

The Gospel of
John



Chapters 11-21

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

Calvary Chapel Poole

Study Notes on John

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Study notes for chapters 1-10 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 single 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 by which you judge.

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 their 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 (lit. the Messiah).

When we survey the four gospels, we get a complete picture of the carpenter from Nazareth, who created all things, who 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 (cont'd)

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', and 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 the 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, to list just some. 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)

Summary of chapters 1-10

As we have seen in the opening chapters of John's Gospel (1-10), Jesus came to shine His perfect light on man's true spiritual condition, showing us the extent of the darkness we had fallen into (John 1:1 / 3:19). Rather than just appear on the scene and declare 'I Am the Light of the world, follow Me!' – for who in their right mind would follow such an unsupported claim? – Jesus pointed to numerous witnesses that upheld His claim to be the Son of Man, (i.e. the Messiah). John the Baptist testified; the miracles Jesus did testified, God had testified, the prophets had testified, and the scriptures had testified. There could be no reasonable doubt that Jesus Christ was 'sent from heaven' (John 6:38), - for '*never man spake like this man*' (John 7:46), for '*no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*' (John 3:2) – and that He was the promised Messiah of Israel.

However despite the overwhelming evidence, the Jewish leaders were becoming more and more incensed at this man, not least for what they saw as blasphemy: '*because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God*' (John 10:33). Although some modern critics and cults try to say that Jesus never claimed to be God, the Jewish leaders were in no doubt whatsoever! And notice that Jesus doesn't try to correct them for misunderstanding Him! With His bold 'I Am' statements He was undeniably declaring Himself to be God in the flesh.

As we have seen, the Jews had tried to take Jesus on previous occasions, possibly from jealousy, certainly to stone Him for blasphemy, but were, for some reason, unable. This went hand in hand with Jesus' continual playing-down His identity. Whilst Jesus had continually insinuated that He was the Messiah and King of Israel, He had refused to publicly state it, and had actually repeatedly told people not to make Him known, because *His time was not yet come*. The Jews had tried to trap Him into a confession, so as to accuse Him to Rome, but Jesus had not played their game. Why all this intrigue? Why not just come out and say who He was? Simply because His hour was not yet come.

All of this changes as we move into the second half of John's Gospel. Chapters 1-10 have covered approximately three and a half years. Chapter 12 to chapter 20 cover just one week – the most important week in human history!

The Jewish leaders' hatred of Jesus now turns from 'reaction' to His statements, to a calculated plotting to kill Him. And we will finally arrive at the long awaited 'hour' that Jesus had spoken of.

Chapters 1-10 have been setting the scene for the greatest 'stage-play' the world has known. The principle character is Jesus Christ, but there is no audience. Every man woman and child are part of the cast, and the part you choose to play will determine your eternity.

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"

(John 12:46-48)

CHAPTER 11

John 11:1-2

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

In introducing us to Lazarus, and the fact that he was sick, John here alludes to an event that he records in the next chapter, but that actually took place a short while after this event (on the evening before the last supper). The fact that John mentions this twice would suggest that it had made a real impact on him, writing this account as he did, some 60 years later. (We will comment on Mary's anointing of Jesus in chapter 12).

John's gospel is the only gospel that records the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Whilst the other gospel writers do record people being raised from the dead, on those occasions the one raised had just died (within hours) (such as the daughter of Jairus). Not that that should make such incredible events seem any less miraculous, but here we find someone raised who had actually been buried and dead for four days!

As we have mentioned, John only records seven miracles performed by Jesus (other than the resurrection), and this is the seventh. The number seven in scripture denotes 'complete'; and with this miracle, the testimony offered by these miraculous proofs is indeed complete.

This final miracle John records speaks of those of us who were dead in trespasses and sins, and bound with the grave clothes of death, only to be raised when all hope was gone. (We will consider more types that can be seen at the end of the chapter).

John 11:3-4

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

It is sometimes hard to understand what the Lord is doing, but if we are saved and belong to Him, we can be assured that all that God allows is for His glory and our benefit.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28)

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing". (James 1:2-4)

John 11:5

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

As we read this, we may think how incredible to have Jesus as a close personal friend. And indeed, for Martha, Mary and Lazarus, how lovely to have recorded for eternity that Jesus loved them! But we are also His friends (John 15:13-15), we also can enjoy an intimate relationship with Him, and as John will say in his first letter: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1). We have been adopted into God's family and are now joint heirs with Christ! (See Romans 8:17)

John 11:6

When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

God's timing is not our timing, *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:9) – the big question is: Do we trust Him? Do we trust Him like Job trusted Him? *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"* (Job 13:15).

John 11:7-8

7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again.

8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

Jesus repeatedly took the disciples by surprise, why? Because, like us, they tried to figure out what Jesus was going to do next, and when He didn't do as they'd expected, it threw their calculations out, and it took them time to readjust. Of course, if they had taken note of that which He had spoken to them, they'd have understood that Jesus had to go back to Jerusalem for the final showdown (See matt 16:13-21). Our confusion in the midst of circumstances also comes from losing sight of His words.

John 11:9-10

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

Jesus explains to His disciples that there is an allotted time to sojourn, using the example of one who travels during the day time so as to see clearly his pathway. Jesus had an allotted time to sojourn on this earth, and although He is approaching His final hour (the hour He had so often spoken to the disciples of), they were not there yet. Nothing would befall Jesus before His sojourning was complete and the night had come. Then He would 'stumble'. The Greek word translated stumble is actually 'Proskopto' which literally means 'to strike at', i.e. surge against (as water); specifically, to stub on, i.e. trip up (literally or figuratively). When Jesus journey was completed, when the day was over and the night had come, this is exactly what happened to Him; He was struck at, surged against, and His light stubbed out – but only for three days and three nights! For on the morning of the resurrection, a light was lit that has been burning brightly for two thousand years, and will continue until the rapture of the church. (See notes on John 9:5).

John 11:11-13

11 These things said he: [bringing emphasis to their importance]: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

Jesus knows that by this time Lazarus has died, but chooses to use the analogy that he was sleeping. This is a fitting expression, for death for a believer is simply a time of rest and peace, looking forward to our awaking in the likeness of Jesus (Psalm 17:15).

Chuck Missler makes the comments:

"Sleep": This word is used for death several times in the OT. But in the NT it is used only for believers (1 Cor 15; 1 Thess 4:14; 5:10). Why does the Holy Spirit use the word "Sleep"?

- 1) Sleep is harmless. Ps 23
- 2) Sleep come as a welcome relief. Eccl 5:12
- 3) We lie down to rise again. Dan 12:2
- 4) It is a time of rest. Rev 14:13
- 5) It shuts out the sorrows of life. John 5:28
- 6) It speaks of the ease with which the Lord will awaken us. "He just speaks our name."
- 7) A time when the body is fitted for the duties of the morrow.

John 11:14-15

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

It is easy to be hard on the disciples for not understanding, but Jesus is ever patient with them (as with us – thankfully!), and wants to lead them into a deeper understanding and walk with Him. He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep!

John 11:16

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

This is the same Thomas who would later become known as doubting Thomas; from what we know of him in the gospels, he seemed to have a bleak outlook on life. Oswald Chambers comments: Thomas was naturally gloomy, not happy and healthy-minded, that was not the way he was made. He was loyal to Jesus Christ, but he took the "sick" view of life; he always thought the worst was going to happen. You remember that when Lazarus died and Jesus said He was going to Bethany, Thomas said, "Let us also go that we may die with Him." It was no use going to Thomas and preaching the gospel of cheerfulness; you cannot alter facts by saying "Cheer up." What did Jesus Christ do for Thomas? He brought him into personal contact with Him self and altered him entirely (see John 20:24-29).

- Oswald Chambers – Workmen of God

John 11:17

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

Jesus had intentionally set out from where He was two days after getting the news that Lazarus was sick. Scholars think the journey would have taken around three days, so just as Jesus had confirmed to the disciples at the start of their journey, Lazarus would have been dead even before they set out.

John 11:18

Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off:

Fifteen furlongs would be about two miles. So Bethany would be just a short walk over the mount of Olives from Jerusalem. We will see in the next chapter that Jesus makes Bethany His temporary residence for the week leading up to the crucifixion.

John 11:19

And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

It is difficult to overstate the intensity of losing a loved one. Evidently, Lazarus was well thought of in that 'Many of the Jews...' Typically, mourning for the Jews at this time would have lasted for up to 30 days, with the first three days being known as the days of weeping, followed by seven days of lamentation.

John 11:20

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

From Luke 10:40 we know that Martha was the practical one of the sisters, given to organising. Mary was the one who had sat at Jesus' feet listening to His word. Maybe Mary had stayed at home, rather than go with Martha, out of disappointment that Jesus had not come sooner. There are certainly times we don't go to Jesus out of disappointment and frustration that He did not fulfil our plans at the time and in the way we decided it should be done. Again, His ways are above our ways... do we trust in His best for our lives?

John 11:21

Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Having seen Jesus heal so many that were sick and infirm, their hope was in what Jesus could do. By the end of this experience, their hope will be in who Jesus is. We must not let the blessings be the reason for our devotion. Do we love Jesus simply because of what He can do for us, what we can get from Him? Or do we love Him?

John 11:22

But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

Is this a statement of faith, believing that Jesus could raise Lazarus? Or is this a statement of resignation, that 'what's happened has happened, but I still trust in you Lord'. From the following verses, it would appear the latter is the case.

John 11:23-24

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

Despite the trust the Martha had in Jesus, her reply would indicate she was not expecting a miracle now.

John 11:25

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

We now come to the 5th 'I AM' statement that John records for us. '5' denotes grace and mercy (as we noted back in chapter 5), and God's grace and mercy abound here. Without Christ there would not, and could not, be a resurrection. The apostle Paul makes the point that the resurrection is the bedrock of our faith: *"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 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."* (1 Cor 15:13-22)

Job, in the midst of his troubles makes an incredible declaration concerning his confident belief in the resurrection: *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me".* (Job 19:25-27)

John 11:25 is often quoted at funerals, but it can only be of true comfort to those who are in Christ – those who believe in Him, for there is another resurrection for unbelievers... 'the resurrection of damnation' (John 5:29).

John 11:26-27

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

This is to be understood as whosoever lives in Christ, and believes in Christ shall never die. Belief on its own is not enough, we need to abide in Him, The question is to all of us: 'do you believe this?' Martha here, along with John the Baptist and the disciples had all reached this conclusion: that Jesus was the promised Messiah of Israel. The evidence was undeniable – but it was about to get a whole lot clearer!

John 11:28

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

Whatever Mary's reason for not going out to meet Jesus at the first, she would not refuse this personal invitation. Of course, each of us has had a personal invitation to come to Him; we too should rise quickly, not letting anything get in our way, and come unto the One who carries the burdens for the heavy laden and gives us rest. (cf Matt 11:28).

John 11:30

Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

Wherever they met was outside the town and presumably near the tomb (which traditionally would be outside the town/city).

John 11:31

The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

This shows how Lazarus was regarded by the Jewish leaders, for our of respect and compassion they seek to comfort his sisters. As Mary heads off, they follow.

John 11:32

Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Mary cannot conceal her emotion and frustration with Jesus' late arrival, and just as Martha had said (v21), she states her faith in what Jesus could have accomplished (past tense). By the end of this day that faith would be a whole lot stronger.

John 11:33-35

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

This is one of the most incredible scenes in the New Testament, where Jesus is weighed down with the grief and emotion of losing a loved one. Death is one thing we were not programmed to deal with, for God never intended us to die, but to fill the earth and subdue it, ruling His creation with Him for eternity. Death is alien to the way things should be, and this is why Jesus came, to defeat death and enable us to declare: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* (1 Cor 15:55)

Verse 35 is the shortest in the Bible, yet so precious:

"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)

"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." (Phil 2:5-8)

Jesus shed tears out of His love for Lazarus, but shed blood out of His love for you and me.

John 11:36-37

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

"Through the maliciousness of their hearts, these Jews considered the tears of Jesus as a proof of his weakness. We may suppose them to have spoken thus: "If he loved him so well, why did he not heal him! And if he could have healed him, why did he not do it, seeing he testifies so much sorrow at his death? Let none hereafter vaunt the miracle of the blind man's cure; if he had been capable of doing that, he would not have permitted his friend to die." Adam Clark

John 11:38

Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

Whether simply from grief, or possibly saddened by the comments of the unbelieving Jews, Jesus continues now to accomplish the purpose for which He had come to Bethany.

John 11:39

Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

Jesus' request must have come as a shock to all around; did Jesus want to see the body one last time? What purpose could there be in seeing Lazarus' corpse? And as the King James so eloquently puts it, by now Lazarus would stinketh!

John 11:40

Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

You can almost sense the shivers go down Martha and Marys' spines, as for the first time they catch a glimpse of what Jesus may be about to do! They had declared their faith in His ability, now Jesus was taking them one step further. Would they have the faith to move the stone, believing the unbelievable? (The priests had to get their feet wet before the Jordan parted (Joshua 3:13) – what is God asking you to do?).

Before we go on, just allow yourself to consider the situation and emotion here, if Jesus were about to do what they think He had just implied, accomplishing the impossible and bringing Lazarus back to life, what impact would this have on their lives? How would they view Jesus from now on? How could they possibly ever doubt Him again?

The next time you or I are in a situation where we think Jesus has 'arrived too late' to help or change the situation, remember this scene, and remember that He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He is just as able to be right there with you in your hour of need as He was with Martha and Mary, and if He arrives late, wait patiently for Him: *"I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD"* (Psalm 40:1-3)

John 11:41

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

Seemingly without hesitation – in faith - the stone is then moved, and Jesus begins to pray out loud:

John 11:42

And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

This then becomes one of the last great proofs of His deity as a testimony before the Jews. Only God would be able to raise a life that had been dead for four days, and you can almost hear the murmurings of the Jews amongst themselves: *'what if He does it, what will we say? What will it mean? What will happen now?'*

John 11:43

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

How amazing it must have been for Lazarus to hear the voice of Jesus calling him back from eternity into time. What an awesome day it will be when we too will hear Him calling us with a loud voice, *'with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God'*, only unlike Lazarus, when it is our turn, we will rise with incorruptible bodies fit for eternity! (See 1 Corinthians 15 / 1 Thessalonians 4).

John 11:44

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

How must those felt who approached Lazarus? What would they find as they unwrapped the grave clothes? Was it really him? The intensity of this moment is almost impossible to imagine. Then the grave clothes come off, and there is Lazarus, back from the dead!

John 11:45

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

Only the hardest of hearts could remain defiant after this. It is also interesting to note that before the darkness sets in, God ensures a final harvest of those who will believe. May God in His mercy allow one more great harvest in our days before the light is removed.

