought life to the redeemed; "the Lord's Day." He did this twice: remember, when Scripture calls out twice, such as "Verily, verily" or "Truly, truly," we are supposed to pay special attention.

> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. [Rev 1:10 NASB, ESV].

> On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them. [Act 20:7a NASB].

> On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. [1Co 16:2 NASB].

IN CLOSING

Christ arose. He appeared to the disciples the evening of the day He arose, but Thomas was not with them. Having immersed himself in self-pity, Thomas hardened himself in doubt. However, he was not so hardened the Lord could not reach him, but "don't try this at home," so to speak.

Thomas' doubt is not our model; neither is his challenge to God. We have his example to learn from his sinful mistake, as Christ said, "Blessed are those who believe though they do not see." The fruit of our faith is to believe, even when it seems the whole world declares we are fools to do so and the trials around us are overwhelming.

The following Sunday, Christ appeared to the disciples a second time. This time, Thomas was with them. When challenged by Christ, Thomas could only declare, "My Lord and my God!"

This passage confirms the resurrection of Christ. He did not declare it to the world, but He did declare it to the disciples and those who believed.

The first two times they met were both Sundays. Upon meeting, the disciples engaged in worship of their Messiah. He did this twice to reinforce it; remember "truly, truly." Christ did this to establish the day of worship: to leave behind the yoke of the Law and celebrate the risen Christ and the New Covenant. It was the Lord who established Sunday worship.

But our biggest take-away in this passage is we are to believe in a risen Christ by faith and trust God regardless how we see the circumstances around us.

John 20:30-31 So You Believe Jesus Is The Christ

For three years, Christ taught the disciples and He performed a vast amount of miracles. Most of Christ's teachings and miracles were not published, but God has recorded what He wants us to know.

Read John 20:30-31.

OVERCOMING FALSE DOCTRINE

John stated positively, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." [20:31b]. Thus refuting both claims of Cerinthus:

1. Jesus is not the Christ; and
2. God has not come in the flesh.

This also stands in bold contrast to the claim of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism and other cults who claim Jesus is not God; also against "Christian" sects which deny the Trinity.

THE SEMI-CONCLUSION

Many have commented this appears to be where John planned to end His gospel account, but he later added the last chapter. Maybe, but most likely not. When reading verses 30 and 31, in view of the preceding verses, it seems to flow as an affirmative to the second clause of what Christ said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." [v29]. This account was written so we can believe, though we have not seen, "and that by believing you may have life in His name."

Furthermore, the following and final chapter, where John described Christ reconciling with Peter and where John put rumors of his own immortality to bed, do not appear to be an after thought. And, upon reading the first epistle of John, you can see how his style of writing was to appear to wrap up only to add more.

In this view, it does not appear the purpose of these two verses were ever intended to wrap up the Gospel of John. It appears these two verses are a logical wrap up to Christ revealing Himself to the disciples. He confronted their doubt and established their worship. John, then, brought this to a personal application, "so that you may believe." [v31]. John's desire was for those who believe, to believe and not doubt: to KNOW this Christ whom they worshiped. We have examples of this in his First Epistle:

what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. [1Jo 1:3 NASB].

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [1Jo 2:3 NASB].

I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. [1Jo 2:12-14 NASB].

As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. [1Jo 2:24 NASB].

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. [1Jo 2:28 NASB].

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. [1Jo 3:14a NASB].

The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. [1Jo 3:24 NASB].

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. [1Jo 4:13 NASB, ESV].

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment. [1Jo 4:16-17a NASB].

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. [1Jo 5:13 NASB].

> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. [1Jo 5:20 NASB].

So here, the Apostle John said the purpose of the Gospel is so we may believe and by believing we may have eternal life. This leads us again to the question: What is believing?

WHAT IS BELIEVING?

The modern American gospel equates believing with a felt sincerity. This is a deception for our hearts are deceitful and sincerity is not a feeling. Many professing Christians tell the sinner to try God out and see if He doesn't prove to be all that He says He is. This is blasphemy. God is not available for test runs and Jesus does not need mans' validation.

Many professing Christians claim they believe Jesus is the Son of God and may even declare Him to be their Lord and Savior, but this believing is merely an assurance of the facts: they believe the facts that Jesus is God who came to earth as a man; He died for mans' sin and rose again. The facts are true, but their life is not changed. The demons also believe (Jam 2:19). They profess their knowledge or belief in the actual fact of Him (Mat 8:29; Mar 1:24, 5:7; Luk 4:34). Demons cannot be saved, yet they know without a doubt Jesus is the Son of God.

Two key passages are 3:36 and Hebrews 3:18-19. Both selections of Scripture equate disobedience with unbelief. 3:36 does this by promising eternal life to the one who believes, then, condemning, as an opposite, the one who disobeys. Hebrews 3:18-19 says those who disobey, do so because of unbelief.

> He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. [3:36 NASB].

> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. [Heb 3:18-19 NASB].

Many professing Christians are living disobedient lives. I do not say this in the context that we still have our sin nature. The Apostle Paul told us in Romans chapter 7, we will struggle with this sin nature; and the Apostle John told us if we confess our sin, God is faithful to forgive and to cleanse us (1Jo 1:9). What I am saying is many professing Christians have bought into the modern American gospel. They have this false belief God loves

them in spite of their sin; they suppose God understands them and winks at their sin.

There are many professing Christians who read their Bibles daily, even for decades, yet they have never gone beyond a general knowledge of what it says. Many have been "saved" for years, but they cannot clearly speak the Biblical Gospel message nor will they defend the Word when it is under attack. Many believe the best way to win people to Christ is to be nice and affirming and speak only of God's love. They have no idea how to be a disciple of Christ.

My friend, do not be deceived. Jesus warned us to enter by the narrow gate and He said few will find it (Mat 7:13-14). And Jesus said there will be many who call Him "Lord" and many even did "great things" for God, but He will turn them away and declare He never knew them (Mat 7:21-23). This will be a horrible, terrible thing to hear these words of rejection from the Savior.

