

The Gospel of
John



Chapters 1-10

A verse-by-verse study
In the beginning was the Word...

Calvary Chapel Poole

Study Notes on John

Table of Contents

• Preface	Page 2
• Introduction	Page 3-4
• General notes about the book	Page 5-6
• Verse by verse study of John chapters 1-2	Page 7- 21
• Verse by verse study of John chapters 3-4	Page 22- 44
• Verse by verse study of John chapters 5-6	Page 45- 66
• Verse by verse study of John chapters 7-8	Page 67 – 83
• Verse by verse study of John chapter 9-10	Page 84 - 98
• Appendix A: Light of The World	Page 100-101
• Appendix B: Was it Mary's Egg?	Page 102-103
• Appendix C: A Jewish Wedding – a taste of things to come	Page 104-105
• Appendix D: Was St. Francis a sissy?	Page 106-107
• Appendix E: Hanukkah – The Feast of Dedication	Page 108-109
• Appendix F: The Feasts & The Labour Cycle	Page 110-111

Study notes for chapters 11-21 are also available via the web site.

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Calvary Chapel Poole

Study Notes on John

The following study notes (by Barry Forder) were used for Calvary Chapel Poole's Sunday evening Bible studies from February to November 2009.

The notes have been 'tidied up' a little to make them easier to read and understand, and a few more comments have been added where appropriate.

Whilst every care has been taken with grammar and spelling, these are only notes and as such are not intended to be a literary classic!

If you are new to studying the Bible, or if you are a Bible scholar, the Gospel of John is equally appealing. It has been said that it is "a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant may swim." The narrative John gives is easy to read, and thus, a child can enjoy; however, the statements and details John recounts are so deep that theologians have mused over these words ever since they were first penned under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

No one commentary can do justice to all that is revealed (and concealed) within John's Gospel, much less these simple notes; the real aim therefore, of these notes is to stimulate the reader to pursue their own diligent study of this book. There is no greater task that can be undertaken in this life than to seek to understand God's Word. All other achievements in the Christian life will bear much more fruit if they are firmly rooted in soil of God's Word.

"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
(Matt 13:23)

In order to make a clear distinction between the Biblical text, the notes and other comments, all the scripture verses being studied are in ***Bold italics***, other scripture quotes are in *normal italics*, and all notes by Barry are in normal black type. *Where quotes from others are used, they are shown in this font.*

As always, the reader is encouraged to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, who *'received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so'*. In other words, don't just take these notes as fact – check it out yourself. Let the word of God alone be the standard that you judge things by.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

Introduction

It has been asked: 'why are there four gospels?' In reality, there are not four gospels, but one four-fold gospel. Each gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, present Jesus from a different perspective. Whereas Matthew presents Jesus as the King of Israel, focusing on Him as Son of David, Mark presents Jesus as a Servant. Luke, in his gospel, focuses on Jesus' humanity and presents Him as the Son of Man, but John's focus is on His Deity, and therefore presents Jesus as Son of God.

When we survey the four gospels, we get a complete picture of the carpenter from Nazareth, who created all things, was there when the beginning began; the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us; the one who became a servant to redeem mankind, yet is destined to sit on the throne of David and rule the nations with a rod of Iron.

John's gospel not only presents Jesus as 'God manifest in the flesh' (*'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'*), it is an intentional defence of that fact.

The First & the Last

We know that John was banished to Patmos by Emperor Domitian toward the end of the first century; and while on Patmos John received the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It was there John came face to face with the 'Alpha and Omega' (Rev 1:8 & 11, 2:8), 'the first and the last' (Rev 1:17). If there had been even the slightest doubt about the deity of Christ in John's mind, this settled it. John would have known the writings of the prophet Isaiah (because he later quotes Isaiah in his own gospel). "*Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last*" (Isaiah 48:12); "*Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God*" (Isaiah 48:12). Thus, John was now standing before the God Isaiah served, the God of the Old Testament, now veiled in human form in the person of Jesus Christ. This is who He presents in his gospel.

The Saviour

Furthermore, in his gospel, John presents Jesus as the Saviour (John 3:16-17; 10:9; 12:47; 14:6 etc.) "*And (they) said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*" (John 4:42) Yet Isaiah writes that God alone is the saviour: "*I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour*" (Isaiah 43:11) "*and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else*" (Isaiah 45:21-22) So, we can make a simple deduction:

God alone is Saviour + Jesus is the only Saviour = for both to be true, Jesus has to be God.

The Creator

Isaiah tells us that God is the creator: "*Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein*" (Isaiah 42:5)

But John will tell us: "*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*" v3 "*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*" v10

So, another simple deduction:

God created all things + Jesus created all things = for both to be true, Jesus has to be God.

Why does John therefore choose to repeatedly underline the fact of the deity of Christ? Well, because by the time John returns from Patmos to Ephesus, where he had been the pastor, heresy had already begun to creep into the church, heresy that denied the deity of Christ.

Introduction

In his first letter John wrote:

“I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:21-23)

Just as Jude, Peter, Paul and Jesus Himself had prophesied, people had come denying that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. Heretical teachers were postulating that the man Jesus had received the ‘spirit of Christ’ at His baptism, that Jesus was not actually God, but rather had come to ‘lead by example’, that Jesus would be the first of many sons that God would bring home.

Because of this, John responds at the close of the first century by writing his gospel to do away with the foolish notion that Jesus was simply a ‘good man’, or a ‘great moral teacher’, unequivocally presenting Jesus as God veiled in human flesh; the Creator of all things, the pre-existent Son of God.

The following from C.S. Lewis, echoes part of what John tries to convey:

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claims to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things that Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse”.

C.S.Lewis adds: “You can shut Him up as a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that option open to us. He did not intend to.”

Toward the end of his gospel, John actually states his express reason for writing:

Chapter 20 ends with John recounting that famous scene with Jesus and Thomas: *“Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”*

After this declaration of the deity of Christ, John then concludes the chapter by saying:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:27-31)

In the classic book by Henrietta C. Mears ‘What The Bible Is All About’, the opening comments on John’s gospel state: “The theme of John’s gospel is the deity of Jesus Christ. More here than anywhere else His divine Sonship is set forth. In this gospel we are shown the babe of Bethlehem was none other than the “only begotten of the Father.” There are evidences and proofs given without number. Although *all things were made by Him, although in him was life, yet He was made flesh, and dwelt among us.* No man could see God; therefore, Christ came to declare Him.”

John’s gospel is the answer and perfect rebuttal to those who would deny the deity of Jesus Christ.

General Notes About The Book

Time of writing:

The time of writing is most probably after John had returned from Patmos (after c.96 A.D.) According to early Christian writer Jerome, John died in peace at around 100 years old, after returning from Patmos to Ephesus. Some scholars try to argue for an earlier date, however, both the subject matter (the deity of Christ) and the heptadic structure are compelling arguments for the post-Patmos time of writing. John's gospel is unashamedly 'making a point', a fact noticeable by the things John omits: His birth, His boyhood, His temptation, His transfiguration, appointing of the disciples, parables, the ascension, the great commission etc.

Key word:

The key word that John uses is 'believe', occurring 100 times. The Greek word πιστεύω (pisteuo) means to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), by implication, to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ)

Why should anyone entrust their spiritual well being to Christ? If he were just a man, an example to follow, there is no reason. However, He is not merely a man, but the Son of God, 'an advocate with the Father', and as such, the most important and most sensible thing any one can do is to entrust their spiritual well-being to Christ, who is the savior of the world (1 John 4:14), the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).

Heptadic Structure

By 'heptadic structure' we mean the consistent use of 'sevens'. One of the things that makes John's gospel so fascinating to Bible scholars, is the continuation of the heptadic structure we see in abundance in the book of Revelation. In Revelation we have seven churches, seven Spirits of God, seven lampstands, seven stars, seven seals, seven angles, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven heads, seven plagues, seven crowns etc.

Although not immediately apparent, John's gospel is arranged around seven 'I AM' statements, seven miracles and seven witnesses. Once again, all of these attest to the deity of Christ.

The Seven I AM Statements:

- I AM the bread of life – 6:35
- I AM the light of the world – 8:12
- Before Abraham was I AM – 8:58
- I AM the good shepherd – 10:11
- I AM the resurrection & life – 11:25
- I AM the way, truth & life – 14:6
- I AM the true vine – 15:1

The Seven Miracles:

- Water to wine: 2:1-11
- Healing the nobleman's son: 4:46-54
- Healing of the man at Bethesda: 5:1-47
- Feeding the 5000: 6:1-14
- Walking on water: 6:15-21
- Healing the blind man: 9:1-41
- Raising of Lazarus: 11:1-57

The Seven Witnesses

- John the Baptist: "This is the Son of God" 1:34
- Nathanael: "Thou art the Son of God" 1:49
- Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" 6:69
- Martha: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the God" 11:27
- Thomas: "My Lord and my God" 20:28
- John: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" 20:31
- Christ: "I am the Son of God" 10:36

Seven x 'Meta-tauta' 'after these things' (3:22 / 5:1 / 5:14 / 7:1 / 13:7 / 19:38 / 21:1)

CHAPTER 1

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word...

Lit: "When the beginning began, the Word was already there." Thus, Jesus (to whom John is referring) is not a created being, but part of the eternal Godhead, outside of time, 'inhabiting eternity' (Isaiah 57:15).

The Greek word for 'Word' is 'Logos', which means 'reason' (in terms of thought) and 'word' (in terms of the expression of that thought).

In Hebrews 1:3 we are told that Jesus is "*the brightness of his (Father's) glory, and the express image of his (Father's) person*"

The Logos is that which reveals, or expresses the Father heart of God. The Logos is the voice of God, pre-existent, yet personified in Jesus Christ.

Although no attempt to explain the Trinity can do justice to such a lofty subject, one analogy sometimes used is that the Father is the thought, the Son is the Word that declares the thought, and the Spirit is the breath that carries the Word to the hearers. A divine mystery that our finite minds cannot grasp.

Jesus Himself said:

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:25-26)

Just as the written Word declares the Father, so does the Son. John here reveals a direct link between the written Word of God and the 2nd person of the Trinity. Jesus Himself alludes to this, as recorded in Psalm 40 and Hebrews 10:7 where we read: "*The volume of the book is written of Me*". The Bible and Jesus Christ are inextricably linked, synonymous with one another.

*"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called **The Word of God**. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."* (Rev 19:11-15)

*"For the **word of God** is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in **his** sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of **him** with whom we have to do."* (Heb 4:12-13)

*"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is **above every name**: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth"* (Phil 2:9-10)

*"I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: **for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name**"* (Psalm 138)

John 1:1 (cont'd)

God spoke the world into existence by His Word - *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth”* (Col 1:16)

In Genesis, we have the ‘voice of the Lord’ walking in the Garden (ch3)

...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

Again, the divine mystery of the Godhead; unity in plurality. The Word, Jesus Christ, was with God the Father inhabiting eternity, and at the same time, the Word was God.

If those who would deny the deity of Christ were to be honest with themselves, they could never get passed this verse. There is no question that the title ‘the Word’ refers to Jesus, and here we have, boldly declared, with no ambiguity, with no translational issues, John stating that Jesus Christ is God.

‘And the Word was God’. Or, God (Deity/ theos), was the Logos: therefore no subordinate being, no second to the Most High, but the supreme eternal Yahweh. - Adam Clarke

This remarkable, profound portion is not merely a preface or an introduction. It is a summation of the entire book. The remainder of John’s gospel will deal with the themes introduced here: the identity of the Word, life, light, regeneration, grace, truth, and the revelation of God the Father in Jesus the Son. – David Guzik

John 1:2

The same was in the beginning with God.

It would appear the Holy Spirit anticipates all false doctrine, and here we find stated once again, the eternal nature of the Word –Jesus Christ. He is not a created being, He did not receive the ‘spirit of Christ’ at His baptism, He is the everlasting God.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” (Isa 9:6)

John 1:3

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

(Col 1:16-17)

John 1:4

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

As Creator, life itself originates from Him. Adam was a ‘shell’ until life was breathed into him ‘and he became a living soul’. Without Him, nothing would exist, (as in the verse above from Colossians), He holds all things together ‘upholding all things by the word of his power’ (Heb 1:3)

In what way is ‘life’ the ‘light of men’?

Life itself, the fact we are alive, the fact we live on a ‘living planet’ teeming with life, is the most undeniable proof (light) that man could need that there is a Creator. Life cannot arise from non-life. However, from an evolutionary perspective, there can be no such thing as life, as it is commonly understood, but just degrees of molecular complexity. A human being would therefore be just a more complex arrangement of chemicals than, for example, a spec of dust. This means there can be no such thing as morals, or right and wrong. Yet this foolish notion, propagated by the world’s academia & education systems, is brutally assaulted by the facts. We all have a sense of justice, right and wrong, the capacity to love and hate etc. - these things cannot be explained, and have nothing to do with the physical world. Life is not merely physical. It is spiritual. ‘Life’ is a bright light, illuminating the way for all who will open their eyes.

John 1:5

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

As Einstein (among others) have noted, there is no such thing as 'darkness'. You cannot measure darkness, touch darkness or see darkness. Darkness is merely the word we use to explain the absence of light.

This has been man's predicament ever since the fall. Man chose to reject God's light, and has been living in a lack of light (darkness) ever since. In our fallen state, we are unable to comprehend the light. That is why God had to be manifest in the flesh, to come and help us see the light – to lead us back 'from darkness to light' (cf. Acts 26:18)

John 1:6

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

John the Apostle now introduces us to John the Baptist...

John 1:7-8

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

8) He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

Picking up on verse 4 & 5, we are now told that, before the Light was revealed, John the Baptist was sent to be a witness that the Light was coming. Again, the reason the Light was coming was so that 'all men through Him might believe'. The Light had to be manifest before men could see, before they could respond.

John 1:9

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Jesus is the true light – probably in a more profound way than most of us have imagined – see Appendix A – 'Light of the World'

John 1:10

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

This is just so hard for us to get our heads around! The Creator entering his own creation. We cannot conceive of the 'step down' required for this to happen. "He was crucified on a cross of wood. Yet He made the hill on which is stood" – Chuck Missler

Yet, incredibly, we were in such darkness on account of our sinful nature, that we did not know or recognise Him for who He was. The same has been true in all ages; and even today, despite 2000 years of the gospel being preached, despite the overwhelming evidence, countless millions are oblivious to the reality of who Jesus Christ is.

John 1:11

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Possibly even more incredible, was the fact that Jesus first came to those who had been expecting the Messiah since the birth of their nation. A nation that had heard prophet after prophet declaring the coming of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). Now Immanuel was here, born in Bethlehem, brought up as a Nazarene, opening the eyes of the blind, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling all the prophetic scriptures, yet the religious leaders still asked for a sign – a sign which He gave most convincingly by rising from the dead – yet they still refused to believe. "Well spoke the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (Acts 28:25-28)

"But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt 6:23)

John 1:12

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

Although the Jews in general rejected their Messiah, many Jews did believe...

“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant (of Jews who have believed) according to the election of grace... What then? Israel (as a nation) hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election (i.e. the believing Jews) hath obtained it, and the rest (of the nation) were blinded.” (Rom 11:5-7) – comments added

These believing Jews then took the good news of the Light to the gentiles...

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom 11:25)

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa 60:1-3)

Up until this time the gentiles had been in darkness...

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8-9)

And now, the most incredible exchange has taken place, Christ became a servant, so we could become ‘Sons of God’. The rightful Heir gave up His position, so we could inherit all things (Rev 21:7), and become joint heirs (Romans 8:17), part of the Royal Family, and children of our heavenly Father.

The phrase ‘Sons of God’ throughout scripture always refers to ‘a direct creation of God’. In the Old Testament, the phrase is used of Angels (Gen 6:2,4; Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7). When we are ‘born again’ we are born of God, and as such, we ourselves become a direct creation of God, and are thus called ‘Sons of God’. We all have natural parents, but Hebrews 12:9 tells us that God is the ‘Father of spirits’. True life is not physical, it is spiritual. Before Christ we were ‘dead in trespasses and sins’ (Eph 2:1). Spiritually, we died when Adam sinned back in the garden, and thus entered spiritual darkness. When Christ – the Light of the world – came, He not only illuminated the path back to God, He cleared our debt, dying in our place, and made it possible for all who believe, to be ‘born again’...

John 1:13

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Thus, not only are we saved from the penalty of sin (i.e. eternal separation from God), we are also granted a new spiritual life that begins when we firstly repent, and then believe that Jesus died and rose again, confessing this in the privacy of our own heart, but also declaring publicly. This new spiritual life that begins within us, because it is ‘born of God’, cannot sin (see 1 John 3:9). It cannot sin because it is super-natural (from God) and not natural. We are to feed this new life (by reading God’s Word, prayer, fellowship, remembering Christ’s death in our place) and so we will begin to grow spiritually; enabling us to ‘walk in the light’, living lives pleasing to God – of course we will then find ourselves wrestling with the ‘old life’ – for more on that read/study the book of Romans.

John 1:14

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

We are here back to the underlying theme of John's gospel, that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. The Word, who was there when the beginning began, took on human form, to come and reveal the Father to us.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"
(Col 1:12-15)

John also here records the fact that he was an eye witness – '*and we beheld his glory*'

John 1:15

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

Although Jesus was born after John the Baptist, and also began His public ministry after him, John declared that Jesus was 'before him' – pointing to Christ being pre-existent – 'before the beginning began'.

John 1:16

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Adam Clarke, in his commentary states: This verse should be put in place of the fifteenth, and the 15 th inserted between the 18 th and 19 th, which appears to be its proper place: thus John's testimony is properly connected.

If that is the case – and it does seem to fit very well – without adding or amending anything John is saying, the flow would be as follows:

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

16)And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17)For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ

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

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

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

Either way, He has given of His fullness, and we are the beneficiaries, receiving grace in place of the judgment we deserved.

John 1:17

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The Law could only condemn, the Law was given to confine all under sin, to show us we could not make God's righteous standard – even if we tried (a study of Galatians hammers this point home!). The purpose of the Law was to lead us to Christ, to show we needed a Saviour – and what a Saviour! Grace beyond what we dared ask for has been given in abundance. Remember the (proper) feeling of unworthiness in the returning prodigal son? And the way the father received him, and welcomed him home? That's you and I!

John 1:18

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

This verse has caused some controversy, for here we are unambiguously told that ‘no man has seen God at any time’. Yet in Genesis 18:20-33, Abraham has a face to face conversation with God. In Genesis 32:24-30, Jacob not only sees God face to face, he wrestles with Him all night. In Exodus 24:9-11 Moses and the elders of Israel go up the mount, see God, and eat and drink in His presence! Later, Moses specifically asks God if he can see Him, God obliges on the condition that Moses can only see the ‘after glow’ of God’s presence as He passes by. Later, Joshua, Gideon, Samson’s parents and others see God, and their lives are spared. So how do we reconcile this issue?

The key is found in John chapter 4, verse 24. There we read: *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* As a spirit being, God does not have a physical body. Physical objects are part of this order of things; ‘In the beginning (time), God created the heavens (space) and the earth (matter)’ (Gen 1:1). Before this, there was no time, no space and no matter. All three came into existence when God began His work of creation. It is therefore impossible for us, in this present order of things to see a God who ‘inhabits eternity’.

There will come a time when we will see Him...

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (1 Cor 13:12)

Thus, no man has seen God as He truly is. For now, God has chosen to reveal Himself through physical manifestations as noted in the scriptures above. Jesus Christ is the ultimate (and final) physical manifestation of God. It is important to note that Father, Son and Spirit, all existed before the beginning, before matter. The Son did not ‘come into being’ at the point of conception with Mary; the Son has always existed, and has always enjoyed a relationship with the Father and the Spirit. For God’s purposes, the Son became a man (became flesh) and dwelt among us to declare the Father to us; to be a ‘lamp to our feet & a light to our path’ (thy Word is... Psalm 119:105)

John 1:15?

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

If Adam Clarke is correct (see note for verse 16) above, this verse should appear here. This links well from verse 18, and leads into verse 19.

John 1:19

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

The ‘record of John’ is as stated in verse 15, that Jesus, although coming after John, existed before him – thus, John’s record is a declaration of Christ’s divinity. This ‘record’, or testimony of John’s, is reiterated in verse 27 and verse 30.

John 1:20

And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

John was not concerned with his own status or position, but just wanted to point the way to Christ – this should be the desire of all believers. Our pride needs to give way to humility, our self needs to give way to sacrifice. Only one person can rule your life, you or Christ. The choice, as they say, is yours.

John 1:21

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

The religious leaders did not ordain or anoint John the Baptist, so, as it is today, they want to know what gives him the right to do what he is doing. They seek the answer in his title..

Notice the question they ask: are you Elijah? – why ask this? Because in Malachi 4:5 it is prophesied that Elijah will once again return, before the great and dreadful ‘Day of the LORD’. But alas, John’s authority does not derive from his being Elijah.

John has already told them plainly that he is not the Christ, so the next question they ask is: ‘Are you *that* prophet?’ This is a reference to a prophecy found in Deuteronomy 18:18, where we are told the Lord would raise up a prophet like Moses. It was believed (and still is by some) that Moses himself would return.

What makes this provocative is the fact that (it appears) Moses and Elijah will indeed make a ‘guest appearance’ on the world scene during the first three and a half years of the Tribulation.

(For more, see study notes on Revelation chapter 11 – available from www.dcf-online.co.uk)

John 1:22

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

Once again, just as it is today, the religious leadership of the day want to see some credentials.

John 1:23

He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

What is John’s authority? The Word of God! (Specifically, Isaiah 40:3)

And that is the only authority needed to serve Him! Jesus is the one who anoints, ordains, and appoints for ministry – not some man with a fancy robe.

Also note: The way is being prepared for Yehovah, thus: Jesus = Yehovah.

John 1:24

And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

... the established / state ‘church’ of John’s day. In 2000 years nothing has changed. The ‘professionals’ are just as lost and blind as they were back then – with the odd exception (both then and now – we will meet Nicodemus in chapter 3, part of the establishment, but genuinely seeking the Lord).

John 1:25

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

John’s declaration that God’s Word was his authority fell on deaf ears, and the Pharisees ask the same question again – ‘but which seminary did you go to?’ ‘are you properly ordained?’ ‘which denomination do you belong to?’

A pastor I know, recently challenged a clergyman over a doctrinal issue. The pastor asked the clergyman how he could reconcile his position with the clear teaching of scripture. The clergyman replied ‘the trouble with you is, you rely too much on that book!’

Errr?? As opposed to...? What else are we to rely on? Our own opinions? C’mon, be serious! The Word of God is living & powerful, the Word of God shall stand forever, for All scripture is given by inspiration of God. In contrast, the wisdom of man is foolishness with God!

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim 4:3-4)

John 1:26-27

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

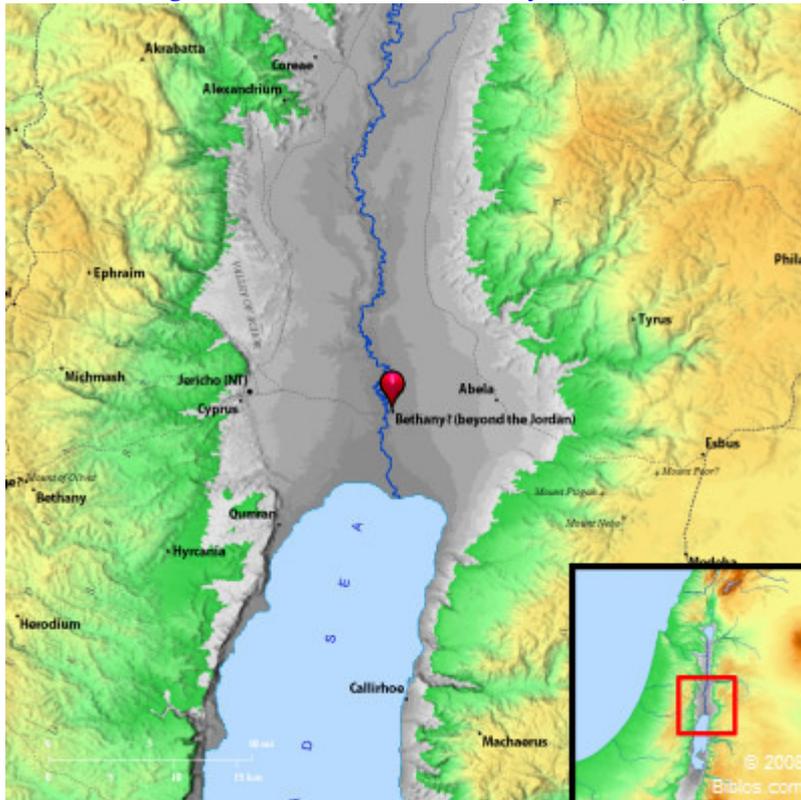
27) He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Yehovah. Here he once again declares the pre-eminence of the One who was about to come.

John's reference to his 'only' baptising with water, would seem to allude to the fact that, what John was doing was symbolic of the washing away and cleansing from sin, however, the One who was coming would accomplish in actuality what John was performing in type.

John 1:28

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



Bethabara may or may not be one and the same as Bethany. In John 11:18 we read: *“Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off”* :15 furlongs would be roughly 3km (1.87 miles).

There is a tradition among the Jews that John was wearing the mantle of Elijah, that had been kept in the temple and given to John by Zechariah. This may have been part of the reason the Pharisees were so keen to walk from Jerusalem, down to the Jordan, to see firsthand.

John 1:29

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

This is the answer to a question that was asked back in Genesis 22. Most will be familiar with the account of Abraham & Isaac, and Abraham's test of faith after God had asked him to offer up Isaac as a burnt sacrifice. Abraham acted in faith, knowing that God had already promised his descendants would come through Isaac. For Abraham, this meant that either, God was going to raise Isaac from the dead, or He has something else in mind (see Heb 11:17-19). On their way up to the top of Mt Moriah (the place would later be renamed 'Golgotha' – where another Father would offer up His only Son), Isaac asks Abraham: *“Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”* (Gen 22:7). Abraham's reply: *“My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering”*. Notice; not *‘God Himself will provide a lamb’*, but that God would provide Himself as the Lamb. We find that when God intervenes and stops Abraham, it is not a lamb, but a ram that Abraham suddenly sees, and therefore becomes the offering on that occasion. Thus, Isaac's question, 'Where is the lamb?' is answered some 2000 years later by John the Baptist, 'Behold the Lamb!'

John 1:29 (cont'd)

Contrary to what some teach, Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, not just a select few that God had predestined. In John's first letter he says: "*And he is the propitiation [payment in full] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). The choice as to whether to accept or reject what Christ has done, lies with each individual; but the price has already been paid in full, and the invitation has gone out.

John 1:30

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

The record that John bears (see verse 19), or if you like, the testimony he gives, of Christ's pre-existent nature is here declared to the assembled multitude.

John 1:31

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

John has already said that 'the world knew him not' (verse 10), that 'He came to His own and they received Him not' (verse 11). Now, despite being his earthly cousin, John the Baptist says that he himself did not know Jesus. Is this because Jesus grew up in the Galilee, whereas John grew up around Hebron? Possibly; but three times a year all Jewish males were to go up to the Temple. Are we to believe that John and Jesus had never met in thirty or so years? Had there been no family gatherings in all that time?

It is more likely that John's declaration here is to do with the divinity of Christ – that was what he did not know – for that is the subject of the following verses.

John 1:32-34

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

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

34) And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

And so it was, that John had been told that he would know who the Messiah was (whom he had been preparing the way for) by a specific sign: that being that he would see the Spirit descending, and remaining. Having seen this happen to Jesus, he now declares that Jesus is the Son of God; i.e. of the 'nature and substance of God', 'very God from very God'. (cf. Nicene Creed)

John's baptisms with water were symbolic. Jesus' baptisms would be with the Holy Spirit and life changing!

This then marked the great unveiling of Jesus to the nation of Israel, and signifies the start of Jesus' public ministry.

John 1:35-38

35) Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36) And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37) And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

It is a testimony to John that his actions support his profession. '*He is preferred before me*' he had said (verse 27); now we see that profession in action, as he points his own disciples to Christ. We are not out to get converts to our opinions, but we are to point men to Christ. No minister is building his own congregation, but rather is used of God to build Christ's Church. In John 3:30 John (the Baptist) will say '*He must increase, but I must decrease*'. This is the pattern for any follower of Christ. He is pre-eminent in all things – and must include our lives.