John 11:46

But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

‘Some of them’ - who had hearts of stone. Thus the end begins, and the countdown to the crucifixion. Up until now, they had wanted to stone Jesus for blasphemy; now they want to get rid of Jesus at all costs.

John 11:47

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

Indeed Jesus had done many miracles, but arguably none more dramatic than raising such a prominent figure as Lazarus. For the Jews, the situation was getting out of control...

John 11:48

If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

This was a very real concern, for if this led to an uprising against the Romans, Rome could crush Israel and she would be no more.

There is a very important doctrinal issue hidden in this remark, for it was the expectation of the Jews that when the Messiah came, He would deliver Israel from her oppressors – for this is what had been prophesied. Even the prophecies surrounding Jesus’ birth were all regarding a national deliver:

*“the Lord God shall give unto him **the throne of his father David**: And he shall **reign over the house of Jacob** for ever” (Luke 1:32-33)*

*“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me **that is to be ruler in Israel**” (Micah 5:2)*

*“He hath holpen his servant **Israel**, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” (Luke 1:54-55)*

*“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: **That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us**” (Luke 1:68-71)*

*“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, **Where is he that is born King of the Jews?**” (Matt 2:1-2)*

And on it goes...

Even the disciples thought Jesus would *‘at this time restore the kingdom to Israel’* (Acts 1:6)

What no one understood was that the Messiah had to come first as a suffering servant (Isaiah 53), and then a second time to rule over the house of Jacob, on the throne of David, thus fulfilling the countless prophecies and taking His rightful place as King of the Jews and deliverer of Israel from all her enemies.

Ironically, in trying to prevent an uprising against Rome, the Jewish leaders in rejecting Jesus and trying to hold on to all they had, ended up losing everything.

John 11:49-50

*49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,
50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

Amazingly the question of whether Jesus really was the Messiah doesn't even appear to have been entertained! The decision was made that 'Jesus was bad for business'; and so Caiaphas, having no idea of the prophetic significance of what he was saying, boldly states the express purpose of Messiah's first coming... John explains:

John 11:51-52

*51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;
52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*

Caiaphas' words are an incredible prophecy and confession from the lips of an unbeliever.

John 11:53

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

Now the gloves are off, the decision is made, they just need the right moment...

John 11:54

Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

We are so close... but not yet. This is Jesus' last retreat into the countryside before returning for the showdown. This retreat was again all to do with timing, timing that Jesus engineered in strict accordance to His father's plan.

John 11:55

And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

So now we come to the final Passover of His ministry and the moment Jesus had been waiting for. This trip to Jerusalem was a one way ticket. Jesus knew what awaited Him, for He had already read the script – a script laid out in Chapter 12 of the book of Exodus at the hand of Moses some 1500 years earlier. The script said that on the 10th day of the 1st month, a lamb was to be taken by the people. They were to keep it until the 14th day, and then kill it 'between the evenings'. The blood of the spotless Passover lamb was that which saved the people from God's wrath. That was the model, the dress rehearsal, now the real thing...

John 11:56-57

56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.

Was Jesus too scared to come? Hardly! Had they know the scriptures, they would have known Jesus had to come to this feast (not just because the Law required it, but because God had ordained it so). Rather than the chief priests and Pharisees 'taking Him', He would give Himself: "*my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*" (John 6:51).

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 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."

(John 10:17-18)

Lazarus – a model for us

There is another incredible model we find in this account of the raising of Lazarus. We have already noted that Lazarus is a type of all of us, having a sickness that leads to death. In the same way our sin separated us from God and causing immediate spiritual death and the gradually decay of our bodies ending in physical death.

With Lazarus, Jesus spoke his name and he was raised, yet still bound. He was free from the grave but bound by the grave clothes, still effectively powerless to help himself. Jesus therefore uses others to minister to Lazarus in removing the grave clothes.

Once they are finally removed he becomes a powerful testimony to the person of Jesus Christ, a *'living epistle, seen and read of all men'* (3 Cor 3:2).

Thus Lazarus was **dead**, then raised but **defeated**, but then **dangerous** in the eyes of the Jewish leaders. The next time we see Lazarus he is **dining** in the presence of the Lord, and thus we have a revealing model.

We were 'dead in trespasses and sins', but were then quickened (brought back to life) (Eph 2:1). However, our salvation from the penalty of sin did not free us from the power of sin that still bound us. However, Jesus, by His grace, begins in us the work of sanctification (Acts 26:18), often using others to minister to us to help remove the things that bound/bind us. This work is accomplished by prayer, fellowship, instruction from His word, and a continual reminder of His sacrifice for us that enabled us to be set free in the first place (see Acts 2:42 for this list).

Once saved from the penalty of sin, and delivered from the power of sin in our lives, we become 'living epistles' that declare the life changing power of Jesus Christ. We then become a threat to society as we declare (by our lifestyle and character) the righteous standard of God, and they *"think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you"* (1 Peter 4:4). We choose to *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them"* (Eph 5:11). We become the antithesis of everything the world stands for, although we should keep in mind, as Jesus said: *"The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil"* (John 7:7). The antagonism of the world toward us is actually toward 'Christ is us' convicting it of its evil deeds.

Once our 'assignment' is complete, and 'many have come to believe' because of the work of Jesus in raising us to new life, we will have the honour and pleasure of dining with Christ: *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God"* (Rev 19:9).

"But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:29).

Thus we were **dead**, then raised to new life yet **defeated**; but Christ would have us as **dangerous** ambassadors for Him against the enemy, and ultimately **dining** with Him when we finally cross that finish line and hear *"Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your Lord"* (Matt 25:23)

CHAPTER 12

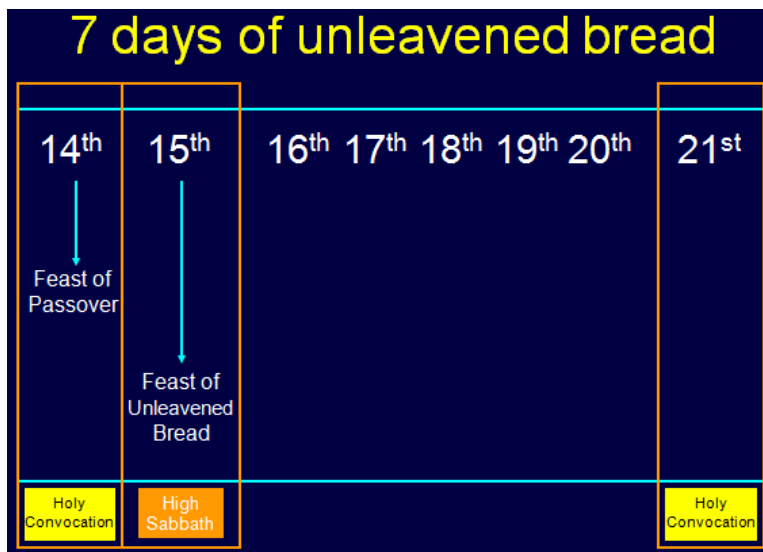
John 12:1

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

As we move into chapter 12 we move into ‘passion week’ – the week leading up to the crucifixion. Jesus now heads back to Bethany, the scene of the events in chapter 11, and because Bethany was just a short walk from Jerusalem, Jesus makes it his temporary home for this week, travelling each day into Jerusalem, and returning each evening.

“Then Jesus six days before the Passover...” This phrase has caused much debate among scholars in regard to the timing of the events of ‘passion week’. Much of the confusion comes from a lack of understanding of how John uses the word ‘passover’.

The Jews used the term ‘passover’ to refer not only to the 14th Nisan (the date when the Passover itself was to be remembered), but also to the entire festival period. Luke explains: *“Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover”* (Luke 22:1). The Jews, according to the Law of Moses (Ex 12:15,19 /13:6-7) were to eat unleavened bread for seven days. These seven days (beginning on the 14th Nisan) became known as both ‘the feast of unleavened bread’ (because unleavened bread was to be eaten throughout this time), and the passover, (because the Feast of Passover marked the beginning of this seven-day festival). What adds to the confusion is that the day following the Passover (on the 14th), was itself a specific feast day called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (celebrated on the 15th) (see table below). This was one of three specific feasts that all Jewish males had to attend each year, and was therefore designated a



The first and last days of this ‘festival were to be set aside and no servile work (i.e. work for which you would be paid) was permitted. See Exodus 12 / 23 & Leviticus 23.

One other thing that should be pointed out is that the Jews’ day began in the evening, so the 14th would actually begin at sundown on the 13th to our way of thinking.

So what has all the got to do with John’s remark *‘then 6 days before the passover’*?. Well, we will see that John consistently uses the phrase ‘the passover’ to refer to the ‘festival starting on the 15th and not the feast of Passover on the 14th. Why? you may well ask.

Simply because, whilst on the 14th no *servile* work was permitted, preparation of food etc. was allowed (see Exodus 12:16). Because of this the 14th became known as the day of preparation (John 19:31), where food etc. would be made ready for the 15th when absolutely no work was allowed. Thus the 14th, whilst being the ‘first day of unleavened bread’ and the Feast of Passover, was much the same as Christmas Eve is for us. Many people have Christmas Eve off work, but they don’t really sit down and relax until Christmas day. (Ed. or Boxing Day if you’re a Mum!)

This is also confirmed by Numbers 28:17: Num 28:16-17 *“And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten”*

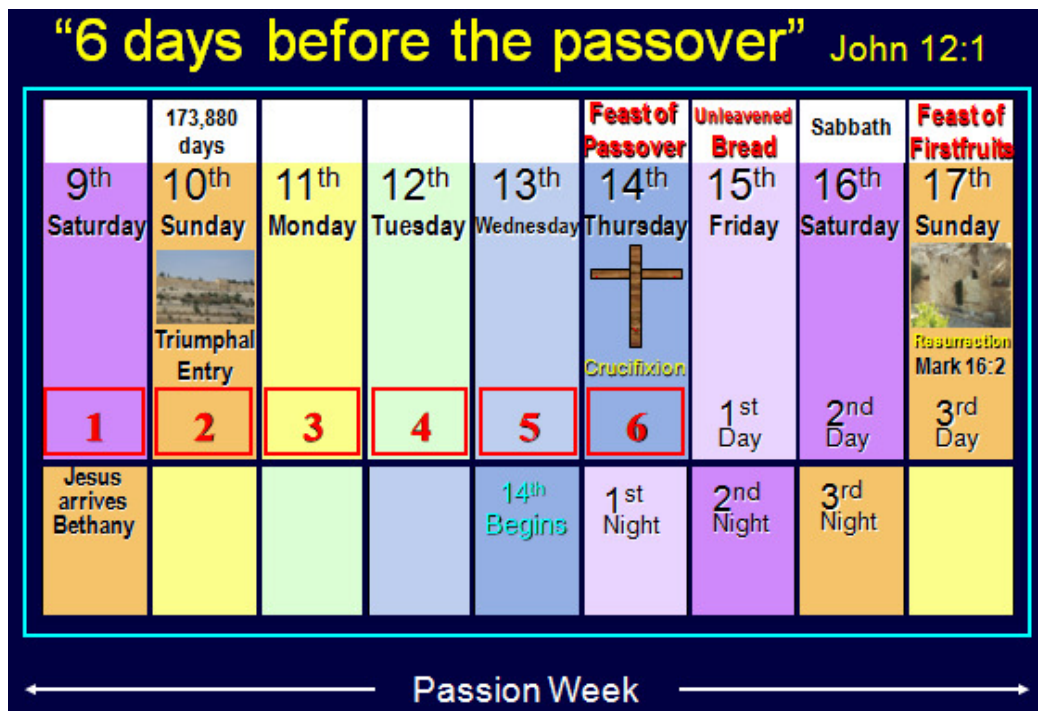
John 12:1 (cont'd)

The fact that John uses the phrase ‘the passover’ in this way can be seen from John 13:1-2: *“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.....”*

It is obvious from the context of this verse that Jesus has just finished the Passover meal with the disciples, yet John opens by saying: *“Now before the feast of the Passover”*. Thus it becomes clear that John is not referring to the Passover meal that they have just eaten, but to the Passover festival that really began in earnest on the 15th, which was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a ‘high sabbath’, and a day off work.

Commenting on this, Sir Robert Anderson says: *“[In] the same way that the Feast of Weeks came to be commonly designated Pentecost, the feast of Unleavened Bread was popularly called the Passover. That title was common to the supper and the feast, and included both; but the intelligent Jew would never confound the two; and if he spoke emphatically of the feast of the Passover, he would thereby mark the festival to the exclusion of the supper.”*

– Sir Robert Anderson. The Coming Prince



Many of the details that verify the timings shown above will be dealt with as we continue through our study of John’s gospel.

For a more detailed study of ‘passion week’ see:

‘Passion Week – Deliberate design in the scriptures’ available from www.dcf-online.co.uk

As can be seen from the above chart, Jesus arrived in Bethany in time for supper...

John 12:2

There they made him a supper; and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

John specifically mentions that Lazarus was there dining with the Lord. This is important for the model we have already mentioned, but also because of what John will continue to say in verse 9. Note also: ‘and Martha served’ – compare with Luke 10:38-42, see the change!

John 12:3

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

A diligent study of the timing of this event reveals an apparent contradiction; for all the other gospels place this event on the evening before the last supper (i.e the Tuesday), whereas, the way this reads in the English, it appears that John is placing this event on the Saturday evening (3 days before). Some would dismiss it as unimportant, others have suggested the events are not the same, occurring on different occasions, however the most plausible and consistent explanation is that John inserts this event as a parenthesis. As can be seen from the following, verse 2 naturally links to verse 9 and John's initial theme continues.

John 12:1-9 (highlighting John's parenthesis)

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

[Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.]

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he [Lazarus] was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

Verses 3-8 are probably inserted here because this event also took place at Simon's house, (albeit a few day later) but John needed to insert this scene at some point because 1) he wants to make mention of Mary (the other gospel writers omit her name – probably to protect her identity, their gospels being written much earlier than John's) and 2) he later picks up on the fact that Satan had put into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus (John 13:2). Unless John had therefore first given us the background that Judas' love of money had provided a foothold for the Devil (1 Tim 6:10), we could be left from John 13:2 thinking that Satan can control us as he wills. This is not the case, for "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4) Whilst the Devil roams about as a roaring lion.....seeking whom he may devour, (1 Peter 5:8), we are told that if we submit ourselves to God and resist the devil when we are tempted, he will have to flee from us (James 4:7). Therefore, one reason John may insert this brief account, is so that we are in no doubt that Judas 'opened the door' to the Devil by his love of money.