The Bible equates believing with obeying Christ. Jesus said if you love Him, you will keep His commands (14:15); He told us to abide in Him; if we are merely reading the Word, we will not produce fruit (15:1-6). We must dig in the Word (6:53-58); we must take up our cross daily and follow Him (Mat 16:24-26; Luk 9:23; 14:27). To have "life in His name" [v31] is to cling to Christ; to cling to everything He has told us in His Word; to desire Him like food and water.

IN CLOSING

The Apostle John said he wrote this Gospel so we may believe. If we read it, we may have a head knowledge, but head knowledge is not the same as believing. If we study it, dig in it, it will become part of us and this will lead to obedience. If we do not obey, we do not believe. True believing is evidenced by obedience and it is found by those who desire Him like food and water; those who find life in His name.

If you profess to believe, but live a disobedient life, you are not saved.

> He who has small thoughts of sin, cannot have great thoughts of God. [John Owen].

John 21:1-14 Jesus Fed The Frail Disciples In Galilee

After Christ arose from the dead, He did not meet with the disciples every day. He told the disciples to meet Him in Galilee (Mat 28:10; Mar 14:28). After He appeared to them twice, they finally made the trip. Upon arriving, some became bored or discouraged, waiting for something to do. So they went fishing.

Read John 21:1-14.

In Matthew's account of the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples they would be scattered, but He would meet them again in Galilee (Mat 26:31-32). When Jesus met Mary Magdalene at the tomb, He told her to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee (Mat 28:7). He said this even though He intended to see them in Jerusalem that night. When He saw them that night, they were still hiding in the upper room; they had not embarked to Galilee. When He saw them a week later, they were still hiding in the upper room. Finally, they went to Galilee, but when they arrived, they grew restless, waiting for the Lord.

JESUS' THIRD APPEARANCE

Jesus appeared to the disciples a third time and here is how it happened: seven disciples were together, hanging around near the lake (v2). Simon Peter said, "I am going fishing" and several disciples said, "We will go with you." [v3]. The ones who went with Peter were Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two others (v2). They went fishing all night and caught nothing (v3). Then Christ appeared.

Early in His ministry when Christ called them, Peter, James and John left their boats and everything they owned to follow Jesus. It was then Christ told Peter he would now be fishing for men (Luk 5:10-11). They left everything to seek a new life with Christ, but now, Peter got discouraged and went back to fishing and six of the eleven went with him.

Christ had risen from the dead, but He was not with them everyday as He was before. They had seen Him twice, but they were not proclaiming His resurrection. They were waiting. Waiting is difficult and the disciples were growing restless. They wanted something to happen. So, at Peter's lead, they went back to their old life and went fishing. They walked away from their calling. Had Christ not intervened, they would have soon been back in business and would never have set out to proclaim the Gospel.

Sometimes our Christian walk seems to be a fruitless, with endless waiting. Some professing Christians will turn back to their old life. Some believe they need to branch out into something new. There are times for action, but

often Jesus wants us to wait; to seek His will rather than seek to make something happen.

As the day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize Him (v4). Calling them "children," He asked them if they had caught any fish. They answered they had not (v5). Jesus told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat. They did not yet recognize Jesus, but they were tired and acted upon the suggestion.

THE REPEAT OF AN OLD MIRACLE

At the time Christ had first called Peter, James and John, He performed a similar miracle. Luke told the story: Peter, James and John had been fishing all night and were cleaning their nets when Jesus borrowed one of their boats to preach from. After Christ finished speaking to the crowd on the shore, He told Peter to row to deep water and cast his net. Peter answered they had fished all night and caught nothing, but he respected Jesus and did what He said. When they cast the net, they pulled in so many fish the nets were breaking. This miracle overwhelmed Peter and he realized he was a sinner standing in front of a Holy God and begged Christ to depart from him (Luk 5:1-11). Now, this miracle from his early days with Christ was happening again (v6).

> **John told Peter, "It is the Lord!" [v7].**

The way John described this scene, it is clear all the disciples were awe struck. Christ had made Himself plainly known by the power of this miracle. Peter was overwhelmed. He put on his outer garment and jumped into the sea to rush to shore. He put on his outer garment, because he realized he was a sinner and he was exposed and he was going to see the Lord, the God of holiness.

Prior to the miracle in both events, the disciples had caught no fish. This was from God, it was not a coincidence. This would make the miracle of their overflowing catch to stand out remarkably against their own efforts.

Though they worked hard, there was no profit. Then, when they obeyed Christ, there was great profit. The moral of these stories is not to obey Christ and receive great profit, this is a false gospel. The moral is all things are in the hands of God. We are called to work hard, we are called to obey Christ, but the outcome is in the hands of God. Therefore, we need to keep our eyes upon Him.

John Calvin wrote in his commentary on this portion of Scripture:

> In the same manner, also, God often tries believers, that He may lead them the more highly to value His blessing. If we

> were always prosperous whenever we put our hand to labor, scarcely any man would attribute to the blessing of God the success of his exertions, all would boast of their industry and would kiss their hands, but when they sometimes labor and torment themselves without any advantage, if they happen afterwards to succeed better, they are constrained to acknowledge something out of the ordinary course; and the consequence is that they begin to ascribe to the goodness of God the praise of their prosperity and success. . . Now if we dislike our calling because the labor which we undertake appears to be unproductive, yet, when the Lord exhorts us to steadiness and perseverance, we ought to take courage; in the end we shall obtain a happy result, but it will be at the proper time. [John Calvin's Bible Commentaries on the Gospel of John, translated by John King, d.1907].

WITH CHRIST ON THE SHORE

The other disciples came to shore in the boat, dragging the net full of fish (v8). Then, they saw Jesus had been cooking some fish on a fire and had some bread laid out, too (v9). While they were fishing and catching nothing, Jesus already had fish.

Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they just caught (v10). John made note, Peter went to the boat and hauled the net with 153 fish ashore (v11). Likely Peter helped the other six disciples haul the net ashore as it would have been a heavy job for one man. The picture is, Peter was overwhelmed, he raced to shore to see Jesus and probably did not know what to say as he must have still felt awkward, having denied Christ a few days earlier and now having disobeyed Him to go fishing, but wanting desperately to be made right with his Lord. So when Jesus made a request for more fish, Peter did not hesitate to make this happen. He desired to be right with Christ.