John 1:38-39

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

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

Over the next few verses we see four ways people come to Christ. Here we have those who are already seeking. They had been interested in spiritual things, they had become John's disciples, and had heard John's message of the need to repent. Now they are leaving John to follow Christ, and He asks the million \$ question: 'What seek ye?' Whenever Jesus/God asks a question in scripture, it is not because He is looking for information! God is omniscient (all knowing). When God asks questions, it is to cause the person questioned to think.

To all those who come to Christ out of curiosity, the same question must be asked; 'what seek ye'. Until you can answer that question, you will never know that what you have found is what you were looking for!

People come to Christ for all sorts of reasons, some for success, some for health, some for comfort. Ultimately, the real reason to come to Christ is because He is the only Saviour. Success, health, comfort and so many other things can be achieved in a variety of ways, but there is just One who came to save.

They came and saw where he dwelt...

We too need to go the place where He dwells. So often, we want Jesus to come to the place we dwell, to solve our problems and deal with our issues. However, He wants to get us to His place, to see things from His perspective – 'seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all the other things will be sorted' (Matt 6:33 - my paraphrase).

John 1:40-41

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

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

Now we have an example of someone who comes to Christ through the witness and example of a friend. Andrew was obviously so excited about 'finding' the Messiah, the first thing he does is to go and tell his brother. We should be just like Andrew who couldn't wait to 'witness'. So often, when people discover something new, they want to tell people about it straight away. We get to make a daily discover that should fill our hearts with praise, and constrain us to talk about Jesus: "*This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness*" (Lam 3:21-23)

The testimony of someone who is 'on-fire' for Christ is a powerful tool in the Lord's hands.

John 1:42

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

Later in Jesus' ministry, as recorded in Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus uses the name He here ascribes to Simon as a play on words, by saying:

"thou art Peter (Gr. Petros – small stone), and upon this rock (this rock being Christ Himself Gr. Petra) I will build my church; and the gates (Lit.councils/schemes) of hell shall not prevail against it."

It is Christ's church, He is building it (1 Cor 3:11), He adds to it (Acts 2:47), He is cleansing it (Eph 5:26-27), and He will present it to Himself (John 14:3).

Just as for Peter here, all who come to Christ are given a new name: "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it*" (Rev 2:17)

John 1:43

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

Our third example of ways people come to Christ is as seen here. Jesus Himself goes and finds Philip, and calls him to follow. In one sense, all who come to Christ do so because He has graciously sought them: “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10), however, there are those, like Philip here, Paul on the Damascus road and others, whom the Lord finds and calls to follow. The two cases cited here were both martyred!

John 1:44-45

44) Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

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

The forth type of conversion found here is again a word of mouth testimony, but this time an appeal is made to the evidence of the claim that Christ is the Messiah, namely, that Jesus is the one of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote. There are many who erroneously think we have a ‘blind faith’, a kind of ‘I hope we are right’ mentality. Scripture knows nothing of this. Our faith is based on solid, verifiable and irrefutable evidence. God does not expect us to disengage our intellects when we make a decision to follow Him.

In the book of Acts we find a continual appeal to evidence to support the claim;

“To whom also he [Jesus] shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs”
(Acts 1:3)

“But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22)

“And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly” (Acts 10:39-40)

“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,” (Acts 17:2)

“And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks”
(Acts 18:4)

“For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28)

In Luke 24:39 Jesus says to Thomas: “*handle me, and see*” – in other words ‘verify and satisfy yourself that this is real’.

John himself will write: “*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*” (1 John 5:13)

Peter states: “*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty*” (2 Peter 1:16)

Philip’s appeal to Nathanael “*We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write*” is an appeal to the two great witnesses that God has given: the Law – to convict men, and the Prophets – to convince men. The Law is that which converts the soul (see Psalm 19v7), and the Prophets, ‘the more sure word of prophecy’ as Peter puts it, converts the mind (2 Pet 1:19).

John 1:44-45 (cont'd)

Peter said: “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Peter 3:15)

We should all know what we believe and why we believe, and be able to explain to others when asked. We need not be ashamed of the Gospel, we really can prove it! (see list of resources – available at the end of this study).

John 1:46

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

It is often a marvel to people that God chooses the simple and ordinary things, the everyday, unimportant places and situations in which to work. Paul said: “*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.*” (1 Cor 1:27-29)

John 1:47-48

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

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

Stirred by Philip’s confidence, Nathanael now comes to Jesus...

Jesus sees all of us, right where we are, and knows what we are doing. “*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*” (Heb 4:13)

John 1:49

Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

John declared his deity, now Nathanael does the same – and states that Jesus is King of Israel – something we have yet to see fulfilled. Jesus presented Himself as King in Luke 19, but the people rejected Him, they wanted to take him by force and make Him king after the feeding of the 5000, but Jesus would not allow it; but there is coming a day, when Jesus will return and sit upon the Throne of David, as promised by Gabriel to Mary (in Luke 1:32).

John 1:50-51

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

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

“As thou hast credited my divine mission on this simple proof, that I saw thee when and where no human eye, placed where mine was, could see thee, thy faith shall not rest merely upon this, for thou shalt see greater things than these—more numerous and express proofs of my eternal power and Godhead” Adam Clarke - Commentary

CHAPTER 2

John 2:1

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

The question that naturally arises from this verse is: the 'third day' from what? With our western mindsets we would struggle to make sense of this – and indeed commentators over the centuries have pondered to no avail. However, with a Jewish perspective (and we always need to remember that the Bible and almost all its authors were Jewish), we get a fresh insight. You may recall back in Genesis, when God was creating, He declared on each day of creation that 'it was good'; that is, all except day two. On day two God doesn't declare it good. However, on day three, twice God declares it good (Gen 1:10 & 1:12). To the Jewish mind this then became known as the day of double blessing. Now, if you were a Jew, what day would you pick to get married on? The day of double blessing – the third day! This is still practiced in Israel today.

John 2:2

And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

So, we know the location, the day, and some of the attendees, what follows next is – on the surface – one of the strangest portions of scripture.

John 2:3

And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

For whatever reason, they run out of wine, but for some reason, Mary turns to Jesus expectantly.

As an aside, John will always use this 'title' when referring to Mary through his gospel. It is probably no coincidence that on the cross, Jesus entrusted the care of Mary to John; thus it seems to be out of respect that John never refers to her as 'Mary'.

John 2:4

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

Jesus' response to Mary may sound harsh as we have it translated, but the Greek would indicate a gentle and loving reply. What is however interesting to note, is that, just as John never refers to Mary by name, Jesus never refers to her as 'Mother'. For an interesting and thought provoking perspective, see Appendix B 'Was It Mary's Egg'.

The significance of Jesus' statement '*mine hour is not yet come*' we become clear as we go through the study, culminating in chapter 12, where we will read "*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified*" (John 12:23)

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour". (John 12:27)

John 2:5

His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

Mary's confidence in Jesus was drawn from spending so much time in His presence. Our confidence in Him will likewise be directly proportional to the amount of time we spend in His presence.

John 2:6

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

These pots were used for the 'water of purification' – see Numbers 19.

Notice, John makes a point of telling us there were SIX waterpots, and that they were STONE. John is writing this up to 70 years after the event. For some reason, these details had made a lasting impression...

John 2:7-8

7) *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim*
8) *And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it*

How many of us would have volunteered to take this 'water' to the governor? How many of us would have trusted Jesus that much? As Chuck Missler says: 'God will find a new way of asking you the same question every day: the question is 'Do you trust mMe?''

John 2:9-11

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

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

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

This is the first of the seven miracles that John chooses to record for us; and it is also the first miracle that Jesus did (as part of His ministry). What is strange about this is that only Mary, the disciples and the servants knew what had happened. How is this manifesting His glory?

Well, let's take another look at what Jesus does: He takes six empty vessels, which should have been set apart (containing the water of purification), he then uses the servants to fill the vessels with water. Then miraculously (by the power of the Holy Spirit) the vessels that once were empty are now full of the fruit of the vine – and this is the first of His miracles, the manifestation of His glory.

Now, one of the most important lessons we can learn, is that there are no meaningless details in the Bible – every number, every place name, and detail are all there by deliberate supernatural design.

With that in mind; six is the number of man (Man was created on the sixth day / 666 etc.); and thus the empty stone water pots signify mankind - so we begin to see that the miracles John specifically selects in his gospel have an incredible significance - The first miracle Jesus does in any one of our lives (if we are saved) is to take a vessel, that was designed to be set apart for holiness, but is now stone cold and empty. He chooses us, fills us with the water of his Word, cleansing us, and the once empty vessel now brings forth fruit – the fruit of the vine. 'I am the Vine, you are the branches' (John 15:5). This is arguably the greatest manifestation of His glory, when an individual is transformed and, for the first time, 'sees the Light' (see notes on John 1:4-5 again).

The world's way vs. God's way.

There is another lesson we can learn hear; the world will always put its best up front, and when we are intoxicated, then the 'poison' when we are powerless to resist. The devil works by deceit, promising success, wealth, happiness, satisfaction, fulfilment etc.. God's way is the opposite: "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy*" (Ps 126:5)

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb 12:11)

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev 21:4-5)

John 2:12

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

Capernaum - Lit. 'the house of Nahum' – the Old Testament prophet had once lived in this area.

Capernaum would later become the centre of Jesus' ministry in the Galilee region, 'His own city' (Matt 9:1). His brief visit now would later be followed up by a prolonged ministry in that area.

John 2:13

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

This is the first Passover in Jesus' ministry.

Notice how 'the LORD's Passover' (Exodus 12:11), has become 'the Jews Passover'. Later we will see this become 'merely' a 'feast of the Jews' (John 6:4).

It was a requirement for all able bodied men to go up to the temple three times a year, once in the spring (Passover), once in early summer (Pentecost), and one in the autumn (Tabernacles).

John 2:14-17

14) And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting

15) And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

16) And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

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

Because the Law required people to bring a sacrifice, and because many had travelled comparatively long distances, it was possible to travel to Jerusalem and purchase the animal for sacrifice there. In addition, the currency of the day was the Roman coins, but the currency used in the Temple precincts was the 'temple coin'. Hence the legitimate need for money changers. There is nothing wrong with this, but it had become a money making exercise, a means of profiteering – and to cap it all, it was taking place in the Court of the Gentiles, which was supposed to be a place of meditation and worship.

Jesus did not just 'lash out', It would have taken time to make the scourge from individual pieces. Bear in mind also, this was not the first time Jesus had been to the Temple. He would have been under no illusion as to what to expect. This time though, Jesus comes to the Temple as the Son of God, the Light of the world; and light exposes darkness.

Notice how Jesus refers to the Temple: 'My Father's house'. Jesus is the only one who could say this.

Does the zeal for our Father's house eat us up? Do we care more for the money changers (the things of this world)?

In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul tells us that we are the Temple of God, we need to purge our own lives, and remove anything not pleasing to Him. Not just in the outer courts (the bits people see), but in the inner parts, the things not on view to the world hidden in our hearts.

John 2:18

Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

Here we go again, 'by what authority...', 'who gave you permission...'. It is always those appointed by men that question those appointed by God!

John 2:19-22

19) Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up

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

21) But he spake of the temple of his body.

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

All things in the Bible, including the Temple, point to Jesus. The Tabernacle was a model, so was the temple, given to illustrate something far greater – but the Jews had forgotten that, and had become entrenched in their religion and tradition – which makes the word of no effect!

John 2:23

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

The people were impressed, and rightly so, by the miracles Jesus did. As a result, many believed that He was the Messiah, but that was an intellectual exercise, the real issue is one of the heart.... Hence why the next verse says...

John 2:24

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

Jesus, knowing that our hearts are ‘desperately wicked and deceitful above all things’ (Jeremiah 17:9), also knew that men are very fickle, given to change.

John 2:25

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

It is a sad indictment, but true.

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom 3:10-12)

CHAPTER 3

John 3:1

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

In commenting on this verse, and by way of an introduction as to who Nicodemus was, Pastor Ray Steadman says: *If ever there was a group, which could be called religious fanatics, it was the Pharisees. They were a select group -- never more than 6,000 of them -- who had each one taken a solemn vow before three witnesses that he would devote every moment of his entire life to obeying the Ten Commandments ...the Pharisees conducted their punctilious attempts to observe the Law and thus please God. That is the kind of man Nicodemus was.*

It is amazing that he would come to Jesus at all, because the Pharisees regarded themselves as superior to other men in spiritual status before God due to their total dedication to obeying the law of God. But not only did this Pharisee and ruler of the Jews come to Jesus, he asked certain questions of him – Pastor Ray Steadman

John 3:2

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

By night, for fear of being seen? Or because it was the best time to get Jesus alone?

Rabbi Lit. 'Teacher' (also 'Master' as a term of respect).

'we know that thou art' – this is an incredible declaration. Nicodemus is speaking on behalf of the Pharisees - *'we* know'. Clearly they had acknowledged, albeit not publicly, that Jesus was not a fraud, but had been sent from God. This goes to make their later rejection of Him even more incredible, and shows that they (the Pharisees in general) hardened their hearts and became wilfully ignorant. Nicodemus on the other hand, after this personal encounter with Jesus, will never be the same!

At the end of chapter two we noted that people saw the miracles Jesus did and were impressed, yet this 'fascination' with Jesus was simply that. It appears that the Pharisees were also impressed by the miracles. However, people's desire for the miraculous will only keep their attention for so long. It is interesting to remember, that John only chooses to record seven miracles in his entire gospel; his focus is not on the miracles, but on the One doing the miracles. John is not interested in the 'effect' but the 'cause'.

John 3:3

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

Jesus here cut's right through the religion, the best we can do for God, and says in effect, 'your religion cannot save you'. It is also an acknowledgement of 'the problem of the human heart' as recorded in Jeremiah 17:9 – *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Nowhere in scripture do we see God 'patching up', repairing or restoring the heart. The heart is incurable, that's why we need to be born again – with a new heart that beats in time with God's.

Except a man... here in this verse we have laid out just how narrow the entrance is into the kingdom of God. There is only one way – but praise God, there is A way!

John uses a very interesting word here that is translated "anew," or "again." It is the Greek word, *'anothen'*, which has three meanings: It means again to do it a second time; it also means to begin radically, completely, a new beginning; and it also means from above, and it is used in that sense in other places in Scripture. It signifies God must do this. The Christian understanding of this word includes all three of those meanings.

– Pastor Ray Steadman

John 3:4

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Nicodemus, as do most of us, immediately thinks in terms of the natural, but as we commented in chapter 1:12, true life is not physical, it is spiritual. So much of our time and focus is on the physical, natural order of things. That is why we find it hard to understand and adjust to spiritual things.

Another thought that may have been underlying Nicodemus' question is the rabbinic view that the various stages of Jewish life, from birth, circumcision, bar mitzvah, talmidim (disciple), all the way to Rabbi were seen as a new beginning. Nicodemus had 'been there and done it'. What could possibly be left that he had not accomplished? Was Jesus suggesting to Nicodemus that he go back and start all over again? If so, how could he begin at birth?

John 3:5

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

Jesus places extreme emphasis on His reply. Not just 'I say unto you'. Nor, 'Verily, I say unto you'. But 'Verily, verily, I say unto you'. Now Jesus gives the most profound answer: to enter the kingdom of God, in fact, the only way to enter the kingdom of God, is through being born, both by water and by the Spirit.

Let's deal with birth by the Spirit first:

We are told in 1st Corinthians 15:22 *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"*. As a result of Adam's disobedience, we all died spiritually in the garden; we have been dead spiritually ever since. Only by God quickening us by His Spirit, putting a new (spiritual) life into us, can we become 'alive unto God' (Rom 6:11). We were dead 'in trespasses and sins' (Eph 2:1), but now are made alive through Christ. We now have a dual nature, the 'old life', (meaning our natural, carnal, sinful life), and the new spiritual life 'born of God' (1 John 3:9 / 1 John 4:7 / 1 John 5:1 / 1 John 5:4 / 1 John 5:18 – see also Heb 12:9).

There is a constant battle between the two lives resident within our physical frame as to which is to be in control: *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would"* (Gal 5:17)

These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures. (Gal 5:17 – The Living Bible)

Note: There are clearly three 'entities' in view in the verse from Galatians: The 'flesh' – our old sinful nature; the spirit – our new life 'born of God'; and you – the real you, referred to in scripture as the soul. Notice that none of these 'entities' are physical. All are resident in a physical frame (which we call our body). The flesh and the spirit both desire control of the physical frame, because the physical frame (what it does, what it hears, what it sees, how it is influenced) has a dramatic effect on the soul.

This is why we are to feed the new spirit-life within us (through reading the Bible, praying, fellowship, communion – i.e. remembering Christ's death in your place). In contrast we are to starve the 'old life' to death. *"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live"* (Rom 8:13)

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom 6:6)

"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:9-11)

This battle will not commence until we are born again. But unless we are born of the Spirit, we cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:5 (cont'd)

Now, to the 'birth by water':

There are some Bible scholars that will contend the position that the water is referring to baptism. Others will argue for water here being symbolic of the Word of God, whilst a third position would have it that the water refers to the Holy Spirit 'washing' us. A further view holds to 'water birth' simply being a reference to our natural birth. A case for each position can be made from scripture, and all have their merits, but in the context Jesus uses, only one can be right. Let's examine the options:

Born of water = Baptism

It is clear from the context that Jesus is talking about baptism. John's baptism was the sensation of the nation at this time. Everyone was talking about it. The Pharisees had sent a delegation to John to ask him why he was baptizing. The meaning of John's baptism was the central theological question of the day in which our Lord speaks. What Jesus means, then, is what baptism signifies. It is not the water that changes anybody. Many people superstitiously think that if they baptize their babies that will assure the children entrance into the kingdom of heaven; or if they themselves were to be baptized as adults that would guarantee them admittance into heaven. That is rank superstition. Water does not change anybody that way. It may make you a little cleaner, you might even smell better, but it does not make you any different in God's eyes. What the baptism stands for is what is important. Do not, like the many in John's gospel, miss the real meaning because of the symbol! The symbol behind baptism is repentance, an honest admission of need.

– Pastor Ray Steadman

Born of water = Water of the Word

There are those who say the water refers to the Word of God. As Peter in his first epistle, chapter 1, verse 23, said that we've been "begotten unto this living hope through the Word of truth." And so, we've been born again through the Word of God. And Jesus said in John 15, "Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." And so it is being born of the Word of God. – Chuck Smith

We know also that we have been washed in the Word (Eph 5:26), Sanctified by the Word (John 17:17), kept by the Word (John 8:31). In the next chapter we will see Jesus speaking to the woman at the well: "*Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*" (John 4:13-14)

Born of water = Water of the Spirit

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5)

Born of water = Water of natural birth

To be born of the water would refer to the natural birth, because in context then, Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which born of the Spirit is spirit." And so, He's talking about the two births: born of the water, and born of the Spirit. And that the born of the Spirit is referring to the new birth, the spiritual birth that we have, where born of the water would refer to the fleshly birth. – Chuck Smith

All the above views have validity, we must repent, which is what baptism symbolises, if we are to be saved. We are also saved by the Word, and saved by the washing and regeneration of the Spirit. However the only view that allows the context to interpret what Jesus says is that we must be born naturally, and this must be followed by a new birth spiritually if we are to enter the kingdom of God. The following verses will underline this conclusion.

It is also true that there are many who have not been baptised who are genuinely saved (the thief on the cross is just one example). There have also been many who have been born again without reading a page of scripture – in some countries people are denied access to the Bible; yes we need to be washed and regenerated by the spirit, but this is part and parcel of spiritual birth Jesus talked about.

John 3:6

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

In verse 5 Jesus talks of two types of birth, now he explains that there is a natural birth, which must be followed by a spiritual birth. This is Jesus' own explanation of being born by water and the spirit; clearly we are dealing with natural birth, followed by spiritual birth.

Whilst baptism is commanded for all believers, it is in itself not a pre requisite for salvation, as mentioned a moment ago, the example is often given of the thief on the cross – he obviously did not have time or opportunity to get baptised, but Jesus Himself assured him of his salvation. Nor did the thief have time to read the scriptures. Many have come to a genuine saving faith in Jesus without reading a page of scripture. We are washed by the word, kept by the word, saved from the power of sin by the word, but we cannot say that unless you read the word you cannot be saved.

Jesus is also reminding us of a universal constant first amplified in Genesis 1; i.e. the law that every living thing reproduces after its own kind. Thus the flesh could never produce something pleasing to God (“in my flesh dwells no good thing” Rom 7:18). As we will see in chapter 4, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24) Therefore, we have to be born again if we are ever to enter the kingdom of God, hence, Jesus says...

John 3:7

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

John Wesley was once asked why he so often preached on this verse: “you must be born again”. His answer was simple: “Because you MUST be born again”.

Picking up on what we have been saying: we are spiritual beings, dwelling in a physical frame. We think non-physical thoughts, we deal in non-physical concepts, such as love, anger, justice etc.. These things are not the result of chemical reactions in our bodies. Chuck Missler makes the interesting point that we are, in essence, software. Most of us are familiar with computer disks; if you have an empty disc and weigh it, then load it with mega bites of software and weigh it again, you will find the weight of the disk does not change. This is because software (which is information) has no mass – it is not physical; it uses a physical medium to ‘express itself’ (just as we use our bodies), but it has no physical properties. You can even send software and information through the air, around the world in seconds, via radio waves. Because it has no mass, it is not subject to the physical laws, and therefore is not subject to the laws of entropy, for example, or even time.

‘We’ (our eternal souls) our just like this. The real person whom you are, is not made up of your physical frame; you could loose an arm or leg, and you don’t become less of a person. Yes, we use our brains to process our thoughts, but our brains do not originate our thoughts. Your brain does not control you, you control (or operate) your brain (although there are indeed many functions the human body is pre-programmed to do, such as breathing, pumping blood through your veins, blinking etc. – all of which have been set in motion and work irrespective of our thoughts).

Thus, we can conclude that we are essentially non physical beings, not subject to physical laws, and so not subject to entropy or time. This has a profound implication for all people; it means that we are eternal beings whether we like it or not! The big question is, where will we spend eternity?

Jesus tells us that if we want to spend eternity with God (as opposed to being eternally alienated from Him), we MUST be born again, we must experience a spiritual rebirth, because our original spiritual life (that which was alive toward God), died in Adam back in the Garden. Unless we are spiritually reborn and become alive toward God, we have no option but to be separated from Him, our souls remaining spiritually dead for eternity.

John 3:8

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

The effects of the wind are observed, even though the wind itself cannot be seen. So it is with the spiritual life that begins in us the moment we are born again. We begin to change and, although we cannot see the actual change taking place, the effects become evident in our lives

Notice now that Jesus, in talking about the new birth only mentions being ‘born of the Spirit’. If the ‘water’ in verse 5 referred to baptism, or the word of God, it would be stated again here. The fact that it is not, indicates again that the water in v5 is in reference to natural birth.

John 3:9

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

It is comforting in one sense that even the great teacher and theologian of the Jews did not understand these things. However, the reason he did not understand was the same reason so many do not understand spiritual things today – a lack of understanding of God’s word, as we see Jesus address in the next verse...

John 3:10

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Lit: ‘Art thou the master of Israel’. Nicodemus was the principle teacher for the nation; if he did not understand these things, what hope could there be for the common people who would look to the Pharisees to teach them?

Why did Jesus chide Nicodemus in this way? Because the ‘new birth’ had been prophesied by Israel’s own prophets; Nicodemus should have understood:

*Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And **I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you;** and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezek 11:17-20)*

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will **put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;** and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:31-33)*

*“And I will give them one heart, and **I will put a new spirit within you;** and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 11:19-20)*

*“A new heart also will I give you, **and a new spirit will I put within you:** and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek 36:26-27)*

Given the clear teaching of these scriptures, it is incredible that Nicodemus did not join the dots, and see that what Jesus was introducing was the same as Israel’s prophets had foretold.

John 3:11

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

Verily, verily, I say unto thee – Jesus again puts particular emphasis on His next statement: Notice what Jesus says: ‘We speak the things we know about, and testify that we have seen; and you do not receive our witness’. Who is Jesus referring to here? It certainly could not be His disciples, we are not even told if His disciples were present for this meeting; and besides, Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about being born again & spiritual rebirth, hardly something the disciples knew about, or had seen, or had born witness of.

The ‘we/our’ here has to be in reference to the Godhead – the same plurality that said ‘Let Us create’ (Gen 1:26 / Gen11:7). Jesus is telling Nicodemus that the matter of the new birth is something settled in heaven, something that God has ordained and foretold in His Word. “*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*” (1 John 5:7)

John 3:12

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Jesus’ answer to Nicodemus’ question was using simple earthly analogies, if Nicodemus is struggling with this, how will he fair when Jesus reveals things from a heavenly perspective? (as He will in v.14). We are all a little like this, God will so often use earthly situations to try to convey something of profound spiritual importance to us, and so often we fail to understand even the earthly.

John 3:13

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

This must have blown Nicodemus’ mind! Jesus is standing in front of him, yet Jesus now says that, not only has He ascended up into heaven, but that is His origin, and even now is where He is! This verse outlines the mystery of the incarnation – God becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

Notice that Jesus says that no man... Jesus is no mere man, but God manifest in human form. That is how He can stand in front of Nicodemus talking to him, and also declare that the Son of man is in heaven.

John 3:14

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

Jesus here continues to answer Nicodemus’ question from verse 9, ‘*how can these things be?*’

In order to answer this question, Jesus now talks to Nicodemus about ‘heavenly things’, specifically taking Nicodemus back to Numbers 21:

“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (Num 21:5-9)

John 3:14 (cont'd)

This incredible 'model' had been in the Jewish scriptures the whole time, and no Rabbi had been able to explain, what on the surface, seems a peculiar situation. The people had rebelled against God, and as a result, God's wrath was poured out on the people in the form of fiery serpents. A bite from one of these serpents would lead to certain death. However, along with God's wrath we find God's mercy, and hence a way of escaping death is made available, for all who choose.

Our sin demands God's wrath, but mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13)

So God instructs Moses to construct a brass serpent, on a pole, and then when anyone is bitten, all they have to do is to look at the serpent on the pole and they will be healed. All that is required on behalf of the sinner is the faith to look to the one place God had prescribed.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that just as serpent was put on the pole, so He, the Son of man, would also be lifted up...

John 3:15

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Just as those bitten by the serpent (representing all those who have been bitten by the incurable 'serpent' of sin – i.e. all mankind), could choose (every individual had to make this choice for themselves) to look at the brass (signifying judgment) serpent (signifying sin – so we have 'sin judged') lifted up on a pole, so in just the same way 'whomsoever will' can look to Jesus, who was lifted up on the cross, becoming sin for us, and receiving from God the judgment we deserved. In so doing, they will be 'healed', and though they were 'as dead' as a result of the serpent's bite, they will now be made alive – i.e. 'born again'.

All that is required is contrite hearts, acknowledging that the judgment had come upon them as a result of their rebellion, and faith that the means of deliverance provided by God was sufficient to heal them and give them 'new life'.

Thus, as we have seen laid out for us so far in the gospel of John, Jesus came to illuminate our spiritual condition, and then to Himself pay for our sin, making it possible for anyone who simply repents and puts their trust in Him to be born again spiritually, and hence receive the free gift of eternal life.

This then sets the scene for the most concise (and well known) summary of the Christian gospel; Jesus, still speaking to Nicodemus continues...

John 3:16

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

The depth and magnitude of this statement by Jesus are awesome:

- *For God* - *the greatest being*
- *so* - *the greatest degree*
- *loved* - *the greatest affection*
- *the world* - *the greatest object of love*
- *that he gave* - *the greatest act*
- *his only* - *the greatest treasure*
- *begotten* - *the greatest relationship*
- *Son,* - *the greatest gift*
- *that whosoever* - *the greatest company*
- *believeth* - *the greatest trust*
- *in him* - *the greatest object of faith*
- *should not perish* - *the greatest deliverance*
- *but have* - *the greatest assurance*
- *everlasting* - *the greatest promise*
- *life.* - *the greatest blessing*

John 3:17

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

Again, a just God must punish sin, He cannot simply ignore it. But as a demonstration of God's amazing love for us, the Father sent the Son to pay for the sins of the whole world.