From a grammatical point of view there is no problem with this explanation either, for the 'Then' at the beginning of verse 3 could also be translated 'in like manner' i.e, 'also at Simon's house...Mary took..'

Having addressed that, we can now stop to actually consider this event, an event John deemed significant enough for him to mention it twice (Ch 11:2 & 12:3).

Scholars reckon the value of this perfume would be the equivalent to a year's wage. Given this, it maybe doesn't come as such a surprise that Judas was so outraged; how many of us would have thought first of all the practical uses for that kind of sum? Yet Mary is extravagant in her worship to her Lord. So often we think in terms of monetary value, yet the Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), and is able to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). There can be little doubt that Mary could have used this money for other things; to pay bills, purchase clothing, purchase food, to help toward moving to a more suitable property, etc. but her devotion to Jesus was the ruling passion in her life, nothing was more important to her.

We tend to think in the natural, considering all that we must do, putting that aside first before then seeing what is left for the Lord – and that applies to our time as well as our money; but Jesus says we must not be concerned with the natural:

John 12:3 (cont'd)

“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you”. (Luke 12:22-31)

“Take no thought for your life.” “Be careful about one thing only,” says our Lord—“your relationship to Me.” Common sense shouts loud and says—“That is absurd, I must consider how I am going to live, I must consider what I am going to eat and drink.” Jesus says you must not. Beware of allowing the thought that this statement is made by One Who does not understand our particular circumstances. Jesus Christ knows our circumstances better than we do, and He says we must not think about these things so as to make them the one concern of our life. Whenever there is competition, be sure that you put your relationship to God first. – Oswald Chambers

John 12:4-5

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

So often we can present such noble and practical reasons for not giving of ourselves to the Lord; *‘but we must spend time together as a family – we can always go to church next weekend, surely God wants us to look after that which He has given’* It seems so logical, yet it is in error – for God will always give back in abundant measure that which we give to Him. *“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting”* (Luke 18:29-30)

If you want your family life to be blessed, surrender it to the Lord, give your time to Him and He will bless you with quality time you could never have engineered on your own. If you want your finances to be blessed, give to the work of ministry as the Lord directs you, *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”* (Mal 3:10). We must learn the lesson from the book of Haggai: *“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes”* (Haggai 1:4-6). The people of Israel were focussed on the natural, practical issues, and had neglected to build the house of the Lord. Consequently, they actually suffered in the areas of life they were trying to build and protect.

John 12:6

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Of course, Judas' real motive was not the poor, but his own greed. We are not told if Judas was actually putting his hand into the bag and taking money out for himself, if he simply saw what was put therein as if it were his own, and in that sense he was a thief. Without wishing to offend or negate the work they do, many church treasurers have a similar heart, they see what is given as their personal responsibility and often won't allow it to be spent on the work of ministry because it is more important 'they' have a healthy balance. But people do not give to the Lord's work to see it sit in a high interest account, but to be put to practical use. This comes back to the Haggai principle mentioned above 'a bag with holes'.

John 12:7

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

Whether Mary understood the significance of what she was doing we cannot say, but clearly Jesus saw this as an anointing in preparation for His burial. A body would not normally be anointed before the death of the person, but this just goes to emphasise that, at this stage, Jesus was 'as dead' in as much as there was no way He was backing out now. He had come to do His Father's will, and he would not fall at the last hurdle.

In Matthew's and Mark's account, Jesus adds: "*Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her*". (Matt 26:13) Mary thus becomes an example of the way we should worship Jesus – i.e. without reservation.

John 12:8

For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Whilst giving to the poor is not discouraged by these verses – indeed we are told: "*Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble*" (Psalm 41:1) - and throughout the ages Christian institutions have certainly led the way in this area, we must take note that we will not 'make poverty history' all the time the world system is as it is. Only when Jesus is on the throne will we see true social justice. Satan would like nothing more than to sidetrack Christians by getting them on-board the social bandwagon, tackling the world's problems. We have a much more pressing social problem to fight: the sin that resides in every human heart, for which the only remedy is Jesus Christ. We must recognise our calling to preach the word, teach all nations, in all seasons, for what is the point of a socially perfect world, with poverty eradicated, if the fate of all the inhabitants is an eternity separated from God?

John 12:9

We now resume John's main theme that he began in the opening two verses;

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

Not surprisingly, the raising of Lazarus had caused quite a stir and the people all wanted to get a glimpse of this man that had been dead for four days.

John 12:10

But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

Never happy when they were upstaged (particularly by an event they simply could not reconcile with their belief that Jesus was a fraud), Lazarus had unwittingly become a target for the Jewish leaders. If they could kill him quickly, they could claim that the whole thing was an elaborate hoax. Lazarus was exactly the publicity they did not want, having now agreed that they would get Jesus (the one who had raised Lazarus) executed somehow. (see again John 11:50).

John 12:11

And this is the reason Lazarus had to go...

Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

John 12:12-13

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

This is clearly the day we commemorate as Palm Sunday, but it was not just 'any old day'. Most people will recognise that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy from Zechariah 9:9, but it was much more!

Palm Sunday – The Background

To really understand this event, we need to travel back to the book of Daniel, and that requires us understanding a little of the history of why Daniel was exiled to Babylon.

The LORD has delivered Israel from Egypt, led them through the Red Sea, and brought them to Sinai, where He gave Moses the Law to give to the people. The Law called for the people to live in complete obedience to God, having no idols or other gods. In addition, (when they had entered the promised land) they were to leave their fields each seventh year (something that has been shown to allow the nutrients to return to the soil) – see Lev 25:3-4.

Because Israel had failed on all these counts, God brought upon them the judgment He had forewarned them of: *“And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury... And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it”* (Lev 26:27-35).

This was precisely the reason God allowed the might of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon to put Israel under servitude (beginning 606 B.C.), and eventually allow Jerusalem and the land to be made a desolation (occurring in 587 B.C.). 2nd Chronicles 36 explains: *“Therefore he [God] brought upon them [Israel] the king of the Chaldees [Nebuchadnezzar], who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years”* (2 Chron 36:17-21)

In actual fact there were two periods of seventy years, one pertaining to the people, and one pertaining to the land itself:

Servitude of the Nation – 606 B.C. to 537 B.C.

“For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer 29:10-11).

Desolations of Jerusalem – 587 B.C. to 518 B.C.

“And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.”
(Jer 25:11-12)

Daniel was taken as a young teenager to Babylon in 606. B.C. and spent the rest of his life there. As an old man of around 83 years old, in the same year that Cyrus signed the decree allowing the Jews to return home (thus bringing to an end the ‘Servitude of the Nation’), Daniel set his heart to pray, firstly confessing the sins of his people, sins that has brought about the servitude, and then pleading with God regarding the future of Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday – The Background

Daniel's prayer is recorded in Daniel chapter 9, but mid way through he is interrupted: *"And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision"* (Dan 9:20-23).

In answer to Daniel's prayer, Gabriel gives Daniel a prophecy that spans the entire future of Israel from that point:

The scope of the prophecy:

24 Seventy weeks [490 years] are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy".

The 483 Years:

*25 "Know therefore and understand, that **from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks [49 years], and threescore and two weeks[434 years]: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."***

The Interval

26 "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

The final Seven Years:

27 "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan 9:24-27).

For a thorough study of this amazing prophecy, go to www.dcf-online.co.uk (verse-by-verse/Daniel).

However, the part that is of overwhelming significance in regard to Palm Sunday is verse 25.

Daniel is given a specific time period (483 years, which equates to 173,880 days), after which the Messiah would appear. From the point the command referred to was given (by Artaxerxes Longimanus on 1st Nisan 445 B.C.), 173,880 days takes to the 10th Nisan 32 A.D., the very day Jesus rides into Jerusalem! Thus, on this day, Jesus fulfils the prophecy of Zechariah and Daniel, proving beyond the shadow of a doubt that He was the Messiah. This wasn't a cryptic prophecy hidden from sight, it was a clear mathematical issue. Any Jew could have looked at the book (scroll) of Daniel and known when – to the day – the Messiah was to present Himself to Israel.

However it is precisely because they didn't know, that Jesus pronounces 'national blindness' upon them as recorded in Luke's account:

Palm Sunday – The Background

“And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least **in this thy day**, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are **hid from thine eyes**. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; **because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation**” (Luke 19:37-44).*

And so we see that on the very day prophesied over 500 years earlier, the Messiah did reveal Himself to Israel:

John 12:12-13 (cont'd)

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The ‘song’ the people sang on this day was actually Psalm 118, and was widely known as the Psalm to be sung when the Messiah would come. Although John doesn’t record it, Luke makes it very clear that the Pharisees were outraged at this ‘blasphemy’ and told Jesus to stop His disciples declaring Him the Messiah. For the first time in His entire ministry, Jesus does not play down who He is; up until now it has consistently been :

- *“mine hour is not yet come”* (John 2:1-4).
- *“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”* (John 6:14-15).
- *“My time is not yet come... for my time is not yet full come.”* (John 7:6-8).
- *“But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.”* (John 7:10).
- *“Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.”* (John 7:30).
- *“And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man”* (Matt 8:2-4).
- *“Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus **straitly charged them**, saying, See that no man know it”* (Mt 9:27-30).
- *“Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.....Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.”* (Matt 16:13-21).
- *“And he charged them that they should tell no man”* (Mark 7:36). *“And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”* (Mark 8:26).

But **now** Jesus says: *“I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out”* (Luke 19:40).

John 12:14-15

14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

We need to grasp the enormity of this day: not only for the first time did Jesus permit Himself to be worshipped as the Messiah, He had actually arranged the whole event, He set it all up specifically to be an undeniable testimony to His Deity and control of history. Undeniable that is, to anyone who hasn’t already hardened their heart, refusing to believe despite the facts.

John 12:16

These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

Although the disciples didn't immediately grasp the significance of the events of this day, it wasn't long before it all became clear.

In regard to 'the things that were written of Him', one such 'thing' is found in Exodus 12: "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, **In the tenth day** of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: **And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.**" (Ex 12:3-6)

Psalm Sunday happened to fall on the 10th Nisan – the very day the lamb's were being taken by Israel in preparation for the Passover. On this day Jesus – the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world - was taken by Israel. In just four days time, many of those waving branches and singing Psalm 118 would be shouting 'crucify'.

John 12:17-18

17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

It appears that those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus, were partly responsible for drawing this crowd.

John 12:19

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

The news of this incredible miracle was making waves and drawing the crowds, and the Pharisees were becoming more and more uneasy, and starting to feel like they were losing control.

Ultimately, the raising of Lazarus directly led to the crucifixion of Jesus. For Lazarus to be raised to new life, Jesus would have to die. So once again we are reminded that our new life came at a cost – the highest cost of all.

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:20).

In Luke 16 we have the account of the rich man and Lazarus (the beggar – not the same as the Lazarus in John ch 12). There are some interesting parallels and contrasts that can be drawn from Luke 16 & John 12, but of significance here is the closing line in Luke 16: "*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*" (Luke 16:31). The plea of the rich man is that Lazarus be sent back from the dead to warn his brothers of the eternal danger they are in; but as Jesus shows, if they have already rejected the two witnesses God has provided – the Law and the prophets – they will not be persuaded even if someone were to rise from the dead. Jesus' words are thus vindicated as Lazarus did rise from the dead, yet the Pharisees (who had already rejected the testimony of the Law, i.e. Moses' words – John 5:46-47), and rejected the testimony of the prophets concerning Jesus, still choose not to believe.

John 12:20-22

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

The Jewish leadership had rejected Jesus (with the odd few notable exceptions), and soon the people would be easily swayed to side with the Pharisees, but now we have another 'dynamic' enter the scene: Gentiles seeking Jesus! These were most likely to be gentiles who had converted to Judaism for we are told they 'came up to worship'.

One interesting conjecture: It is possible that, if left just a short while longer, the Romans would not have permitted Jesus to be crucified at the request of the Jews. If the Greeks had got caught up in the euphoria, it would have ceased to be a trivial Jewish religious problem, and therefore, killing Jesus could have had serious ramifications. Either way, Jesus' answer to the disciples in verse 23 implies 'we no longer have time for distractions like this'.

John 12:23

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

For three and a half years we have been hearing that 'my hour is not yet come', now (at last), on this specific day, in fulfilment of prophecy, Jesus tells His disciples 'The hour is come'! This is what Jesus' entire life has been heading toward, this hour, for now we enter the most important week in human history.

John 12:24

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Jesus now cryptically tells His disciples what will happen over the next few days: As a corn of wheat, Jesus Himself will be put into the ground (just as the feast of Unleavened bread is about to begin!). This has to happen or there can be no 'new life', and Jesus would remain the only member of the human race able to reside with God for eternity. But, by dying, just as with a corn of wheat, He will rise and bear much fruit.

John 12:25

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

Just as Jesus Himself was willing to lay down His own life in order to gain a greater reward, so all who would take hold of the prize of eternal life, must be willing to let go of this present world.

Possibly remembering these words of Jesus, John in his first letter will say: "*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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*" (1 John 2:15-17).

John 12:26

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Jesus says this in the light of all He is about to face; the challenge is to follow Him to the laying down of our own lives. Jesus is not asking those who would follow to commit to martyrdom (although millions have done so), the life we are to lay down is the old flesh life, our old nature (that Paul speaks so much about in Romans 6-7). Jesus isn't asking you to die for Him, He asks something much harder: He asks you to live for Him, every moment of every day.

But... we have the promise that in so doing, God the Father will honour us! Can you conceive of a greater honour or commendation?

John 12:27

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.

Clearly the thought of all that was about to befall Jesus weighed heavy upon Him, yet He would not turn away from His God-given assignment. Normally, at this point (when we face real pressure) we look for a way out, which usually ends with us 'fleeing to our mountain' (cf Psalm 11) i.e. the place where we are in control, and this is the very essence of sin – refusing to abandon our right to our self. Jesus knows nothing of 'self', He is completely given over to the will of His Father.

Again it is reiterated, this is the hour that it has all been about.

NB: The word hour here is not used to denote 60 minutes, but rather a short, specific period of time. We use the phrase 'our darkest hour' etc. in exactly the same way.

John 12:28

Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Jesus' obedience and desire to seek His Father's glory were well pleasing to His Father. This is the third time God's voice is audibly heard during Jesus' ministry (1: Baptism, Matt 3:17 / 2: Transfiguration, Matt 17:5).

John 12:29-30

29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

So much of what Jesus said, did, and that the Father did for and through Him, was for the benefit of the bystanders, that they might believe.