Then Christ gave them some fish and bread to eat (v12-13). This was the third time Christ appeared to the disciples as a group (v14). Amidst their anxiety and distress, He called them to break from the life they were seeking and come and eat. He called them to spend time with Him.

IN CLOSING

The disciples became discouraged and went fishing; they were depending upon their own labors to satisfy them. Since Christ was crucified, they had been in hiding, now they were more safely in Galilee, but their lives were

amounting to nothing. They were trying to make something happen to legitimize their lives, once again. They did not wait on the Lord as He told them; and this encounter was very humbling.

Often times, to obey means to wait. Jesus told the disciples to meet Him in Galilee. Their obedience was delayed, and when they finally did go, they grew restless for waiting and went back to their old life.

Sometimes, we grow restless. We want to see things happen; we want to "be used by God." Or, sometimes there is pain, injury or illness to overcome and God does not seem to be hearing our prayers. The wait can be discouraging and some go back to their old way of life.

The disciples had walked away from their calling. Jesus met the disciples with a miracle and the disciples were humbled. They realized they were lacking in faith and it seems they were repentant. Then Christ fed them.

Walking with the Lord, sometimes it means we wait. If we are in the Word, Christ will meet us. God speaks to us through His Word.

Come, spend some time with Christ.

John 21:15-19 Jesus Reconciled Peter To Feed Christ's Lambs

So far, Peter has seen Christ three times since His resurrection and it does not seem he has brought up his denial or repented of it verbally, but, we saw in the last passage, it seems he wanted to please Christ; he wanted to be right with Him. He was likely in an awkward state.

Peter had such a strong confidence in his own abilities; he was impetuous and bullheaded. The night Jesus was crucified, Jesus declared the disciples would all be scattered, but Peter proclaimed he would never fall away (Mat 26:33). Nonetheless, he denied Christ three times. Now he was overwhelmed by his failure.

When Christ called Peter from his boat to be His disciple, to be fishers of men, he was never to go back to the boats (Mat 4:19; Mar 1:17). Sin builds upon sin. Peter had denied Christ and in his discouragement, he disobeyed Christ and led others to do the same. Peter's sin had led to his dismay and it was this state which led to more sin.

When we wallow in discouragement, we take our eyes off the Lord and Satan uses our despair to embolden us to sin, to abandon our commission. When we bathe in our depression, we cannot speak the Gospel; we sin. Peter's example is our warning: do not let despair take hold. Let us keep our eyes on the Lord; let us take them off ourselves. If we have sinned, confess our sin and God will forgive and cleanse us (1Jo 1:9).

When Peter saw Christ on the shore, his heart ached; he longed to be right with Christ. In the previous verses we saw how Peter did not wait for the boat to get him to shore, but he jumped into the water in his rush to see Christ. When Christ asked for the disciples to bring more fish, Peter was the first to bring the net full of fish to shore, because he longed to be right with Christ. He would do anything to please Him.

In this passage, we see Christ restore Peter three times. Three times Peter denied Christ and three times Christ restored him, but Christ did not just bring Peter back into the fold. Three times He restored Peter's authority to minister by telling him to "feed My sheep" and "feed My lambs." This was done in the presence of the disciples for their confirmation as well.

Read John 21:15-19.

LOVE ME; FEED MY SHEEP

With each question, Christ addressed Peter, "Simon son of John (or Jonas)." When Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus, his name was Simon. Jesus

changed his name to Cephas or Peter, which means Rock (1:42). What made Peter a rock was his confession of faith (6:68; Mat 16:16-19). Jesus said upon this confession He would build His church (cf Rev 12:11). However, Peter's most recent confession was to deny Christ three times. Of this, he had not yet repented verbally. In Christ, Peter was a rock; on his own, he was fraught with human frailty. So, Christ addressed him by his birth name, his name of frailty, "Simon, son of man."

The first question Jesus asked Peter was, "do you love Me more than these?" [v15]. "These" being the other disciples, his friends. "These" are the ones he sought companionship with; "these" are the ones he wanted to lead; "these" are the ones he led astray. He took them fishing; he took them back to the old life, rather than lead them to wait on Christ.

After this, Christ asked him two more times if he loved Him, then He told Peter how he was going to die. In the past, Peter may have followed Christ impetuously and denied Him in the same manner. Now, Christ gave him the opportunity to count the cost. If we truly follow Christ, there is always a cost. This cost did not deter Peter; he wanted to be right with Christ.

During His ministry, Christ told the disciples, if they love their family more than Him or if they do not take up their cross to follow Him or if they find their life here, they are not worthy of Christ. He told them to count the cost.

> He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. [Mat 10:37-39 NASB]
>
> If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?. . .So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. [Luk 14:26-28,33 NASB].

Calling him Simon, Christ asked Peter three times if he loved Him and Peter was distressed by the third time. Many commentators find a progression in the conversation, as Jesus Christ answered each time, "feed My lambs," "tend My sheep" and "feed My sheep." They read too much into this passage as Christ's commands are essentially the same. Peter had

denied Christ and had led His sheep astray. For the rest of his life, Christ wanted Peter to keep one thing in mind: "Love Me; Feed My Sheep."

Christ restored Peter in the presence of the other disciples. To ask the question once, could have been considered casual conversation; to ask three times was to cement this restoration and the commitment to feed His sheep firmly in the minds of everyone.

The Modern American gospel says, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life," but Christ told us to deny our life; to give it up and follow Him. Christ told Peter he now had one mission and an unpleasant death to look forward to.

Following Christ is not a flippant commitment. It is not something we do when we have the time. If we are too busy to spend time with Christ, we are not following Him; we have not taken up our cross. If there are things we love more than Christ, we cannot be saved. When we take up our cross and follow Christ, we deny our life. This is why Christ said in Luke chapter 14, count the cost and renounce all that you have (Luk 14:28-33).