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2)

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9)

John 3:18

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

This is as simple as it gets: If you believe on Jesus, you are not condemned. If you choose not to believe, you are condemned already, for there is no other way.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12)

John 3:19

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

We saw in chapter 1 that Jesus came to illuminate the way for all mankind, however, men prefer to choose the pleasures of sin for a season, than an eternal life with our creator. In this they condemn themselves. God does not choose for any to go to hell – hell was made for the devil and his angels, not mankind (Matt 25:41) individuals condemn themselves to an eternity separated from God on account of their wilful rejection of Him.

John 3:20

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

Light exposes darkness. Men do not want their sinful deeds exposed because they do not want to give up their sinful pleasures; but as has been said 'a man is no fool who gives up that which he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot loose' (Jim Elliot 1927 – 1956)

Jesus Himself said the same: *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Mark 8:35-36)

John 3:21

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

'doeth truth' – we live in a state of denial if we reject the testimony of our own conscience. We all know that sin is wrong; no one lies and says 'I though lying was the right thing to do'. No one steels and says 'but I though stealing was the right thing'. No one commits adultery and says that what they were doing was good – that's why such things are done in secret, lest they be exposed. However, those who take heed to their conscience, and conclude with God that their sin is evil, and seek Him, 'coming to the light', live their lives in his presence, through his enabling, with nothing to hide and no need of censor.

This is the end of our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus; and though we are not informed here of any good effects produced by it, yet we learn from other scriptures that it had produced the most blessed effects in his mind, and that from this time he became a disciple of Christ. He publicly defended our Lord in the Sanhedrin, of which he was probably a member, John 7:50, and, with Joseph of Arimathea, gave him an honourable funeral, John 19:39, when all his bosom friends had deserted him. - Adam Clarke

John 3:22

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

Later, in Chapter 4, we are told it was not Jesus himself who did the baptizing but his disciples did it in his name.

‘After these things’ - meta tauta in the Greek. Jesus had obviously become somewhat of a celebrity in Jerusalem, He had even had a personal visit from Nicodemus, one of the greatest teachers in Israel. Yet He now chooses to leave the ‘bright lights of the city and return to Galilee (John 4:3), passing first through Judaea and Samaria. This is not the natural way of things; we strive for success, and latch onto any glimmer of popularity in the hope of ‘being accepted’. Jesus however, was not concerned with success ‘I come to do thy will, O God’ (Heb 10:9), “*Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*” (John 4:34). Jesus also declared “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10). “*And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Luke 5:31-32).

Have we reached the point in our relationship with God where we care nothing for our own reputation, or our success, but rather seek for ‘His kingdom to come, and His will to be done’?

The slightest revision of what I know God is telling me to do is the first element in the damnation of my character in that particular (see John 3:19). Immediately I see what God wants me to do when I am in His presence, I must do it and care nothing for the consequences – Oswald Chambers

“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phil 2:7)

John 3:23-24

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

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36)

Do we forget the urgency of the situation? Do we make the most of every opportunity? In Aenon there was water and people; John did not know how long he had left, but didn’t waste a moment in leading people to repentance, and as we have already seen, pointing them to Jesus. “*behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:2)

John 3:25

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

The Jewish act of purification (literally, cleansing by water) was something that was done after someone had been ceremonially unclean for whatever reason. The person would was in water, and sometimes shave, as in the example of some one who was pronounced clean from leprosy: “*But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean*” (Lev 14:9)

It appears that some of the Pharisees mistook what John was doing as simply an extension of the act of purification ceremony. No doubt John’s disciples were trying to set the record straight. John was not preaching an external cleansing, but an internal one!

John 3:26

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

It would seem that the Pharisees come, trying to cause division – no doubt for their own ends. There are many like this in the church today.

John 3:27

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

John diffuses this attempted suggestion of rivalry by simply pointing out that all ministries and all gifts come from God. Why should he be envious of another whom God chose to use? John was not seeking his own glory but the glory of the One who had bestowed the blessings and gifts upon him.

John 3:28

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

John now reiterates and reminds the Pharisees of that which we saw him declare in chapter one; viz. that he had been sent to prepare the way for the Messiah.

John 3:29

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

John is here saying that he is the Best Man, his job is to see the Bridegroom (Christ), and the bride joined together – this is his joy; so again, why would he be jealous that the bride is coming to the Bridegroom? This is what John wanted to see, and thus, in one sense, the ultimate fulfilment of his mission.

Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom (Matt 9:15 / Matt 25:1,5,6,10), but did John know just how profound and perfect a title this was? Paul, in Ephesians 5, makes the incredible claim that the whole basis for marriage was intended as a shadow of Christ and His bride, the Church. Ultimately, Christ will return to claim His bride and take her back to the place He has gone to prepare for her (John 14:3). It is incredible to discover that Christ's marriage to His bride, seems to have been intentionally based upon a traditional Jewish wedding. (See appendix C – A Jewish Wedding – a taste of things to come)

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

We could write volumes on this one profound utterance of John. In the local sense, John is acknowledging the remit of his ministry, viz. to announce the Messiah. Inevitably, once the Messiah had been revealed, John's work would come to an end. However in a broader sense, this is an axiom for all believers. Scottish theologian, James Denny, said: "You can never at the same time convince people that you are a great preacher and that Jesus is a great Saviour." The same could be said of any area of Christian ministry, we should never be looking for the recognition or praise for our labours, we should simply be pointing people to Christ; 'His is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, now and forever – Amen!'

There is also a very personal application of this verse: I have said before that you will understand most of scripture and most of life if you understand two thrones. Firstly, the Throne of David; if you understand what the Bible says about this throne, the Bible and world events harmonise with incredible clarity. Secondly, there is the throne of your heart; only one can sit on that throne at a time, and each moment of each day we have to make a choice as to whether it will be Christ or self. All our issues, stresses, anxieties and concerns stem from the fact that too often we are sitting on that throne. When we decrease and let Christ increase, when we yield to His sovereignty in our lives, there comes a sublime peace (which passes understanding (Phil 4:7), and a confident assurance that He is working all things for good (Rom 8:28), and that 'He that begun a good work in us, will not give up on us' (Phil 1:6), that He knows the end from the beginning (Is 46:9-10) and even knows where the sparrow lands (Matt 10:29), so how much more will He care for us (Matt 6:30). As the Apostle Paul said:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20)

John 3:30 (cont'd)

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

If you become a necessity to a soul, you are out of God's order. As a worker, your great responsibility is to be a friend of the Bridegroom. When once you see a soul in sight of the claims of Jesus Christ, you know that your influence has been in the right direction, and instead of putting out a hand to prevent the throes, pray that they grow ten times stronger until there is no power on earth or in hell that can hold that soul away from Jesus Christ. Over and over again, we become amateur providences; we come in and prevent God, and say—"This and that must not be." Instead of proving friends of the Bridegroom, we put our sympathy in the way, and the soul will one day say—"That one was a thief, he stole my affections from Jesus, and I lost my vision of Him."

Beware of rejoicing with a soul in the wrong thing, but see that you do rejoice in the right thing. "The friend of the Bridegroom . . . rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." This is spoken with joy and not with sadness—at last they are to see the Bridegroom! And John says this is his joy. It is the absolute effacement of the worker, he is never thought of again.

Watch for all you are worth until you hear the Bridegroom's voice in the life of another. Never mind what havoc it brings, what upsets, what crumbings of health, rejoice with divine hilarity when once His voice is heard. You may often see Jesus Christ wreck a life before He saves it. (Cf. Matthew 10:34) – Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*

John 3:31-35

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

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

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

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

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

In these verses, John the Baptist gave 5 reasons for Christ's superiority to him: 1) Christ had a heavenly origin (v. 31); 2) Christ knew what was true by firsthand experience (v. 32); 3) Christ's testimony always agreed with God (v. 33); 4) Christ experienced the Holy Spirit in an unlimited manner (v. 34); and 5) Christ was supreme because the Father sovereignly had granted that status to Him (v. 35). - *John MacArthur*

This is an incredible 'barrage' that John fires at the Pharisees leaving them, no doubt, bewildered and somewhat regretting they had started this conversation!

As we have already noted, John (the gospel writer) wrote this gospel to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Word made Flesh. That He was, and is, God incarnate (see Isaiah 9:6). Here, the Apostle John records words of John the Baptist, blatantly screaming to all who have ears that Jesus is God!

v.31 – Jesus is from above, and is preminent – this could only be said of God

v.32 – Jesus has seen and testifies of things no man could know – He cannot therefore be merely a man.

v.33 – John the Baptist himself testifies to the validity of his declaration

v.34 – Jesus has come as God in the flesh, speaking as God, full of the Holy Spirit, without measure, which could only be said of God.

v.35 – An incredible relationship exists in the heart of God – Father, Son & Spirit. God could not give all things into the hand of a created being – But Jesus was Himself the creator.

John 3:36

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

This is really quite simple: there is an offer of everlasting life being made; the condition to becoming a beneficiary is believing in Jesus (just as the Jews looked in faith to the serpent on the pole). The alternative is to reject Christ, thus rejecting the chance to be spiritually reborn. Notice what we are here told is the relationship of God to those who reject Christ: Not 'God loves you' as is so often erroneously and unbiblically told to unbelievers, but rather, God's wrath abides on you!

If we were honest in our preaching of the gospel, and stopped watering it down in case we offend someone, we would see far greater results! To tell an unrepentant sinner that God loves them is to tell them they don't need to change, why should they if God loves them anyway? However, to tell them that God's wrath abides on them, that they will face God on judgement day and be judged by God's righteous standard for every word, thought and deed, that unless they repent they will perish – if we tell them this, we are demonstrating true love, honesty and conveying the urgency of the situation.

The Bible (in the New Testament in particular) only lists two classes of people: the saved and the perishing (1 Cor 1:18 / 2 Cor 2:15 / John 3:15). Too many of the perishing are perishing because they don't know they are perishing!

What was John the Baptist's message? *'You have a God-shaped hole in your heart'*? No! Repent!

CHAPTER 4

John 4:1-4

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

2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

3 He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

Jesus now continues His journey away from Jerusalem, the Pharisees and the opportunity of 'success'; and heads toward Galilee. Now, most Jews would cross over the Jordan and go up on the other side of the river so as to avoid going through Samaria, but John tells us that Jesus deliberately ('must needs go') chooses to go through Samaria. The Samaritans were considered outcasts by the Jews, and they would have nothing to do with them. This 'feud' began shortly after 722 B.C. when the king of Assyria had taken the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity. The record of this is found in 2 Kings 17:18-33:

"Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only...as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day... And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. Howbeit every nation made gods of their own...They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence"

Thus, the Samaritans were Assyrian deportees from other lands who had learned of the God of the land of Israel from Jewish priests, who had themselves been sent back by the king of Assyria to teach these new inhabitants the laws of the God of Israel. Their religion therefore became a mixture of paganism and Judaism, and hence the reason the real Jews wanted nothing to do with them.

They were considered by the Jews to be the lowest of the low; yet it is to these Samaritans that Jesus chooses to go. Furthermore, as we will see, it wasn't just to the despised Samaritans that Jesus went, but to a woman, and an outcast. Thus we see Jesus reaching out to the least esteemed person among the least regarded people, and here we see a picture of you and I. We were not just sinners, we were gentiles, we were 'afar off' (Eph 2:10-19), the off scourging of humanity; yet Christ willing gave up the majesty and glory of heaven (as here He had given up the prestige and honour in Jerusalem), to come to the lowest of the low, reach out His hand and offer living water.

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph 2:3-6)

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom 9:30)

John 4:5-6

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

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

How interesting that Jesus was wearied. In taking on human form He subjected Himself to the same frailties we experience: *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15)

Jesus arrives at this well at about mid-day.

John 4:7

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

There was a well in the city itself, but it would appear this woman was not welcome there, for she makes the journey out of the city, carrying a stone water pot, intending to fill it by drawing water from a deep well and then carry it home again. Imagine her surprise when a Jew, not only speaks to her, but asks her for a drink.

Jesus asks each one of us to do things for Him, not because He is unable to do them Himself, but because He wants to bless us. God does not need our help, the kingdom of God won't come to a grinding halt if we fail to do something properly, or at all! Jesus simply gives us the opportunity to do things for Him because it pleases Him when we obey, and blesses us in the process.

John 4:8

(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

John inserts this editorial comment for us – although he was an eye witness at the end of this event, he was absent at the beginning. Jesus must have relayed the conversation to the disciples in order for John to have recorded it here. This means that Jesus wanted this meeting documented for future reference, no doubt because of what it teaches you and I.

John 4:9

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

As we have already noted, the Jews did not associate with the Samaritans, nor should a Rabbi talk with a woman he did not know. There were actually some Rabbi's who would cover their faces rather than even look at a woman.

John 4:10

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

We are given quite an interesting profile of this woman; clearly an outcast, but as we will see, with some degree of religious conviction. One thing that does become clear is that she is a person who is seeking to be satisfied, her life clearly unfulfilled, despite her lifestyle. Jesus now talks to her, no doubt recognising her inward longing, and offers her something she doesn't have, nor has been able to attain by her efforts.

‘If thou knewest the gift of God’ - we have already seen the gift of God, detailed for us in chapter 3:16 *‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’*

‘and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink’ - Jesus is the gift of God, and He offers something that is not temporary, but permanent.

Living water (unlike the water in the well) would be fresh water from a spring, bubbling over, continually replenished and refreshing. Jesus uses the example of water to contrast that which this woman can have by her efforts, and that which He can give her.

John 4:11

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

The woman, just like Nicodemus in the last chapter, doesn't see past the natural to the spiritual.

John 4:12

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

'Just who does this Jew think he is? Coming here and talking about 'living water'. I know our tradition and it says nothing of 'living water'. What can you give me that my tradition can't?'

John 4:13-14

*13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:
14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

Jesus now cuts to the real issue: 'thirst'. That which is natural can never quench our real thirst because it is spiritual. Dave Hunt says the following: "Why do I introduce water into this discussion? I do so because water is so often used by Christ to illustrate the spiritual truths we are considering. Thirst is an important ingredient of hell. Is it a physical thirst for physical water, or something even more painful and specifically related to the spiritual thirst to which Christ so often referred and which He claimed to quench for those who would believe on Him?"

The rich man in hell was "tormented in this flame." He begged Abraham to send Lazarus to "dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue..." (Luke 16:23-25). Were the flames in hell and the thirst that tormented the rich man real? Certainly. Were they physical? How could that be the case? Only the rich man's soul and spirit were in hell; his dead body was in the grave. He had no tongue in hell. Could physical flames affect soul and spirit, and could soul and spirit have physical thirst?

Did the rich man in hell need physical water? It would not have done his soul and spirit any good. The unbearable thirst that tormented him was because at the heart of all of his sin was his rejection of the water of life that Christ offered. He would suffer eternally from the painful guilt of that rejection and the weight of his sins"

John 4:15

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14)

And so it is here; this woman still does not understand what Jesus is saying to her, but the thought of having her thirst satisfied, the thought of not having to make this journey time and again sounds too good an opportunity to miss.

People tend to focus on their physical need with little regard to their spiritual need; yet our spiritual condition has a profound affect on our physical state. Jesus will now show this woman that her real need is spiritual, not physical.

She did not as yet comprehend our Lord's meaning; but her curiosity was much excited, and this was the design of our Lord, that he might have her mind properly prepared to receive the great truths which he was about to announce – Adam Clarke

John 4:16

Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

Because He knows all things, Jesus is able to ask the most penetrating questions to us, the ones we would much rather not face. But, once again, Jesus makes us face the things we would rather not deal with in order to expose the sin, for only then can the Master Surgeon do His healing work.

John 4:17

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

The woman's answer is truthful, yet not the whole picture. Scripture is full of examples of people who have tried to hide things from God (see Genesis 3 (Adam & Eve) / Genesis 4 (Cain) / Joshua 7 (Achan) / 2 Sam 11 (David) / Acts 5 (Ananias & Sapphira) etc.)

Tip: don't bother! If He can see the end from the beginning, He knows all about you!

John 4:18

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

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor 4:5)

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:12-13)

John 4:19

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Is her response just an attempt to change the question? Regardless, this strikes her as a great opportunity to ask a prophet one of the most burning theological questions of the day...

John 4:20

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

Probably pointing to Mount Gerizim, at the foot of which Sychar was situated. The patriarchs had worshipped here-Jacob builded an altar on this mountain, and worshipped the true God: (see Gen 22:2; 33:20). Thus she could say, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. - Adam Clarke

In contrast, the Jews' central place of worship was Jerusalem where David has purchased the threshing floor of Ornan (1 Chron 21:18-30), upon which site the temple was build by Solomon. It was also on Mt Moriah (the Mountain upon which Jerusalem sits) that Abraham had been called to offer up Isaac. So the big question: where would God prefer we worship Him?

John 4:21

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

Probably not the answer she was expecting! Jesus will go on to elaborate on His answer, but first He says...

John 4:22

Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

The Samaritans worshiped the same God as the Jews in principle, but had not the Law and the Prophets to give them clear instruction. The Samaritans' worship was misdirected and incomplete. The Jews on the other hand, followed the Law of Moses and its sacrificial system as closely as possible. The Jews had a clear understanding of what God required, it was the Jews that God had called to be a holy people, *'a peculiar treasure unto me above all people'* (Ex 19:5)

'salvation is of the Jews' - the Bible is a Jewish book, the Apostles were Jewish, Jesus was born a Jew, He will return to reign on the throne of David, from Jerusalem. God has chosen that salvation is of the Jews. Many in today's church don't seem to like this, but remember, it is Jesus Himself that makes this statement!

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom 3:1-2)

John 4:23

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

In the previous chapter, Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the new spiritual birth; it is only those who have been born again spiritually who can worship the Father in a way that is acceptable. By the phrase 'true worshippers' Jesus is contrasting the worship that was offered under the Law of Moses to the true worship that is offered by someone born again of the Spirit of God. The writer to the Hebrews explains this in detail:

*“For the law **having a shadow** of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never** with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that **the worshippers** once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.** Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. **He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.** By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all.** And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. **For by one offering he hath perfected for ever** them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, **This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them**” (Heb 10:1-16)*

But the hour cometh, and now is – Jesus had come as the Light of the world to announce the new covenant and illuminate the way back to God. Now was the time that this incredible offer was being presented to the world.

John 4:24

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

In Isaiah 64:6 we are told that '*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*', that is, the very best we can bring to God of our selves is abhorrent and offensive. Notice the use of the word '*must*', if we are to worship God, it must come from new hearts and renewed minds that have been '*perfected for ever*', in spirit (the new spiritual life) and truth (with our old nature '*crucified*'), all deceit and pretence gone.

John 4:25

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

Even the Samaritans knew that the Messiah 'the anointed one' was coming; and He would 'tell us all things' in regard to the nature of God, the nature of his worship, and the proper place to worship him. In a nutshell, this woman is saying: 'he will settle the great national question between Gerizim and Jerusalem'

John 4:26

Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

Although not considered one of the seven 'I AM' statements in the gospel of John, it is none the less a declaration that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, and the 'I AM'. The 'he' has been inserted by the translators for 'readability'; Jesus literally says ***I that speak unto thee AM.***

Jesus here claims to be the voice of the burning bush (Exodus 3:14), the eternal God.

John 4:27

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

As was often the case with the disciples, they didn't understand what Jesus did, or why He was doing it, but they knew enough to hold their tongues. As we see the LORD work in others lives, we would also be wise to refrain from comment whilst the LORD does His work.

John 4:28

The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

By leaving the waterpot she marked her intention to return post-haste.

John 4:29

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

At the beginning of their meeting, this woman would have been horrified that someone should expose her past life, but Jesus did not condemn her, He simply allowed her to see her own emptiness and longing to be satisfied (He exposed her thirst for natural things, which was in itself an attempt to deal with her greater need – her spiritual thirst). He then revealed Himself as the Messiah, the only one who could satisfy that thirst.

The Way of The Master

The precedent in Scripture is given in John 4 for personal witness. You can see Jesus' example with the woman at the well. He started in the natural realm, swung to the spiritual, brought conviction using the seventh commandment, and then revealed Himself as the Messiah. So, when I meet someone, I'll talk about the weather, I'll talk about sport: let them feel a little bit of sanity. Get to know them; maybe joke here and there and then deliberately swing from the natural to the spiritual. - Ray Comfort

For more information on 'Biblical evangelism' and how to witness effectively see 'Hell's Best Kept Secret' available from <http://www.livingwaters.com/helps/HellsBestKeptSecret.pdf>

John 4:30

Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

Once again we see the power of personal testimony as the people respond to this woman's testimony.

John 4:31-34

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

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

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?

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

What is our meat? Do we live to satisfy our flesh? Or do we seek first the kingdom?

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:17-20)

John 4:35

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

As Jesus is calling the disciples to lift up their eyes, no doubt the multitude are making their way from the city, curious to meet this man who the women declared to be the Messiah. Jesus uses this agricultural example to say to the disciples, don't put off 'harvesting' because you don't think it's time, there are so many souls to be won for the kingdom, now is the time.

We may meet with opposition from time to time, but there are so many people longing to hear the message of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ that we cannot lose a moment.

John 4:36

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

We are told in Matthew 6 to lay up our treasure in heaven, there can be no greater treasure than to see the souls of those we have witnessed to in heaven.

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (1 Thess 2:19)

John 4:37

And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

We all have a part to play, sometimes we may sow the seeds, other times we may get the joy of reaping that which others have sown; whatever the situation, we should always be looking for the opportunity to share the gospel with people.

Once again, I would strongly urge you to become familiar with Ray Comfort’s teaching on how to witness ‘the way of the Master’, by using the Law to bring conviction of sin and expose each individual’s need for a Saviour. Go to: <http://wayofthemaster.com/>

Psalm 19 says: *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul”*. What is it that converts the soul? The Bible makes it clear: it is the Law of the LORD. We need to become skilled in using the Law for the purpose for which it was intended – that of leading souls to Christ. (see Gal 3:24 / 1 Tim 1:8-9).

John 4:38

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

For the disciples, they were reaping a harvest sown by the prophets of Israel through the centuries. In Israel, very few needed to be told of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; very few needed to be told the Messiah was coming; all the disciples had to do was to point the way to Jesus, He was the long awaited Messiah!

We too have had so much of the labouring already done for us, we are simply building on the *“foundation of the apostles and prophets”* (Eph 2:20). We have the *“more sure word of prophecy”* (2 Peter 1:19), and a faith built on *“many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3) to convince the intellect. We have the law of the LORD to convict the conscience; we simply need to *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine... But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry”* (2 Tim 4:2,5)

John 4:39

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

The testimony of one that has been with Jesus is irrefutable. *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus”* (Acts 4:13)

John 4:40

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

Once we have been introduced to Jesus, we will never want Him to depart from us – thankfully for us we have His promise: *“lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matt 28:20), and *“for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Heb 13:5)

“After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight” (Hos 6:2)

John 4:41

And many more believed because of his own word;

Evidently, some may have been sceptical of the woman's testimony (although they still came), but nothing except wilful ignorance could stop the words of Jesus bearing fruit.

John 4:42

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

As we have already mentioned, Isaiah tells us that God alone is the Saviour, yet here, recorded in John's gospel, we are told that Jesus is the saviour; therefore, Jesus has to be God manifest in the flesh.

Sometimes people may not believe our testimony (they cannot refute it, but they may choose not to believe it), so we need to point them to the Word of God: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb 4:12)

John 4:43-44

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

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

From what we know from the other gospels, and the following verses here, it appears that Jesus now departs into Galilee (which is an area, not a single town), but avoids the town of Nazareth, the town in which He grew up.

In Matt 13:57; Mark 6:4, and Luke 4:24, which are the only texts where Jesus is said to have declared this, he always spoke of Nazareth only, and not of Galilee in general, a country where he lived for the most part, and performed the greatest number of his miracles, and made the most converts. - Adam Clarke

Jesus' Journeys - John Chapter 3 & 4



John 4:45

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

Back in John 2:23-24 we were told “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. **But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men**” (John 2:23-24)

Evidently, some of those who had been impressed with Jesus signs’ in Jerusalem had been from the area of Galilee. No doubt news Jesus was on His way had already made it through, so the people, keen to see Jesus do some more miracles were quite happy to receive Him. Jesus, on the other hand, ‘knew all men’, and knew their hearts.

All the time we entertain people they will keep receiving us, but when there is a call to a holy lifestyle, watch the attitude change. Organise a social evening for the church and lots of people attend, and even bring friends. Organise a prayer meeting and oh, how the excuses roll in!

*“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, **Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper**”*

(Luke 14:16-24)

John 4:46

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

This nobleman would have been an officer, and possibly a relative of Herod Antipus, who was at that time the tetrarch (ruler) of Galilee.

NB: John is the only gospel to record this miracle – there are no meaningless details in the Bible, so we should expect there to be a reason that John chooses to include this account in his gospel.

John 4:47

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

The journey from Capernaum to Cana was around 20 miles, yet obviously a worthwhile investment of time and effort given that his son was near death.

“Though high in office, yet he did not refuse to go personally to Jesus to ask his aid. He felt as a father; and believing, after all that Jesus had done, that he could cure his son, he traveled to meet him. If men receive benefits of Christ, they must come in the same manner. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, must come personally as humble suppliants, and must be willing to bear all the reproach that may be cast on them for thus coming to him. This man showed strong faith in being willing thus to go to Jesus” (Barns)

Presumably, this father had tried the usual physicians to no avail, so now he abandons all natural solutions and seeks Jesus.

Sometimes God has to allow something in our lives to come close to death (or even to actually die), whether a hobby, a passion or even a ministry, in order to get us to abandon the natural and seek Jesus. As we have already said, the biggest issue in our lives is our spiritual condition. There is only One who can deal with that, and His name is Jesus. Are we prepared to meet Him at the place the empty stone water pots were filled with new wine?

John 4:48

Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

In 2000 years little has changed. So many in 'the church' today base their faith on signs and wonders, to the extent that churches that don't experience signs and wonders are considered 'dead'.

Recently, I asked another believer 'how was your weekend?' the answer came back: 'Oh Sunday was incredible, the Holy Spirit was really moving in a powerful way'. What this brother meant was that people were being 'slain in the Spirit', speaking in tongues, signs & wonders were taking place. This was taken as evidence the Holy Spirit was present and moving. However, is this understanding biblical? I don't believe so. In John 16:7-8 we are told by Jesus Himself of that which the Holy Spirit will do: *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"*

When the Holy Spirit is working in our midst, there will be conviction of sin, producing godly sorrow. There will be an understanding of the need to live righteously, and the reality of the coming judgment where all men will give an account of themselves before God. There is no mention of 'holy laughter', or people making animal noises, just contrition as we are confronted by the Holy Spirit in regard to our sinful nature.

A few verses further on Jesus adds: *"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come"* (John 16:13). In John 17:17 Jesus tells us unequivocally that God's Word is truth. The Holy Spirit will therefore reveal to us, and give us understanding, concerning God's Word. So a church where the Holy Spirit is present and working (based on what we are told in scripture) will be a church where the Word is taught, and as a result (see Heb 4:12) people are convicted of Sin and seek after righteousness, knowing the urgency of the hour and the reality of the coming judgment.

There is an incredible incident in the book of Leviticus chapter 10: *"Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD"* (Leviticus 10:1-2)

On the surface this seems a harsh response from God, that is, until we see the lesson behind it: In Leviticus 16:12 we are told that the fire to be used for burning the incense must come from the alter. This was because the fire on the alter (which was to be kept burning at all times – Lev 6:13) was actually kindled (set alight) by God Himself (Lev 9:24).

Incense represents our worship, the fire is that which kindles (is the source of) our worship. The only fire that God permits as the source of our worship has to come from the alter where the sacrifices, representative of Christ's death as an innocent (burnt offering) substitute (sin offering), were to be offered up. In other words, the source of our worship must be Christ's propitiatory sacrifice for us. That which fuels our worship must not therefore be 'signs & wonders', miracles, healings, prosperity, success, or any other thing. These other things may have a legitimate place in our Christian walk, but they must not be the root, they are merely the fruit if God so chooses to produce them.

John 4:49

The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Jesus' remark (v.48) was not specifically aimed at this nobleman, but indicative of the attitude of the people. No doubt this nobleman had heard from the people that Jesus could do miracles, and may well have been 'egged on' by the people, keen on seeing another miracle. This nobleman does not respond to Jesus' remark, his only concern is for his dying child.