Observe also that Jesus' faith was strong enough and didn't require 'a sign'. The sign was given for the benefit of others. Jesus' trust and confidence in God came from a life spent in fellowship with His Father. If we would only spend more time on our knees in prayer, and in His word, we wouldn't require signs either.

John 12:31

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

As if strengthened by His Father's voice, Jesus now continues with His summary of all that is about to transpire, and notably, through the victory Jesus is shortly to accomplish, the 'prince of this world' will be defeated. Satan had usurped Adam and stolen his position as ruler of this world; the court was now about to sit in judgment, and Satan would forfeit all.

John 12:32

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

This is the golden rule for evangelism, simply lift Jesus up, and He will do the drawing.

John 12:33

This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Once again, Jesus knew exactly what was about to happen – nothing took Him by surprise.

John 12:34

The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

Jesus had repeatedly used the phrase 'Son of man' in relation to Himself, but the people still ask the question. Some of the people, it would appear, had acknowledged that He was the Christ (Messiah), 'but if the Law says the Messiah lives forever, how can You, if You really are the Messiah, die?'. This is still a question asked today. I was asked by some Jehovah Witnesses: 'If Jesus is God, how can God die?' The question needs to be turned back around: 'If Jesus were not the infinite God, He could not pay the infinite price for our sins. A mere man could only give his life in exchange for another; but Jesus is 'the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world'(1 John 2:2)

John 12:35

Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

The presentation of Christ's deity, and His revealing Himself as the Messiah would not get any clearer than this. This was the time when it was clear to see. If people reject the testimony now, darkness would come (in the form of a hardening of their hearts), and there would then just remain confusion.

Just as it was then, so it is now for those who hear the gospel, yet put off accepting the revelation of who Jesus is. It only gets harder as the seeds of the gospel are taken by the birds of the air, and we are left with a stony ground (see Matthew 13:4).

The same is true in regard to those who would gamble their eternity on the premise '*if the church is raptured, then I'll believe*'. 2nd Thessalonians 2:11 tells us that, for those who reject the truth in favour of lies, God will send them strong delusion, so they will not believe.

Paul talks in 1 Timothy 4:2 of those who have got passed feeling, having their conscience seared; they become numb to the things of God and unable to respond.

This is why in 2 Corinthians 6:2 we are told that today is the day of salvation.

John 12:36

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Continuing on from the previous verse, Jesus just underlines the importance of the moment.

John 12:37

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

And so, as we commented above, "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*" (Rom 1:21).

John 12:38

That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

It is one of the greatest paradoxes, that God, knowing that so many people would reject Him, still choose to go ahead with His plan of salvation for the few who would receive Him.

John here quotes from Isaiah 53:1 – a chapter that had these people read, would have answered their questions regarding how could the Messiah die?

John 12:39

Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

This short simple verse destroys the relatively recent 'dutero Isaiah' theory; i.e. that the book of Isaiah was actually written by two different people. It was proposed that the first 39 chapters of Isaiah were written by one author, and the remaining 27 chapters were written by another. As Dr Chuck Missler says, it's amazing that every heresy has already been anticipated in advance by the Holy Spirit! And here John quotes from the 2nd half of Isaiah, and will now go on to quote from the 1st half, and tells us unequivocally that it was the same Isaiah that wrote both!

The more scholars attack scripture, the more foolish they become:

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor 1:20)

John 12:40

He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

This quote is from Isaiah 6:9-10 (see below). As we have noted, national blindness was pronounced on this very day as a result of the failure to recognise 'the time of their (Israel's) visitation' by their Messiah. Thus Isaiah's prophecy also came to pass.

John 12:41

These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed". (Isaiah 6:1-10)

We so often use the world's standards of success when considering our ministries. We look for popularity and numbers. Yet Isaiah's ministry, as with Jeremiah and many of the other prophets, was a failure by worldly standards. Isaiah was to go and speak of God's love, goodness and mercy to a nation in rebellion, but God warns him in advance, 'they are not going to listen to you!'

God asks for obedience, not results. The results are His business.

John 12:42-43

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

"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).

"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26).

John 12:44

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me

Jesus now speaks aloud to all those assembled in what will be His final address to the people as a whole. From this point on, He will spend His last week with His disciples.

"The public work of our Lord was now done; and the remnant of his time, previously to his crucifixion, he spent in teaching his disciples-instructing them in the nature of his kingdom, his intercession, and the mission of the Holy Spirit; and in that heavenly life which all true believers live with the Father, through faith in the Son, by the operation of the Holy Spirit."

- Adam Clark

Jesus brings it all back down to basics: to believe in Him as the Messiah is to believe in the One who sent the Messiah. The Messiah was the One whom God Himself had promised through the prophets; the issue was not so much believing in Jesus, but believing in God. God had foretold the day the Messiah would present Himself, God had foretold the manor and work of the Messiah, and much more. Everything about Jesus could be verified through the scriptures; the question was, do you believe God's word?

John 12:45

And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

There was a beautiful transparency about the life of Jesus, through which you could see the Father. Sons inevitably bear a strong likeness to their fathers; but none more so than in the Divine family. Later, Philip will say to Jesus 'show us the Father' (John 14:8), but Jesus answers in the same way "*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:9). Of course, there is something far more profound about Jesus' words, for Jesus was the I AM, He was the Word from before the beginning began, so seeing Him was to look upon God veiled in human flesh.

John 12:46

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

Jesus now returns to the theme so prevalent in the early chapters of John's gospel. He is light. We were in darkness. He came to light our way home. No need abide in darkness any longer.

John 12:47-48

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Jesus came the first time as Saviour and redeemer. He will come the second time as judge of the nations, ruling with a rod of iron, and as the long awaited King of Israel. But here Jesus is stating it like it is: He had not come to condemn, but to state the facts of the matter. No one had to obey or follow Him; but for all who chose to reject His testimony, the miracles, and the witnesses that had testified on His behalf, they would ultimately be judged in light of the revelation they had received.

John 12:49

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

Jesus just clarifies that the words He had spoken, that will one day sit in judgment on those who rejected Him, were not actually His own words, but the Father's.

John 12:50

And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Of course, not all will be judged by those words, because for those who keep His commandments, there is the promise of life everlasting and no condemnation (Rom 8:1).

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2-3).

CHAPTER 13

John 13:1a

Now before the feast of the passover...

As we noted back in chapter 12:1, John consistently uses the word ‘passover’ to refer to the ‘festival’ of unleavened bread, beginning with the Feast of Unleavened Bread itself on the 15th Nisan (see Luke 22:1 / Num 28:17). We also know from Luke 22:15 that Jesus did eat the passover meal with the disciples on the evening of the 14th, as was the Jewish custom. (NB: The Jewish day began at sundown, and, according to Exodus 12:6, the passover could be killed and eaten any time from sundown to sundown – a 24 hour window. This is an important point we will refer to again later).

John 13:1b

...when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father... Throughout His ministry Jesus had been awaiting this week. This was what it had all been about. Now with less than 24 hours remaining, Jesus does something that takes His disciples completely by surprise:

Before John continues to explain what Jesus did, he makes mention of **three** important things:

(1) John 13:1c

...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

So often we hear the ‘Jesus loves you’ message. That is simply unbiblical. Jesus loved His own, and He loved them to the end. Those who rejected Jesus, John tells us ‘the wrath of God abides on’: *“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”* (John 3:36). We have so many false converts in the church because of the ‘Jesus loves you gospel’ which sows false security and gives a license for people to carry on living a life of sin without true repentance. Ask most people if they think they will go to hell and the answer will be ‘no’, because we have told people ‘God is a God of love’. However, what is seldom taught by today’s preachers is that, whilst God is a God of love, He is also a God of justice, and it is His justice that shows his love is genuine. If God simply ‘let people off’ because He loved them, how far should we take it? Should Hitler be granted to access to heaven because ‘God is a God of love’? What kind of justice would that be for the millions whose painful death he was responsible for? Should Saddam Hussein go to heaven because ‘God is a God of love’? What about all his crimes against humanity? Should a murderer or rapist be let in? How do you differentiate? What is, and who sets, the standard?

It is of course God Himself who sets the standard and we are told that *“murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”* (Rev 21:8).

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9-10)

Ultimately, God’s standard is summarised in the Ten Commandments, thus any who have lied, stolen, lusted, hated, taken His Name in vain, made a false god, dishonoured their parents, coveted, and so on, have broken God’s perfect Law and stand condemned before the judgment bar of a Holy God. This is why we are told that by God’s standard *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23). No one is good enough to go to heaven, we all deserve God’s justice, but God is a God of love and because He *“so loved the world... he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 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”* (John 3:16-18)

But: *“except ye repent, ye shall perish”* (Luke 13:5). If you repent, you are loved to the end!

(2) John 13:2

And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

24 hours before this meal, Judas had sat in the home of Simon and watched Mary pour away a year's wages anointing Jesus' head and feet. John had inserted the details of this event at the beginning of chapter 12 (the parenthesis we highlighted), and made mention that the reason for Judas' disgust was not out of his concern for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had a love of money. In Luke 16:13 Jesus had said: "*No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Luke 16:13), and Paul later tells us that "*the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*" (1 Tim 6:10). Judas was one of those. The important point here is that Satan did not just have free access to Judas against his wishes; Judas had 'opened the door' by his greed, and Satan had simply seized the opportunity: "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8).

An important spiritual principle is given in Proverbs: "*Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, So a curse without cause shall not alight*" (Prov 26:2), in other words, unless you do something to deserve it, a curse will have no more effect on you than an aimless bird flying in the air. Satan cannot just 'put into your heart' to do something, unless you first give him a way in. We are told (and reassured) in John's first letter: "*greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4).

(3) John 13:3

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

The third thing John tells us before getting to his main point is that Jesus was absolutely secure in the knowledge of who He was, His relationship to His Father, and His mission, purpose, and destiny. We too can have the same peace and security in Christ. It is being sure of our security and position in Christ that releases us to be willing servants.

John 13:4-5

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. 5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Returning to the main point, John now tells us that Jesus removed His outer garment (as scholars tell us the Greek indicates) and thus would have been adorned with just a tunic, as would be the norm for a servant. Luke's account gives us the background that led up to this: "*And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve*" (Luke 22:24-26). Thus, this dispute over greatness among the disciples becomes the opportunity for Jesus to give the disciples an object lesson on servant-hood, and the real basis of greatness from God's perspective.

Jesus Himself will go on to comment on the significance of His actions, so for now we will simply note what Paul tells us in Philippians:

"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: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:5-11)

John 13:6

Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

Always quick to react without a great deal of forethought, Peter jumps in with both feet (if you will pardon the pun!). Although Peter's comment may initially appear to have the hallmarks of humility (and is interpreted as such by most commentators), I believe it is actually laced with unconscious pride. There are many apparently humble people who simply refuse to let others do things for them. The truly humble person will freely admit they are insufficient and need the help of others. Unless we humble ourselves and allow Jesus to cleanse us, we can have no part in Him – see verse 8.

John 13:7

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

When would Peter know? Again, most commentators presume Peter understands the significance of this after Jesus' explanation in the following verses; however, it could be argued that Peter won't really understand what Jesus does here until he reaches the end of himself (John 18:27), and as a broken, humble man, is restored by Jesus (John 21:15-17). That's when Peter's ministry and life of servant-hood really begins.

John 13:8

Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

As we mentioned above, if we are too proud to allow ourselves to be cleansed by Jesus, we cannot be His disciple.

John 13:9

Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Peter now, desperate not to be cast aside, attempting to demonstrate that he does want a part with Jesus, goes to the other extreme...

John 13:10

Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

In that culture, because of the typical footwear and dusty roads, it would be usual to wash your feet after a journey (a task usually performed by the lowest servant), yet it wasn't necessary to bathe completely. What Jesus does by washing the feet, as well as teaching the principle of servant hood, is also symbolic of cleansing our way. If we are walking 'cleanly', the rest of our body will naturally follow where the feet lead. We are told to 'walk by faith' (2 Cor 5:7); 'walk in the Spirit' (Gal 5:16); 'walk in love' (Eph 5:2); 'walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise' (Eph 5:15); 'walk in Him' (Col 2:6); 'walk in wisdom' (Col 4:5); 'walk worthy of God' (1 Thes 2:12); 'walk in the light' (1 John 1:7); and 'walk in truth' (3 John 4), and so on. If our feet are cleansed, the rest of us will be also.

but not all... Jesus here alludes to Judas – one of 10 such warnings given to him (as noted by Dr Chuck Missler). Interestingly, Pharaoh also had 10 warnings. In both cases they hardened their hearts to the point of no return.

John 13:11

For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

John here adds a few words of commentary. We should remember that John was actually present at this passover meal – had his feet washed by Jesus, and heard all these things with his own ears – is writing these things around seventy years after the event. These things must have been so clearly imprinted on his memory.

John 13:12

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

This was, no doubt, one of those awkward silences; no one was going to speak first, even if they *thought* they knew the answer!

John 13:13

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

As a side note, the disciples never refer to Him as Jesus, and He always encourages them to call Him Lord (Matt 9:28; Luke 19:31; Matt 26:18)..

John 13:14-16

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

The 'verily, verily' underlines the surface lesson here: In God's order of things, we must give up the right to ourselves, being willing to stoop down and lay aside our rank and position to serve each other (see again Phil 2:5-11). "*But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*". (Matt 20:25-28)

All churches should strive to make this a fundamental basis for all that is done. As Paul tells us: "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*". (Gal 6:2-3)

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body..."

(Rom 12:3-4)

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28)

However, there is also deeper understanding to that which Jesus does here, which can be drawn from the symbolism we noted in verse 10. The surface lesson (as we have noted) was to teach the true nature of servant hood, yet at the same time this was a presentation of the gospel message, an acted out summary of all Christ came to do.

He laid aside His 'garments', giving up the majesty and glory of heaven, to stoop down to those who were not aware of their need to be cleansed. He humbly took the position of a servant, yet elevated those who would receive Him to the position of those who reign. Then, taking a vessel He filled it with water, pouring it on their feet, (symbolic of their walk – thus making them clean throughout). There was nothing they could do to participate in this cleansing, except be willing to humble themselves and receive. "*For by grace ye have been saved*" (Eph 2:8).

Jesus says: "*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*".

We are to set aside our rights (giving up the right to ourselves), stooping down to all and any who will listen, preaching in season and out of season, not just to the respectable, well dressed folk who fit in to our preferred social group, but preaching to all men regardless of colour, creed or social standing. Paul says: "*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (1 Cor 9:19-22).

Note also, that the water to cleanse the feet was poured into a vessel by Jesus. Likewise, you and I are vessels fitted for His use. We are to let the water of the Word of Christ dwell in us richly, so that we never run dry, and through us will flow rivers of living water (Jn 7:38).