Though we have shepherds in the form of pastors and elders, every one of us is called to love Christ and minister to the body (Heb 10:24-25; Gal 6:2). If we do not love Christ more than we love our own lives, we cannot properly minister to Christ's sheep. Only those who truly love Christ can represent the Good Shepherd among His sheep.

Three times Christ told Peter to "feed My sheep" affirming his role within the body. This did not make him the head or a pope, as the Roman Catholic church claims. Christ singled out Peter because he had denied Him and he needed to be restored. Christ did this in the presence of the disciples so there would be no question Peter was restored in his relationship with Christ and in the body. Furthermore, the message Christ gave to Peter, applied to all the disciples and it applies to us: we must deny ourselves, follow Christ and feed His sheep.

> Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world
> makes himself an enemy of God. [Jam 4:4b NASB, ESV].

DENYING OURSELVES

Our natural desire is to live in comfort and die in peace. In denying ourselves, we release control how we live and how we die. We know if we follow Christ, we must put the comforts of life behind us and we also leave to Christ how we will die. In denying ourselves we put our faith and confidence in God, alone.

If we keep our faith hidden, there is a chance we die in peace or be proclaimed a good or great man, someone everybody loved, but if we fearlessly proclaim the authority of Christ, there is a better chance we will not. As we see the world building up their rebellion toward God, be assured, a hidden faith is no faith at all.

Christ told Peter how he was to die: he would be taken against his will to die with arms outstretched. Christ told Peter he was going to die for the glory of God (v19); he was going to die at the hands of others; he was going to die against his will. His witness for Christ was going to raise the ire of many and they were going to lead him away to his death.

John said Christ told Peter how he was to die to "show by what kind of death he was to glorify God." [v19 ESV]. This was not revenge for his denial nor was it punishment for allowing his discouragement to lead to disobedience. His death was to bring glory to God.

> Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. [Psa 116:15 ESV].

We do not see the big picture nor the end of all things, but God is great and He works all things for His glory. We do not always see this glory. When we suffer for Christ at the hands of man it can be hard to see how God can be glorified. We do not always see how God uses this among man and we cannot understand what goes on in the heavens and among the principalities.

> I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another. [Isa 42:8 NASB].

> For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. [Col 1:16 NASB].

After laying out how Peter would die, Jesus told Peter, "Follow Me." [v19]. He did not ask him to receive Him. He did not tell him to accept Jesus into his heart. Jesus told Peter, "Follow Me."

> If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. [Mat 16:24-25 NASB].

IN CLOSING

When Christ asked Peter if he loved Him, Peter pledged his love. He was grieved the Lord asked him three times, but this is how Christ restored him and commissioned him to feed His sheep.

Peter loved the sea; he loved to fish and he sought the comfort of his old life. When he fell back to this old life, Christ called him and assured him he would die for his faith. Now Peter was given the opportunity to count the cost: to follow Christ was going to cost him everything. To save his life he had denied Christ three times, but after he reconciled with Christ, Peter abandoned the comfort of his old life and never denied Christ again, even knowing death awaited.

It is easy to say we love Christ and want to follow Him. Many say this, but continue in their sin, even giving the appearance of trying to live "good" lives. Do not take this lightly; count the cost. If our desires are for this world, our family, our career, our homes, our investments, our cars, our toys and such; if anything has become an idol, we cannot follow Christ and we are not worthy of Him.

John 21:20-23 Resolving The Myth John Would Not Die

Jesus reconciled Peter and gave him the charge to feed His sheep. Christ told him his faith was going to lead to his death. Amidst this conversation, Peter became concerned for John and when he saw him, he asked Christ what will happen to him.

> **Read John 21:20-23.**

Some commentators say Peter may have been disturbed when Jesus told him how he was to die and he was now concerned what would happen to John. Others say he felt rebuked and wanted to know he was not alone. In either case, our human tendency is to concern ourselves with other people's walk. Christ told Peter, and the lesson is also for us, not to concern ourselves with what God is doing in the lives of others. Whether Peter's desire was to protect John or to alter his course, it was not in his power. Everything and everyone is in God's control.

Jesus replied,

> **If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me! [v22 NASB].**

Jesus' rebuke is evidence Peter had not fully committed to Christ's command to follow Him. Our responsibility is to follow Christ. While we should be in prayer for our brothers and encourage them in their walk, it is not for us to understand their walk, but to focus on our own.

> So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. [Php 2:12-13 NASB].

Because of Christ's reply, it seemed there was a rumor the Apostle John would live until Christ returned. John wrote this account, as he explained in verse 23, to crush this rumor.

At the time of the writing of the Gospel of John, John was the only disciple remaining; all the others had been martyred. John had survived the destruction of Jerusalem; he had survived his exile on the Island of Patmos; and church history also claims he had survived being boiled in oil. What Christ said about John had spread through the church as a prophecy and he was concerned for the Lord's honor should he pass away soon and others would view this as a failure of Christ's prophecy. John clarified what Christ had said was "IF it is My will" and the imperative "YOU follow Me!" to demonstrate this was not a prophecy, but a rebuke.

IN CLOSING

It was not wrong for Peter to be concerned with John's welfare, but it was sin to be distracted by it. It is not good for us to concern ourself with other peoples' relationship to God, except to point them to Christ. God is in control.

Christ has called us to follow Him: "YOU follow ME."

John 21:24-25 John's Authorship And What Was Left Unsaid

Whether this chapter was the originally intended end of the book or whether it was the addendum, we have now reached the end of the book.

> **Read John 21:24-25.**

WE KNOW THIS TESTIMONY IS TRUE

Until now, John had written about himself in the third person. Here he disclosed he was the author of this epistle, but even in this, he identified himself without saying his name.

He also affirmed he was an eyewitness to all the things written in this book and he made note his witness was true. Nothing he wrote was hyperbole. It was all true. He was the only apostle alive at the time of the writing. He was the last, living eyewitness.

THE WORLD COULD NOT CONTAIN THE BOOKS

John was careful not to repeat events recorded in the synoptic gospels, unless it was to add clarity or fill in missing information. Nonetheless, all the Gospels added together could not record everything Jesus Christ did or said.