John 4:50

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

Not the result the people wanted, they wanted to be entertained by a display; but this was exactly the result the nobleman was seeking, and in simple faith, believes Jesus' word, and goes away.

John 4:51

And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it”

(Isaiah 55:11)

John 4:52-53

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

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

Incredibly, so confident was this nobleman of Jesus' word, he did not bother to make the journey home that day! His son was healed at 1pm, it was around a 20 mile journey home, so he could have made it home by 8pm-9pm if he had wanted to (or earlier on horseback). This is the kind of faith the LORD would have of all of us:

God said it,
I believe it,
That settles it!

Oswald Chambers said it in a different way: “Suppose God is the God you know Him to be when you are nearest to Him, what an impertinence worry is!” – My Utmost For His Highest

The love this nobleman had for his son was obvious, but his faith in Jesus equally so. There was no point in worrying once Jesus had spoken.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt 7:7-11) See also Matt 6:25-33

John 4:54

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

As we have already noted, John specifically selected seven miracles to include in his Gospel. The first miracle typologically sees us as empty stone vessels that God transforms and fills with new life. Here we see that, once we have come to Jesus at our Cana, we simply need to trust His Word to save the life that was dying. His Word is sufficient; His Word is living and powerful; His Word is truth.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (Isaiah 40:8)

CHAPTER 5

John 5:1

After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

'*After this...*' John doesn't tell how much time passes from the events of chapter 4 as we move into chapter 5, we are simply told 'meta tauta' 'after these things'.

'there was a feast of the Jews ...' According to Exodus 23, all able-bodied Jews were to go up to Jerusalem three times each year; firstly, the feast of unleavened bread, then at the feast of Pentecost, and finally at the feast of Tabernacles. These would occur in the 1st, 3rd and 7th months of their religious calendar (which started in March/April time).

"Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) And the feast of harvest [Pentecost], the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering [Tabernacles], which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD" (Ex 23:14-17)

NB: Although the Feast of Unleavened Bread itself was a specific feast to be celebrated on the 15th of Nisan (Abib), the 'festival period' ran from the 14th (which was itself the Feast of Passover), through to the 21st. This festival period became known as both 'the feast of Passover', and also 'feast of unleavened bread' because unleavened bread was to be eaten throughout the entire seven day period. According to Exodus 23:14-17, attendance was required for the whole period, which therefore included the 14th (Feast of Passover), 15th (Feast of Unleavened Bread) and usually the Feast of Firstfruits. The Feast of Firstfruits however was not fixed by date, but by day. It was to be celebrated on the day after the first Saturday Sabbath following the Passover (which would always make it a Sunday), and therefore could fall as late as the 22nd of the month.

'...and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.' This is the second feast John records Jesus attending; the first being the Passover where He made a cord and drove out the money changers (as we saw in John 2:13-17). We are not specifically told which feast this was, but it would seem most likely that it was the 2nd of four Passover's recorded by John which span Jesus' three and a half year ministry (see John 2:13 / 5:1 / 6:4 / 12:1).

So in obedience to the Law, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate this feast; something He had done since a child: *"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast" (Luke 2:41-42)*

(For a more detailed discussion of the argument for this feast being the second Passover of Jesus' ministry, see commentary on this verse by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown).

John 5:2

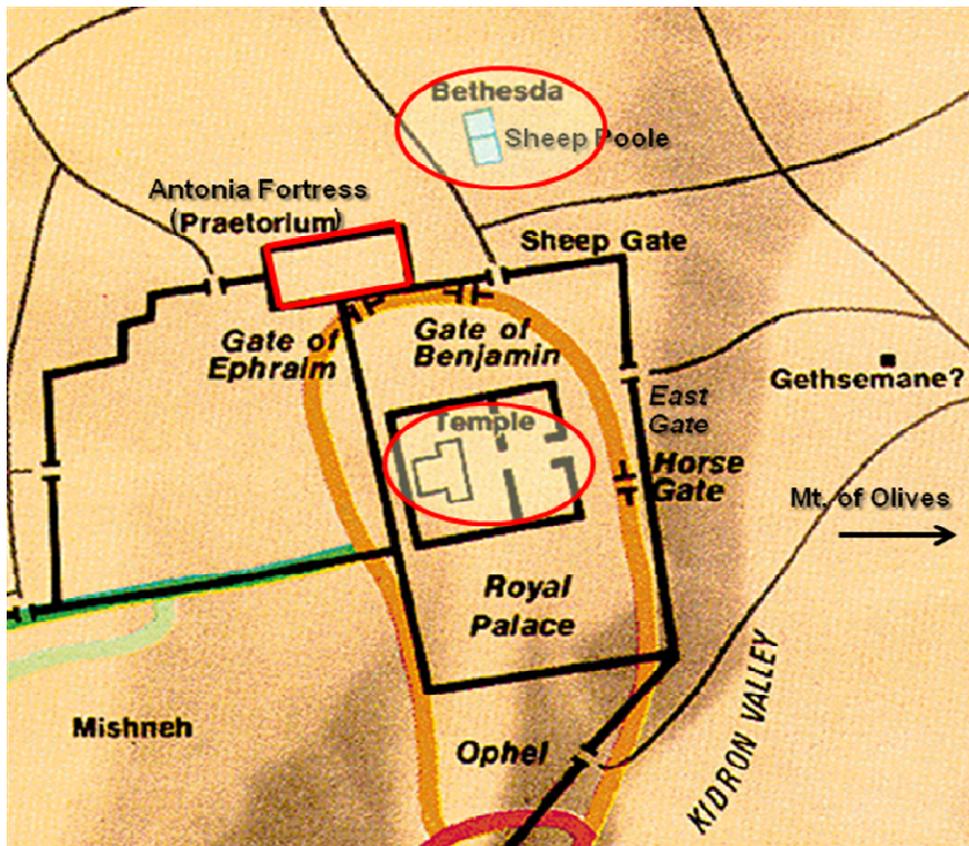
Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Bethesda means 'House of mercy'. John also makes mention that there were five porches surrounding this pool. Commentators have noted that the number five seems to be consistently used in scripture to denote grace and mercy, if that is so, it certainly fits here. This sheep market was adjacent to the 'back entrance' to the Temple area, and the place where the lambs were washed prior to being offered for sacrifice (according to the Law of Moses the offering had to be 'without blemish'). The fact that Jesus intentionally chooses to come to this pool, tells of His grace and mercy, coming to meet us where we are, in our situation, in our predicament. As we will see with this miracle (the third of seven that John records), Jesus knows our need and our inability to help ourselves.



Above: Model of what the pool of Bethesda may have looked like. Note the Antonia Fortress in the background (to the left of which would have been the Temple)

Below: Map of Jerusalem at the time of Christ showing the pool of Bethesda, the Roman Praetorium and the Temple.



John 5:3

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

This whole multitude were gathered under these five porches, no doubt to avoid the heat of the day, desperately hoping for a better life, waiting for something to change.

The world is full of *spiritually* 'impotent folk', 'blind', 'halt' and 'withered', just waiting for their circumstances to change; maybe they will win the lottery, maybe they will get that promotion at work, maybe they will meet Mr or Mrs Right and everything will change for the better? So much time is wasted '*waiting for the moving of the water*'.

Right before them, cleansed lambs were coming up out of the pool, these lambs were to make atonement for sin - the infirmity that afflicts all the descendants of Adam. All people will die physically as a result of sin. Yet these cleansed lambs were a shadow pointing to the ultimate Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Instead of seeking Him, they were pinning all their hopes on the moving of the water.

John 5:4

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

Some have tried to argue that this verse is not in the 'original manuscripts'. Yet there is plenty of sources that attest to its rightful inclusion. The context alone necessitates this verse being here or verse three and verse seven make no sense. Why would all these people be gathered at this pool without the explanation John gives us in this verse? It is true, there is no other record of an angel performing miracles in scripture, but we are not given enough information to reach any solid conclusions regarding this angelic visitation. Was this angel a 'good angel' or one of Satan's? We don't know; however Satan does appear as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), and would like nothing better than to create a diversion with the appearance of the miraculous to keep people from the truth. (How many 'miracle crusades' by men in white suits and gold wristwatches have people huddled in their 'porches' today, waiting for the waters to move?)

John 5:5

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

There are no meaningless details in the Bible. 38 years was the exact duration the children of Israel needlessly wandered in the wilderness, when all the time the Promised Land was so close. For 38 years this man had been staring at the sacrificial lambs, never understanding why.

John 5:6

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

'*When Jesus saw him lie ...*' Jesus had sought this man, He knew exactly where to find him.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16)

'*and knew that he had been now a long time...*' Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown comment: As He [Jesus] doubtless visited the spot just to perform this cure, so He knew where to find His patient, and the whole previous history of His case. What comfort there is that Jesus 'sees' and 'knows'.

'*Wilt thou be made whole?*' Such an important question; we saw back in chapter three that *"this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19). Incredibly, many choose to remain 'impotent' rather than receive a new life through Christ. Do you want to change? Do you want to live a life wherein you bring glory to Jesus Christ? Are you prepared to give up the only life you have known? Have you grown so accustomed to your spiritual disability that you would rather not have to face the interrogation from family, friends and colleagues that will inevitably come with being made whole? That's why Jesus asks this question.

John 5:7

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

This man had already reached the place where he knew he was powerless to effect, or even assist in his own healing. It takes a great deal of humility to acknowledge our need of others. The question could be asked, 'why then, did this man stay at this place if all hope of healing was gone?' The truth is, until we meet Jesus, we will hang on to any glimmer of hope the world may afford us of a better life, regardless of the odds.

John 5:8

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

There was no need to cut through a religious façade (as there had been with Nicodemus), nor to let this man see himself as he really was (as with the woman at the well); just the incredible grace and mercy ('Bethesda') of the Saviour meeting a man were he was. Note also, the faith of the man is incidental; those who claim that you can be healed if you have enough faith should take note! The quality of your faith does not count, the quality of your Saviour does!

John 5:9

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

It is not until verse 14 that Jesus will later introduce Himself to this man, so this healing wasn't a case of 'I'll heal you if you believe in me', there were no conditions attached.

As well as being an act of grace, it seems that Jesus intentionally choose to heal this man on a Sabbath day, no doubt knowing what would happen as a result...

John 5:10

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

NB: When John uses the term 'the Jews', he is making reference to the leaders of the nation, not every Jew in Israel.

We come now to one of the central issues in scripture: Law vs. Grace. The Law says 'you can't', Grace says 'you can'. The Law knows nothing of mercy, nor can it if it is remain a holy Law. Paul tells us in the book of Galatians that the sole purpose of the Law was to confine all under sin, i.e. show us we could not meet God's righteous standard by our own efforts, thereby showing us the desperate nature of our predicament, and revealing our need for a Saviour.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal 3:24-25)

John 5:11

He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

For 38 years he has been in his predicament, the one day he is finally healed he is told should not be walking and carrying his bed! How incredible that the Jewish leaders who must have known of this man prior to the event, do not so much as comment on his miraculous healing. Also interesting to note is that this man finds his refuge from the harsh demands of the Law in the words spoken to him by Christ. *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"* (Rom 8:2)

John 5:12

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

This now becomes an authority issue: 'Who gave you permission?' When we are obedient to the Word of God, expect to be challenged, but always refer our interrogators back to our authority – the Word of God which is living and powerful (Heb 4:12)

John 5:13

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

We will see this again and again throughout John's gospel, Jesus continually avoiding popularity and notoriety. It was no accident that Jesus had 'conveyed Himself away'. There is a very specific reason for this that will be discussed in chapter 12.

John 5:14

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

The fact that Jesus finds this man in the Temple would suggest this man had chosen to bring an offering out of gratitude to God. It could have been a sin or trespass offering (Lev 5-7) in acknowledgement of his violation of the Sabbath Law, and/or because of his inability to do this before now.

Jesus now finds him, (lit. 'sought him out'), and says in effect '*continue in sin no more*'. This man has been made free from his infirmity, free from the demands of the Law, and free from sin, but the onus is now on him to make moment-by-moment choices to live righteously. The New Testament tells us however, that even this 'walk' is not to be done through our own strength, but by the working of the Holy Spirit within us when we submit to Him.

'lest a worse thing come unto thee' This is not to imply that his sickness was itself a result of his own personal sin (although all sickness is a direct result of sin and the effect of the Fall). Nor is Jesus saying 'one mistake and your back where you started', Paul tells us: "*the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*" (Rom 11:29) – Jesus wasn't going to take this miracle back if this man messed up. The 'worse thing' Jesus spoke of was something He reiterated throughout His ministry: "*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*" (Mark 9:43-48)

What could be worse than the physical condition this man had had to endure for 38 years? Answer: To be in a spiritual condition, separated from God, devoid of any hope for all eternity. There will be no stirring of the waters there!

John 5:15-16

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

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

The penalty for violating the Sabbath was stoning; this appears to be what the Jewish leaders had in mind for someone they see as advocating rejection of the Law of Moses. Their disdain for Jesus however, was just about to get a whole lot worse...

John 5:17-18

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

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

It is so easy for us to read over these statements and miss the earth shaking significance of what is being said: Jesus here claims equality with God by calling Him 'My Father'. Jesus' justification for His 'working' on the Sabbath is that "*God never stops working, and (as God in the flesh) neither do I*".

Whenever we are in danger of missing the significance of a statement like this, the Jewish leaders come to our rescue and leave us in no doubt as to the implications:

John 5:19-47 – Let the Battle Commence!

Jesus now launches four salvos against the Jewish leaders which must have left them stunned, exasperated and somewhat intimidated. Because of what follows here, some commentators regard this chapter as the key chapter in the entire gospel, and a defining moment in the life of Jesus. In these verses we will see some of the clearest and most compelling arguments for the Deity of Christ. Jesus begins His first three points with '*verily, verily, I say unto you*'.

- Verse 19-23 – The relationship between the Son and the Father
- Verse 24 – The mission of the Son
- Verse 25-29 – The authority of the Son
- Verse 30-39 – Four witnesses are called to testify
- Verse 40-47 – Verdict is given on the Jewish leader's rejection of Christ

John 5:19-23

The relationship between the Son and the Father

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

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

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

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

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

This incredible 'outburst' from Jesus really puts the cat among the pigeons! The fact of His deity and unique relationship with the Father are laid out to the listening Jews.

Oswald Chambers makes the following insightful comments regarding Jesus' willing submission to His Father:

The Gospels reveal these three things:

First, Jesus Christ's deliberate free submission of Himself to His Father: "*I can of Mine own self do nothing.*" (John 5:30)

Second, the subordination of His intelligence to His Father: "*The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of Myself.*" (John 14:10)

Third, the submission of His will (not the subjugation of His will) to His Father: "*But the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.*" (John 14:10)

All through, Jesus manifested a strong personal identity, but the dominant note was the submission of it all to His Father. He separated His holy Self for God's purposes, "*For their sakes I sanctify Myself*" (John 17:19). **Before He spoke, He listened with the inner ear to His Father; He never allowed thought to originate from Himself.** "*For I spake not from Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He hath given Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*" (John 12:49 rv). That is the meaning of communion, an intelligent determined submission. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do*" (John 5:19). (Emphasis added)

Bringing Sons Unto Glory page 37/38 – ISBN 0-551-052198

Oh to learn to listen with our inner ear to our heavenly Father before we ever speak!

In these verses Jesus gives us an interesting insight into the love, organisation and responsibilities within the Godhead, particularly in regard to judgment. In Acts 17:31 Paul concurs: "*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*"

The relationship between the Son and the Father (cont'd)

Dave Hunt, in commenting on the Trinity makes the following point: Jesus said, "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3:35), and again in John 5:20, "**The Father loveth the Son....**" The God of the Bible truly *is* love, not just toward mankind but pre-eminently among the three Members of the Godhead. And three *personal Beings* they must be. It is meaningless to suggest that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mere offices or titles or modes in which God manifests Himself. Offices or titles or modes don't love, consult and fellowship together. Not only Jesus Christ, the Son, is presented as a Person, but the father and the Holy Spirit are presented as equally personal in the New Testament. A Cup Of Trembling p.248 – ISBN 1-56507-334-7 (Emphasis added)

The Bible makes it very clear that in and of Himself "God *is* love" (1 John 4:8,16). The God of Islam and Judaism could not be live in and of himself. He would have to create other beings in order to have the experience of loving or of being loved. Yet consistently, from Genesis through Revelation, the Bible presents a God who did not need to create any beings to experience love, communion, and fellowship. This God is fully complete in Himself, being three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who are separate and distinct yet at the same time eternally one God. They loved and communed and fellowshiped with each other and took council together before the universe, angels, or mankind were brought into existence. Ibid p.246

John 5:24

The mission of the Son

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

In a nutshell, this is a summary of the divinely conceived mission the Son came to do.

Note: the prerequisite given here for eternal life is hearing His word (as in a true understanding, i.e. not just listening to, but understanding and acting upon) and believing in the Father who sent His Son for us. If we *do* understand His word, we will see ourselves in the helpless predicament the Bible repeatedly shows us to be in, i.e. 'dead in trespasses and sins', unable to effect our own healing, as with the man at the pool. This will, through the goodness of God (Rom 2:4), lead us to a place of genuine repentance. Oswald Chambers makes the comment: "Repentance to be true must issue in holiness, or it is not New Testament repentance. Repentance means not only sorrow and distress for the wrong done, but the acceptance of the Atonement of Jesus which will make me what I have never been—holy" Bringing Sons Unto Glory page 26 – ISBN 0-551-052198

In other words, if our 'repentance' does not result in a holy life, it is not genuine, and is evidence that we have never really understood His word, thus we become as the three types of seeds referred to in Matthew 13 that 'don't make it'.

Example #1 "When any one *heareth the word* of the kingdom, *and understandeth it not*, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. – Result: *Spiritually Stillborn*

Example #2 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that *heareth the word*, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth *because of the word*, by and by he is offended. – Result: 'Back-Slider' – more correctly, a False Convert

Example #3 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that *heareth the word*; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, *choke the word*, and he becometh unfruitful. – Result: 'Back-Slider' – more correctly, a False Convert

Example #4 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that *heareth the word, and understandeth it*; which also *beareth fruit*, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" – Result: *Genuine Conversion 'passed from death to life'*
(Matt 13:19-23)

John 5:25-29

The authority of the Son

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

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

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

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

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

We need to put ourselves in the place of the Pharisees and Sadducees as Jesus is saying this if we are to begin to grasp the impact of these words when Jesus first spoke them. The carpenter from Nazareth is telling these religious leaders that *He* is going to speak and the dead will rise from their graves, and that this power has been given to *Him* from God. Not only that, but *He* will then have the power to pass eternal judgment on all souls – some will inherit eternal life, some eternal damnation.

As C.S. Lewis noted, these are either the ramblings of a madman, or God in the flesh. Under no circumstances would a prophet dare to say such things. These five verses should end forever the question ‘did Jesus ever claim to be God?’ Unequivocally yes!

On a doctrinal note, Jesus here refers to two resurrections; the resurrection of life, and the resurrection of damnation. The first point to note is that this confirms that all human beings are eternal beings – whether you like it or not. The only question is whether you will spend eternity in ‘smoking’ or ‘non-smoking’ accommodation! The decision has to be made prior to leaving earth. The resurrection of damnation is recorded in Revelation 20: “*And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*” (Rev 20:11-15)

In contrast to this, the resurrection of life is often referred to commentators as a ‘category’ rather than a specific single event. In 1st Corinthians Paul said: “*For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming*” (1 Cor 15:21-23)

The order revealed in scripture is: Christ first; then the ‘dead in Christ’ and all believers still alive at the time of the Rapture (1 Thes 4:15-18); this will be followed by a great multitude who come out of the Great Tribulation (Rev 7:13-17) who will finally receive their new resurrected bodies at the time of the Second Coming (Rev 20:4).

Some are concerned and/or confused about the thought of receiving new resurrected bodies, but in 1st Corinthians Paul explains: “*All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial... So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body... Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* (1 Cor 15:39-44 / 50-53)

John 5:30-39

Four witnesses are called to testify

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

Jesus here reiterates His initial statement, but this time goes on to call four witnesses to take the stand:

- Witness #1 John the Baptist v32-35
- Witness #2 the works that Jesus had done v36
- Witness #3 the Father v37
- Witness #4 the Scriptures v39

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

“by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify” (Num 35:30)

“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor 13:1)

Here Jesus is simply restating that the testimony of a single witness is not admissible, hence He will now call His witnesses to testify:

Witness #1 John the Baptist v32-35

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

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

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

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

Throughout chapter one and three John the Baptist had boldly declared that Jesus was the One who should come, that He was there in the beginning, that He was the Lamb of God, that He would be full of the Spirit of God, and that He is from Heaven & had been sent by the Father. In effect Jesus asks ‘If you accepted John – albeit for a season – why do you reject the Son of Man whom he testified of?’

Witness #2 the works that Jesus had done v36

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

Jesus now calls attention to the works He had done, the miraculous signs and wonders; something the Jewish leaders could not deny. Later however, the Jewish leaders, unable to deny or explain away, would attribute these signs to the power of Satan (see Matt 12:24-32).

Witness #3 the Father v37

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

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

On two separate occasions in Jesus’ ministry (at His baptism and Transfiguration) the Father audibly bore witness to the person and deity of Christ saying *“this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matt 3:17 / 17:5). Throughout the Old Testament also, the Father had revealed countless details regarding His Son, none clearer than Isaiah 9:6-7: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this”*

However, the Jewish leaders did not have God’s word abiding in them, so they could not / would not recognise Christ.

Witness #4 the Scriptures v39

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

The final witness that Jesus calls to testify on His behalf is the scriptures themselves. In many ways this is the most compelling of all four; hundreds of details of Jesus birth, life, trial, death by crucifixion, burial in another's tomb and resurrection were foretold in the scriptures. As Jesus had already shown Nicodemus, the serpent on a pole in the wilderness was expressly pointing to the work He would accomplish on the cross. The obedience of Abraham in presenting Isaac as a burnt offering to God pre figured the Lamb of God, that God said He Himself would provide. The Passover, with the lamb without blemish, taken on the 10th day, killed on the 14th day all were an anticipatory model looking forward to their fulfilment in Christ. Born in Bethlehem, the Seed of the woman, called out of Egypt, growing up in Nazareth – all foretold centuries in advance. The incredible mathematical prophecy, given by Gabriel to Daniel that pinpointed the exact day the Messiah would be presented to Israel as king – and the list goes on and on.

The Jewish leaders trusted the scriptures for their eternal life, yet here before them stood the One whom the scriptures so clearly testified of; every detail on every page in some way points to Jesus Christ, but the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees would not allow themselves the possibility of considering 'could this be the Christ?' They had something far more precious to protect – their tradition (Matt 15:6).

Hence Jesus now concludes the case for the defence by pronouncing His own verdict on the Jewish leaders:

John 5:40-47

Verdict is given on the Jewish leader's rejection of Christ

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

41 I receive not honour from men.

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

For those who love not God and reject His Son, there is no other way.

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

The Jews will eventually (in the not too distant future) receive one who comes in his own name; this 'one' will allow them to worship and sacrifice in their newly rebuilt Temple. He will even confirm a covenant with them for seven years. He will of course be the one often referred to as Antichrist – and there will be bitter consequences for Israel (see Dan 9:27).

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

The Jewish leaders were puffed up with pride, patting themselves on the back (see Matt 23:5).

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

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

47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

Confirmation is given here that Moses wrote the Torah.

Jesus need not accuse them, for they accuse themselves by rejecting the witness of Moses through the scriptures. Moses' witness began in Genesis 1:1 "*In the beginning Eloheim created the heavens and the earth*" – the word Eloheim translated 'God' is actually plural and so hints at the Trinity; as does '*Let Us make man...*'. Furthermore in Hebrew there are two un-translated letters between 'God' and 'Created'. The letters are an א (Aleph) and ט (Tau), the first and last letters in the Hebrew alphabet, equivalent to Alpha and Omega in the Greek. Thus, what we read is: "*In the beginning God – Alpha & Omega - created the heavens and the earth*" – this is exactly what we are told in Colossians 1:16!

And so the defence rests. If the 'prosecution' had intended to ask any questions of the accused, I'm sure they now quietly withdrew with a 'no more questions your honour'. What else could they say? What argument did they have left? Answer: None. That is why from this point on they (the Jewish leaders) are reduced to mud-slinging and name-calling as they seek to find a way to silence this Man.

CHAPTER 6

John 6:1

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

As we have already noted, John would probably have been in his late teens or early twenties when these events took place. Now, some 70 -80 years later, as he writes to the Church, John records with clarity these incredible events. For the sake of his (predominantly) gentile readership he explains that, what, by the end of the first century was known as the sea of Tiberias (so called after the Roman emperor), was originally known as the sea of Galilee.

As Solomon noted in the book of Ecclesiastes, any accomplishment or achievement in this life is but a vapour soon forgotten. Emperor Tiberias may have been a great and powerful man, but the sea that once bore his name quickly reverted to its former name and his memory consigned to the history books.

“For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool”
(Eccl 2:16)

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten”
(Eccl 9:5)

John 6:2

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

Some no doubt seeking healing themselves, others just fascinated by the miracles, either way *‘a great multitude followed him’*. It is interesting to note that at the end of this chapter *‘many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him’* (John 6:66). There is a cost involved in following Christ: *“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:27). All the time we can follow at a distance we will travel along with a great multitude; but when there is talk of sacrifice, when it is actually going to cost you something...

‘Jesus says that the eternal principle of human life is that something must be sacrificed; if we won’t sacrifice the natural life, we do the spiritual’ – Oswald Chambers

John 6:3

And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

It has been quipped: ‘you will either come apart with Jesus, or you’ll just come apart!’ Jesus desires to sit with His disciples, and sometimes that will necessitate us climbing a mountain until every other concern has been stripped away. What’s the reason for the mountain you are facing right now? Maybe it is necessary so Jesus can get you alone and just sit with you for a while. When is the last time you sat with Him?

John 6:4

And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

This chapter opens with a ‘meta tauta’ ‘after these things’ – meaning the events of chapter 5, and as we saw, chapter 5 opens with a feast of the Jews which we concluded was most likely Passover. If that is correct, this chapter jumps forward 12 months to the following year. This is quite probable because John only gives us snap-shots of the three and a half year ministry of Jesus, instead choosing to devote almost half his gospel (chapters 12-21) to the final week. Although nowhere in this chapter does it record Jesus actually going up to Jerusalem to this Passover, we can be confident He did, as it was not only a legal requirement under the Torah, but chapter 7 opens with another ‘meta tauta’ and we see Jesus returning to Galilee from Judea after upsetting the Jewish leaders once again, and no doubt this had occurred whilst He was in Jerusalem for this Passover.

John 6:5-6

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

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

Whenever Jesus asks a question, it isn't because He is lacking in knowledge! '*And this he said to prove him*'. At the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army on one side, the sea on the other, God knew exactly what would happen, the test was for Moses and the children of Israel. As David picks up the five stones and goes out to face Goliath, God was not hurriedly trying to come up with a plan, God wanted to prove David and Israel. For Abraham on top of Mt. Moriah with Isaac bound on the altar, God wanted to prove him. And so here with Philip 'the Israelite in whom was no guile'; did he yet have the kind of confidence in Jesus that Jesus was looking for? Or was he still looking through natural eyes?

When a problem occurs in our life or circumstances, do we look expectantly to Jesus for what He is going to do? Or do we look to our own natural resources and find them woefully inadequate?

John 6:7

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

There is no natural solution to this kind of problem – and Jesus will ensure we each sit the test until we are proved, until we roll back on God the burden He has placed on us.

"there are burdens placed on us by God which He does not intend to lift off, He wants us to roll them back on Him. "Cast what He hath given thee upon the Lord" (rv mg). If we undertake work for God and get out of touch with Him, the sense of responsibility will be overwhelmingly crushing; but if we roll back on God that which He has put upon us, He takes away the sense of responsibility by bringing in the realisation of Himself"

– Oswald Chambers (My Utmost For His Highest)

John 6:8-9

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

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

Andrew now, possibly sensing Jesus' disappointment with Philip's answer, now comes to the rescue... but then realises the inadequacy of that which he can bring. In reality, neither Philip nor Andrew pass this test, the bottom line is that it's not about us or our ability, it's not about what we can bring. We need to get our eyes off the problem and onto the only solution – Jesus Himself.