As an aside, the Calvary Chapel movement was started because Chuck Smith was willing to do just this: set aside his rights, and take the good news of this ‘free cleansing’ to the social outcasts of his day. Many were perturbed that men with long hair and no shoes were being allowed in to the church. Yet God blessed Chuck’s willingness to humble himself, and now thousands of people are walking in the Spirit, with their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel because he laid aside his garments of preconception, tradition and pride, and became a basin into whom the Word of God was poured for the cleansing and regeneration of a generation.

John 13:17

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

There is an unexplainable joy in serving, when it is done from a pure heart, and there is no greater service than to share the water of the Word with others. Paul said of those he had brought to Christ in Thessalonica: “*For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy*” (1 Thess 2:19-20)

John 13:18

I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

The expression ‘lifted up his heel’ is a metaphor for a sudden kick of a mule or a horse. Judas’ actions were just like this. In this verse Jesus quotes from Psalm 41:9, which David had penned after he had been betrayed by Ahithophel (his once trusted counsellor). However Psalm 41:9 reads: “*Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me*”. Notably, Jesus omits the ‘in whom I trusted’.

The debate continues over Judas: was he saved? Did he simply backslide? Is it therefore possible to lose your salvation? (see again comments on John 10:28-29). This verse should help us answer those questions. Jesus does not count Judas among the rest, and remember that Jesus ‘judged righteous judgment’, not as men see (John 7:24). Jesus makes the point that He knows whom he had chosen, apparently referring to the eleven, so by implication, he had not chosen Judas, even though he had been selected to be among the disciples ‘*that the scripture might be fulfilled*’.

John 13:19

Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

Jesus once again underlines that He is in complete control, nothing is going to take Him by surprise. These little comments were intended to show that fact to His disciples as they looked back on these events from the other side of the cross.

John 13:20

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

It appears that Jesus now stops to consider the future, to which He had just alluded, and which He could no doubt see so clearly. Evidently thinking forward to the time when His disciples and the other believers would begin the work of evangelism. Thoughts about Judas (which sandwich this verse) represented Jesus’ darkest hour; but thoughts of what would be accomplished by the faithful disciples, no doubt gave Him great consolation.

John 13:21

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.

Jesus now returns to the thought of His betrayer. Being betrayed by an enemy is to be expected. But to be betrayed by one who would call himself your friend is painful to our spirits. See David’s sorrow at his betrayal by Ahithophel, recorded in Psalm 55:12-15.

John 13:21

Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

The emotion of this moment is hard to imagine; these ‘friends’ had now been together for over three years, they had become family. The thought that one of them could betray Jesus surely seemed unthinkable.

John 13:23

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

The occasions in his gospel where John refers to himself (as is the case here), he never mentions his own name...

John 13:24

Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

Peter, usually accustomed to taking the lead, this time prompts John to ask Jesus the question. Peter's reluctance to ask the question for himself may be due to his rebuke concerning the washing of the feet we saw in verse 8.

John 13:25

He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

The must have been anxiety in the hearts of all the disciples at this moment; *'what if He says it's me? Could it be that I could betray Him?'* Oswald Chambers makes the comment: "When God wants to show you what human nature is like apart from Himself, He has to show it you in yourself. If the Spirit of God has given you a vision of what you are apart from the grace of God (and He only does it when His Spirit is at work), you know **there is no criminal who is half so bad in actuality as you know yourself to be in possibility.** My "grave" has been opened by God and "I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." God's Spirit continually reveals what human nature is like apart from His grace". Oswald Chambers – My Utmost For His Highest

John 13:26

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.

Judas was so trusted by the other eleven that, even with this 'hint' given by Jesus, they still don't put two and two together.

John 13:27

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

'Satan entered him': Was it that he resented Jesus exposing him (as much to himself as to the others) that gave Satan this foothold? Or was he still outraged about the extravagant waste at yesterdays evening meal at Bethany? Either way, we are now just seeing the outworking of rebellion that had taken hold.

John 13:28-29

28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

29 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.

Whist this dark scene is playing out before their eyes, the disciples remain oblivious to the enormity of the moment.

John 13:30

He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

It was night outside, and for Judas, it was now night within. It can get no darker than rejecting the revelation of Jesus, the Light of the world: "*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 13:31

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

The wheels were now in motion, nothing was now going to stop Jesus being 'lifted up'. Many see the cross as a tragedy; it was not a tragedy but an achievement unequalled in time and eternity.

John 13:32

If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

[If God be glorified in him] If God is honored by him. If the life and death of the Messiah be such as to lead to the honor of God, such as shall manifest its perfections, and show his goodness, truth, and justice, then he will show that he thus approves his work.

[God shall also glorify him] He will honor the Messiah. He will not suffer him to go without a proper attestation of his acceptance, and of the honor that God puts on him. Jesus here confidently anticipated that the Father would show that he was pleased with what he had done. He did it in the miracles that attended his death, in his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and in the success of the gospel. We may remark that God will always, in the proper time and way, manifest his approbation of those who live so as to promote the honor of his name.

[In himself] Or by himself; by a direct and public expression of his approbation. Not by the ministry of angels or by any other subordinate attestation, but by an expression that shall be direct from him. This was done by his direct interposition in his resurrection and ascension to heaven.

[Shall straightway] Immediately, or without delay. This refers to the fact that the time when God would put this honor on him was at hand. His death, resurrection, and ascension were near. (Barnes' Study Notes on The Gospel of John)

The Upper Room Discourse (13:33-17:26)

The preceding verses (31-32) have been the introduction, now begins the upper room discourse (that will take us to the end of chapter 17). This is the longest recorded discourse in the New Testament, and give us Jesus' closing words to His disciples before He is taken to be crucified. If you knew your death was imminent, your conversation would centre around that which really mattered. Anything of importance would be communicated whilst the opportunity remained. And so it is here. That which follows is of profound importance for all believers, and many doctrinal issues are resolved by taking heed to Jesus' words. These are the impassioned words of a Servant-Saviour who cared so deeply for those He had chosen that He would not leave them without hope and without instruction.

John 13:33

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

For some time now, Jesus had hinted at His 'departure'; Jesus begins this discourse by making it clear. We should not trivialise the intense emotion on both sides here: the disciples had given up all that had – jobs, family, friends – to come and follow Jesus; and at this stage, they had no idea what was going to take place over the next four days. For Jesus, what He was about to do, He had to do alone, no one could go for Him or with Him.

John 13:34

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Jesus doesn't just tell His disciples to love one another, but to love (agapao) one another '*as I have loved you*' – unconditionally; not dependant on ability or perceived usefulness.

The timing of this 'new commandment' was important also, for when difficulties come (as they were about to here) relationships get strained, and people's true characters are exposed. Thus the disciples needed to hear '*I am going to be departing from you, but you must now love each other, just as I have shown you – this is a new commandment, for it has not been this way for you up until now. Everything is about to change*'.

John 13:35

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This is to be the mark of a true follower of Christ; and the identifying feature that sets us apart from this world. In his first letter John picks up on this and says: *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us”* (1 John 4:10-12)

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (1 John 5:1-2).

A true follower of Christ will exhibit a genuine love for other believers. Paul says: *“be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”* (Phil 2:2-3).

John 13:36

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

Peter, now plucking up the courage again, asks the question the others were all probably thinking. Jesus’ reply may have been specifically addressed to Peter (*‘thou shall follow Me..’*), but in a general sense it was a promise to all believers.

Peter wasn’t ready to follow yet; he had a trial of his own to endure before he would be ready to lay down his life for Jesus. But later, he would follow, experiencing persecution and (tradition has it) was himself crucified.

However, in a broader sense, although none could follow at that time, Jesus would make a way for all of His own to follow to the place He was going – ultimately, back to His Father.

John 13:37

Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Ever eager, Peter doesn’t want to miss out on anything; little did he know what the next 24 hours had in store for him, so Jesus explains...

John 13:38

Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

These words from Jesus must have made Peter’s world come crashing down. Peter had made mistakes but had ever sought to do the right thing. Now he is being told by his Lord and Master, the One he had acknowledged as the Christ, the Son of the living God, that when push comes to shove, rather than stand for and with Jesus, he would deny Him.

There comes a point in our lives when God will bring us to the end of ourselves, to the end of our confidence in our natural ability. Here, Peter is faced with the reality of who he really is; not who he portrayed himself to others as, or even who he may have believed himself to be prior to this, but who Jesus knew him to be when all the facade was stripped away.

The Apostle Paul deals with the ugly reality of our true selves in Romans 7: *“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin”... “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Rom 7:14-25)

John 13:38 (cont'd)

Although Peter, just as Paul explains here 'willed to do good' there was not the power in him to perform it. If that were the end of the story, you, I, and Peter would have been left wallowing in despair – but Jesus will go on to say ***“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me”***, and Paul gives us the same marvellous solution to our problem: *“who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom 7:24-25). Through Christ we are transformed into something we could never have been before, vessels fit for the Master's use (2 Tim 2:21) – just as we will see Peter become.

Commenting on the above, Oswald Chambers says:

Peter did not wait on God, he forecast in his mind where the test would come, and the test came where he did not expect it. "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Peter's declaration was honest but ignorant. "Jesus answered him . . . The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice." This was said with a deeper knowledge of Peter than Peter had of himself. He could not follow Jesus because he did not know himself, or of what he was capable. Natural devotion may be all very well to attract us to Jesus, to make us feel His fascination, but it will never make us disciples. Natural devotion will always deny Jesus somewhere or other.

- Oswald Chambers – My Utmost For his Highest

Another insightful comment by Oswald is as follows:

The bravery of God in trusting us! You say—"But He has been unwise to choose me, because there is nothing in me; I am not of any value." That is why He chose you. As long as you think there is something in you, God cannot choose you because you have ends of your own to serve; but if you have let Him bring you to the end of your self-sufficiency, then He can choose you to go with Him to Jerusalem, and that will mean the fulfilment of purposes which He does not discuss with you.

We are apt to say that because a man has natural ability, therefore he will make a good Christian. It is not a question of our equipment but of our poverty; not of what we bring with us, but of what God puts into us; not a question of natural virtues, of strength of character, knowledge, and experience—all that is of no avail in this matter. The only thing that avails is that we are taken up into the big compelling of God and made His comrades (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:26-30). The comradeship of God is made up out of men who know their poverty. He can do nothing with the man who thinks that he is of use to God.

- Oswald Chambers – My Utmost For his Highest

CHAPTER 14

John 14:1

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

There were no chapter breaks in the original text, so these words of Jesus follow directly on from His remarks to Peter. No doubt, Peter had been troubled by what Jesus said (13:38), as would have been the other disciples; after all, if *Peter* could deny Jesus, how would *they* fare? The disciples had now come face to face with the reality that everything was about to change. Jesus had been telling them of this moment for the last six months, but they had not really understood what He meant. Now it is clear and they understand it: He was going away and they were troubled. However, Jesus, as a loving shepherd of His sheep, seeks to reassure them; *'just as you trust God, so you can trust me'*.

NB: This is another declaration of Christ's deity, for these words, coming from a man, would be nothing short of blasphemy.

John 14:2

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Jesus now goes on to explain where He is going, and why. This is such an important verse, so we must consider carefully what Jesus is saying:

Firstly, Jesus makes reference to His Father's house. Although Jesus refers to the temple as God's house (Matt 21:13), a process of deduction leads us to conclude that here Jesus uses His 'Father's house' to refer to Heaven - for that was where Jesus was returning to. This may seem obvious, but it is a very important point.

Secondly, we are told there are *many* mansions; the idea being conveyed is that there is ample dwelling for all who will go.

Thirdly, these dwelling places are suited to our needs. Although the word 'mansions' is used by the KJV, the scale is not given here, but it is implicit from Revelation 21-22 that we are to imagine an abundance, fit for those highly favoured.

The *fourth* thing to note is that Jesus actually underlines the literal reality of this place by telling us *'if it were not so, I would have told you.'* We are intended to understand that this is a real tangible place. See also Revelation 21:15-21 which describes the literal city wherein we will reside with God for eternity. NB: This city is right now being prepared in Heaven, which is where we will get our first glimpse, and see and experience the splendour and beauty.

Fifth: Jesus was going there, in part, to prepare (make ready) a place for each of His own. Doesn't this make you feel special? The Creator of the universe, the One who gave His life so that you could be forgiven and born again spiritually, the One who gave up the majesty and glory of Heaven to become a man to redeem you, that One is now preparing and making ready a place especially for you! What greater evidence could you want that you are eternally secure? The plans have been drawn up, the building materials have been purchased, the work has commenced. There will be no empty rooms; everyone who is invited will be there. Upon arriving you will find a door with your name engraved upon it, it is not for anyone else, just you. Your reservation has been confirmed & paid for by the blood of the Lamb.

No wonder Abraham was content to dwell in tents while he was on earth: *"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"*. (Heb 11:9-10)

May we, have such a perspective of the reality of what awaits us that we loosen our grip on the things of this life, and take firm hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of us (Phil 3:12).

A Jewish Wedding – Our Model

With all of this, we start to see an incredible model that is developed throughout the New Testament – that of a typical Jewish wedding. Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom (Matt 9:15 / also John 3:29), and in the New Testament the church is depicted as His chaste virgin bride (see Eph 5:22-32 / 2 Cor 11:2 / Matt 22:2-14 / Rev 19:7-9).

Most of us in our western culture will know little or nothing about a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony. However, to Jesus and His disciples, it would have been well known (hence the reason Jesus chooses this analogy).

A typical Jewish wedding is separated into two distinct parts, 1) the ‘Ketubah’ (Betrothal), and 2) the ‘Huppah’ (wedding ceremony), which is followed by the conclusion/wedding feast, ‘Nisuin’.

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”.*

With a Jewish wedding, after the groom has departed to his father’s house to prepare a room for his bride, she will use the opportunity to visit a ritual bath known as a Mikveh. The purpose of this is to cleanse her spiritually to enable her to enter marriage in a state of complete purity, ‘without spot or blemish’. 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.

The model 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)

John 14:3

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

With a Jewish wedding, at the appointed time, the groom will 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.

Jesus here tells the disciples that it will be just the same for His bride. Just as certainly as He is going to prepare a place, so He will return - with a blast of a trumpet and a shout (1 Thes 4:16-17) - and take His bride unto Himself. John tells us that we too must declare our independence from this world:

“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)

John 14:3 (cont'd)

One hugely significant point needs to be mentioned here: Jesus (as we have noted) was returning to Heaven. It was there He would be preparing the eternal dwelling for His bride. Elsewhere in the New Testament we are told: *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal*" (Matt 6:20)

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:20)

Thus it is clear from scripture that the destination of Christ's bride is Heaven, where her citizenship and treasure await her.