> **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 that would be written. [v25 NASB].**

There is marvel in these words the Apostle John used to end this Gospel book. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, once wrote, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh." [Ecc 12:12 ESV]. Yet one can never weary in the study of the Son of God. The words of John give testimony to this: if everything Christ did were ever written, "the world itself could not contain the books" to give testimony to the vastness of the work of God in Christ, not only in His life on earth, but also in His eternal plan.

> How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. [Psa 139:17-18a NASB].

IN CLOSING

The Redeemer has come! The eternal covenant has been fulfilled and soon all will be complete. The Gospel of John has given us the story of God becoming man, dwelling among men and dying for men, to redeem His people from His very own wrath. And now, He anxiously waits for us to join Him in Heaven and see His glory.

The Bible gives us the story, how before time began God conceived a plan to create man, who, though created in the image of God, would be in rebellion to Him, but God, Himself, would suffer to redeem those chosen in Christ before the creation of the world. The Son would be crushed by the Father and would die to satisfy His wrath. He nailed our sins to the cross and, through His blood, gave us His righteousness, so that, though dead in our sins, the Holy Spirit would quicken His people to be made alive in Christ and God has adopted us into His family and we will reign with Him forever.

When we consider this, how can we hold back our awe?

Can we contain our praise?

Could we not write forever of the glories of God and give Him praise for ever?

God sits on His throne and the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy."

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

[words by Meir Ben Isaac Nehoral, 1050;
used in the song, "The Love of God"
by Frederick M. Lehman, 1917].

My friend, be in the Word.

Christ's Gospel Versus The Modern American Gospel

We have studied the Gospel of John and we see it is very different from the modern American gospel, which says, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." If you are not saved, this is a lie, because the Bible tells us God is indignant everyday with those who are not following Christ (Psa 7:11) and the wrath of God REMAINS upon them (3:36).

If the wrath of God remains on you and God is indignant with you, God does not love you and you are without hope, so there is no wonderful plan for your life. Repent and follow Christ. He is your only hope.

The modern American gospel emphasizes God's love, but the Bible tells us God is "holy, holy, holy." [Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8]. RC Sproul used to say there is NO mention God is "love, love, love." Holiness is God's defining attribute; it is what sets the Creator apart from His creation. Every attribute of God is revealed through His holiness. Therefore, His love is not a gushy, feel good emotion. His love is a holy love and it begins with Himself.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have loved each other with a holy love throughout eternity. As you read Scripture, it is clear the greatness and praise of each other is God's first love. God praises Himself (Isa 44:6-8, 24-28). He is worthy of all praise and He will not give His praise to another (Isa 42:8). In fact, all creation praises Him, except the heart of natural man (Psa 19:1;33:1-22).

When man violates this greatness of God, what would His holiness demand? Or what would His love for Himself demand? The Bible tells us, every single person is sinful and falls short of God's holiness (Rom 3:23). The Word also tells us our sins have separated us from God, so that, He will not hear us (Isa 59:2). Because of this, mankind will die and stand before God in judgment (Heb 9:27). This is all bad news.

MAN FELL INTO SIN AND SIN BROUGHT DEATH

God told Adam, while living in the Garden of Eden, do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told him if he disobeyed, he would die, but Adam disobeyed anyway. He sinned against God and sin brought death. Death to all mankind. The Bible says, "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. . .the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation." [Rom 5:12,16b NASB].

> You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,

> for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. [Gen 2:16-17 ESV].

But man did not die physically that very particular day. God showed His mercy, by giving man a covering. He made Adam and Eve clothings of animal skins. Their sins were covered at the cost of blood; it cost the lives of innocent animals to cover their nakedness. The Bible says, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." [Heb 9:22 ESV].

At this time, God promised He would send a Redeemer (Gen 3:15), because the blood of animals was powerless to save sinners. The animal sacrifices were merely a placeholder; a type and symbol of the blood which would come to redeem mankind.

The Redeemer would come to undo death, which was brought about by sin. He would trample Satan's head (Gen 3:15). Jesus Christ is this Redeemer, who died for mans' sin and rose from the dead, conquering death and the grave (1Co 15:55-57).

As we already said, man did not die that very day. In fact, Adam lived 930 years (Gen 5:5). Before the Flood, most men lived nearly 1000 years. Clearly, Adam lived a long time after he sinned and more men came to be born and more and more sinful natures were added to this earth.

We could go into a study of the words and the semantics to grasp more clearly what God meant when He said, "for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die," but we won't in this discussion. Suffice to say, many of the principalities (demons and such) questioned God's judgment when He appeared to be slow or negligent to bring about the penalty for sin, which is death. "For the wages of sin is death. . ." [Rom 6:23].

> But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment, and the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness. [Isa 5:16 NASB].

GOD MADE A WAY TO SAVE MAN

The Apostle Paul discussed this in Romans chapter 3. Paul said, God, in His forbearance passed over former sins (Rom 3:25). This does not mean He ignored sin; this means He delayed the penalty. He delayed the penalty until the time the Redeemer would satisfy His wrath. He wrote God sent a Redeemer, whom He put forth as a propitiation for mans' sin.

Propitiation means to satisfy God's wrath. Most professing Christians do not want to talk about God's wrath. It makes them uncomfortable; it violates the god of love they worship, but God's wrath had to be satisfied and there is nothing man could do to save himself. So, God made His Holy

Son to be our propitiation to demonstrate His righteousness and His justice. Christ is this Redeemer and He was crushed by the Father for our sin (Isa 53:10). Now that the penalty is paid, God's righteousness and His justice have been revealed, proving He is Just and He is the Justifier; satisfying the complaint of the principalities (Rom 3:26).

When Paul was reasoning with the naysayers and philosophers at Mars Hill, he told them in the times of ignorance, God overlooked mans' sin. This, again, did not mean God ignored mans' sin, it meant He delayed the penalty until the time of the Redeemer. Then Paul warned them, since the Redeemer has been revealed, God commands all men to repent. To reinforce this need for repentance, he said God has fixed a day of judgment and He gave proof this will happen by raising the Redeemer, Christ Jesus, from the dead (Act 17:30-31).