Incredibly, as Jesus so often does with us, He takes the five loaves and two small fish that Andrew has found – choosing by His grace to allow us to participate in that which He is doing. Did Jesus need Andrew's offering? Of course not! Jesus could just as easily created food out of the dust of the ground, but He, seeing the willingness in Andrew's heart in offering all he had, graciously accepts this meagre portion.

John 6:10

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

The number of men was about 5000, so in total there could have been over 15,000 people with the women and children – again, when we look at the scale of the problem, we have to look to Jesus for the solution.



John 6:11-13

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

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

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

This is 4th miracle John records, and is significant in that it is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels (except the Resurrection). We have seen incredible lessons concealed in the other miracles we have seen so far in John's gospel, and this one is no exception. Here we see much of the heart of God. Jesus had seen this great multitude coming toward Him, and had compassion on them. He didn't just preach and then tell them to go home; He cared for their physical needs also. In Matthew 6 Jesus reminds us: *"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matt 6:25-33).

"..as much as they would. When they were filled..."

The people didn't just have a quick bite to tide them over, they ate until they were absolutely full, as much as they could eat. That which God does is not merely adequate, it is *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"* (Eph3:20-21). When we come to Christ, not only does he transform the empty stone vessels, giving new life to that which was as dead through His Word, doing it all because we were 'without strength', He also provides for our every need in the most amazing way!

"..twelve baskets..."

We are told throughout scripture that 'a labourer is worthy of his wages'; the disciples had spend the day serving at Jesus ' request. In Mark 10:29-30 we read: *"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life"*

Now at the end of this long and incredible day, we have twelve hungry disciples and twelve baskets of food left over! *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:19)

John 6:14-15

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

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

In Deuteronomy 18 Moses had promised that *"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken"* (Deut 18:15). Moses had led the people across the sea and then miraculously provided food for them. Jesus likewise had crossed over the sea, the people had followed after Him, and then He provides food so that 'no man had any lack' (Ex 16:18). In their eyes, Jesus was indeed a prophet like unto Moses, and hence 'that prophet'. Because of this they would like to make Jesus their king, but once again, Jesus declines the opportunity – His time had not yet come, nor were the people's hearts genuine.

John 6:14-15 (cont'd)

"Command that these stones become bread"—"satisfy Your own needs and the needs of men and You will get the kingship of men." Was Satan right? Read John 6:15, "When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a king . . ." Why? He had just fed five thousand of them! yes, but we read that Jesus "departed again into a mountain Himself alone"; He would not be king at that price.

– Oswald Chambers (If Ye Shall Ask)

"What is the attitude of the Church to-day? Christ on the throne of God? No, Man on the throne of God! The tendency is to reverse the order of the commandments (see Mark 12:29-31). The temptation which beset Our Lord with such fascination and power is the very temptation which is besetting the modern Christian—"Heal bodies, cast out devils, feed the poor, and men will crown You King." The temptation is more powerful to-day than ever it has been in the history of the Church, to put men's needs first, not God; to spell God in the term "humanity"; to make God an etcetera for blessing humanity. If you heal men and give them bread, what do they care about the claims of Jesus Christ? Health and happiness is what is wanted to-day and Jesus Christ is simply exploited."

– Oswald Chambers (Bringing Sons Unto Glory)

John 6:16-21

*16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,
17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.
18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.
19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.
20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.
21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*

In these verses John reveals to us the next test that Jesus gave His disciples. In Matthew's account of this event we are told: "*And straightway Jesus **constrained** his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away*" (Matt 14:22). Once again we see Jesus engineer the circumstances.

"It is only the loyal soul who believes that God engineers circumstances. We take such liberties with our circumstances, we do not believe God engineers them, although we say we do; we treat the things that happen as if they were engineered by men. To be faithful in every circumstance means that we have only one loyalty, and that is to our Lord. Suddenly God breaks up a particular set of circumstances, and the realisation comes that we have been disloyal to Him by not recognising that He had organised them. We never saw what He was after, and that particular thing will never be repeated all the days of our life. The test of loyalty always comes just there. **If we learn to worship God in the trying circumstances, He will alter them in two seconds when He chooses**"

– Oswald Chambers (My Utmost For His Highest)

It is important to keep in mind that the disciples in this boat were experienced fishermen who spent their life on the Sea of Galilee, they had no doubt weathered storms in the past. We are not told if they were afraid of this particular storm, but the storm is merely the canvas upon which Jesus chooses to paint a bigger picture of Himself in order that the disciples would start to see who He really was. It is through the storms in our lives that Jesus can be seen more clearly. The disciples had seen water turned to wine, people healed and food appear from nowhere, they had no doubt been caught up in the excitement of all that was happening; but this event, in the middle of the night, in the midst of the sea moved things to a whole new level – this was personal, this time they were in need. "*Then they willingly received him...*"

Notice the ship immediately arrives at the other side; as per Oswald Chamber's comment above, God can alter our trying circumstances in two seconds when He chooses; what He is seeking is that we put our trust completely in Him. This will bring glory to Him and safety and security to us.

This is the 5th miracle John records: When we come to Christ, not only does he transform the empty stone vessels, giving new life to that which was as dead through His Word, doing it all because we were 'without strength', He also provides for our every need, and is with us through the storms of life, which He allows in order that we might keep our eyes on Him.

John 6:22-26

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

23 (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)

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

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

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

How quickly Jesus cuts through our thoughts and intentions; the people were not interested in Him, but in what they could get from Him. Much of today's church sees Jesus as a means of blessing, to feed, clothe and prosper. The disciples on the other hand were beginning to see Jesus as a Saviour to be worshipped.

From what we read in verse 59, it would appear that this crowd find Jesus in the Synagogue.

John 6:27

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

Jesus has already shown Himself to be the source of living water, now He reveals Himself as the source of spiritual food.

John 6:28

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

Jesus mentioned something about God and it was coupled with food, so, seeing this as a meal ticket, the question is asked 'how do we go about getting this food?'

John 6:29

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

The ultimate purpose in all that Jesus had done was to point them to Himself as the Saviour. Back in chapter one we were told that Jesus had come to shine His light into the darkness of humanity, so they would see their spiritual need and seek Him. His provision for their physical need was not an end in and of itself, it was a bridge for them to cross that they might find and believe in Him.

Sadly, too many missionary organisations today focus on the humanitarian need at the expense of preaching the gospel. The emphasis is too often put on saving lives here and now not on saving souls for all eternity. Time and again we hear the deceptive old adage 'preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words', and this is taken as justification for letting our actions speak louder than words. But this is not what the Bible says: "*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*" (Rom 10:14)

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim 4:2)

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor 1:21)

(See Appendix D)

Jesus here is not interested in popularity, but the truth.

John 6:30

They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

Jesus has just fed five thousand plus people, performed countless miracles healing all kinds of sickness and disease and they ask “*What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe the?*” !!!

John 6:31

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

Evidently, they are still thinking about their stomachs! People will always focus on their natural desires and appetites until they come to see themselves in the true light of God’s Word; then and only then will men seek the Saviour.

John 6:32-33

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

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

Our Lord refutes the argument of the Jews, by proving:

- That it was not Moses, but God, who gave the manna.
- That this bread was not the true bread, but was merely a type of it.
- That God had given them now a bread infinitely more excellent.-
- That himself is that heavenly nourishment of which he spake, and who was typified by the manna in the desert.

To show that himself was the true bread from heaven, he proves two things:

1. That his doctrine was the true nourishment of the soul, and that those who were to be put in possession of the blessings promised in it must come to God by faith.
2. That he would give his body for the life of the world: that as bread is the staff that supports the natural life of man, so the salvation procured by his death should be that by which the bodies and souls of believers should be preserved unto life eternal.

(Adam Clarke)

John 6:34

Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

Just as the woman at the well who asked for the living water in order that she would not have to make the journey to the well each day, so now, completely missing the spiritual point Jesus is making, these people ‘ask amiss that they may consume it on their own lusts’-see James 4:3

John 6:35

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Now Jesus makes it as plain as can be. That which He is talking about is not physical, for the nourishment of our bodily frame, but rather spiritual for the nourishment of the new life that begins in us the moment we come to Christ.

This is the first of the seven I AM statements John records for us, all of which attest to the deity of Christ.

John 6:36

But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

As we saw with the Jewish leaders in chapter 5, all the evidence was before them, yet they refused to believe and rejected Jesus, so now the people who had been so graciously fed by Jesus, even though they had seen, believe not.

John 6:37

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Just as Jesus would not lose a single fragment of the food, but ensured that all was gathered in, so all that come to Him are eternally secure. We will discuss this further in chapter 10.

John 6:38

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Just as John the Baptist had declared (John 3:31), and as Jesus Himself had testified to Nicodemus (John 3:13), again now Jesus speaks of His origin and purpose – that being to do the will of God. Throughout John’s gospel Jesus makes it clear that He came to do His Father’s will and to complete the work assigned Him by His Father. (cf. John 3:17 / 4:34 / 5:19 / 5:30 / 5:36 / 8:28 / 12:27 / 12:49 / 14:10 / 17:4)

John 6:39

And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Here we have it confirmed that the Father and the Son are in complete agreement regarding those who come to Him by faith. Note: the Father has given to Jesus those who will be eternally His. Does this infringe on our freedom of choice? Not at all! This mystery of the sovereignty of God over all things, and the sovereignty of man over his own destiny, is not an oxymoron (self contradiction) when we understand that God inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15), that He knows the end from the beginning. Thus from the foundation of the world He has been able to predestine and choose all those who would themselves choose Him.

This subject often raises the issue of those we know who have ‘fallen away’ or ‘back slidden’. If we do a careful study of Mark 4 and Matthew 13 we will discover that such people are not back slidden or fallen away, they were never there in the first place, they were false converts. See comments on chapter 5 verse 24. Alternatively, go to <http://www.livingwaters.com/> and click on the ‘True & False Conversions’ audio link.

John 6:40

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Oh, the Father heart of God! His will is that all be saved: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16)

“The Lord is ...longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9)

There are overtones in this verse of ‘the serpent on the pole’ (John 3:14-15 / Numbers 21:6-9) “*every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life*”

John 6:41

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

Once again we encounter the ‘Jews’; as we have remarked, John uses this expression to refer to the Jewish leadership – the Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes. Up to this point the conversation in chapter 6 has been between Jesus and the people who had followed Him after the feeding of the 5000.

It would appear that upon arrival in Capernaum, Jesus headed for the Synagogue, where the crowd then caught up with Him. The Jewish leadership sat patiently listening to the conversation that began in verse 25. Now however they start murmuring among themselves, after all, who did this Jesus think He was?...

John 6:42

And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?

We don’t know if these ‘local’ Jews had been in earshot of the awesome declaration of His person and deity at the Passover 12 months beforehand? (See again John 5:18-47). From what follows it seems that they may well have been oblivious to the conversation on that occasion. Regardless, they are just as indignant that this young man who had grown up in their midst would say such things.

John 6:43

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

Possibly to their surprise, Jesus knows what they are saying and interrupts them...

John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Once again, by calling God His Father He is claiming equality with God (cf. John 5:18); He then claims to have been sent by God, and then claims to have power to resurrect people! This is so reminiscent of Jesus' comments to the Jews chapter 5 in Jerusalem; however this time He is speaking on home turf. Capernaum had become the northern base for Jesus' ministry, and in all likelihood, this was His local Synagogue (see Matt 13:54 / Mark 1:21 / Luke 4:31). Just as had been the case in Jerusalem the year before, the Jews have nothing to say (publicly at least!). Jesus continues...

John 6:45

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Jesus (almost indignantly) quotes from Isaiah (54:13) and says that who have heard God, and have been taught of Him will come to Jesus. The clear implication is that any who do not come to Jesus have not heard God!

John 6:46

Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Back in chapter 4 we saw that God is a Spirit, and hence no one can see Him as He is in this current order of things. Jesus however who is **of God** (i.e. is of the nature and substance of God) has seen the Father.

John 6:47

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

In case any had missed the point hitherto, Jesus emphatically states it in the clearest possible way, everlasting life is through believing on Him alone.

John 6:48

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Jesus now goes for the jugular: this was the comment that had caused the murmuring among these Jews in the first place. Jesus here again claims that the manna provided in the wilderness was the type of which He is the substance. Whereas those who ate manna all died, any who eat of His flesh shall live forever. As to how we are to eat of His flesh is the question the Jews now ask:

John 6:52

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Jesus' answer may appear cryptic to us, but I don't believe Jesus was trying to be ambiguous...

John 6:53-58

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

So what does all this mean? How are we to eat of His flesh & drink His blood?

I believe the answer to this apparent conundrum lies in the sacrifices God had ordained for Israel. As part of the Passover meal the Israelites were to eat of the flesh of the lamb by way of identification; the lamb was dying in their place, so they could go free. In Leviticus 6:26 & 7:6 the priests were instructed to eat of the flesh of the sin offering and trespass offering. Both of these offerings required a substitute to be sacrificed in place of the one who had committed the offense. Jesus was offered as a lamb without blemish, and as a sin and trespass offering for all mankind. To eat the flesh was to be identified with the offering, knowing it had been offered in your place. To eat the flesh of Christ means to forever be identified with His death in your place, the innocent dying in place of the guilty. Those who are willing to be identified with Christ in this way will forever be pardoned from their sin.

In regard to the blood; in Leviticus 17:11 God says: *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”* Hebrews 9:22 says: *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission”* Why did blood make atonement? Because the blood speaks of the life – without blood, you die. On Calvary the blood of Jesus was shed for the sins of the world, i.e. His life was given in exchange for yours and mine. In this way God’s justice and mercy could be satisfied. Our sin had been paid for in full, but our life had been spared, but at the cost of His own Son. By ‘drinking His blood’ we agree to be identified with His life (for that is what His blood represents). When Christ rose from the dead He rose to new life, all therefore who are identified with His life likewise receive new life in Christ – *“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day”*

A further illustration that may be helpful can be found in Genesis chapter 40. There we have the account of the butler and baker imprisoned with Joseph by Pharaoh. Joseph interprets their dreams as follows:

Butler: “The three branches are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler” (Gen 40:12-13)

Baker: “The three baskets are three days: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee” (Gen 40:18-19)

There is a subtle hint left for us here by the Holy Spirit with the ‘three days’, and that we have ‘bread and wine’. The cup represents the life (blood) of Christ which after three days is lifted up and restored to its former place; the bread speaks of Christ’s body, and the flesh is eaten as payment for transgression (in this case the transgression of the baker, but symbolically representative of our transgression that Christ bore in our place when He was lifted up and hung on a tree).

*“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: **this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.** After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, **This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me**”* (1 Cor 11:24-25)

John 6:59-60

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?

Was it a hard saying because they did not comprehend it? Or because they did comprehend and could see that Jesus was talking about one life dying (our old sin nature) and another life rising to new life (the life born of the Spirit of God)?

Most people don't reject Jesus because they don't understand what it is all about, they reject Him because they do, and they are not prepared to be identified with His death (which requires an acknowledgement of our sin), so they can never be united with Him in new life.

John 6:61

When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?

Well does it? Are you not His disciple too? Have you come to the place where you acknowledge your own sin and utter unworthiness before a holy God? Are you prepared to be identified with His death, knowing it will cost you your life of sin and the 'pleasures of sin?' The church today is full of those who have never dealt with this issue, and therefore are not saved: *'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you'*

A.W. Tozer said, "It is my opinion that tens of thousands of people, if not millions, have been brought into some kind of religious experience by accepting Christ, and they have not been saved."

D. James Kennedy said, "The vast majority of people who are members of churches in America today are not Christians. I say that without the slightest contradiction. I base it on empirical evidence of twenty-four years of examining thousands of people."

As Paul said to the Corinthian believers: *'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves'* (2 Cor 13:5), this is the most important issue any of us can face.

John 6:62

What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

Many put off making a decision regarding 'eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood' (i.e. being identified with His death in our place as sinners, and thereby being united with Him in newness of life); but how quickly would you resolve the issue if you were suddenly faced by Jesus Christ in all His glory sitting on His throne, not hypothetically but for real? I can tell you now there would be no atheists there!

One reason so many procrastinate (put off the decision until another day) is because they are not convinced by the reality of the situation. Jesus is saying here to His disciples *'you may be offended because of what I am asking you to do (i.e. give up the right you yourself to Me), you may want to think about this another day, but if you were see the Son of man, not on earth as just another human being, but as God in awesome majesty, what would be your response?'*

John 6:63

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

These are the most important home truths any of us will face: The 'flesh', our natural sinful nature will profit us nothing. We may think we are really living, 'gaining the world' and being successful, but in reality we are just losing our soul (Matt 16:26). Real life is not physical but spiritual, it is God's Spirit that can make us truly alive, and this is exactly what Jesus is saying – He wants us to live, and to live more abundantly (John 10:10)

John 6:64

But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

Sadly, even when presented with all the evidence, when shown the reality of the situation, there are some who will just harden their hearts and refuse to believe 'having loved this present world' more (2 Tim 4:10).

"And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:18-19)

John 6:65

And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Once again, the apparent paradox of predestination. The only ones that will come to Christ are the ones the Father has chosen. The ones the Father has chosen are the ones who choose to come.

John 6:66

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

At the beginning of this chapter many of these so-called disciples wanted to take Jesus and make Him king – but that was when He was blessing them with provision and 'entertaining' them with miracles. Note how that through this chapter Jesus' approach has not been seeker-friendly; He hasn't been trying to fill His 'auditorium'. He doesn't try some motivational speaking to make the people feel good about themselves. No, the words He speaks are spirit and life. Unless they see themselves as rotten-to-the-core sinners and become identified with His sacrificial death for them they will not have eternal life.

This is not some big game where we will tot up the scores at the end and see who wins, this is the choice between life and death – eternally.

"Men are still offended at Jesus; they hear gladly His "Follow Me" and enthusiastically leave all to follow, but when the way becomes narrow, and to follow costs shedding of blood, they begin to waver. As long as it means peace and joy we will follow Jesus, but when it costs us dear we are tempted to go back and walk no more with Him" – Oswald Chambers

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15)

John 6:67-69

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Amen and amen! Once we have come to know Jesus Christ, there is nothing in this world that should hold any appeal for us. "Nothing compares to the promise I've found in You".

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39)

John 6:70

Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

Some wonder if Judas was really saved – this verse gives us a clue to the answer!

Judas did not ‘back-slide’, he was a false convert ‘sown among thorns’. He had heard the word, but *the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choked the word, and he becometh unfruitful*” (Mark 4:18-19)

However, his act was so convincing that even at the last supper the other disciples did not suspect him:

“When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night” (John 13:21-30)

Even after Jesus had practically told them who the traitor was, no one suspected lovely, kind Judas, ‘he had such a heart for the poor’ – no, he was a thief!

John 6:71

He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

It is no coincidence that John tags this little comment on here; in this chapter Jesus has been sifting, separating the sheep from the goats. There is an extremely important lesson here: We make think we know someone, they may come to church, sing the songs, help out in various ways, they may even hold a position within the church, but that doesn't mean they are saved. So how are we to know? Quite simply, by their fruit!

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt 7:17-20)

We should see genuine believers *“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance”* (Luke 3:8) *“Repentance to be true **must** issue in holiness, or it is not New Testament repentance. Repentance means not only sorrow and distress for the wrong done, but the acceptance of the Atonement of Jesus which will make me what I have never been—holy”*

– Oswald Chambers

Someone who claims to be a Christian yet does not desire to be holy (set apart), or cannot be observed to be growing in holiness and grace, has never truly repented.

If someone is saved, we will see the fruit of the Spirit manifest in their lives: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts”* (Gal 5:22-24)

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15)

CHAPTER 7

John 7:1

After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

Although chapter breaks were obviously not put in by John, we now reach another natural break in his gospel, as we had done at the start of chapter 5 and chapter 6, marked by the phrase ‘meta tauta’ – ‘after these things’.

The ‘things’ that this is now ‘after’ were John’s record of Jesus’ teaching at the synagogue in Capernaum where He had laid down His ‘terms & conditions’, stating: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you”, or as we commented, ‘unless you repent and turn from your sin, being identified with Christ’s sacrificial death in your place, acknowledging it was on account of your sin that Christ died, thus dying yourself to your old sinful life, AND are identified with the life (blood) of Jesus, thus becoming a beneficiary of new life in Him, you WILL NOT and CANNOT have eternal life within you.

Obviously, this radical teaching of Jesus did not go over all that well with the Jewish religious leaders! And as Jesus had no doubt promptly left Capernaum to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover (see John 6:4), we can be fairly certain that the Jews in Jerusalem had got wind of this. So this ‘new heresy’, combined with the healing on the Sabbath the previous year, gave even more reason for the Jews in ‘Jewry’ (Judea) to seek to plot His death.

John 7:2

Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

Verse 1 indicates that Jesus had returned to Galilee after the Passover; so this feast of Tabernacles sees us jump forward around 7 months to the September/October time of A.D. 31. This would make this the last feast of Tabernacles Jesus would attend, because the following spring would see the next and final Passover of Jesus’ ministry during ‘Passion Week’ to which John will devote almost half his gospel.

John 7:3-5

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

‘His brethren ...’ Although some would try to argue otherwise, it is generally understood that the ‘brethren’ referred to here would have been other sons (and daughters) of Mary whom she had with Joseph in the years subsequent to the birth of Jesus. We know from Matthew 13:55-56 that Jesus had sisters and at least four half-brothers* including Jude and James (of NT fame) although neither became believers until after the resurrection (as indicated by verse 5).

*Half-brothers of God? – see Appendix B

‘that thy disciples also may see...’

The disciples his brethren are referring too would most likely have been those who had become His ‘disciples’ back in John 2:23 & John 4:1. As Tabernacles was a mandatory feast to attend, they would be back at Jerusalem and it would be an ideal time for Jesus to go and impress some more.

‘If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world...’

This is of course the world’s way. Push yourself to the top and then blow your trumpet when you are there. To His brethren this is so simple: ‘if You want to be known, go and perform in front of the crowd’. ‘Play to the capacity audiences’, ‘Go where the money is’...

However, Jesus had come for one reason and one reason alone: viz. to do His Father’s will. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise – and clearly that is what is happening here.

John 7:6

Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

As we noted back in chapter 2 verse 4, Jesus was waiting for a specific time when He would be revealed to Israel as their king. Throughout the gospel accounts we see Jesus continually play down who He was, even commanding demons not to make Him known! God's plan and timing were very precise, and there was a specific prophecy that had to be fulfilled on a specific day. That is why we will see Jesus repeatedly say "*My time is not yet come*".

In contrast to this, for Jesus' brethren, His disciples and for us, there is not a specific time; if we are to serve God, today is the day. We have this notion that we are on a long journey looking to reach our ultimate destination, and often see the journey as frustrating:

"We have an idea that God is leading us to a particular end, a desired goal; He is not. The question of getting to a particular end is a mere incident. What we call the process, God calls the end.

God's training is for now, not presently. His purpose is for this minute, not for something in the future. We have nothing to do with the afterwards of obedience; we get wrong when we think of the afterwards. What men call training and preparation, God calls the end.

God's end is to enable me to see that He can walk on the chaos of my life just now. If we have a further end in view, we do not pay sufficient attention to the immediate present; but if we realise that obedience is the end, then each moment as it comes is precious"

– Oswald Chambers

John 7:7

The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

This is an important insight that we would do well to take notice of. We often think the world is against us, but in reality it is against Christ, because He has testified that the world is in darkness and its deeds are evil. Next time you are 'under attack' for your faith, witness and character, remember that it is not you, but Christ in you they seek to destroy. This is what Paul spoke to the Colossians about: "*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church*" (Col 1:24)

James said: "*Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*" (James 5:10-11)

John 7:8-10

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Note the word 'yet' in verse 8. The fact that Jesus does go up to this feast has led some to claim that Jesus here lied to His brethren. Most of the supposed contradictions evaporate when people learn to read!

Once again Jesus underlines the point that He is waiting for a specific time in His ministry when He reveal Himself as Israel's King, hence He goes up "*not openly, but as it were in secret*".

John 7:11-13

11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

The Jews = the Jewish leaders.

I like the old rhyme: "*What do you think of Jesus? Neutral you cannot be.*

One day you will be asking, what does Jesus think of me!"

John 7:14-16

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

The world will always judge by its own standards. Jesus' wisdom however, was not of this world, but from His Father. In the book of Acts the Jews again marvel, this time at the words of Peter and John who were 'unlearned and ignorant men', in their estimation, but the key to their wisdom was that 'they had been with Jesus'. (Acts 4:13)

John 7:17

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

In commenting on this verse, Adam Clarke says the following:

I will give you a sure rule by which ye may judge of my doctrine: If you really wish to do the will of God begin the practice of it; and take my doctrine, and apply it to all that you know God requires of man and if you find one of my precepts contrary to the nature, perfections, and glory of God, or to the present or eternal welfare of men, then ye shall be at liberty to assert that my doctrine is human and erroneous, and God has not sent me. But if, on the contrary, ye find that the sum and substance of my preaching is, That men shall love God with all their heart soul, mind, and strength, and their neighbour as themselves; and that this doctrine must bring glory to God in the highest, while it produces peace and good will among men; then acknowledge that God has visited you, and receive me as the Messiah promised to your fathers. - Adam Clarke

John 7:18

He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, not only did He do the Father's will, but sought to bring His Father glory in all things.

There is another claim made here by Jesus that He is deity, for He declares that there is no unrighteousness in Him – something that could not be claimed for any human (see Jer 17:9)

John 7:19

Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

Jesus here cuts to the root of their antagonism which had begun a year and a half earlier at the pool of Bethesda, when He had healed a man on the Sabbath. As a result of that miracle the Jews sought to kill Jesus for defiling the Sabbath, but Jesus throws this back at them and tells them that though they accuse Him of breaking the Law, none of them had been able to keep the Law either! (Remember that anyone who offended in one point was as guilty as someone who had broken all the Law - see James 2:10). This was exactly what Jesus wanted to show them, and in so doing Jesus fulfilled the Law (see Matt 5:17). The purpose of the Law was to confine all under sin (Gal 3:22) which in turn would lead people to Christ (Gal 3:24).

John 7:20

The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

We have already seen that the people feared the Jews, knowing they had an issue with Jesus, but did 'the people' know the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus? This may explain their reaction to Jesus statement.

John 7:21-23

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

John 7:21-23 (cont'd)

Jesus now addresses the question of whether He had actually broken the Law anyway. The example He gives is regarding circumcision, which, according to the Law, had to take place on the 8th day, regardless of whether it was a Sabbath day or not. If the Jews do that, why are they so enraged at Jesus for healing someone who had been infirm 38 years?

John 7:24

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Men are quick to judge, and it is the appearance (that which we see on the surface) that causes us to jump to our conclusions. Jesus doesn't say 'don't judge at all', but that when you do, judge righteously, according to God's heart not your own.

John 7:25-26

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

Evidently some of the people in Jerusalem had put two and two together and realised that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus, so why not just deal with it now? Is it because that deep down they know who this person really is?

John 7:27

Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

Once again we see a lack of understanding of the scriptures produces a wrong belief. According to the scriptures the Christ (Messiah) was to be born in Bethlehem, of the house and lineage of David (Micah 5:2 / 2 Sam 7:12-13 / Luke 2:4). He would have to go to, and subsequently be called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1 / Matt 2:15). He would be raised in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2 / Matt 4:14-16), and called a Nazarene (Matt 2:23). In addition He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).

So much of the church today has messed up beliefs because they do not read or understand the scriptures.

John 7:28

Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

In commenting on this verse, Adam Clarke says the following:

Perhaps they should be read interrogatively: Do ye both know me, and know whence I am? Our Lord takes them up on their own profession, and argues from it. Since you have got so much information concerning me, add this to it, to make it complete; namely, that I am not come of myself; am no self-created or self-authorized prophet; I came from God:- the testimony of John the Baptist, the descent of the Holy Spirit, the voice from heaven, the purity and excellence of my doctrine, and the multitude of my miracles, sufficiently attest this. Now, God is true who has borne testimony to me; but ye know him not, therefore it is that this testimony is disregarded. - Adam Clarke

John 7:29-30

29 But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

Just in case you miss it, the outrage was caused by yet another profession of His deity – being equal with, and sent from the Father.