Jesus tells us that He will, at some future time, come and take us back to Heaven. This is a promise to all believers and is clearly what the Apostle Paul explains in 1ST Thessalonians: *"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (1 Thess 4:13-18)

In this passage Paul explains that some believers have died – and are currently 'with the Lord' (Phil 1:23) – but there will be others who will still be alive when Jesus returns at the time of the Rapture; then all will join Christ, receive new resurrection bodies (1 Cor 15: 22-23 / 50-55) and return with Christ to the place He has been preparing.

Creation took just six days; our heavenly dwellings have been around 2000 years in preparing. Just how wonderful will our eternal dwelling be?

For a brief discussion on some of the eschatological issues raised by this verse, see Appendix C - *John 14:3: To be or not to be? What is your position?*

John 14:4

And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Jesus was returning to His Father (see John 7:33), and the only way to the Father was through Jesus (as we will see in verse 6).

John 14:5

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

We have already noted Thomas' pessimistic approach to things; as Oswald Chambers commented: *"he always thought the worst was going to happen"*. Now, despite Jesus having told them on numerous occasions where He was going, Thomas panics, 'we don't know where you are going, how will we be able to find the way?'. This sets up the famous answer that Jesus gives...

John 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Thomas did not need directions, he needed a chauffeur! There was no way Thomas, or the disciples, or anyone else in the world, could find, or navigate, their way to the Father. No amount of effort on our part would suffice (and the purpose of the Law was to underline that very fact – see Rom 3:20 / Gal 3:21-25). The only way to the Father is through the Son. What has separated us from the Father is our sin, and Jesus is the only sacrifice for sins acceptable to the Father.

John 14:6 (cont'd)

Therefore, only by accepting Jesus death in your place (which necessitates repentance / eating of His flesh – cf. John 6:51-56), and by receiving His forgiveness & new life (drinking of His blood - Heb 9:22; 1 Cor 11:25), can we be 'saved' and put into a right relationship with the Father. Through Christ, we stand before God, not in our ability or righteousness (see Isaiah 64:6), but in the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor 5:21).

Before Adam fell, he enjoyed three primary benefits: 1) communion with God, 2) he knew God, 3) and he was alive spiritually. When he fell, he was 1) separated from God, 2) plunged into spiritual darkness, 3) and he died spiritually. These are the three things specifically addressed by Jesus: 1) He reconciled man to God (He is the Way), 2) He is the Light of the world that illuminated our condition and allows us to see ourselves as we really are (He is the Truth), 3) He makes it possible for us to be regenerated by being spiritually born again (He is the Life). No one else could have done this, hence Jesus is the only way to the Father.

Of course, this is not politically correct today; Christians who declare Jesus to be the way, the truth, and the life, are considered too narrow minded and intolerant. We are, apparently, no longer to be dogmatic about what we believe. We are supposed to accept that all paths are equal. The stupidity of this political correctness screams out loud!

In no other area of life would such 'free thinking' be tolerated. When a pilot comes in to land a plane, he is dogmatically told which runway he is to use; why? Because the air traffic controller knows more about the conditions on the ground than the pilot. No one would fly with a pilot who, 'in the spirit of the modern age', choose whichever runway worked for him. There is a way that leads to life, and a way that leads to death!

Why, when it comes to our eternal destiny, do people assume they can make up their own rules? Truth is not decided on by our opinion. Jesus declares that He is the way, truth and life, and that there is no other option available if we are to be restored to a right relationship with the Father. It matters not if someone dislikes this, or feels it to be intolerant of other views. If what Jesus said is true, emotion and opinion are irrelevant.

Take, for example, a pupil that objected to the maths teacher's dogmatic and intolerant stance that $2+2=4$. Will the pupil complaining that he would like it to be '5' every now and again, just to be inclusive, 'in the spirit of the age', change the fact the $2+2=4$? Never! That pupil would find himself in detention after school learning there is a right way and a wrong way!

There are basic rules that people dogmatically follow, giving strict and literal adherence to, in every walk of life. Contrary to the media assault on the word, there is nothing inherently wrong with holding to **fundamental**



beliefs and practices - ask any crane operator or surgeon! The idea of not sticking to the fundamentals due to the risk of offending someone who claims that you're narrow minded and dogmatic is, quite frankly ridiculous. If you don't stick to the fundamentals someone is going to get hurt!



However, when it comes to matters of faith, fundamentalists are seen as a dangerous minority, (a view largely fuelled by the media). It is just not logical though, to expect any religious group to not hold to their fundamental beliefs, for the moment they abandon their fundamental beliefs they cease to be what they are and become something new.

As an aside, the problem with Islamic fundamentalists is not that they hold to fundamental beliefs, but that those beliefs have an agenda to conquer, 'by the sword', all who will not convert; and in the process all Jews and Christians must be destroyed. For more on this issue see the book 'Judgment Day' by Dave Hunt.

John 14:6 (cont'd)

Because of the apparent lack of understanding in regard to the intrinsic importance of sticking to the fundamentals, and due to the stigma that is now erroneously attached to the word, many areas of the church are seemingly content to lay aside areas of doctrine, not wanting to be seen as fundamentalists. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in the USA and author of *The Purpose Driven Life*, in a recent article in a Philadelphia newspaper¹ said that he '*despises fundamentalism*' in the church, and that that fundamentalism, of all varieties, will be '*one of the big enemies of the 21st century*'. '*Muslim fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, Jewish fundamentalism, secular fundamentalism - they're all motivated by fear. Fear of each other.*'

Is this to suggest that we should now abandon the fundamentals of our faith? All of this has led to moves to make Christianity more acceptable and 'all inclusive'. After all, if we continue to be so dogmatic about our doctrine won't we just drive people away? Surely we must be more tolerant of others and try to be 'seeker friendly'? Many of the individuals responsible for leading this change are themselves very sincere; however as they erode the foundation beneath their feet, a new religion is forming that may have the outward appearance of Christianity, but inwardly is 'another gospel' with a different Jesus. (For a detailed study of this 'other gospel', see 'Faith Undone' by Dr Roger Oakland)

Leading evangelicals, theologians, and church members have publicly stated that the cross was 'an act of cosmic child abuse', that the resurrection did not happen, that it is not important to believe in Jesus as long as you're good, that we should not spend so much time reading the Bible, that Israel have no claim to the land and that they have forfeited God's promises, that anyone who believes in a literal six-day creation is foolish. A new religion is being created with different fundamentals and a different Jesus than the one revealed in the Bible – the Jesus who said "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*". Exactly as the Bible prophesied, those who hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith are becoming ostracised and considered the 'trouble makers': "*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.*" (2 Peter 2:1-2)

1. January 8th 2006 edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer

(Notes above (in red) taken from 'Should We Be Dogmatic About Our Doctrine?' – available from www.calvarychapeldeal.co.uk)

A fundamental of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. There is no other name given under Heaven whereby someone can be saved (see Acts 4:12).

For those who feel this is 'unfair', it is like a patient sitting before a doctor; he has been diagnosed with a terrible illness. The doctor takes half an hour explaining how this poison is seeping through his system, and how it will start to affect his body, but then turns to the patient and says 'but I have some good news' 'There is a cure!'. At this point, what would the patient do? Fly into a rage and complain that it is not fair that there is only one cure? State that he wanted to drink raspberry juice instead – why couldn't that cure him? How dare this doctor be so narrow minded! NO! In such a situation the patient would not care that there is only one cure, he would do whatever he could to get hold of it. All that would matter is that there is **a** cure.

And so it is with us; we all have the poison of sin within our system, it is a terminal illness that kills every member of the human race. However, there is a cure! Not for our bodies, they will perish; but for our souls (2 Cor 4:16). All who accept the cure – which is given freely yet priced above any amount ever earned – will receive eternal life, and the promise of new resurrection bodies, fit for eternity. It matters not that there is only **one** way, the miracle is that God has provided **A Way!** - and His name is Jesus!

John 14:7

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

The key to knowing the Father is to know the Son. Although the disciples thought they knew Jesus, they were about to see Him in a whole new light – and in that light they would realise they had been looking at the express image of the Father.

Jesus could also have said: ‘if you don’t know Me, you will not know My Father’, for the same is true. Quite simply, if you don’t know Jesus, you won’t know God. Thus, cults that reject the deity and person of Christ, cannot be speaking on behalf of God. And in regard to His deity, Jesus makes an undeniable declaration of that fact here. *“from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him”* The only way for this statement to be true is if the Father and the Son are One.

John 14:8

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

From the start, Philip had been quick to follow (John 1:43), now it seems they are on the verge of something truly amazing. Jesus is talking about seeing the Father, and Philip (just like Moses in Exodus 33:18) doesn’t want to let this opportunity pass.

John 14:9

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

Probably not the answer Philip was expecting! I just wonder how Philip reacted to this? What did he think as he tried to process this information? What he had just been told was that express image of the Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had taken on flesh and was standing there in front of them. But how can an infinite God appear in human form, the sceptics may ask? Answer: In exactly the same way He did to Abraham (Gen18), Hagar (Gen 16:7-16), Moses (Ex 33:11), Joshua (Josh 5:14-15), Samson’s parents (Judges 13:22-23) etc. The fact that God chooses to reveal Himself to us in a way we can comprehend should not surprise us. God is infinite, we are merely created beings. What is God really like? God is Spirit (John 4:24); we are spiritual beings, but dwelling in a physical frame. For us to ‘see God’ in this order of things, He reveals Himself to us in human form, as we see numerous times in the Old Testament. But the ultimate revelation of God is in the person of Jesus Christ, as the writer to the Hebrews declares:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb 1:1-3)

John 14:10

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Possibly looking at the confused expression on Philip’s face, Jesus responds: ‘Do you still not believe and understand that I and God are one and the same? Consider the words I have spoken, consider the works I have done, what have they told you? Who is it that has done them?’

“The word “Father” in these passages seems to be used with reference to the divine nature, or to God represented “as a Father,” and not particularly to the distinction in the Trinity of Father and Son. The idea is that God, AS God, or as a Father, had been manifested in the incarnation, the works, and the teachings of Christ, so that they who had seen and heard him might be said to have had a real view of God. When Jesus says, “hath seen the Father,” this cannot refer to the essence or substance of God, for He is invisible, and in that respect no man has seen God at any time. All that is meant when it is said that God is seen, is that some manifestation of him has been made”

(from Barnes' Bible Commentary)

John 14:11

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Whether you believe because of the evidence, or simply believe by faith, you must believe in the deity of Christ – your eternity depends on it!

John 14:12

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

It has long been debated by scholars, exactly what was Jesus referring to in the verse? Some say Jesus was telling His disciples that they would do greater miracles that He had done. Others go to the other extreme and say this has nothing at all to do with the miracles. Whatever the answer, Jesus begins by stressing the importance of this issue, *‘Verily, verily, I say unto you...’* Whatever the answer, it is clear that it is connected to Jesus’ return to His Father; *because I go unto my Father.*

Let’s explore each option: Firstly, was Jesus saying that His disciples would do greater, more impressive, miracles than he had done? If so, and Jesus actually made such a declaration, there should be no question that we, by now, should have witnessed the fulfilment. Some scholars point to the exploits of the early church as such a fulfilment:

1. The very shadow of Peter healed the diseased (Acts 5:15).
2. Diseases were cured, and demons cast out, by applying to the persons handkerchiefs and aprons that had before touched the body of Paul (Acts 19:12).
3. By the word of Peter, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead (Acts 5,9,10).
4. Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind by the word of Paul (Acts 13:11).

Whilst these are impressive miracles, can it *really* be argued that these were *greater* works than the raising of Lazarus or Jairus’ daughter? (John 10 / Mark 5:22). Or are they greater than the healing of the man born blind (John 9), or the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5), or the woman with internal bleeding for twelve years who simply touched Jesus robe and was instantly healed? (Mark 5:25-34).

If we are honest, we cannot say the early church did ‘greater’ miracles than Jesus. However, today we have countless ministries running ‘miracle crusades’ around the world; and if you are prepared to pay enough, and your faith is strong enough, you can be healed in your living room whilst watching these ‘anointed healers’ on Christian TV do ‘greater’ works than Jesus! Of course, this is said tongue-in-cheek, for we cannot arrange a miracle service and tell God what He is going to do and who He’s going to heal. God is sovereign and will do as He chooses. This is not to deny the gift of healings listed in 1 Cor 12:28, but we must not assume that we have the power to use as we think appropriate.

We have to conclude therefore, that neither the church today, or at any time in history, has done ‘greater’ works than Jesus. Barns, in his commentary says: *Interpreters have been at a loss in what way to understand this... The word "greater" cannot refer to the miracles themselves, for the works of the apostles did not exceed those of Jesus in power.*

So that puts us back at square one as to what did Jesus mean?

Some claim that the ‘greater’ refers to quantity; certainly, if you were to count the miracles done by Jesus in His ministry and compare it to the number done collectively throughout the history of the church, the church, by virtue of the number of believers and the hundreds of years involved would come out ahead, But this too seems to be missing the reason for the *“Verily, verily, I say unto you”*. It would surely be just stating the obvious for Jesus to point out that, *‘given enough time, and given enough faithful believers, you will end up doing a larger number of miracles than me’*.

We should remember too that miracles accompanied Jesus wherever He went; in contrast, when was the last time you personally witnessed a single miracle? Let alone saw multitudes healed? (see Matt 12:15); or saw thousands fed from just a few loaves and fish? (Mark 6:43). We have to face it, the miracles of the church have not exceeded the miracles of Jesus in power or quantity pro rata.

John 14:12 (cont'd)

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary suggests that we are to understand Jesus words as follows: **Greater works. Not to be restricted to the signs such as Jesus wrought in the days of his flesh. The works could not be greater in quality than his, but greater in extent.**

Maybe the church has seen a greater variety of miracles than Jesus did, and in that sense has done greater works? Once again, this explanation does not satisfy, for John will remind us at the end of his gospel that many of the acts of Jesus have not been recorded. So the argument is uncertain at best, and still doesn't justify the **"Verily, verily, I say unto you"**.

So if the 'greater works' doesn't refer to the power of the works, or the quantity of the works, or the variety of the works, what was Jesus trying to convey?

A basic rule for understanding scripture is to take that which we read in the context in which we find it (see Appendix A). One thing that becomes clear when we study Jesus' miracles is that He never claims to have done them of Himself, but rather always attributes them to His Father. And, contrary to the way we often view miracles, there is one express purpose for all the miracles Jesus did:

*"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"* (John 5:20). This is the first time works (Gr. Ergon) are mentioned in John's gospel, and they are from the Father as a witness to the people.