So we learn from these two Scriptures, though it appeared God's judgment was negligent by not requiring Adam's life the moment he sinned, God sent a Redeemer to pay the penalty for man's sin. The Bible says God sent Him at the right time (Rom 5:6; Gal 4:4). In this provision of grace, God's righteousness was demonstrated and soon His final judgment is coming. And Jesus said if you do not believe, you are condemned already (3:18).

OUR EFFORTS CANNOT SAVE US

Let us look at Romans chapter 3 again. Look at verses 20 through 26. This passage begins by explaining we can do nothing to save ourselves. Paul was speaking to the Jew, who believed they were saved by keeping the Law.

Paul wrote the purpose of the Law was to give us the knowledge of sin; the Law exposed sin in our lives. In Genesis we learn Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were seduced by the idea man could be like God, knowing good from evil (Gen 3:5). After man had this knowledge, it seems he has looked for ways to cover it up. Adam and Eve hid their nakedness by sewing leaves.

In the course of time, man became more and more unrepentant in his sin. Even a flood of the entire world, destroying all human life, save the few who were chosen, did not change the heart of man. Then God chose a nation for Himself. He chose Israel, the offspring of Abraham. He gave them a Law to keep; this Law would contrast them from the nations around them. The Law was a picture of God's righteousness and this nation, with His Law, would be an example of His holiness to a world of rebellious people and nations.

Rather than confess they could not keep this Law, they hid their nakedness by adding rule upon rule and deceiving themselves they were righteous by their own efforts. They added to the Law God had given, so they could have the false confidence they had done their part to be saved.

> For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. [Rom 10:3-4 NASB].

Before the Redeemer was revealed, God's righteousness was manifested in the Law. The Redeemer was foretold in the Law and in the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament Scriptures. God's righteousness is now manifest in this Redeemer (Rom 3:21; Heb 1:1-3). We can have this righteousness, not by our works, but through faith in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer (2Co 5:21).

Some still trust in works and argue they do not need Christ's righteousness, because they think they have done enough to save themselves, but Paul argued all have sinned and all fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). This means, the Jew who thinks he can keep the Law and the Gentile who thinks he has done more good than bad with his life; they have all sinned. Every man has failed to be righteous before God.

In fact, if we go back a few more verses in Romans chapter 3, to verses 10 through 19, the Bible tells us:

1. No one is righteous. NO. Not one.
2. No one understands.
3. No one seeks after God. Period. Final.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says we are saved by grace, through faith. We are told both this grace and this faith are a gift. We cannot be saved by anything we do, "lest any man should boast," but the modern American gospel has a lot of people boasting. They say things like, "I accepted Jesus into my heart," "I said the sinner's prayer," "I came forward in a meeting," "I made Jesus Lord of my life," "I made a decision for Christ," "I remember the date" and on and on it goes and none of these things are told us in the Bible. This boasting robs God of His glory and subordinates His sovereignty and His authority to the will of man. In this, we have robbed God and brought Him down to our own level; we have made Him into our own image.

MAKING GOD INTO OUR OWN IMAGE

Like the Jews of old, the modern American gospel has made God into an acceptable image. This way, the professing believer can feel confident they have done their part to be saved or have done their part by "turning their life around." They hide their nakedness by boasting in what they have done to earn their salvation: they said the sinner's prayer; they made a decision for Christ; they accepted Jesus as their Savior and such other man glorifying claims as these, but the Bible reminds them there is nothing they can do to save themselves or even assist God in this endeavor.

> For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment. [Isa 64:6 NASB].

Even when Christ was upon the earth, the professing believers rejected the Son of Man because they had made God in their own image. The image they had was of a god who could be appeased by their works. The modern American gospel has made a god of love and kindness. One who would condemn no one, at least not one who was trying to be good. "God knows my heart," is the common slogan when justifying one's sin.

WE ARE GUILTY; GOD IS GRACIOUS

In Romans chapter 3, Paul listed a whole bunch of sins we are guilty of, making it clear even the best of us are vile and worthless. We have turned aside from God's Law, we speak evil, we do evil and we do not fear God. The righteous requirements of the Law still stand and the purpose of the Law will shut our mouths from any claim of goodness in ourselves. Then we come to verse 23: "for ALL have sinned." Bad news, again.

But there is good news: the next verse says we can be justified by His grace as a gift (v24). There it is again: God's grace is a gift; there is nothing we can do to be saved.

1:12 says to those who received Christ, God gave the right to become children of God. God gives the gift and we receive. However, do not think, like the modern American gospel proclaims, this gift is given to all and it is yours for the taking; as if you have the ability to receive this gift of your own freewill. 1:13 says this receiving is not of our own freewill, it is of God's will. Jesus said no one comes to Him unless the Father draws him 6:44). So, the ability to receive this gift is based solely upon God's choosing. Salvation is a gift from God.

SIDENOTE: Another interesting subject this brings up is, a lot of people and most professing Christians believe all people are children of God. They base this upon the idea we are all created in the image of God (Gen 1:26) or

at least by God, but there is no place in the Scriptures which will support this claim that we are all children of God. We already talked about how God hates the sinner who remains under His wrath and 1:12 tells us it is those who receive Christ who are given the right to become children of God. Romans chapter 8 tells us those who walk in the Spirit and not according to the flesh, this means they obey Christ, they will be adopted as sons into His kingdom. So, according to Scripture, the only children of God are those who receive Christ and follow Him. Those who are not His children, remain under His wrath (3:36).

Again, in Romans chapter 3, Paul said God put Christ forward as the propitiation for His wrath. You remember what this means, right? Yes. Jesus Christ took God's wrath upon Himself for our sin and Isaiah said it pleased the Father to crush His Son (Isa 53:10). The wrath of God had to be satisfied and the Son of God bore this wrath for us. He, alone, could satisfy the wrath of God. What a matchless grace, that the Son of God died to save us from the wrath of God!