We see another interesting thing here that tells of God's complete control of these apparently random events. To date, Jesus has refused fame because His hour was not yet come, but now we see that the Jews are actually rendered powerless to touch Jesus before His time; everything is gearing up to the fulfilment of an event prophesied over 500 years earlier – but it will not happen before the appointed day, hence "*they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come*".

John 7:31

And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

Once again, the people are making their decision based on the miracles rather than the Word of God. This mistake has been repeated throughout the ages and permeates the modern church. A person's relationship to Christ stands or falls based on the impact the Word of God has in the person's life (See Matt 13:19-23), not on how they perceive Christ may entertain, assist or bless them.

If people are swayed by the miraculous, what test do they employ to ensure it is not a deception? Even if the miracle is genuine, what measure is employed to be certain it is from God? The devil will deceive the world with lying signs and wonders – there will be real people like you and I who get caught up in his deception. Don't be so arrogant as to think you are above deception. Our one safeguard is the Word of God – that's why God has gone to such lengths to give it to us.

John 7:32

The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

Regardless of the people's motives in 'accepting' Christ, the Pharisees (the Pharisees are now specifically singled out from the 'Jews') will not stand for this Man winning the hearts of the people, so they sent their officers...

John 7:33-36

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?

36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

With the benefit of hindsight (and of course the New Testament!) we understand what Jesus was referring to, but the officers sent by the Pharisees and the rest of the Jewish leadership were no doubt left scratching their heads!

John 7:37-39

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The feast of Tabernacles was to be a seven-day festival, followed by the 'eighth day of assembly' (see Lev 23:34-43). This marked the end of the Mosaic feasts for that year and so was a great occasion when everyone would gather at the Temple. Jesus now stands up in their midst and makes the same declaration He had done to the woman at the well in Samaria. Again, the thirst that Jesus offers to satisfy is not physical but spiritual. There is no other way of satisfying this thirst except by coming to Christ, being identified with His death on account of your sin, and being born again to new life through His Spirit.

John gives us an editorial comment here to underline that Jesus was speaking of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers; an event that occurred for the first time on the day of Pentecost. This remains one of the most incredible privileges and demonstrations of God's grace. That we whose old lives were dead in trespasses and sins should be born again of the Spirit of almighty God is unfathomable.

There is much effort put into evangelism today – some good, some misguided – but let us never forget, it is the utmost privilege to be saved.

John 7:37-39 (cont'd)

The following insightful commentary on these two verses (available on-line from the Blue Letter Bible www.blueletterbible.org) is by Pastor Chuck Smith:

"IN THE LAST DAY, THAT GREAT DAY OF THE FEAST."

- A. This was the Feast of Tabernacles, Succoth.
 - 1. Made their booths beside their houses.
 - 2. At the celebration in Jerusalem, the priests would pour water from their jugs on the pavement of the Temple Mount.
 - a. This was a memorial of the water out of the rock in the wilderness.
 - b. On last day they did not go through this ritual as a reminder that they now possessed the land promised by God.

II. "JESUS STOOD AND CRIED."

- A. The standing was significant.
 - 1. When the Rabbi's taught they sat.
 - 2. When they were heralding a truth they stood.
- B. Why did Jesus get so emotional over this?
 - 1. Paul tells us, "Jesus was that Rock."
 - 2. That is, men are perishing in the wilderness of sin. Without Christ they will surely die.

III. "IF ANY MAN THIRST."

- A. Jesus was not referring to physical thirst.
 - 1. There are body thirsts or drives necessary for our survival.
 - a. Meslov has defined them and catalogued them in order of intensity.
 - b. The strongest being our air drive.
 - c. Next is the thirst drive.
 - 2. The thirst drive can be overwhelming.
- B. He was not referring to our emotional drives.
 - 1. We need love from early infancy.
 - a. A baby in the first six months denied this love and fondling will suffer permanent mental retardation.
 - 2. We need security; to be needed.
 - C. Deep inside man the spirit is crying out for God.
 - 1. The psychologist who denies the spiritual nature of man will never truly understand human behavior.
 - 2. The psychologists admit that neurotic behavior often begins with frustration.
 - a. They trace the neurosis to the guilt, to the escape, to the inferiority, to the frustration.
 - b. What is frustration but thirst?
 - c. David said, "My soul thirsts after the living God."

IV. "LET HIM COME UNTO ME AND DRINK."

- A. Here is the gospel in the simplest terms.
 - 1. The answer to man's thirst for God can be fully satisfied by Jesus Christ.
 - 2. He calls to your poor, thirsty soul, "Come..."
 - 3. He said to woman at the well, "Drink of this water and you will thirst again."

V. "HE THAT BELIEVES IN ME."

- A. Here He tells us how to drink from Him.
 - 1. My spirit is thirsting for God - where can I satisfy this thirst?
 - 2. Jesus said, "Come unto Me, believe in Me."
 - 3. Does it work?
 - 4. Listen to the testimony of thousands of witnesses.
- B. "Out of his belly will flow rivers of living water."
 - 1. Out of his belly shall gush torrents.
 - 2. That area of man that so consistently is seeking to be fed will become the source.
 - 3. God is not satisfied to just fill your life, He wants your life to overflow.

VI. "THIS SPAKE HE OF THE SPIRIT."

- A. This is John's added commentary from the perspective of hindsight.
 - 1. What is He saying about the Holy Spirit?
 - 2. It should be as a torrent gushing forth from your life.

John 7:40

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

v40: Moses had provided water from the rock (which Paul tells us was symbolic of Christ – 1 Cor 10:4). Now Jesus is offering to provide rivers of living water, so some of the people once again conclude that Jesus must be the prophet promised by Moses in Deuteronomy 18:18.

v41-43: Back in verse 27 the people had said “*but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is*”; now, after thinking about it for a while, they realise that actually the scriptures do say something about the Messiah. Regardless, we see again that our decision regarding Christ will cause division. “*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*”. (Matt 10:34-37)

v44: Again, the incredible situation persists; they want to take Him, but are powerless because His time had not yet come. The more we study the gospel accounts, the more we see God’s complete control of history, and it all centred on just one week in 32 A.D. – all time and eternity condensed into one week in the dusty city of Jerusalem on planet Earth.

John 7:45-46

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

This must have been a real slap in the face for the Pharisees! Of course, the response of the officers is the natural response of any who come to Christ with an open mind. Jesus’ words are spirit and life (John 7:63), they will transform us and we will see things in a way we never imagined possible before.

John 7:47

Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

No, the officers weren’t deceived, they were honest. The Pharisees, they were deceived because they did not know God, so they could not recognise the One whom He had sent. (See again John 5:37-38)

John 7:48

Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

The arrogance of the Pharisees is displayed for all to see in this verse. They don’t believe so nor should anyone else! There are many in the ‘establish church’ today who adopt a similar attitude; unless it has been sanctioned by *the church* it is not acceptable! And if it has been rejected by *the church*, then don’t concern yourself with it. You are far better following the lead of the officers, and listening to the words of Jesus.

John 7:49

But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

This is said to suggest that the poor ignorant people who were listening to Jesus were bound to be swayed by His teaching and therefore were cursed because they didn’t understand the law. No matter, the people who DO know the law are also cursed! “*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*” (Gal 3:10-13)

John 7:50-51

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

Nicodemus here demonstrated the wisdom that caused him to seek Jesus in the first place.

John 7:52

They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

1 – 0 to Nicodemus! If the Pharisees, who ‘*knew the Law so well*’ (!) had searched, they would have found that both the prophets Jonah and Nahum came from Galilee – as would the Messiah! The religious leadership of the day often speak with confidence on matters they know nothing of – usually the Word of God!

John 7:53

And every man went unto his own house.

The crowd now head home at the end of the festival after spending the last week dwelling in booths to remember their wilderness wanderings. We are told that every man goes to his own house: At the end of the day every man stands on his own before the judgment throne of God. You cannot appeal to ‘majority opinion’ or ‘but my church said this was ok’. You will not have a ‘Pharisee’ standing at your side to answer God on your behalf on Judgment Day, you will have to answer for yourself. Every man has to make his own decision, and that decision will be based on how you responded to the Word.

CHAPTER 8

John 8:1

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

At the close of chapter 7, all the people return to their own homes after the feast of Tabernacles. Jesus however, was of 'no fixed abode', and so we are told He goes to the mount of Olives.

Are we to assume that Jesus stayed on the mount of Olives all night? We see elsewhere in the gospels that Jesus took time out of the everyday humdrum to be alone with His Father, and this may well be another of those occasions. Certainly, Jesus' relationship with His Father took precedence over the rest of life's demands; this is why He always heard His Father's voice. The voice of God is so often drowned out in our lives because we never take time out of the melee of life to be alone with God. The deeper the relationship, the easier it is to hear. In 1st Samuel, when Samuel is a child, the LORD calls out to him, but Samuel had not yet reached the place where he recognised God's voice. We hear so many voices around us that it is often hard to distinguish God's voice and often don't recognise when He is speaking to us. Not so with Jesus; He always heard the Father's voice, He would let nothing keep Him from His constant communion with the Father.

The following morning we read that Jesus heads back into the temple, not wandering aimlessly, but being led of His Father. Everything He did was by divine appointment.

John 8:3-5

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

This is obviously an intentional set-up, with the express purpose of getting Jesus to say something whereby they may accuse Him (as confirmed in v6). According to Leviticus 20:10: "*And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death*"

And in Deuteronomy 22:22: "*If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel*"

There is no question that, according to the Law, this woman should have been put to death, but so should the man! Where was he? Why did the scribes and Pharisees not bring him too? And why even go to ask Jesus' opinion if they so obviously know the requirements of the Law?

This was a deliberately deceitful plot, to which this woman had fallen victim.

John 8:6-8

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

In chapter 7 verses 21-23 Jesus had pulled the rug out from their accusation that He had violated the Sabbath by healing the impotent man, hence the need for them to find something else that they may accuse Him of.

Scholars have long wondered at what Jesus wrote on the ground; some say He began writing their names, others that He was just doodling; but one of the most plausible options is that He began writing out the 10 commandments. Interestingly, the 10 commandments were the only other time we find God actually writing with His own finger, and on that occasion He also did it twice.

John 8:6-8 (cont'd)

Psalm 19:7 tells us that it is the Law of the LORD that converts the soul, so if Jesus did start writing the 10 commandments out in the dust, it is no wonder they became convicted of their own sin and walked away, unable to accuse this woman. James tells us: *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2:10)

John 8:9

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

This again highlights that, under the Law, all are guilty, no matter how religious. All are in need of a Saviour. Paul said to the Galatians: *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”* (Gal 2:16)

Their attempt to accuse Jesus had merely brought to light their own sin. The fact that the eldest go first, and the youngest last, is probably indicative of youthful pride and arrogance – see 1 Timothy 3:6.

John 8:10

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?

This woman was just about to be stoned to death; now she has seen all her accusers acknowledge their own guilt in the light of God's perfect Law.

John 8:11

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Grace, mercy and peace are found together four times in the New Testament (1 Tim 1:2 / 2 Tim 1:2 / Titus 1:4 / 2 John 3), but in reality they are inseparable. God's grace was the reason He sent His only begotten Son, thus allowing Him to have mercy on sinners who repent and trust in Him; this in turn brings a peace that passes understanding. This woman was a sinner worthy of death, but by God's grace and mercy, she is does not come into condemnation, but walks free.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1)

Of course the price for her sin still had to be paid, and six months later Jesus would Himself be put to death, dying in her place – and yours and mine.

She has now been given a 'new life' and Jesus invites her to 'go and sin no more'. Notice that Jesus does not say 'try your best to sin no more'. It is not dependant on her ability, but His. Jesus says that we are *“sanctified by faith that is in me”* (Acts 26:18)

“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18)

John 8:12

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

This is the 2nd I AM statement John records for us, and here we have reiterated that which John recorded for us in the opening chapter. Mankind was in (spiritual) darkness, unable to even comprehend the true predicament he was in, but God sent Jesus to expose the darkness and reveal Himself as the true light. Jesus here doesn't declare Himself to be one of many available lights, but as the only light for mankind. Therefore any other proposed solutions, will just take its adherents further into spiritual darkness.

John 8:13

The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

As expected, the Pharisees reject Jesus claim to be the light of the world, although the reason they give for rejecting His claim is shallow to say the least. The issue they raise is that it is not sufficient evidence for such a claim if a man bear witness of himself.

As we saw back in chapter 5 (vs 30-39), Jesus had already called four witnesses to testify, but that had been around a year and a half earlier. Nevertheless, there was ample evidence to support Jesus assertions. Jesus now gives three reasons why His testimony is true:

John 8:14

Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

Jesus' first defence is that He *is* able to bear record of himself because He knows all things. One of man's biggest issues is the debate regarding our origins, and just as pressing are the questions regarding our future; yet Jesus knew with absolute certainty where He was from, what He was doing, and where He was going.

John 8:15-16

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

His second statement is that He judges no man after the flesh. Any judgment that you or I make is after the flesh. Our judgment is limited because we simply do not have all the facts. The theory of evolution is an example of this. Because our judgments are based on very fragmentary facts, they really are speculation. Either man accepts speculation or he accepts revelation. If one judges according to the flesh, he will naturally follow speculation. The Lord Jesus says that He does not judge according to the flesh. He gives the judgment that comes from heaven. He gives God's viewpoint, God's estimation. This is revelation, and it differs from man's point of view. That is why the hostility of these religious rulers is mounting.

- J Vernon McGee

John 8:17-18

17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

Jesus' third defence is that, despite what the Pharisees are saying, He is not just bearing record of Himself, for His Father has also born witness of Him (both in an audible voice at His baptism, and through the scriptures, where His Father had foretold His coming, His life, His ministry etc).

John 8:19

Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

The Pharisees naturally think about the natural, and assume Jesus is talking about Joseph – the one *they* believed was His natural father. Jesus corrects them: '*you are wrong in your assumption, you do not know My Father. If you had known who I was, you would have also known my Father*'.

John 8:20

These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

Once again we see an opportunity for the Jews to take Jesus, but they are not able because His hour was not yet. We need to be mindful when reading through the gospels that Jesus orchestrated the events according to His Father's timetable. There is coming the hour when Jesus will not only allow Himself to be worshipped as king, but will also allow them to take Him – but only at the right time, so that all that was written might be fulfilled.

John 8:21

Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

As if to purposely provoke reaction, Jesus picks up on what He had said to the Pharisees earlier. So often we see Jesus say something with the express purpose of causing the hearers to think. So many of the world's religions are based on blind faith in the unprovable. All that Christ said He provided support and evidence for. After His resurrection He would show himself to more than 500 people 'with many infallible proofs'! (Acts 1:3). Paul reasoned (appealed to rational thought) with his hearers concerning the obvious truth of the gospel.

Jesus adds to His previous remarks by telling the Pharisees they will seek Him, but not find Him, and that they will die in their sins – chilling words from the only One who could save them from their sins!

Was the fact they could not go where Jesus was going because they were unable, or unwilling?

In one sense, no one could go where Jesus was going; just like the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Jesus had to go and offer the sacrifice alone (cf. Lev 16).

On the other hand, all who want to be Jesus' disciples have to take up their cross and follow Him.

Forsaking All I Trust Him = FAITH

John 8:22

Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

The Jews here just don't get it, so Jesus puts it in the simplest terms possible:

John 8:23

And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

This, in a nutshell, is why Jesus is the Light of the world. Anyone from this world is part of this order of things, and therefore in the same mess as the rest of us, no matter how noble, religious, devout or sincere they may be. Only someone from outside this world, untainted by sin, can be the answer to the human problem. We have the graves, tombs and mausoleums containing all the great religious leaders, philosophers and gurus that history has produced. But there is an empty tomb in Jerusalem, testifying to the fact that Jesus Christ of Bethlehem was not of this world.

John 8:24

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

Again, Jesus is the only one who can save people from their sins; He is the only remedy prescribed by the Father. If He is rejected, there is no other way.

John 8:25

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

"Then said *they* ..". I wonder what the 'they' were thinking when this question is asked? No doubt some were looking for Jesus to trip Himself up by His reply, giving them something to accuse Him of; others maybe were beginning to wonder just who it was that was standing before them – the comment about them dying in their sins must have made some stop and think; whatever their thoughts, it remains the most important question for mankind: Just who is Jesus to you?

He is the One who has been since before the beginning began; He has been declared through the prophets through the Old Testament; He was manifest in a human body and declared in unequivocal terms that He is the (only) Light of the world. He is our only way of coming out of the darkness. Your other option is to die in your sins.

John 8:26

I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

There is no doubt much that Jesus could have said to completely confound these Jews, but He would only speak that which the Father gave Him to speak. Thus the ‘conversation’ we have been observing between Jesus and the Jews has actually been for the benefit of all who have ears to hear, to the intent that each one of us resolve from themselves, the question of who Jesus is.

John 8:27

They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

There are many today who are just as ignorant regarding the words of Jesus. No man has seen the Father, Jesus came to reveal Him, and illuminate the way back to Him.

John 8:28-29

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

In what seems like an act of mercy and compassion, Jesus once again lays it out as clearly as can be, almost pleading with His hearers: Jesus will be lifted up (crucified) at the request of the Jews; then it will dawn on them who he was (or else why guard the tomb? – what harm could His disciples really do with a corpse? – who would really be fooled by such a claim with no evidence to support it? – and why would His disciples willingly risk their lives to promote an obvious hoax?).

John 8:30

As he spake these words, many believed on him.

In response to His impassioned plea, many believed on Him

John 8:31

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

Oh how important is this verse! IF you continue in His WORD, then and only then will you be shown to be His disciples.

So many come to Christ for a better life, or the promise of health, wealth and happiness (largely due to the abundance of unbiblical teaching regarding salvation), and care nothing for His word, and so fall away – see again comments on John 5:24 cf. Matthew 13:19-23.

John 8:32

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

This is an oft quoted verse, but sadly seldom in context! You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free IF you continue in His word and are His disciple!

John 8:33

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

True, they were Abraham’s seed, but the person who said they’d never been in bondage should have been defrocked! For 400 years they were in bondage to Egypt, then, when back in the land, through the times of the Judges, they experienced a total of 111 years in bondage to the likes of Moab, the Midianites, Ammonites, Philistines etc. The Northern kingdom then fell in around 722 B.C. to Assyria, and the Southern kingdom later fell to Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon in 606 B.C. After 70 years of this they returned to the land, only to have a turbulent 400 years as the power shifted between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties (as detailed in Daniel 11). Far from ‘never being in bondage’, they had continually been in bondage in fulfilment of Deuteronomy 28:15-57.

But this, of course, was merely the symptom of the real bondage they had never been able to escape from – that of sin...

John 8:34

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

The fact they had been in bondage was so obvious that Jesus doesn't even address it, He simply highlights the far greater spiritual bondage, from which no man can escape without the help of a Saviour.

John 8:35-36

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Jesus highlights the difference between the servant, who has no rights, and a son who is heir and will inherit all. As a slave of sin we have no rights, and must fearfully await judgment. Jesus' offers to make us joint heirs (Rom 8:17) and set us free from the power and bondage of sin for ever – who in their right mind could turn down such an offer?

John 8:37

I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

'You may be Abraham's seed by physical descent, but Abraham believed in Me on the basis of faith, which God counted to him as righteousness' (see Heb 11:17-19). Their actions were not consistent with their profession! – and why? because of their relationship to His Word!

'Believers', who care nothing for God's Word, will frequently contradict their profession (that which they purport to be) by their actions.

John 8:38

I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

Now the gloves come off! This now becomes a question of parentage; Jesus clearly insinuates that although their physical decent may be from Abraham, their actions tell of their real decent being from the father of lies.

John 8:39-40

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

See comments for v37.

John 8:41

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

In response to Jesus' insinuation that their true father is the devil, they through is back at Him and question His parentage, saying that He is illegitimate, because He was born out of wedlock. Psalm 69 gives us an interesting glimpse into the childhood of Jesus, and the taunts He received due to the mystery surrounding His birth:

“Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.” (Psalm 69:7-12)

Seeing the spiritual overtones of Jesus' comments, they now boldly claim that God is their Father:

John 8:42-43

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

Clearly God is not their Father – again evidenced by their actions. Children carry a strong family likeness to the parents. God’s children will show forth His characteristics.

As if to keep beating the same drum, the Word is again highlighted as the root of the problem. If the roots go down into the soil of God’s Word, the fruit will be evident.

John 8:44

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Jesus now just comes out and says it like it is! ‘*Because you are fathered by the devil, you cannot help but bear a likeness to him, in thought and actions*’.

We are also told here that Satan was a murderer from the beginning; this poses two questions: What made Satan a murderer? And, when was the beginning?

From Genesis 1:1 we find that the beginning was when God made the heaven and the earth. In Matthew 19:4 Jesus says that Adam and Eve were also made at the beginning (a simple verse that rules out the possibility of belief in evolution for a believer in Christ!). Adam was made on day 6, and Eve sometime shortly after day 7 (after God had planted a garden and brought all the animals to Adam to name, and not finding a suitable helper, God put Adam to sleep and took Eve out of his side). Thus we can deduce that when Jesus refers to the beginning, He is meaning the days of creation and the short period of time that followed leading up to Genesis chapter 3.

We know from Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 that Satan was created as a perfect angelic being, apparently responsible for the worship in Heaven, having access to walk up and down in front of the throne of God. Satan (Lucifer at that time) would have also been among the great company of angelic beings that rejoiced as God was laying the foundations of the earth:

“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. ..When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7). Ezekiel 28:13 indicates that Lucifer was in the Garden of Eden in his unfallen (i.e. still perfect) state. This means that Lucifer fell after the days of creation. This would seem to be confirmed by John in 1 John 3:8, where John tells us that the Devil sinned from (but not before) the beginning; we can understand therefore that something occurred at the beginning that caused Satan to sin and this in turn led to him committing the first murder.

Paul tells us it was pride that caused Satan to fall (1 Tim 3:6). And Isaiah tells us that the root of that pride was that Satan wanted to be ‘like God’. Now, bear in mind that no angel was made in the image of God – but Adam was! Adam had been made in the image and likeness of God, and had been given dominion over the earth. Satan had previously held the position of ‘anointed cherub that covers’, i.e. the no#1 in God’s created order. Now God creates a man, and not only gives him dominion over the world He created, but also makes him in His own likeness! Satan’s pride caused him to rebel, and seek to destroy God’s new man.

God had told Adam (but not Eve, that was Adam’s responsibility) *“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”* (Gen 2:16-17). Satan saw this as his chance to kill Adam and claim the world for himself. Satan therefore deceives Eve, who in turn gives of the fruit to Adam, resulting in instant spiritual death for both of them, and ultimately physical death as their bodies would now be subject to ageing and decay. Satan may have been surprised that they didn’t die completely there and then, but he had now got the ‘title deed’ of the earth, so was no doubt not too concerned. Satan became (and still is) the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4).

Thus Satan committed the first murder; in fact, it was a double murder.

John 8:44 (cont'd)

That Adam and Eve died spiritually is evidenced by the fact they try to hide from 'the voice of the LORD' walking in the Garden (Gen 3:8-13). God is Spirit (John 4:24) and now they were spiritually dead they could no longer fellowship with Him.

In addition to this, Adam was now guilty of sinning against God, and deserving of judgment. However, this turn of events did not take God by surprise! God knew the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9-10) and had already planned from before the creation of the world that a spotless Lamb would be offered in place of Adam (and his descendants), and that God's judgment would fall on this Lamb instead (Isaiah 53:10). Thus, in anticipation of the time when that Lamb would be offered on behalf of mankind, God slew two animals (one for Adam and one for Eve), their blood being shed to make atonement (lit. a covering), and gave to Adam and Eve coats of skin to wear (Gen 3:21).

Thus God made provision for their sin, and by offering His own Spirit to all who repent, a new (spiritual) life begins for any descendant of Adam who receives it on the basis of faith in the completed work of the Lamb!

Because Jesus was born into the human race, He became a kinsman of Adam, and as such has the right to purchase back the property that was once Adam's – i.e. the title deed to the earth! The book of Ruth is an incredible model of this, and we see the ultimate fulfilment played out in the book of Revelation. In chapters 4&5 we see the opening of the scroll (title deed) with seven seals. When John sees it he sobbed convulsively, until One was found who was worthy to open this legal document. Jesus then stakes His claim to planet earth and the rest of the book of Revelation details His reclaiming the earth from the usurpers. Satan automatically forfeited his rights when he murdered again at the time of the cross, but this time by killing innocent blood (see Matt 27:4 / Gen 9:6).

Thus Satan is indeed a murderer many times over, and the father of lies – which is how it all began: '*you shall not surely die*' (Gen 3:4).

John 8:45

And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

People, just like the Pharisees were, become so convinced of the lies, they can no longer discern the truth.

John 8:46

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

None of them had a case against Jesus, so why not believe Him?

John 8:47

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

God is Spirit, unless we are born again of His Spirit, we cannot fellowship with Him, and therefore cannot hear Him.

John 8:48

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

The Jewish leaders now resort to name calling! – always a sure sign you are losing the argument!

John 8:49-50

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Jesus now reminds them that there is a judgement coming, and God knows all things. This is always a 'hard saying' (hard fact to deal with) when you know you have overstepped the mark.

John 8:51

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Once again we are back to keeping His Word! But with such a prize to be had, who would refuse?

John 8:52

Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

Having already rejected His claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God, this to the Jewish leaders is arrogance – and indeed it would be if He were not God in the flesh!

John 8:53

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

In trying to appeal to what they believe is a higher authority (i.e. Abraham), the Jews again come unstuck; for Jesus *is* greater than Abraham, evidenced by the fact that Abraham himself was looking forward to ‘Christ’s day’, the day when God would provide Himself as the Lamb in the mount of the Lord, Mount Moriah, aka Calvary. (see Gen 22:8, 14).

‘whom makest thou thyself?’ Jesus was ‘making himself’ no one. He was and is the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14), the Son of God (John 1:34), God manifest in the flesh (John 1:14), the Immanuel – God with us (Isaiah 7:14), wonderful, counselor, the mighty God (Isaiah 9:6) – and the Jewish leaders could have no excuse for not knowing.

John 8:57

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

Not, only had Jesus seen, spoken to and visited Abraham (Gen 18:1), He was his Creator and Lord.

John 8:58

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

If after getting to chapter 8 in the gospel of John, there is still anyone with the slightest doubt that Jesus claimed to be, and was God in the flesh, this should finally end the debate. Here Jesus claims to be the voice of the burning bush, the I AM, the everlasting God, I AM THAT I AM, the self existing One. This is the 3rd ‘I AM’ statement that John records.

John 8:59

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

In case we miss it, the Jews clearly understood what He said, and hence pick up stones to stone Him for (what they believe is) blasphemy.

However, again Jesus just slips away – for His time had not yet come – but it’s getting closer!

CHAPTER 9

John's narrative from chapter 8 continues as we carry on into chapter 9 (there were no chapter breaks when John wrote his gospel). We have just seen Jesus declare Himself the Light of the World, and the Living water, making it clear again that He was boldly claiming He was God in the flesh – for such a claim could not be made by any other than God Himself. This, as we have seen, just angered and provoked the Jewish leaders to the point of wanting to stone Jesus for blasphemy. Chapter 9 opens with another miracle – the sixth of the seven John records for us - that once again offends, and no doubt confuses and unnerves the Jewish leaders yet more.

As we have mentioned, John records just seven specific miracles, out of the countless ones Jesus did during His ministry. So, we ask the question, why these specific seven?

One of the clearest things that emerge as we study these miracles is that they tell the story of mankind, the predicament we were in, and the life-changing effect that meeting Jesus has. One of the key underlying themes in the gospel of John is that we were in darkness, unable to see the extent of our own plight, but Jesus came as the Light of the world to deliver us from the spiritual darkness caused by sin, and lighten the way back to God through faith in Him.

Of the six miracles we have observed so far, we have seen:

#1 (John 2:1-11) Water to wine:

'Water-pots' originally designed for that which is holy, but that has become empty and made of stone. These were taken by Jesus and caused to bring forth fruit.

#2 (John 4:46-54) Healing of the nobleman's son:

We then saw that the basis for bringing this dead/dying child back to life was faith in His Word alone.