*"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"*(Jn 5:36). Again, the works were not of Jesus but the Father, and were to be a witness.

*"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"* (John 10:25)

Here again, the purpose of the works is explained: they are of the Father, but the miracles Jesus did were to convince the people that He was the Son of God – God manifest in the flesh. Thus, works = witness.

*"If I do not the **works** of my Father, believe me not. 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"*. (John 10:37-38) Regardless of people's initial reaction to Him, Jesus points people to the works as the evidence He was God. Again, works = witness.

So, the miracles Jesus did were done through Him by the Father, with the express purpose of witnessing to the fact that Jesus was God in the Flesh.

With that foundation we can now look at our verses in John 14 again: (Jesus speaking to Philip): **"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the **works**. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very **works**' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the **works** that I do shall he do also; and greater **works** than these shall he do; **because** I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son"** (John 14:10-13)

What was the purpose of the works? To witness to the fact that Jesus was God! What therefore is it that believers will do that will be greater? They will more abundantly witness to the world that Jesus is God. And because Jesus was returning to the Father we will be enabled to do this to a greater degree because Jesus will be our intercessor before the Father (Heb 7:25). We shall ask whatsoever we will, in Jesus name, THAT THE FATHER MAY BE GLORIFIED. And that which brings glory to the Father is bearing witness that the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father.

John 14:12 (cont'd)

History shows this to be true; for the early church, and the church through the ages, has borne a greater witness that Jesus is God in the flesh, to all nations tribes and tongues.

This understanding satisfies the reason for Jesus' emphasis: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, [this is important, so take note...'] He that believeth on me, [i.e he that believes I'm the Son of God (God in the flesh)] the works that I do [to bare witness that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me] shall he do also"; and greater works [= witness] than these shall he do"*

In agreement with this, Adam Clarke says: I think it still more natural to attribute the greater works to the greater number of conversions made under the apostles' ministry. The reason which our Lord gives for this is worthy of deep attention: [*Because I go unto my Father.] Where I shall be an Intercessor for you, that...* (see next verse where Jesus continues...)

John 14:13

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

The 'asking what we will' (and receiving it) is not just a blank cheque to use as we will. James says: "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James 4:3). Our liberty in asking anything in Jesus' name is conditional. Jesus promises to grant our requests *if* the Father may be glorified thereby.

We need also to remember that Jesus is here speaking with His disciples, whom he had already told: "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*". (Matt 16:24). Therefore, the privilege of asking anything in Jesus' name is only given to those who are to have already denied the flesh life with its desires and passions, and left all to follow Christ. In that context, anything they ask in Jesus' name will bring glory to the Father, and so Jesus will delight in granting such requests.

John 14:14

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Commenting on verses 13 & 14, the Wycliffe Bible Commentary says: "**Whatsoever.** The scope of prayer. **Ask.** The condition of prayer. **In my name.** The ground of prayer. This involves at least two things: praying in the authority Christ gives (cf. Matt 28:19; Acts 3:6) and praying in union with him, so that one does not pray outside His will. **That will I do.** The certainty of prayer. **That the Father may be glorified in the Son.** The purpose of prayer. **If ye shall ask.** The *if* is on the side of the one who prays, not on the side of Christ".

John 14:15

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

This is the simple test of our profession. If we truly love Jesus, we will keep His commandments. "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1 John 5:3-5)

In this verse from John' first letter he ties all this together: our love for Him is demonstrated by keeping His commandments; those who keep His commandments are those who overcome the world; those who overcome the world are those who believe that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. This is a natural progression built on the foundation Jesus is laying in John 14 with His disciples in the upper room.

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

This is the first time we find the promise of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for 'another' is 'allos', which means another of the same kind (rather than another of a different kind). Thus the Holy Spirit will be of the same kind as Jesus, just as Jesus is of the same kind as the Father.

John 14:16 (cont'd)

Importantly, the Holy Spirit is here promised to abide with the Church forever. This is a compelling reason for believing that when the 'Restrainer' (Holy Spirit) is removed prior to the unveiling of Antichrist at the start of the Tribulation (2 Thes 2:1-8), the church must also be removed. Quite simply, if the Holy Spirit goes, and the church and the Holy Spirit are not to be separated, the church must go too!

In Revelation 4:5 we also see the seven-fold Spirit of God, and the seven branched lampstand (which Jesus identifies as the church – Rev 1:20) in unity before the throne in Heaven – again prior to the start of the Tribulation. At the end of the book of Revelation (22:17), the Spirit and the bride are again seen together.

Just as Jesus here promises, the Spirit will abide with the church forever.

This is one of the most amazing and incomprehensible privileges of the church. In Psalm 51, as David pours his heart out to the Lord after his transgression with Bathsheba, he pleads "*Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me*" (Psalm 51:11). David was all too aware of how Saul (his predecessor) had forfeited his privilege through disobedience: "*But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him*" (1 Sam 16:14). You and I have the knowledge that even if we sin (and "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*"), we have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). And "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:8-9).

Although we therefore cannot lose the Holy Spirit, we are told: "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*" (Eph 4:30). The thought that we can actually grieve the Spirit of God through our actions and thoughts is sobering indeed, and Paul warns us: "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*" (1 Cor 3:16-17).

John 14:17

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Here we are given one of the titles of the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of Truth'. Jesus has already shown that the world is in spiritual darkness; because of this, the world cannot recognise or know the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us: "*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 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 2:12-14)

As a side note, at this point, the Holy Spirit was dwelling with the disciples; later (John 20:22), they will receive Him and He will dwell in them.

John 14:18

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

This is a two-fold promise. Jesus will send the Spirit to be their (and our) comforter, and will also Himself come again (cf .verse 3).

John 14:19

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

Jesus was returning to the Father, and the world would not see Him anymore. The life referred to here is the spiritual life Jesus would impart after His resurrection; this is the new life, the new birth, he had spoken to Nicodemus of back in chapter 3.

John 14:20

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

Just as the Father was in the Son, and the Son in the Father, so, after His resurrection, ‘***At that day***’, on the day of Pentecost, because the Holy Spirit would then be in believers, the relationship would be complete. Because now the Spirit of God is in us, Paul tells us that we can be in God and in Christ:

“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3).

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17)

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:15-16)

We cannot even begin to fully understand the privilege we have – but it should bring home the responsibility and onus upon us to *“present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”* (Rom 12:1-2).

John 14:21

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

As we noted in verse 15, the real test of our profession of love to Jesus is whether we obey Him. One of the biggest tests of our obedience comes on the line of trust; do we trust Him to do for us all that the New Testament says he will? Or are we still seeking to solve the problems on our own? A wonderful promise is given here for those who do trust: *“he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”*.

In his first letter, John will tell us just how amazing God’s love is: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 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 3:1-2).

John 14:22

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

John is quick here to vindicate his friend and fellow disciple Judas, the brother of James (aka Thaddeus), and dissociate him from Jesus’ betrayer. These are the only recorded words of Judas, but it is a good question and evidences that he had been intently listening:

John 14:23

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

This is how we are to know the fellowship of the Father and the Son: If we love Him, that is, have a preference for Jesus over any and every other thing in this life, we will keep His words out of love and not a sense of duty or compulsion; and as a result, the Father and Son, through the Spirit, will make their abode with us!

John 14:24

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

Someone who does not keep Christ’s sayings, and is not obedient to His word, demonstrates that he does not truly love Christ. Jesus reminds us again that all He had spoken, and is speaking, is of the Father. It is the Father’s plan and will that we be reconciled and made one through His Son.

John 14:25-26

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

This was just too much for the disciples to take in and understand in one go, and Jesus knew it would be. Hence He tells them that the Holy Spirit, when He comes, will bring these deep, essential and foundational truths to their remembrance and teach them concerning them. In a broader sense, we are here given a brief outline of the work of the Holy Spirit: He will be a comforter, teacher and will bring to remembrance the things that Jesus has spoken. But this doesn't just apply to the disciples who heard Jesus speak audibly; for we too have heard the words of Jesus through the pages of scripture, and the Spirit will likewise bring to our remembrance, at the moments when we need it, whatsoever Jesus has said to us.

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

To know we are loved by the Father and the Son, and indwelt and comforted by the Holy Spirit, produces a peace that the world can never know. The world's view of peace is 'absence of conflict'. The Hebrew word for peace gives us an insight to the true nature of peace. 'Shalom' comes from the verb meaning to pay, fill, fulfil. We can have real peace because Jesus died to pay for our sin, in so doing he fulfilled the requirements of the law that were against us, and then He has filled us with His Holy Spirit.

John 14:28

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

At the time, clearly the disciples were upset and confused, Jesus was going away, and what were they to do now? It is the changes and transitions in life we find the hardest to deal with; that is where we need to trust Jesus the most. It is then we need to remember that "*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose*" (Rom 8:28). If we could see the end, we would indeed rejoice as we see that what Jesus was engineering all along, was for our good.

John 14:29

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

And so Jesus draws 'session 1' of His discourse to a close by effectively saying to His disciples 'you don't understand all of what I have said yet, but soon, when you have received the Holy Spirit, you will.

John 14:30

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

Jesus' time with His disciples is almost at an end. Soon Satan will launch his assault, thinking that by killing Jesus he will be victorious in defeating God's 'rescue plan for mankind'. Little did He know that the next 24 hours would in fact seal his own fate.

John 14:31

But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Just as our love for Jesus is demonstrated by our obedience, so was Jesus' love for His Father demonstrated by His obedience to the Father's will.

Jesus now seems to leave the upper room with the disciples, and they head out on their journey to Gethsemane.

CHAPTER 15

John 15:1

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

To try to set the scene: it appears that Jesus is now en route to the Mount of Olives with His disciples. As they walk by some vineyards, Jesus takes the opportunity to give them an object lesson using vines and branches.

The word for true here is *alēthinos*, which means "genuine." A thing can be true as over against error and falsehood, or a thing can be true over against that which is a counterfeit. The latter is the way it is used here. We have had this word used in the same way previously in the Gospel of John. John the Baptist was a reflecting light, but Jesus Christ is the true Light. Moses gave bread in the wilderness, but Jesus Christ is the true Bread. So here Jesus is saying, "I am the true vine, the genuine vine." - J Vernon McGee



The significance of this may not be immediately apparent to us, but the vine's primary purpose is to bear fruit. Ezekiel 15:2-5 makes the point that, other than bearing fruit, the vine is good for nothing (see also Judges 9:13). The vine is one of the idioms used of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament (see Psalm 80:8-15 / Jer 2:21) – of which the disciples would have been familiar; but Israel had not produced the fruit it should have done (Isaiah 5:1-7). There is also another vine mentioned in Revelation 14:9, 'the vine of the earth'. This is a counterfeit vine that has been growing down through the ages. It purports to lead men to spiritual fruitfulness, but ultimately leads them to destruction and the wrath of God. Israel and the vine of the earth have this one thing in common: they were/are unable to lead men to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They cannot produce the necessary spiritual fruit to 'get right' with God. In stark contrast, Jesus (who had come to lead men from darkness to light, who was *the Way*) now boldly states He is the *genuine Vine*.

As a side note, this is the seventh and final I Am statement John records for us.

In the previous two chapters we have seen Jesus lay the foundation for discipleship, summarised as follows:

- 1) *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* (Matt 16:24). Although John doesn't specifically record this, it is implied in John 12:26, and is the initial and most basic requirement. Dying to self & following Christ are where it begins.
- 2) *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* (John 13:14-15) – This is the second preliminary; without a servant's heart (being willing to give up your rights) you cannot progress to the first level, you cannot begin the course.
- 3) The training begins with: *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* (John 13:34). From now on things will be different for a disciple of Christ. Jesus tells us that this will be the outward manifestation that we really are His disciples.
- 4) The next issue concerns the inward man, the hidden life that only God sees: *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* (John 14:15). Keeping His commandments is not so much about that which is visible, but rather, is a matter of the heart. The root of this is our thought life, and the moment by moment decisions we make (see Rom 12:2).

The reward for successful completion of 'stage 1' is: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* (John 14:21)

Now, using this example of the vine and branches, Jesus is ready to explain the requirement for 'stage 2'; namely that His disciples bear fruit.

John 15:2

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Being a disciple is not to be a ‘spectator sport’; active participation is mandated. Whilst we can do nothing to earn our salvation (Eph 2:8), bearing fruit is the evidence that our faith and profession are genuine. The fruit (whilst almost certainly manifesting itself through good works) is not works themselves, but the ‘peaceable fruit of righteousness’ (Heb 12:11).

J Vernon McGee comments: I do not believe that the fruit mentioned here refers to soul-winning, as so many people seem to think. I believe soul-winning is a by-product but not the fruit itself. The fruit is the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance . . .” (Gal. 5:22–23). This is fruit in the life of the believer. Abiding in Christ will produce effectual prayer, perpetual fruit, and celestial joy:

For those who *do* bear fruit, He promises that the Father will ‘purge’ them, in order for them to bring forth yet more fruit. The Greek word (translated here as ‘purgeth’) is *kathairō*, which means ‘to cleanse’. It is from where we get our word ‘catheterise’, meaning to purge/cleanse (typically, poison from the system). And that is what our heavenly Husbandman does with us: as the ‘old life’ is purged from our system (1 Cor 5:7), and we become renewed day by day (2 Cor 4:16), we become cleansed conduits along which flows the life of the Vine, thus causing the branch to bear more fruit. Interestingly, when a branch is pruned, it is cut back and brought closer to the root, making it ready to grow again. Many times in our Christian walk, our Heavenly Father will cut us back to the Root. We can get so absorbed in our daily routine, or our ministry etc., that we forget that first and foremost, our Heavenly Father simply wants us to have a relationship of abiding in Christ (John 4:23 / 14:21). This purging is *“for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”* (Heb 12:10-11).

Having dealt with the latter part of the verse, we now turn our attention to the opening 11 words, which touch upon some of the most complex and challenging questions in the New Testament. There are essentially two views as to exactly what Jesus meant by *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away”*. The real fork in the road, which determines the direction we take, is the two little words ‘in me’. Either this is in reference to just believers or it has a broader application. If it is just in reference to believers, how can they be ‘taken away’ by the Father? Some argue that *taken away* means ‘lifted up’ (a legitimate translation from the Greek) in order that it might be given opportunity to bear fruit, but verse 6 compounds our problem by telling us that such branches *wither and are cast into the fire!*? If, on the other hand, there is a broader application in mind, the fact they are cast out and thrown into the fire makes more sense, but how can they then be said to be ‘in Me’, or even expected to bear fruit in the first place? What makes this even harder is that both of these positions are not unbiblical in themselves, and can actually be defended from scripture (see notes on vs. 6).