THE RANSOM

Many professing Christians claim God paid a ransom to Satan. That, somehow Satan now owned man after he caused man to sin and God had to ransom man or buy man back from the devil. Sorry. NO. This is blasphemy! God forbid He should offer a sacrifice to Satan and NEVER the sacrifice of His Son.

From the time Satan chose to exalt himself above God, he has been destined for eternal destruction in Hell. Therefore, God did not crush His Son to satisfy Satan. It was God's wrath which had to be satisfied and Christ alone could pay the price for our sin to ransom and redeem man back to God.

This is something which is hard to fathom. I marvel over this, over and over. Christ is God. He left His home willingly, He left His glory behind and He came to earth to die for man who could not save himself. This is a marvelous thing: God, Himself, saved man from God's wrath. God demanded a sacrifice, but there was no one whose blood could pay the price. Therefore He sacrificed Himself; He took the blood of His Son to satisfy His wrath. This is something awesome and unsearchable!

> Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth. [Rev 5:9-10 NASB].

We said Christ left His glory to die for man. Many professing Christians say Christ left His divinity when He became man, but this is a lie; another blasphemy. While He was on earth and even to this day and forevermore, Christ is both fully God and fully man.

While Christ was on earth, He demonstrated His Deity. He did things which only God could do, such as calm a storm on the sea, knowing the thoughts of man and a whole host of miracles of healing and feeding thousands.

> For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form. [Col 2:9 NASB].

The "fullness of Deity" is God. The "dwells bodily" is man. Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.

As we said before, Christ paid the penalty for our sin by allowing the Father to crush Him. And this is why Christ died: to redeem those who are His (Mat 1:21). He did this to show God's righteousness (Rom 3:25). He paid our debt and nailed our sins to the cross (Col 2:14) and gave us His righteousness (2Co 5:21).

As Romans chapter 3 declares, no longer could the principalities, nor any other created being, accuse God for being hypocritical in His justice or in His righteousness. God demonstrated His righteousness, a standard we cannot meet, by crushing His own Son. By this, He proved Himself to be Just and He proved Himself to be the Justifier of those who come to Christ in faith.

By ransoming His people, God proved He is Just and He is the Justifier.

HOW A MAN IS JUSTIFIED

God does not justify the one who falsely believes he can do good works to save himself; nor the one who thinks he can save himself by making a decision for Christ or any other effort of man. The false gospel says, "God helps those who help themselves." This is blasphemy. The Bible tells us Christ died for us when we were powerless or unable to do anything for ourself (Rom 5:6).

The Apostle Paul wrote those who believe and are saved were chosen in Christ Jesus before the creation of the world and they were chosen for God's purposes (Eph 1:4-11). 1:12-13 says those who received Christ, did not come to Him by their own freewill, but by the will of God. Those who receive Christ are those whom the Father draws to Him and Jesus assured us, all those chosen in Him will come to Him (6:37).

Lest you think Ephesians 1:4 describes a mere foreknowing by God of those who would receive Christ, Jesus said we cannot come to Him unless the Father draw us (6:44) and, furthermore, we can only come to Christ if the Father authorizes us (6:65). The Bible tells us there is no one who seeks after God (Rom 3:11), unless he is drawn and authorized by the Father.

As for freewill, those who are slaves to sin, cannot choose righteousness. For, unless God regenerates a man's heart, the slave of sin will always choose sin.

> The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. [Rom 8:7-8 NASB].

Jesus said we must be born again (3:3) and this is the work of God (3:7-8). Just as you were not able to determine anything about your birth, where you would be born, into which family, being born male or female, your looks and abilities, so too, you made no decision to be born again. If you are saved, God did this for you. The flesh, that is your effort to get saved, is no help at all (6:63); lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

> For You have done for us all our works. [Isa 26:12].

God saved those who were unable to save themselves. He chose us in Christ Jesus and He regenerated our hearts, so that we will repent, believe and follow Christ.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY; MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

By now you might be thinking, "If salvation is fully the work of God and there is nothing I can do to be saved, then why concern myself with eternal things?" The answer is simple: all men have a duty to obey God (Ecc 12:13) and God commands every person everywhere to repent (Act 17:30). There is a judgment coming upon all men (Heb 9:27).

There is a tension in the Scriptures between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. In the Bible, we find commands to do something, even though we are powerless to accomplish this task ourselves. For example, Christians are told to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, but, in the next verse, we are told it is God working in us. Both the desire to do the work and the ability to do it are from God (Php 2:12-13). God is sovereign, but we are responsible for our actions and how we choose to live our lives. No man has an excuse before God (Rom 1:20).

> I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps. Correct me, O

> LORD, but with justice; not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing. [Jer 10:23-24 NASB].

On the one hand, God says, "My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose." [Isa 46:10b ESV]. And Scripture says man makes his plans, but God directs his steps (Pro 16:9), but on the other hand, He says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [Rom 10:13 ESV]. Will you be saved? Will you escape condemnation? Jesus Christ said if you do not believe, you are condemned already (3:18).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly good news. The news is Christ died for our sins while we were unable to help ourselves (Rom 5:6). According to Acts 17:30-31, God proclaimed satisfaction of the debt by raising Christ from the dead. If we receive Christ, this is the work of God and we are saved and become children of God (1:12-13).

If you hear Christ calling, do not harden your heart (Heb 3:15). Repent of your sins and receive Christ today.

> Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. [Act 2:38b-39 NASB].

HOW WE CAN KNOW WE ARE SAVED

Seize the Word of God. If we are truly saved, we will desire the Word of God and will be in constant prayer. Many professing Christians fancy themselves to be prayer warriors, but they are not in the Word. When Jesus spoke of God giving us what we ask for, it was always in the context of being in the Word. If we are in the Word, we will know what God wants us to pray for and we will have a heart which is always repenting. A person who is not in the Word, can only pray for worldly or fleshly desires, for this is all they know.

Now, you may say you believe, but the fruit of your life says you are still living to please the world and your selfish ambitions. My friend, believing in Christ is not merely believing what the Bible says is true. It is to receive Christ and follow Him in obedience (3:36). The Apostle James said the demons believe, that is, they know the facts, and they tremble (Jam 2:19). The problem today with most professing Christians is they say they believe, but they do not tremble.