#3 (John 5:1-47) Healing at Bethesda:

The reality of our situation was again underlined with the man at the pool of Bethesda, completely powerless to help ourselves, having spent a lifetime looking for a way, Jesus comes at the appointed time, and by His Word we are imparted a strength to stand that was never in us before.

#4 (John 6:1-6) Feeding of the 5000:

Jesus is the Bread of Life, and can provide for our every need. He hasn't just filled us with new wine, given us life and strengthened us, He provides all that we need right here and now.

#5 (John 6:15-21) Walking on water:

He is then able to keep us (safe) above (or below) the waves of life because He is Lord of all. We just need to keep our eyes fixed on Him.

#6 (John 9:1-41) Healing of the blind man:

As we build to a conclusion, we find that Jesus removes the blindness that kept us in darkness from birth. When our eyes have been opened we see things we couldn't even conceive of before. Jesus gives us more understanding than our teachers (cf Psalm 119:99 / John 9:30-34), and we come to the place where we worship Him as Lord.

#7 (John 11:1-57) Raising of Lazarus:

The final miracle will see the raising of the dead to new life – but we will look more closely at that when we get there!

John 9:1-2

1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

Just as with the man at the sheep pool, it is almost certain Jesus had passed by this man on many previous occasions; yet it is now He chooses to heal him. There is nothing haphazard or random in Jesus' ministry – everything is according to God's divine plan, laid down before the foundation of the world.

The disciple's question was a result of Jewish tradition that attributed physical sickness to a past sin. In one sense all sickness is the result of sin – going back to the Garden of Eden. If Adam hadn't sinned, there would be no sickness. Sin introduced sickness into the human race, and we are now all suffering from the effects of the fall. The perfect genetic blueprint from Adam has been corrupted many times over, and this is the reason for sickness in general. However, the Jewish tradition was in error to assume that each specific sickness or disability was the result of a specific sin that had been committed in the past. Having said that, throughout scripture we find 'the law of sowing and reaping': "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Also Hosea 8:7: "*For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*".

So although not the norm, God does bring His judgment on those who are in rebellion, and sometimes this can be in the form of physical sickness. (See Acts 12:23 / 2 Kings 5:25-27 / 2 Chronicles 13:20 etc).

The healing of blind people is the most common recorded miracle in the gospels, and ultimately speaks of each of us and the reason Jesus had come – to turn men from darkness (blindness) to light. To give sight to those who could not see on account of their sin.

It is interesting that this blind man had no idea what the world looked like; he had never experienced colour, seen shapes, or watched a sunrise. The contrast is just as marked for those who are dead in trespasses and sins before they 'come to the Light'. Unbelievers cannot understand or comprehend the truth.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14).

John 9:3-4

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

G Campbell Morgan suggests that the way these sentences are punctuated (and separated by the verse division) betrays the real meaning of the text. Rather, the text should be rendered as follows:

Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents.[i.e. this man's blindness is not the result of this man's nor his parent's sin].

But that the works of God should be made manifest in him I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

In other words, Jesus took this opportunity to do the works of His Father, using this blind man as a practical demonstration of a deeper spiritual lesson – this is what Jesus goes on to explain...

John 9:5

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

What did Jesus mean by this? Is it to imply that there is a time coming when He would no longer be in the world and the light would be gone? In a nutshell, yes!

There was a time before Jesus came when the world was in darkness; but now Jesus' has come the light has been manifest for all to see, The light however, was not removed when Jesus returned to His Father, because His light still shines through all those who are His, by the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven".* (Matt 5:14-16)

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil 2:14-15)

But, there is coming a time, as Jesus said in verse 4, when *the night cometh, when no man can work*. This will be after the removal of the Church from this earth at the time of the Rapture. The apostle Paul told the church at Thessalonica: *"For the mystery of iniquity is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."* (2 Thess 2:7-8)

The 'He who restrains' is the Holy Spirit who indwells the Church. At the time of the Rapture, the Church will be removed, and the Holy Spirit – who was given to the church by Jesus with the express promise that He would 'abide with you forever' (John 14:16) – will also leave, making way for the 'mystery of iniquity' to be fully revealed. This will see the ushering in of the kingdom of Antichrist and the darkest time the world has known. By God's grace, some people will still be saved during this time, but the light which burns brightly for all men in the present age will be extinguished, and the majority of mankind will be deceived by 'lying signs and wonders' (2 Thes 2:9).

John 9:6

When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

Jesus didn't need to do this – He could have simply spoken a word and the man would have been healed. So why make clay? We will find in verse 14 that Jesus chooses to do this on a Sabbath day! And, according to Jewish tradition, spitting on a rock was permitted, but to spit on the dust, and thus make 'clay' was considered to be working! Of course the Law said no such thing, but the Jewish leaders had tried to codify and legislate so much that they had destroyed the spirit of the Law (2 Cor 3:6). Jesus therefore does this to expose their false and empty religion – which could never please a holy God.

John 9:7

And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

At this point, we need to remember that this man has little idea who Jesus is; all he knows is that Jesus did not blame him for his blindness (see again verse 3). We have already seen that Jesus spoke like no other person (John 7:46), and that His words were Spirit and life (John 6:63). We also know that Jesus did not judge according to appearance (as if to look at this blind man and ascribe his condition to his sin), but rather He judged righteous judgment. (John 7:24). It is no doubt, because of these things that this blind so willingly complies with the request of a complete stranger who had just smeared his eyes with mud.

The pool of Bethesda was actually closer, but Jesus specifically names the location, and John emphasises the importance of this detail by telling us that the name is actually translated as 'Sent' (or more accurately 'the sent one').

John 9:7 (cont'd)

Thus Jesus is telling this man to go to 'the sent one', and there wash. Because we know the outcome, it is easy to miss the obedience, humility, and faith of this man. There is a parallel here with the account of Naaman the Syrian in 2 Kings 5, who whilst at first refused to go and wash in the Jordan, later humbled himself and obeyed, resulting in his healing from leprosy. The underlying message here is one of the simplicity of salvation. There were other pools this man could have gone too, but only one 'sent one'. The message of salvation is that simple: come to Jesus (the sent One), believe His words, be washed and start seeing.

It is also interesting to note that the waters from the pool of Siloam were collected in a great reservoir for the use of the city; there was ample water at 'the sent one' for any who would humble themselves and wash there.

John 9:8-9

8 The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

There is a touch or irony here, this man can now finally see, and the world doesn't recognise him! Such is the transformation of one whose eyes have been opened by Jesus. As we move from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, so we will become alien to the world around us and they too will not recognise us. This man, no doubt hearing the comments feels compelled to testify 'It is me!'

John 9:10

Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened?

Something they cannot understand has taken place, so his' neighbours' look for an explanation. The world will always try to find a rational explanation.

John 9:11

He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

Moments like these are priceless: the man, still not quite sure of all that has happened, simply tells it like it is. He doesn't try to explain how, or why, he just points to Who, and what happened as a result. Sometimes, when we are witnessing to others, we try too hard to explain the unexplainable instead of just pointing to Jesus and what He's done.

John 9:12-13

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

This is such a predictable (human) response from these people; something incredible has taken place, they are eyewitnesses and could simply just accept and believe, however they bring this man to the Pharisees to seek their opinion. Unless the great authority (whoever or whatever that may be) in our life sanctions something, we are unwilling and lack the confidence to simply accept it. We want verification, an official seal of approval before we will believe; we want others (usually the majority) to decide for us, rather than be bold enough to stand alone – even if the proof is before our eyes. This is why so many reject the gospel, not because they don't (or won't) believe, but because they lack the courage to stand out from the crowd. The Bible calls this 'the fear of man': "*The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe*" (Prov 29:25)

John 9:12-14

And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

John includes this as almost a side comment, yet Jesus had intentionally chosen to do this miracle on this day, knowing the reaction it would bring.

John 9:15

Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

You get the sense that this man is started to get tired of this interrogation! Back in verse 11 he had given a full answer, now it is condensed: *He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.* What else is there to say?

John 9:15

Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

As we commented back in verse 6, spitting in the dust and thus making clay was considered work, and this is the ‘offense’ which some of the Pharisees accuse Jesus of.

Nothing will bring a greater division than our position regarding who Jesus Christ really is.

John 9:17

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

The question is: ‘given that this man has opened your eyes, who do *you* think He is?’ Jesus was originally just a man to him (v11), but now he is in no doubt this Jesus has to be a prophet of God. He will eventually realise that Jesus is not just a prophet, but his Lord (v36/38).

John 9:18

But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

The testimony of this man was not what the religious leaders wanted to hear. They were having a hard enough time just trying to play down the things Jesus was saying, but miracles like this would really cause a stir. So, they opt for the age old tact: discredit the witness. We need to understand that when we stand up and testify to what Jesus has done for us, people will quickly seek to discredit our testimony – often by pointing to something in our lives, or past – that will cause the ‘onlookers’ to be distracted from what we are saying. This is one reason the Apostle Paul says that church leaders (but it applies to us all) should be ‘beyond reproach’, so as not to give the Devil this foothold. *“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil”* (1 Tim 3:7)

In the case of this man, there was nothing he had done wrong, so they expose the depth of their desperation in trying to annul his testimony by questioning if he had been blind in the first place! And so the parents are called:

John 9:19

And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?

Notice: ‘who ye say’. The Jews imply that his parents are making this up: ‘because, if he were born blind, how can explain the fact that he can now see?’

John 9:20-21

20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

21 But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

The man’s parents are prepared to commit so far (‘yes he was born blind’) but no further (‘ask him, he’s old enough’). Once again we see the fear of man coming to the fore.

When our eyes have been opened by Christ, we should not be surprised if even those close to us keep their distance: *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it”*. (Matt 10:34-39)

John 9:22-23

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

To be put out of the synagogue would be to be treated as outcasts, hence the response from the parents.

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven”. (Matt 10:32-33)

People are so concerned about their social standing and reputation that they will deny their Creator so as to maintain ‘favour’ with man. In truth, favour with man is very short-lived, whereas favour with God (through Christ) is eternal. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:” (Phil 2:5-9)*

When we see ourselves as we really are – sinners fallen short of God’s perfect standard – we realise we have no (good) reputation to maintain – but rather are glad to die to the old life, be given a new name and be called the sons of God! That is the highest position a person can ever attain – and it is freely offered to all who repent and believe.

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (Gal 6:3)

John 9:24

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

By saying this (‘give God the praise’), the Jews were in effect trying to put this man under oath, with the hope that he would retract his previous remarks...

John 9:24

He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

What could the Jews say to this? Under oath or not, his statement was irrefutable! All you need to know to witness for Jesus is that, you were blind, now you see! The rest is just details.

John 9:26

Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?

Unable to force a retraction of his confession, the Jews now try to find another way to ‘explain this away’.

John 9:27

He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

You begin to sense the man’s frustration with all of this; and it would appear to be sarcasm rather than naivety that prompts his question: will ye also be his disciples?

John 9:28-29

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples.

29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

If they truly were Moses’ disciples they would have known that Moses wrote of Jesus (see John 5:46). Jesus was the I AM who spoke to Moses at the burning bush, He was the Rock in the wilderness, the only Door to the tabernacle & the sin offering for mankind. The writings of Moses offer the most compelling arguments that Jesus is the Messiah!

John 9:30-33

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. (note the sarcasm again!)

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

Many times in the Old Testament we read that God opens the eyes of the blind (Ex 4:11 / Psalm 146:8 / Isaiah 35:5 / Isaiah 42:7). Thus this man is sure that this was a work of God. After all, God does not regard sinners (Psalm 66:18), so this Jesus had to be a 'worshipper of God'. The fact that 'since the world began' nothing like this had happened, was evidence enough that Jesus was of God as far as this man was concerned.

John 9:34

They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?

The blind man sees, and the religious leaders who were supposed to see are blind. They echo the tradition that sickness was a result of sinning. Ironically, he was teaching them! "*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation*" (Psalm 119:98-99). This man had obeyed the command of Jesus and now he had become wiser than his 'enemies'.

And they cast him out... They immediately excommunicated him, as the margin properly reads-drove him from their assembly with disdain, and forbade his further appearing in the worship of God. Thus a simple man, guided by the Spirit of truth, and continuing steady in his testimony, utterly confounded the most eminent Jewish doctors. (Adam Clarke)

John 9:35

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

When we have been cast out by men, we can rest assured that we will be sought out by Jesus! The question in effect was 'do you believe in the Messiah?' – for this is how Jewish ears would have understood the phrase 'Son of God' (cf John 1:49).

John 9:36

He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?

We must remember that up until this point, the man had not seen Jesus; he had only heard His voice. Later, Jesus will say to Thomas: "*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*". (John 20:29).

John 9:37

And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

The man had heard His voice, he is now looking into His face. There must have been much for his mind to process since receiving his sight earlier in the day, but nothing compared to seeing the Messiah with his own eyes!

Fanny Crosby, the well known hymn writer, was born blind, and once said: "*It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me.*" If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour."

For those of us who do have the gift of sight, let us say with the Psalmist: "*Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way*". (Psalm 119:36-37)

John 9:38

And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

How wonderful this moment must have been! After a lifetime of blindness, to now be looking into the face of his Healer, Saviour and Lord – no wonder he worshipped Him, the only fitting response.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”
(1 John 3:2)

“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death”. (Rev 1:17-18)

John 9:39

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

In a word: humility. *“for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted”.* (Luke 18:14)

There are many who will remain spiritually blind because they won't admit they cannot see.

John 9:40-41

40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Er.....Yes!

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

*“Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and **their eyes have they closed**; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them”.*

(Acts 28:25-27)

CHAPTER 10

John 10:1

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Jesus now uses the analogy of a sheep, shepherd and sheepfold to communicate some basic truths; there is much that can be drawn from the relationship between the sheep and its shepherd that typifies our relationship with Jesus. The writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as ‘*that great shepherd of the sheep*’ (Heb 13:20). Peter calls Him ‘*the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*’ (1 Peter 2:25), and ‘*the chief Shepherd*’ (1 Peter 5:4). The dependence of the sheep on the shepherd has its parallel in our need and complete dependence on Jesus.

Jesus starts this analogy by underlining the significance of what He is about to say: *Verily, verily, I say unto you...* The initial issue is the sheep and those who would have rule over them. The Pharisees who had sought to take rule over the people had invented ways to enforce obedience from the sheep; they had, in effect, climbed into the sheepfold some other way.

We have many today in the ‘sheepfold’ of Christ’s church, who seek to rule over the sheep, yet they have not entered through the Door, but are nothing more than thieves and robbers. These self-appointed shepherds continually fleece the sheep by promises of health, wealth and happiness. This should not surprise us as it is exactly what Peter foretold: “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

John 10:2

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

Not only is Jesus the true Shepherd, He is also the Door, He is the only way into the sheepfold. All those who would become shepherds of the sheep (i.e. pastors of Christ’s sheep) must enter through Christ – the chief Shepherd – being appointed by Him (see Eph 4:11), and should follow Christ’s mandate to feed His sheep (with the solid food of His Word): “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **Feed the flock of God** which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*” (1 Peter 5:1-4)

John 10:3

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

In this ‘parable’ Jesus introduces the idea of a porter, or guard, such as there would have been on the sheep pens in and around Jerusalem. The porter would enable the shepherd access to the sheep.

Typologically, the Holy Spirit is the one who today enables the shepherds of Christ’s sheep. The responsibility of the ‘under-shepherds’ is not to get the sheep to know their own voice, but rather to make them so familiar with the voice of Jesus that they will be led by Him. It is Christ who calls all those who are His by name, each one is special and precious to Him.

John 10:4

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

What a comfort – when we are ‘put forth’ into the various situations we face in life, Jesus goes before us, we can then follow by hearing His voice (usually for us this is through His Word – hence the importance of daily reading if we are not to go astray!).

John 10:5

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

Sadly, this is the way it should be, but sometimes not the way it is. Too many of Christ's sheep do not know His voice well enough and often get led away by 'strangers' rather than flee from them. Our only safeguard against deception is to know His Word – His voice. We have a plethora of courses and programmes in today's church that are supposed to help us be better Christians, and achieve a greater degree of success; yet in reality they are, in the main, man-made schemes, that unless you already have a good understanding of God's Word, can actually be very unhelpful (at best!). If we are not to go after strangers, we must get to know His voice.

John 10:6

This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

As is the case with all parables Jesus spoke, they concealed truth concerning the church that had been hidden in the ages past (see Eph 3:4-6), but now was being revealed to His own. In Matthew 13, regarding parables we read: "*And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*" (Matt 13:10-16)

John 10:7-10

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

The opening six verses of this chapter deal with those who would rule over the sheep; now Jesus turns His attention to the sheep themselves, how they are to enter the sheepfold, the freedom they have once they are there, and the abundant life that is available through Jesus.

There is only one way into the sheepfold, through the door; there is no other way in; and so it is with the kingdom of God. The religious superiority of the Pharisees (and others who had come before Jesus) would not give them access, nor would any amount of good works. It should come as no surprise that prior to Jesus, 'the sheep' had not been swayed by the religious externalism of the Pharisees or other religious leaders; '*the sheep did not hear them*'. However, any who hear Jesus, and seek to enter through Him will be saved, and in so doing will find a new life and freedom from sin that was never possible under the Law. All other 'paths to God' will only steal from us, kill and destroy us. However, in Christ we can live life in all its fullness, the way God intended.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Jesus now separates Himself from all the would-be shepherds who had gone before Him, by revealing the extent of His love for the sheep.

John 10:12-13

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

Whether thinking of those who had gone before Him, or looking forward to that which was to come, Jesus now contrasts His love for the sheep with that of a hireling. In the context, a hireling would be one who was to be paid for looking after the sheep, but had no natural affiliation with them. Consequently, if trouble were to arise, his first thought would be for his own safety, often at the expense of the sheep.

We find exactly this in the church today; many ministers are little more than hirelings, chosen by men to look after a congregation. When trouble comes they will flee because they have no natural affiliation for the sheep. In the New Testament we find that men God had chosen were appointed over the local congregation of believers where they were, thus there was a strong natural bond between the pastor and the sheep (see Titus 1:5). In today's church, in many denominations, ministers and pastors church hop every few years, never having really fulfilled Christ's mandate of feeding the flock of God with His Word.

In some churches, it is the sheep who decide who is going to be their shepherd! If they don't like a particular shepherd, they remove him and replace him with someone who suites their tastes a little better! This is what the apostle Paul said would happen: *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* (2 Tim 4:3-4). It is no wonder the church has become so biblically illiterate.

John 10:14

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Given the above, what a comfort to know that every true believer is called by name and is part of Christ's flock – and He is the good shepherd!

and am known of mine... Those who know the voice (Word) of the Shepherd know the Shepherd. We should not underestimate the vital importance of knowing the voice (Word) of the Lord if we are to really know Him. An interesting example is found in John 20, where Jesus appeared to Mary after the resurrection: *"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master."* (John 20:15-16).

Regardless of why Mary did not recognise Jesus (something we will consider when we get to chapter 20), her 'experience' let her down and she failed to recognise Jesus because the way He appeared was not what she was expecting. Much of our decision making and opinions are based on what we expect, or consider a likely outcome, but this can often lead us to wrong conclusions. However, the moment Jesus called her by name, she immediately recognised His voice. Do we know the voice of the Lord well enough so as not to be put off by our circumstances?

It has been said that Satan's preferred instrument is the eyes, whereas God's preferred instrument is the ears. In the book of Romans Paul said: *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom 10:17). David said in Psalm 119:105 *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* – The way he should go, the path he should tread were illuminated by the voice of the Lord through His Word, David learnt not to rely on his natural sight.

John 10:15

As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

God knows all things, and so we see here another declaration of Christ's deity – knowing what no one else could know: the heart of God. And God's heart was that Christ would lay down His life for the sheep.

John 10:16

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

If there is one verse that encapsulates God's plan for all of history it is this one! Although God separated Abraham and made of him a great nation – through whom the Saviour came into the world – the promise was made that in Abraham (and subsequently through Christ) all nations would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). Because of their unbelief, rebellion and rejection of the Messiah (Matt 23:37), Israel's eyes have been temporarily blinded until 'the fullness of the gentiles have come in' (Luke 19:42 / Rom 11:25). But the mystery of God's will is "*that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him*" (Ephesians 1:10). In the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22) we see the 12 apostles (representative of the church) and the names of the 12 tribes (representative of the house of Israel) united as one people for eternity. God will be our God, and we will be His people (Rev 21:3), and Jesus will be our Shepherd, reigning for all eternity.

John 10:17

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

God's love for His Son is a perfect love, made possible because of Jesus' perfect obedience to the will of His Father.

John 10:18

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Jesus makes it clear that neither the Jews nor the Romans were responsible for His death. It was a decision made by the Godhead before the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8).

John 10:19

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

This was indeed heavy stuff for the Jews – so it is hardly surprising there was a division over the incredible things they had just heard.

John 10:20-21

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

As we have previously noted in our study, neither camps here look for verification from the Word of God; their assessment is based on their natural observations and opinions. Miracles themselves are a poor basis for our trust in Jesus (as we saw in chapter 4:47-53). Later, (in verse 38) Jesus will say to the Jewish leaders: '*at least believe in me because of the miracles*', but this is not to advocate such a weak foundation for our faith, for we are told that "*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Rom 10:17) – that is the foundation that will not be moved! Paul tells us that Satan will actually deceive the world using miracles (signs and lying wonders - 2 Thes 2:9). That is why we are to walk by faith, not sight.

These Jews however, were just focussed on the 'tangible' outward effect of the miracle; whereas the removal of the spiritual blindness is a much greater work.

Jesus does care for the natural order of things – 'give us this day our daily bread'.

But, this is immediately followed by – 'and forgive us our trespasses'

Of the two, the latter is of infinitely more value!

John 10:22

22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

The 'feast of dedication', referred to here by Jesus, occurs around the 18th of December; and is also known as Hanukkah, 'Festival of Lights' or 'Festival of Rededication'. For the background regarding this feast, see Appendix E.

Scholars are divided as to whether all the events of chapter 10 occur three months further on than the events of chapter 9 (which occurred at the Feast of Tabernacles Sept/Oct), or whether chapter 10:1-21 are a follow on of chapter 9, and now with verse 22 we jump forward around three months. Either way, Jesus picks up again on the shepherd/sheep analogy.

John 10:23-24

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

Although Jesus had declared Himself to be the Messiah by inference, and offered witnesses to verify His claim, (a point proven by the Jew's desire to stone Him for blasphemy), He had not just 'come out with it' and said it in black and white. Because of this the Jewish leaders ask Him to publicly state in effect 'I am the king of Israel'. This was not out of a genuine desire to know, but rather because they wanted to accuse Him to the Roman officials.

John 10:25

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

In asking the above question (verse 24), the Jews were disregarding and discounting the works He had done, along with witnesses Jesus had called to testify on His behalf (i.e. John the Baptist, the prophets, Moses, Abraham, and His Father).

Jesus' response is to explain that despite the evidence that has been presented, they have chosen not to believe.

John 10:26

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

The reason they don't believe is here explained.

There are many people in this world that will ask us for proof that what we believe is true. First of all, it should be stated that there is no shortage of evidence: we can prove the existence of God and the supernatural origin of the Bible from history, geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry and more. There is no shortage of evidence – remember the Apostle Paul reasoned and disputed with the Greek philosophers (the academia of the day). However, just as with the Jewish leaders, evidence is not what they need. It is not a case of seeing then believing, but rather it's believing that enables you to see.

John 10:27

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

In contrast to the Jewish leaders who had blocked their ears, Jesus' sheep – those who by faith had believed – had unblocked ears and eyes that could see, and so were willing to follow their Shepherd. This has not changed in 2000 years.

John 10:28-29

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Now we come to two of the most important verses in the Bible. There has been centuries of debate over the question of eternal security; there have been good scholars and theologians on both sides of the debate. One point of view suggests that it is possible to 'fall from grace'* and lose your salvation, the other side flatly denies this, claiming that 'once saved, always saved'. Chuck Missler makes the insightful comment that both views are right in what they assert, but both are wrong in what they deny!

The importance of these verses in this debate is that they clearly state that (point no #1) Jesus gives to His sheep eternal life. If it is eternal it can never be lost or rescinded – or it would not be eternal life. If you were to receive a jug of water that would never run out, no matter what you or anyone else did, you could be certain of one thing – it would never run out! And so it is with eternal life. Point no#2 is that Jesus' sheep will never perish - the same argument applies; the one thing we can be sure of is that, no matter whatever else may happen, Jesus' sheep will never perish. Thirdly, Jesus declares that no man is able to pluck the sheep out of His hand. You and I are part of mankind; so if no man means no-man, then as members of mankind, you and I would also be unable to remove ourselves from His hand – and as His sheep why would we want to?

John 10:28-29 (cont'd)

The final promise is that Christ's sheep are also in the Father's hand, and again, no one (including you and I) are able to pluck us out of His hand.

Stepping back, we realise that we are in the safest pair of hands imaginable! People will continue to debate this issue, but there is no getting around what Jesus says here.

So if our eternity is secure, what about 'backsliders'? The truth is that (going on Jesus' explanation in Matthew 13), there is no such thing as a backslider. We all too often use the term 'backslider' to denote a false convert, someone who has never come to genuine repentance even though they may profess to believe in Jesus.

For a good review of this issue, listen to 'True & False Conversions' by Ray Comfort:

<http://www.livingwaters.com/learn/trueandfalse.htm>

The other area that generates misunderstanding is rewards; John will say in his second letter: "*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*". (2 John 8). Some mistakenly see this (and other similar passages) as a warning about losing our salvation, but we cannot work for, or earn, our salvation. Throughout the New Testament we are promised rewards for faithful service, but this has nothing to do with our salvation or sanctification which is entirely a work of grace – a free gift that cannot be earned. Our rewards are given for faithful and obedient service and will be awaiting us in heaven (cf Matt 6:19-20 / 1 Cor 3:12-15 / 2 Peter 1:11). A diligent study will show that many of the conditional promises for Christians found in the New Testament (the 'if you....', 'then...' type promises) are in regard to the rewards that can be earned, and not in regard to salvation. The only 'if you...' connected with salvation is 'if ye repent' (Luke 13:3 / Acts 2:38 / Acts 3:19 etc). Once we humble ourselves, admit our own sin and need for a Saviour and truly repent (to turn around and go in the opposite direction), putting our trust in Jesus, we will be saved (by His grace) and receive the free gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who will put into us that which was never there before viz. a holy character.

*The phrase 'fallen from grace' actually comes from Galatians 5:4 and is used by Paul in addressing a hypothetical issue. Nowhere does Paul advocate, or even imply, that it is possible for a believer in Christ to lose their salvation; he actually goes to the other extreme and basically says that he couldn't lose his salvation even if he wanted to! (see Rom 9:3).

John 10:30

I and my Father are one.

After stating that His sheep are firmly held in His hand and His Father's hand, Jesus explains how that is possible – simply because He is one with the Father.

'If Jesus Christ were not God, could he have said these words without being guilty of blasphemy? It is worthy of remark that Christ does not say, I and MY Father, which my our translation very improperly supplies, and which in this place would have conveyed a widely different meaning: for then it would imply that the human nature of Christ, of which alone, I conceive, God is ever said to be the Father in Scripture, was equal to the Most High: but he says, speaking then as God over all, I and THE Father -the Creator of all things, the Judge of all men, the Father of the spirits of all flesh -are ONE, ONE in nature, ONE in all the attributes of Godhead, and ONE in all the operations of those attributes: and so it is evident the Jews understood him'

- Adam Clarke

John 10:31

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

With this, the Jew's 'blasphemy monitor' goes off the scale, Jesus is claiming to be God! Hence, again they reach for stones to stone Jesus, the prescribed punishment for blasphemy (Lev 24:14-16).

John 10:32-33

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

If there is the slightest chance that through our study in John's gospel it has been possible to miss the fact that Jesus repeatedly declared Himself to be God in the flesh, we can at least thank the Jewish leaders for this answer! There is absolutely no doubt in their mind as to the implications of all Jesus had said.

Many cults deny that Jesus is God, and say that He never claimed to be; if that were the case He could simply have cleared up the confusion at this point. Instead, He drives the point home

John 10:34-36

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

Jesus points them to Psalm 82:6 (and as an aside Jesus classes even the poetical books as part of 'the Law'). There the context is referring to judges (or magistrates) over the people. Commenting on this, Adam Clarke says the following:

'If those were termed gods who were only earthly magistrates, fallible mortals, and had no particular influence of the Divine Spirit; and that they are termed gods is evident from that scripture which cannot be [set aside]; what greater reason then have I to say, I am the Son of God, and one with God, when, as Messiah, I have been consecrated, sent into the world, to instruct and save men; and when, as God, I have performed miracles which could be performed by no power less than that of omnipotence?' - Adam Clarke

Once again Jesus confounds them and leaves them with no reply.

John 10:37-38

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

Jesus lays it out before them: *If the works I have done do not demonstrate a supernatural ability that only God could do, then don't believe me. But if the works demonstrate that God is at work in your midst (even though you don't want to believe Me), accept it on the basis of the miracles, so that (in order that) you may know (i.e. by believing you will see) that the Father is in me, and I in Him.*

The Jews started this conversation, back in verse 24, asking for Jesus to tell them plainly if He was the Christ. Their intention was to trap Him into saying something they could use against Him before Rome. Jesus gives them the answer they were seeking, but without any ammunition to use against Him. He could not have answered their question clearer or more emphatically, yet there was nothing in what He said that would be of the slightest interest to Rome, to whom this was just a Jewish religious issue.

John 10:39-40

39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,

40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

Even though they had already wanted to stone Him, under Roman law they did not have the power to execute someone; their frustration is now reaching fever pitch. Once again – supernaturally – He escapes.

John 10:41-42

41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

42 And many believed on him there.

Many did believe John's testimony, and accepted the miracles as proof of His divine mission.

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## Appendix A – Light of The World

In Job 38 God gives Job a science quiz and, among other things, asks him *“Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof”* (Job 38:19). This confirms something now known by modern science: light moves, but darkness is fixed. Before going on, I’ll pose the question: ‘What is darkness?’ or to put it another way ‘How do you measure darkness?’ If we think long and hard we will come to the realisation that darkness does not actually exist in and of itself; darkness is simply the absence of light. We can measure light, but we can only ‘measure’ darkness by the amount (or lack) of light present.

In Genesis 1:3 we find one of the most well know verses in the Bible: *“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”* Now, the common understanding of this verse is that God says: ‘Let there be light’, at which point light appears; and that is certainly what happens. However, if we look at the Hebrew (see slide at the bottom of this post), we find that what God actually says is: “Be light, be light” or we could say: “Let light be light”. Another way we could render this would be: “Let the Light illuminate”, and now we begin to see something incredible! Who is The Light? Jesus Christ!



In 1<sup>st</sup> John we are told that *“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all”* ( 1 John 1:5). This is also stated in the opening of John’s gospel: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All*

*Lit: “And God said, ‘Let light be light’”*

*And God said, ‘Let the Light illuminate’*

*things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him [i.e. the Light] might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* (John 1:1-9)

Thus, from these verses we see that God, in the person of Jesus, is the Light, and the Creator of all things. He Himself said: *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* (John 8:12). Was this just a metaphor? Apparently not, for in Revelation 21:23 we read: *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* (Rev 21:23).

Another verse that sheds some light on this subject (pun intended!) is 2 Corinthians 4:6: *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”.*

Here Paul is referring to Genesis 1:3, but notice what we are told: God commanded the light to shine. For God to command the light to shine, the light had to be in existence prior to this point; in other words it was not created but was pre-existent!

This would seem to be confirmed in Isaiah 45: *“I form the light, and create darkness”* (Isaiah 45:7). The Hebrew word for ‘form’ is *Yatsar* and it means to ‘fashion, form, frame, make through the squeezing into shape’. In other words, it is working with something that already exists. However, in contrast to this, create (darkness), is the Hebrew word *bara*, meaning to ‘create out of nothing’. God does indeed create darkness (out of nothing) simply because He is Light. The fact that He is light makes it possible for darkness to exist. The same idea is carried on in the second part of the verse where we read: *“I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things”*. Many people have struggled with this verse because they think it makes God the author of evil; until, of course, you realise that, just as darkness is the absence of light, so evil is the absence of God. Evil exists because of the absence of God in the hearts of those who reject God. God does not ‘form’ (*yatser*) evil from something that already existed, He ‘causes’ it to exist (*bara*) out of nothing – i.e. it hasn’t always been there. It only became a possibility with the existence of beings (angels and humans) who have the power of choice – choice that allows them to reject God.

One final thought: If God commanded Jesus, who is Light, to ‘illuminate’ the world (as I believe Genesis 1:3 is saying), and we know from Colossians 1:16-17 that Jesus created all things that exist, then, we could legitimately say that ‘Light created all things’. Why am I making this point? Well, simply because of the following:

### Symmetry of Design

- Each particle has an antiparticle  
particle + antiparticle  $\leftarrow ? \rightarrow$  annihilation + photon
- Physicists suggest this is a reversible reaction
- The implication...
- Light could have created matter!

Particle physicists know that each particle (the smallest physical object – smaller than an atom) has an anti-particle. If a particle and anti-particle combine they will annihilate each other and emit a photon (the smallest unit of light). What’s provocative is that it’s believed that this reaction could be reversible. This would mean that, from a photon (a single unit of light), it would be possible to ‘create’ a particle and its corresponding anti-particle. In other words, some particle physicists now believe that all you would need to create matter, is light! –

And what has the Bible said for thousands of years?

‘In the beginning God – the one who is Light – created all things!!

## **Appendix B - Was It Mary's Egg?**

By Maureen Forder

The dictionary states that 'to conceive' means 'to become pregnant'. We read in [Genesis 38 v 18](#) of Judah and Tamar that *'she conceived BY him'* The only other similarly worded phrase is in [Matthew 1 v 20](#) where we read *'For that which is conceived in her is OF the Holy Spirit'*.

The Genesis reading could have said 'conceived OF him'; so too, the Matthew reading could have said 'BY the Holy Spirit'. But they don't. The inference of the Genesis reading is that Judah was the natural father of Tamar's child, she being the natural biological mother.

The reading in Matthew reads that the baby which was conceived in Mary was totally from God – **not Mary's egg**.

The problem with the idea that it was Mary's egg is that Jesus would have inherited traits from Mary like any baby does from its mother. Mary, in her 'song' when she met Elizabeth said, *'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my SAVIOUR.'* ([Luke 1:46-55](#)). She recognized that she needed a saviour – that is, she also recognized that she was a sinner.

This being so, had the egg been Mary's then her baby, Jesus, would inherit the sinful nature – as we all do from our natural parents. We know that Jesus was sinless for we read in [2 Corinthians 5 v 21](#) *'For He has made Him to be sin for us (on the cross) who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'*

In [Matthew 1 v 18](#) we read *'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child OF the Holy Spirit'*.

Jesus no doubt cared very much for Mary, for she carried Him, the Son of God, for nine months and then gave birth to Him. But see His reaction to her in the following verses.....

[Matthew 12 v 46-50](#)... *'While He yet talked to the people, behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Then one said to Him "Behold, your mother and your brethren stand without, desiring to speak with you." But He answered and said to him that told Him, "Who is my mother? And who are my brethren?" And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, "Behold, my mother and my brethren!" For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, my sister, and mother'*. (See also [Luke 8 v 20-21](#))

[John 19 v 25-27](#).... *'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He said to His mother "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple "Behold, your mother!"'.....*

Nowhere in Scripture does Jesus call Mary 'Mother'.

Jesus also says in [Matthew 11 v 11](#) *'Verily I say to you, among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist....'* See also [Luke 7 v 28](#)

As all are born of women, He was separating all mankind from Himself. After all, someone else DID rise greater than John the Baptist – Jesus. If it was not Mary's egg, then He was not born of women.'

There is no other apparent reason to use this phrase 'born of women' than to distinguish between men and Jesus.

Luke 11 v 27-28 seems to be out of context to the verses either side, but must be there for a purpose. It reads: *'And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said to Him 'Blessed is the womb that bare you, and the paps which you have sucked.' But He said 'Yes, but rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.'* Again, Jesus takes the emphasis off Mary.

#### An Error or Insight?

Luke 1 v 31 says *'And behold, you shall conceive in you womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call His name Jesus.'* Conception happens in the fallopian tube [not the womb], the embryo then 'journeying' to the womb. God could easily implant the embryo complete into Mary's womb. We can choose what to believe, but the truth is in the Bible. The main point is that Mary, in Jesus eyes, is the same as other Christians. She was chosen for an extra special job – are we willing to let God use us as He chooses?

#### A few more verses to ponder:

Romans 8 v 3....' *God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh....'*

Galatians 4 v 4... *'But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, (note: not 'born of a woman') made under the law. To redeem them that are under the law....an heir of God through Christ'*. If Christ was 'made' under the law then He was put in the position of being subject to the law. In the same way, if He was 'made' of a woman then He was put in the position of being subject to Mary i.e. in her care, for her to bring Him up in her family.

Hebrews 2 v 17... *'Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like His brethren....to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.'*

In Matthew 13 v 55 we read of Jesus' brothers and sisters. If the egg was Mary's then they could claim to be half brothers and sisters to Jesus and therefore God. There couldn't have appeared to be much difference about Jesus to His brothers and sisters (other than He never sinned) in that His 'brothers' did not accept Him until after the crucifixion. Then they would have understood the reasons why He never got into the same 'scrapes' as them. If they had known just who He was, then His ministry would have been so different than what God had planned.

James – a brother – opens his letter with *'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'*

Jude, another 'brother' says in verse 21.... *'looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.'* Not a thing one would expect if they were biologically half brothers.

Romans 1 v 1-3 says....'concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh.' (The lineage from whence Jesus came)

1 Corinthians 15 v 47 *'The first man is of the earth, earthy (Adam) , the second man is the Lord from heaven.(Jesus).'* Adam was created by God from the dust (no mother or father). Jesus is God and similarly has no (earthly) biological parents. Isaiah 9 v 6 sums up where we and Mary are in all of this. *'For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.'*

Amen

## Appendix C

### A Jewish Wedding – A Taste Of Things To Come

#### A Jewish wedding

Most of us in our western culture will know little or nothing about a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony. However, to Jesus and His disciples, the following would have been very familiar.

#### Kiddushin

Marriage to the Jews is extremely serious, it is a 'holy institution' ordained by God. Its very name in Hebrew, 'Kiddushin', means "sanctification". In 1 Thes 4:3 we read: *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual immorality"*. If God's will for the Church is that we be married to His Son, how appropriate that our being 'set apart' (sanctified), and our remaining pure (abstaining from sexual immorality) should be joined together in this verse.

A typical Jewish wedding is separated into two parts,

- 1) the 'Ketubah' (Betrothal), and
- 2) the 'Huppah' (wedding ceremony), which includes and is followed by the 'Nisuin' (wedding feast).

This is very much like our engagement, which would be followed by the Wedding Day/Reception.

The Ketubah to a Jew however, is a far more serious commitment than we tend to view an engagement. The Ketubah is in fact a marriage contract between the groom and his bride. After the groom has purchased his bride, he draws up a contract in which he undertakes to give all that he has in order to provide for every need of his bride, not only while he is alive, but also in the event of his death. This is exactly what Jesus has done for us. He has purchased us, and has written a new covenant in His blood to ensure His bride – the Church – has been given *'exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think'* (Ephesians 3:20).

To mark this contract, the Jewish groom and bride drink from a cup of wine. Our agreement was sealed in an upper room (Matt 26:28) where the Groom shared a cup of wine and said *"I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."* (Matt 26:29) After this, it is customary for the Chatan (groom) and Kallah (bride) to remain apart for the time leading up to the wedding day. During this time the groom will return to his father's house to prepare a room for his bride. Our Groom said: *"I go to prepare a place for you. And 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."* (John 14:3)

The bride, meanwhile, will visit the ritual bath known as the Mikveh. The purpose of this is so she can cleanse herself spiritually and enter marriage in a state of complete purity – without spot or blemish (Eph 5:27).

One part of the ritual includes removing all manmade things (such as jewellery and nail polish etc) and then being fully immersed in water while reciting a special prayer. She is supervised and assisted during the ritual to ensure it is done correctly. This is incredible! The Holy Spirit has been given for the Church to prepare us to meet our Bridegroom. We too should be fully immersed in the water of God's word, so that we should be without spot or blemish (Eph 5:25-32). We should purge ourselves of all that is in this world, *"For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."* (1 John 2:15-17)

### Huppah

At the appointed time, the Jewish groom will then return with a shout and a blast of a ram's horn to claim his bride and take her back to the 'Huppah', which is traditionally held at his father's house. By entering the house, the woman is declaring her official independence from her family and accepting the protection of her husband. What a parallel this is to the Rapture when there will be a blast of a trumpet and a shout, and then we will rise to meet Jesus in the air. As with a Jewish wedding we will also go back to the Father's house, thus forever severing our ties with this world. For a Jew, the wedding ceremony now begins and the couple say their 'vows' reciting 'the seven blessings' whilst holding a second cup of wine. These blessings begin with 1) praising God for His creation in general, then 2) praising Him for making man in His image, 3) then praising Him for making a "two part creature", man and woman, 4) then acknowledging that only together can they be complete. 5) In the fifth blessing they pray for the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple. 6) The sixth blessing expresses the hope that the bride and groom will grow in love for each other, focusing their love as exclusively as Adam and Eve, when there was no one else in the world. 7) Then finally, the seventh blessing is a prayer for the Messiah to come and redeem the Jews from exile, so that peace and tranquility will reign over the world.

Once the seven blessings have been said, a Jewish couple will drink from the second cup of wine and the marriage is sealed. Again, Jesus said: *"I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."* (Matt 26:29) After this comes the wedding feast and celebration, usually accompanied by much singing and dancing! At the end of this, the Sheva Brachot, the wedding blessing, is pronounced. The same is true for the Church, for in Rev 19:6-9 our own 'Sheva Brachot' will be pronounced.

In Matthew 22:2-3 we read *"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son..."* If God has indeed arranged a marriage for His Son, is it surprising that it has been arranged to model a Jewish wedding, when His Son was in fact born as a Jew?

## Appendix D Was St Francis of Assisi A Sissy? – By Ray Comfort

One hundred and fifty thousand children had been on the brink of starving to death, but thanks to the kind gift of a very generous billionaire, every child now had enough food to keep him alive. That gift had arrived in the form of one big check. The horror was now over. It was finished. It was just a matter of distributing the food using the few relief workers we had. Without them to get the food to the children, there would have been many more deaths. Some days later, a frantic worker burst into the camp and cried, "Some of the relief workers have stopped distributing food. *Masses of children are dying!*"

Why would the workers stop when there was plenty of food? It didn't make sense. The distraught man said, "It's because one of them held up a sign that said, 'Feed the starving children. Where necessary, use food.' That has caused some of the workers to simply befriend the starving children without giving them food. It's insane!"

The first time I ever heard of Saint Francis of Assisi was back in 1965. It was during the surf movie "The Endless Summer." Four surfers who were chasing the sun discovered the perfect wave, at a place in South Africa called "Cape Saint Francis." The sight of the perfect wave excited me beyond words.

### *The Unspeakable Gift:*

The next time I heard of him was when I heard that he said "Preach the Gospel at all times. Where necessary, use words." That statement upset me beyond words, because it was a philosophy that I knew sounded deeply spiritual . . . to those who were spiritually shallow. It made as much sense as "Feed starving children. Where necessary, use food."

On 16 July 1228 Francis of Assisi was pronounced a saint by Pope Gregory IX. That's a long time ago, so it's a little late for questions, but if I could I would like to find out why anyone would say such a strange thing? Was it because he was fearful to use actual *words* to preach the truth of the Gospel? Or was it because he thought that people would see that he had good works and hear the message of salvation without a preacher, something contrary to Scripture's "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

Whatever the case, 800 years since Francis we have many who profess faith in Jesus, and are no doubt using this popular philosophy to justify being speechless. To them salvation truly is an "unspeakable" gift.

Recently someone told me about a conference where 100,000 Christians gathered to worship God. When I asked if they were exhorted to go out and preach the Gospel to every creature, it was no surprise to me that they weren't. Instead, they were exhorted to live a life of worship. Again, that sounds spiritual, but you can't worship God without obedience to His Word, and His Word *commands* us to preach the Gospel to every creature.

I regularly meet those who think they can obey the Great Commission without using words. When they hear the Gospel preached that are usually offended and say things like, "I appreciate what you are saying, but I don't like the way you are saying it." With a little probing, they are the relationship folks, who think preaching the Gospel means building relationships with the lost, and never mentioning words like "sin," "Hell," and "Judgment Day." They think that *real* love is to withhold the Bread of life from those that are starving to death. Remember that Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me *and of my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38, italics added).

According to the dictionary, a "sissy" is "a timid or cowardly person." From what I understand of Saint Francis, he was no sissy. He was a loving man who was not afraid to use words when he preached. He wasn't frightened to preach repentance to a sinful world. However, there have been times when *I* could have been called that name. I have felt the grip of fear and have wanted to drop words such as sin, Hell, repentance and Judgment Day when I have preached to sinners. I don't want to come across as being unloving or judgmental, but I fear God more than I fear man. So when God's Word tells me to use words, I use words, despite the consequences.

Listen to the Apostle Paul's sobering warning to his hearers: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 26-27). Perhaps he spoke about being free from their blood because he was familiar with God Himself warning Ezekiel of his responsibility to warn his generation: "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' *and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.*" (Ezekiel 3:18, italics added).

When someone thinks that they can feed starving children and not use food, that's their business. But when their philosophy spreads throughout the camp, it becomes an unspeakable tragedy. If we become passive about the Great Commission because we are more concerned about ourselves than the eternal well-being of others, we may be able to hide our motives from man, but not from God. He warns, "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" (Proverbs 24:11-12).

There's an interesting irony to this story. After a little research I came across a quote about the famous saying. It is from someone who had been a Franciscan monk for 28 years--and had earned an M.A. in Franciscan studies. He contacted some of the most eminent Franciscan scholars in the world to try and verify the saying. He said, "It is clearly not in any of Francis' writings. After a couple weeks of searching, no scholar could find this quote in a story written within 200 years of Francis' death." (1.)

So if it wasn't Saint Francis who said not to use words, who was it? Who is it that would like to see the truth of the Gospel hindered from being preached to every creature? That doesn't need to be answered.

The time is short. The laborers are few. Please, cast off your fears and equip yourself to preach the Gospel with words. They *are* necessary.

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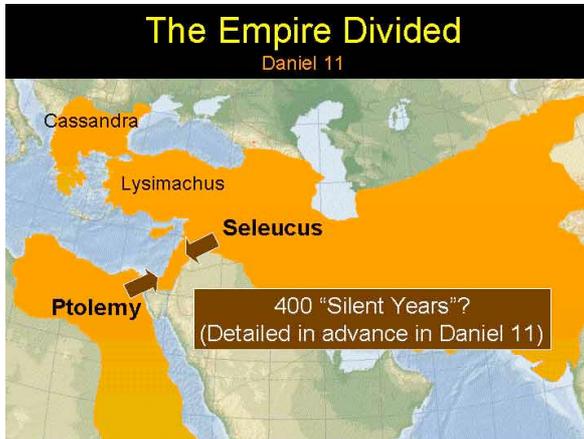
(1.) [www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Oct2001/Wiseman.asp](http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Oct2001/Wiseman.asp)  
For [Evangelism](#) Resources, please visit [LivingWaters.com](http://LivingWaters.com).

## Appendix E

### Hanukkah – The Feast of Dedication (John 10:22)

#### **Background:**

Following the death of Alexander the Great, a long rivalry had developed between the Seleucid Empire (covering approximately Syria and beyond) and Ptolemaic Empire (covering approximately Egypt)



According to the book of 1 Maccabees in the Apocrypha, and other historical records, Antiochus IV was the 8th king of the Syrian dynasty, reigning from 175 – 164 B.C. He ascended to the throne after the death of his father and imprisonment (by Rome) of his elder brother, Seleucus Philopator. Yet Antiochus was not the rightful heir, for Seleucus had a son. However, as prophesied by Daniel (Dan 8:25), by flattery and bribery Antiochus succeeded in becoming king. He invaded Egypt and defeated Ptolemy VI, but on his way back

he stopped of at Jerusalem. Jerusalem was situated right in between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires, and acted as a ‘buffer zone’ in between the two rival kingdoms. As you can imagine, the Jews were not very enamoured by this and tried to resist. In response, Antiochus plundered and desecrated the temple and even went as far as sacrificing a pig on the alter. He tried to do everything he possibly could to offend the Jews as can be seen from the following record from 1 Maccabees:

*“And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah: he directed them:*

- to follow customs strange to the land,
- to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary,
- to profane Sabbaths and feasts,
- to defile the sanctuary and the priests,
- to build alters in sacred precincts and shrines for idols,
- to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and
- to leave their sons uncircumcised,

*They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they [the Jews] should forget the law and change the ordinances. And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die”*

Antiochus put an idol in the temple and stopped the daily sacrifices. Here we see a foreshadowing or model of what Antichrist will do. Jesus himself referred to this event as the ‘abomination of desolation’ and prophesied it happening again during the coming time of Tribulation (see Matthew 24).

#### **The Maccabean Revolt**

In 167 B.C. a Jewish priest, by the name of Mattathias, was so incensed by the desecration of the temple and the erecting of an idol in the holy place that, not only did he refuse to worship this idol, but also started killing the Hellenistic Jews\* who did. (\*Jews that had adopted the Greek culture and lifestyle). As a result of this, he and his five sons were forced to flee into the wilderness. After Mattathias' death about one year later, his son Judas Maccabeus (whose name meant ‘hammer’) formed an army and led a revolt against Antiochus IV, which in 164 B.C. was eventually successful in overthrowing the Seleucid control of Israel. When the Jews finally entered the temple they found only one days supply of the consecrated olive oil that was needed to maintain the light on the great seven-branched lampstand called the ‘Menorah’. According to the Law of Moses this was to be kept continually burning. The Jewish Talmud records that the priests poured the oil into the seven lamps and lit them to bring forth light. Miraculously, to one days supply of oil burned for eight days - which was the length of time it took to press, prepare and consecrate new oil.

**The Feast of Dedication**

To commemorate this event the Jews added the Feast of Hanukkah, also called 'Festival of Lights' or 'Festival of Rededication' to their annual feasts. Whilst not specifically given by God, the validity of this feast is confirmed in John 10:22: "*And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.*" (John 10:22-23). After this event, the Maccabees then founded the Hasmonean royal dynasty and established Jewish independence in the Land of Israel for about one hundred years, from 165 B.C. to 63 B.C.

For a detailed study of the above, see study notes on the book of Daniel:

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## Appendix F The Feasts & The Labour Cycle

There is an amazing design hidden behind the timing of the Feasts of Israel that makes us stand back in awe at the God who has given us this unique and wonderful treasure we call the Bible.

The Feast of Passover is a celebration of the new life that God gave to Israel by bringing them out of captivity in Egypt. Christians also can see a clear model of how we, like Israel, were in slavery - to sin. We too were saved by the blood of a lamb - the Lamb of God. Thus in a very real way the Feast of Passover becomes a model of our new life starting when we are born again. Even to this day, Jews who celebrate Passover, place an egg on the 'Passover table' on the 14th of Nisan to symbolise new life.

If we now consider the start of a human life and the timetable of a human pregnancy we will discover that the blueprint for this is hidden in the Feasts of Israel that were recorded thousands of years before medical science made the discoveries we now know.

The best time to conceive is on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of a woman's cycle. For pregnancy to occur the egg must be fertilized within 24 hours. If we compare this with the Feast of Passover, we realise that it also falls on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month. The next feast is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which according to Jewish law, must occur the next day.

The next feast is the Feast of Firstfruits, which, contrary to tradition, was not on a fixed date but could fall anywhere from two to six days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Amazingly, as any gynaecologist will confirm, once an egg is fertilized, it travels down the fallopian tube at its own speed taking anything from two to six days to arrive safely at its destination in the womb.

Next we have the Feast of Pentecost that occurs exactly fifty days after Firstfruits. From the point an embryo reaches the womb it starts to grow, but nothing dramatic changes until it becomes an actual foetus when it takes the form of a tiny baby. This happens exactly 50 days later!

It is no coincidence that 50 days after Christ's resurrection on the Feast of Firstfruits, the Church took on the appearance of a body as a result of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Church technically began at Firstfruits when Jesus rose again, bringing new life to all who would accept it, but it wasn't until Pentecost that it had a noticeable structured form.

Once a baby has passed the 50<sup>th</sup> day, the growth is gradual with nothing momentous happening until the 1st day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. According to medical textbooks, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month the baby's hearing is fully developed. The baby can then distinguish one sound from another. For example, a trumpet can be heard as a trumpet. Any guesses as to the next feast of Israel?

*"And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation". (Lev 23:23-24)* This is the Feast of Trumpets! Now all this could be just coincidence, but then again.....let's continue.

*"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement" (Lev 23:26-27).* So the 10th day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month was to be the Feast of Atonement. The next significant event in the development of an unborn child occurs.... yes you guessed it, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month!

At this stage there are important changes in the blood and it is necessary for the foetal blood, which carried the mother's oxygen through the baby's system, to change in such a way that the baby can carry the oxygen it will obtain upon birth. Technically, the haemoglobin of the blood has to change from that of a foetus to that of a self-respiring and circulating human being.

A foetus doesn't breathe, but rather depends on the oxygen obtained through the mother's blood circulation. Naturally, this system must be changed before birth, and that change occurs according to the textbooks, in the 2nd week of the 7th month, and to be precise on the 10th day. It is on that day according to the Mosaic Law, that the high priest takes the blood into the holy of holies and presents it as an atonement for the sins of Israel. Leviticus 17:11 puts it this way, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul"*.

So, we've now reached the 10th day of the seventh month in the development of a human child, but the baby is not ready to be born. One more development is yet to occur, which coincides perfectly with the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, which in the Law of Moses is when the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated. At this point the lungs are developed; this is a major step in the development of a child, because once the lungs are operating, even if it is then born prematurely, the child stands a very good chance of survival.

This is an incredible picture of the feast of tabernacles! The tabernacle is the 'house of the Spirit'. The Hebrew word for 'Spirit' is the same word that is translated 'breath'. So the tabernacle is literally the 'house of breath', and the lungs are indeed the 'tabernacle' of the breath – God breathed breath into Adam to make him become a living soul and Jesus breathed on the disciples and said : *"Receive the Holy Spirit"* (John 20:22)

At this point 'our baby' could survive and is now as good as ready for birth, but we've only reached 200 days and a normal pregnancy should last 280 days. The Feast of Tabernacles however, marks the end of the Levitical feasts as recorded in Leviticus 23; so we ask: is there anything in the Jewish calendar that occurs at 280 days?

Amazingly, on the 280th day of the Jewish calendar we come to another feast, not one of the Mosaic feasts, but rather one that was added much later - the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah as it is called today. In Daniel 8:9-14 we read that an 'abomination of desolation' would result in the daily sacrifice in the temple being taken away. This prophecy was fulfilled in 167 BC when a Selucian ruler called Antiochus Epiphanes captured Jerusalem and desecrated the Jewish Temple, sacrificing a pig on the altar. However as Daniel had prophesied, after 2,300 days the sanctuary was cleansed thanks to the revolt against Antiochus led by Judas Maccabees.

When the Jews finally entered the temple they found only one days supply of the precious consecrated oil that was needed to maintain the light on the great seven - branched lampstand called the 'Menorah'. According to the Law of Moses this was to be kept continually burning. The priests went ahead and poured the little precious oil they had into the seven lamps and lit them to bring forth light. However, it would be 8 days before more oil could be supplied. During those 8 days a miracle occurred; the one days supply lasted for 8 days!

So in honour of the 'miracle of light', the Jewish people added the Feast of Dedication to their calendar - on the 280<sup>th</sup> day. Whilst not specifically given by God, the validity of this feast is confirmed in John 10:22. It is on this day that the (textbook) pregnancy ends when a baby is born and sees the light for the first time!

Thus we have the feasts of Israel and the pregnancy cycle in harmony. As the medical knowledge necessary to verify this was not known until recently, and the feasts of Israel were established thousands of years ago, the only logical conclusion can be that both were intentionally designed by the same Author to validate God's Word as supernatural, again showing that only God knows the end from the beginning and has revealed it to His servants in the pages of the Bible.