> There is no fear of God before their eyes. [Rom 3:18 NASB].

Those who are truly saved will abide in Christ; we will be in the Word, and Christ will produce His works in our lives (15:1-6). Even this is of God. He regenerates us so we will receive the Promise, we will desire the Word and we will abide in Christ. Salvation is fully the work of God alone, by His grace, lest any man should boast (Eph 2:8-9).

> This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent. [6:29b NASB, ESV].

RECOVERY GROUPS KEEP YOU CHAINED TO SIN

So get out of your recovery groups. Jesus said you must be born again (3:3). To be born again is to be made new; to be born again is to abandon your sin, to desire it no more. The Apostle Paul wrote, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away" [2Co 5:17a NASB]. Being born again is not a process. When you are reborn, you have gone from darkness to light.

Sanctification is a process; a lifelong process.

Regeneration or being born again, is an immediate change of our desires.

Some will argue that many people have prior addictions, which chain them and they need help overcoming. Jesus said to be in His Word and He will produce fruit in your life (15:5). If you need more help, be more in the Word. It is this simple. To remain in recovery groups is to remain a slave to sin and it is to declare you have a weak god. If you are chained to your sin, you are not born again; you have not been regenerated. You may have a desire to be clean, but you are not born again.

> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. [Rom 8:6-8 NASB].

Many people long to leave the chains of sin and they have no problem being accountable to another person, but they do not want to be accountable to God. They desire a good life, but they play with their sin and they are not saved.

Beware of all man-centered religion: seek a religion centered upon God.

YOU CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

Many professing Christians seek an easy faith; a life of blessings. They want to add God to their lives, as if the Christian life is part of a strategy for success. They do not seek Christ; they seek their own gain. When trouble comes, they may attest to faith in Christ, but when trouble persists, they leave the faith. As the Apostle John wrote, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us." [1Jo 2:19a NASB].

Many professing Christians want to please the world. They want the Gospel to be acceptable or relevant to the world. Jesus told us the world hates Him and, if we stand firm in our faith, it will hate us also (15:18-19).

This desire to be acceptable to the world is why many preach God's love and promise God has a wonderful plan for rebellious sinners' lives, rather than preach His judgment and the need to repent. If the world loves the gospel you preach, know this: you are not preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Beware Christ's warning: if you care more for the praise of man than the glory of God, you cannot be saved (5:44).

If you are living to please the world, the Bible says you are an enemy of Christ (Jam 4:4). Jesus said if you find fulfillment in the world, the light within you is darkness and He warned you cannot serve two masters (Mat 6:23-24).

OBEDIENCE VS UNBELIEF

God said, "Be holy, for I AM holy." [1Pe 1:16]. The sign of those who are saved is obedience; to be disobedient is unbelief.

> He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. [3:36 NASB].
>
> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. [Heb 3:18-19 NASB].
>
> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he

> abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. [1Jo 2:3-6 NASB].

The sign of those who are saved is they leave their lifestyle of sin. They desire God and seek fellowship with Him. Many people profess to know Christ, but they refuse to honor Him as their King, their Lord and their Master; they may give lip service, but their hearts are far from Him (Luk 6:46). For they cling to their sin, which is rebellion to God (Heb 6:1-8; 1Jo 2:19).

> This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [1Jo 1:5-9 NASB].

SEEK SOUND DOCTRINE

If you are truly saved, you will seek sound doctrine and seek to fellowship with those who seek sound doctrine. Many professing Christians merely accept the doctrines they hear from the pulpit, but they are not in the Word, examining the Bible to find truth (Act 17:11). Jesus said we will only know the truth if we are in His Word (8:31-32).

Sound doctrine is important to salvation, because false doctrine is preaching the wrong Jesus. Doctrine which is partially right is false; it merely fashions God into our own image. Seize the Word.

> Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. [1Ti 4:16 NASB].

Many professing Christians declare their pastor "preaches the Word" because he has some Scripture in his sermon. However, most times he is merely preaching morality, positive motivation and other psychologies, using a verse or two to back up his points. This is pro-forma for most evangelical preachers. This is the modern American gospel. This is the itching ears the Apostle Paul warned about.

> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires. [2Ti 4:3 NASB].

Charles Spurgeon said discernment is not the ability to understand the difference between truth and falsehood; it is the ability to understand the difference between the truth and almost the truth.

If you have received Christ, Get into the Word; stay in the Word and examine your life through the Word. This is your responsibility.

> Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? [2Co 13:5 NASB].

> Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

> See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. [Col 2:6-8 NASB].

As you see the fruit of Christ develop in your life, know this is the work of God in you. You cannot add to His work.

> 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. 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. 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. [15:4-6 NASB].

> You have done for us all our works. [Isa 26:12].

If you produce no fruit, you can be certain you are not saved.

- Do not mistake an appearance of kindness for fruit.
- Do not mistake a career in ministry for fruit.
- Do not mistake long-term or short-term missions trips for fruit.

- Do not mistake volunteering at church for fruit.
- Do not mistake doing great things for God for fruit.
- Do not mistake the praise of man, even the praise of other professing Christians, for fruit.

Many church-going people will be surprised when Christ tells them to depart from Him and that He never knew them.

> Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.
>
> Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." [Mat 7:21-23 NASB].

If you cling to small sins; if you desire the approval of the world or your peers, then you are not following Christ. If you are not following Christ, then you are not saved and God does not love you. You are lost and remain under God's wrath.

Your good works cannot save you, but you will not be saved without them. In other words, Christ alone can produce the works in you which lead to eternal life. Repent and follow Christ. Seize the Word.

> I have sworn by Myself,
>
> The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness
>
> And will not turn back,
>
> That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.
>
> They will say of Me, "Only in the LORD are righteousness and strength."
>
> Men will come to Him,
>
> And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.
>
> [Isa 45:23-24 NASB].

Your salvation is not about you and your glory. In all things, God is working out His glory and He is jealous of His glory. If we truly follow Christ, we will be seeking God's glory.

- [The End of The Book] -