What cannot be defended from scripture however, is a third position that suggests that these branches, who are not bearing fruit, are believers that subsequently lose their salvation. The Believer’s Bible Commentary by MacDonald & Farstad says: *“This is clearly impossible because it contradicts so many other passages which teach that the believer has an eternal salvation”*. Salvation is a work of God’s grace, we cannot contribute to it: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* (Eph 2:8-9). In John 10 we saw that Jesus promised eternal life to His sheep. If it is eternal, it cannot come to an end – ever. We also saw in the last chapter that the Holy Spirit is given to believers forever. That means there will never be a time when a believer can lose the Holy Spirit. If we could lose our salvation, then it follows that we could also maintain our salvation by meeting certain criteria; thus we would, to some degree, become contributors to our own salvation, which would then cease to be a sovereign work of grace. We could then boast that we had, to some degree, earned our salvation. This is **not** what the Bible teaches!

For now, we will leave these branches hanging (so to speak!), suffice to say, that the Father is looking at the branches on the vine to see who is bearing fruit, and who isn't! If there were a fruit inspection right now, how would you fare?

John 15:3

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Possibly less than an hour before this, Jesus had washed their feet and said: "*He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean*" (John 13:10). Through Jesus' words, their walk had been cleansed; they had now started down a different road. As Paul will tell us in Ephesians, His Word is that which washes and cleanses us; and as we noted in the previous verse, the Father 'kathairō us', literally cleanse us from within.

John 15:4

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

It is easily understood that a branch, unless connected to the root, cannot bear fruit. The ability to bear fruit comes from that which the root supplies, And so it is with Christ's disciples. The sense here is that we are to *continually abide* – it is a moment by moment choice.

John 15:5

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Following on from the above, Jesus underlines how important it is for us to abide in Him. We deceive ourselves if we think we can live a fruitful Christian life without, choosing moment by moment, to abide in Christ. Note that this verse doesn't say 'without Him we can do little', or 'without Him it is much harder to get results', but 'without Him we can do **nothing!**' Are you struggling right now? Are you not seeing fruit in your own life? Examine yourself (see 2 Cor 13:5) and see where it is you are abiding!

John 15:6

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Jesus now returns to the theme of verse 2, where we are told that the unfruitful branch is to be 'taken away' by the Father. As we noted in verse 2, our difficulty is in deciphering what constitutes a 'branch in Me', and in verse 6, what does it mean to 'abide not in Him'. The options appear to be as follows: Either the unfruitful branches are unbelievers, or they are saved (but not sanctified?) believers. We will look at each of these as there are valuable lessons that can be learned from both points of view.

The scholars who argue the unfruitful branches represent carnal Christians are quick to point out that Jesus is talking to His own; the chapter has nothing to do with their salvation, but rather, their bearing fruit. So how could it even be expected of an unbeliever to bear fruit, let alone be said to be 'in Christ'? J Vernon McGee comments: "In me," that is, in Christ, is what it means to be saved. There are tremendous words like propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption that cover particular phases of salvation, but the entire spectrum of salvation is in the phrase "in Christ." There are only two groups of people: those who are in Christ and those who are not in Christ.

Paul tells us: "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Cor 5:17)

If then these unfruitful branches *are* believers, we have to deal with some hard questions:

- 1)** How can a genuine believer, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, connected to the Vine, fail to bring forth fruit? (particularly if all things have become new & old things have passed away! See also verse 16).
- 2)** How does He do it, and what does it actually mean, for the Father to 'take away' an unfruitful branch from the Vine? How can a believer be removed from the opportunity / possibility of abiding in Christ? (cf. Rom 8:35-59).
- 3)** Without any connection to the Vine (without which we can do nothing – see v.5), is it possible for a 'withered' believer to find their way back? Can an unfruitful branch, once removed, ever be restored?
- 4)** What does it mean for a believer to be cast into the fire and burned?

If this position is valid, we must find satisfactory answers to all these questions!

John 15:6 (cont'd) Unfruitful believers view...

Attempting to answer these questions, J Vernon McGee states: If a branch does not bear fruit, how does He take it away? One of the ways He removes it is by taking such a person away from the place of fruit-bearing. I know many who have been set aside today because they were no longer effective for God. There are ministers like that and there are lay people like that. Removing such a branch does not mean they lose their salvation, but they are taken away from the place of fruit-bearing. Sometimes this removing from the place of fruit-bearing is by death, physical death. I believe this is what John means in 1 John 5:16 when he says that there is a sin unto death. A Christian can go on sinning until God will remove him from the place of fruit-bearing by death. Ananias and Sapphira were removed by death from the early church, which was a holy church, a fruit-bearing church. These two liars could not stay in that church.

Possibly lending support to this position, we have an interesting situation recorded in 1st Corinthians: Paul opens his letter to them by saying: *“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints”* (1 Cor 1:2); thus Paul is writing to those who are in Christ, and who have been called; these people are clearly not ‘false converts’! Yet in chapter 5 we find that Paul rebukes them because they were tolerating a member of the congregation who was committing fornication with his step-mother. Paul’s advice in this situation is *to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* (1 Cor 5:5). Thus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul says that they are to ‘cut off’ this branch from fellowship, that after his flesh has been ‘consumed’, he would come to his senses and repent, thereby being restored. Paul’s advice was evidently heeded and vindicated, for in 2 Cor 2:5-11 we find the man had repented and Paul then urges the church to forgive him and restore him to fellowship with them.

Another interesting passage is found in 1st Peter: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:3-7). Peter here talks of our security in Christ (*kept by the power of God*), yet seems to suggest that, for some, *‘if need be’*, they will endure temptations and trials, being tried **by fire**, so that in the final analysis, they might be purified.

This begs the question, that if a branch can be cut off due to unfruitfulness, and subsequently ‘tried by fire’ to bring it to repentance, can it be restored? In Paul’s explanation of the place, purpose and future of the nation of Israel in Romans 11, he says concerning Israel: *For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.* (Rom 11:15-24).

Here we have a biblical precedent for ‘unfruitful branches’ being cut off, but then, when they cease to abide in unbelief, they are grafted back in and can ‘abide in the true Vine’.

There is also a clear warning to Christians to ‘abide’ in His goodness or risk being cut off.

John 15:6 (cont'd)

Again, we must stress, we are not talking about salvation, but about fruit-bearing and inheritance. National Israel were broken off as a result of unbelief (a lack of faith – without which it is impossible to please God – is the primary cause of unfruitfulness), and whilst each individual Jew will only be saved by accepting Jesus Christ as LORD and Saviour, God has, in His word, stated that they (Israel) are chosen and will ultimately be saved (see Acts 15:14-16 / Rom 11:26-27 / Ezek 11:17-20 / Ezek 36:22-28), and thus, this *may* be a legitimate parallel to an unfruitful believer (?) (Caveat: Acts 17:11).

Another indication an unfruitful believer can be restored is in Galatians 6:1: *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted”*. This is not just referring to the sins we are all guilty of on a daily basis, but rather something that is more serious. The word translated as ‘overtaken’ is *prolambano*, which has the idea of ‘*eating before others have an opportunity*’. This surely is the case for a fruitless believer who, before being transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom 12:2) and therefore consumed by the things of God, are consumed by the things of this world. The potential for this ‘back sliding’ is in all of us. Paul said to the Galatians: *But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?* (Gal 4:9).

For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures. (paraphrase of Gal 5:17-18 - The Living Bible)

Even as believers we have moment-by-moment choices to make as to how we are going to live, and ultimately whom we are going to serve. Paul writes: *“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. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”* (Gal 6:7-8).

An example of this ‘reaping corruption’ / ‘being thrown into the fire’ may be seen with the parable Jesus gives of the prodigal son: *And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:* (Luke 15:11-23)

Here we have an unfruitful (carnally minded) son, whom the father (reluctantly) hands over to the world for the destruction of the flesh. When he has been burnt and had his fill of the world, and seen that Satan’s promises are actually lies, he comes repentantly back to his father. It is important to note that the son loses his inheritance (viz. eternal rewards?), but he does not lose his sonship (viz. Salvation?).

John 15:6 (cont'd)

As an aside, John writes of the danger/possibility of losing our eternal rewards: *Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward* (2 John 8). Paul amplifies on this idea in his letter to the Corinthians: *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”* (1 Cor 3:11-15)

NB: This could lead us to a further study looking at the biblical differences between fruit and works – in 1 Cor 3 it is works that are burnt up, (the produce of that which has been done serving the flesh). However, in John 15 it is the unfruitful individual who is themselves burnt up. Note too that the ‘judging’ of rewards takes place in Heaven, the judging of fruit takes place whist on earth.

God does not want us to be unfruitful, but to bear fruit, which in turn will produce good works, and so we receive a full reward, bringing glory to Him. *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”* (Gal 5:22-25). For believers who do not crucify the flesh with its passions and desires, God, through His love, may hand such a one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. We see a clear example of God using the world to bring correction, (this trial by fire, reaping corruption as a result of sowing to the flesh) throughout the life of the nation of Israel. A study of the book of Judges and Kings will quickly show How God allowed Israel's enemies to oppress them, causing them to call out to God, and return to Him with their whole heart (see 1 Kings 18:39).

It should of course be noted that there are differences in the way God worked with Israel and the Church, not least the fact that the Church, unlike Israel has been given the Holy Spirit as a permanent ‘possession’, and it is He who will produce fruit in our lives (the fruit of the Spirit). This is why we are told: *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Cor 3:16-17).

NB: it is no coincidence that this caveat comes at the end of the passage we have just looked at regarding eternal rewards, and explains that those who have ‘sown to the flesh, reaping corruption’ are still saved, yet so as by fire! (see again 1 Cor 3:11-17).

Thus, we could conclude, that if believers are unfaithful, they will, by virtue of this, be unfruitful. God has used, and will use, the world to try them by fire; *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1:3-7). We have also seen, in principle at least, that repentant branches can be grafted back in if they cease to abide in unbelief and seek to abide in Christ. But it should also be noted that unfruitful, unrepentant branches may be ‘removed from the game’ as was the case for Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), and this may also be the explanation of 1 Corinthians 11:28-30.

So whilst there is a biblical basis for the notion that carnal Christians will be ‘cut off’ (from fellowship at the very least), the question is, is *this* what is being referred to by Jesus in John 15:2 & 6? And whilst they clearly may lose their eternal rewards/inheritance, can it truly be said that they are *completely unfruitful*, particularly if the fruit in question is not works, but the fruit of the Spirit?

Proverbs 18:17 says: *“The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him”*. Therefore, we should take a look at the other position:

John 15:6 (cont'd) The alternative view.....

If the unfruitful branches Jesus refers to are however, unsaved individuals, the 'tough question' we have to answer is 'how can they be said to be 'in me'?

One argument put forward is that these are people so intertwined with the Vine so as to make it undetectable to the natural eye whether they are connected to the root or not. They may be part of the Vine, but not abiding in it. The Greek word 'en' (translated as 'in' me in verse 2) does allow for this understanding.

Ron Matsen comments: 'If there is no fruit, you have to question the connection to the root!'. Jesus Himself said: *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **Ye shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 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 7:15-20). Significantly, we see here that Jesus says a good tree will bring forth good fruit, and we should note that the end of the unfruitful ones in Matthew 7 is exactly the same as in John 15:6, both are cut off and cast into the fire.

Some may argue that the false prophets and 'bad trees' are not 'in the Vine' (to use the language of John 15:2), but Jesus then goes on to say: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity* (Mt 7:15-23) To onlookers, these false converts seemed to be as much 'in' (or on Gr. 'en') the Vine as the genuine believer; they prophesied, did miracles, and many works all in Jesus name, yet we find they are taken away, because they did not bear the 'peaceable fruit of righteousness'; there was not that vital connection to Jesus that comes through repentance, faith and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Note also, these branches actually believed themselves to be 'in the Vine' "*Lord, Lord, have we not... in Thy name...*".

Jude also makes a very similar comment in regard to 'certain men' who had 'crept in unawares' – to the undiscerning, these church members would be considered part of the Vine; but Jude says: "*These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; **trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots***" (Jude 12). Here, those who had crept into the church were exposed by their lack of fruit, and just as in John 14:6, they wither, and are removed. This warning and admonition would not need to be given unless these false converts actually resembled the genuine branches. The sheep know to run from the wolf, but the wolf in sheep's clothing is much harder to discern.

Another passage that underlines this still further is in Matthew 13. There, Jesus gives us seven kingdom parables, six of which specifically highlight the difference between those who are merely on (Gr: *en*) the Vine, compared to those who are abiding in the Vine. A clear illustration of this can be seen with the final parable: *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* (Matt 13:47-50). Here we have a net that draws out of the world (represented by the sea) a multitude. But within the net are both good and bad, i.e. both believers and 'false converts' are drawn out of the world and are found *in* the net. The destiny of the bad, just like the unfruitful branches, is to be thrown into the fire.

This starts to become one of the most compelling arguments for this position; In Matthew, it is without question false converts who are removed from Christ and cast into the fire. With the end result being the same for the unfruitful branches in John 15:2 & 6, it is hard to see them as anything other than false converts / unbelievers also. We should note too, that in Revelation 3:16, to the lukewarm church of Laodicea, Jesus says He will spue them out of His mouth! They were in the Laodicean church, but rejected from the body.

John 15:6 (cont'd)

To add even more weight to this, if we go back to the first parable in Matthew 7 we find we are introduced to four seeds/soils; The first seed doesn't even make it into the soil, but of the 2nd and 3rd soils we read: "*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. 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*" (Matt 13:20-22). These are people who hear the word and receive it, and even endure for a while! We would be (and often are) delighted with such results, and happily consider such people to be 'in Christ'. But time will tell if the profession was accompanied by genuine repentance and a new birth – something natural eyes cannot see.

Only the last soil of the four brings forth fruit, and notably Jesus tells us it is indicative of the person who receives the **word** and understands it. The next verse in our study (John 15:7) tells us that the key to abiding in Christ is to have Christ's words abiding in you.

Another example is found in the second parable. This reveals that there are, within the church, wheat and tares. These are indistinguishable as they grow, and remain together until the time of the harvest. The tares, to all intents and purposes are 'in Christ'; they look like Christians, often act like Christians, are seen at church, and have a fish on the back of their car. It is only at the time of the harvest we notice a difference, for the wheat will bow its head, but the tares remain bolt upright (*God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble* - 1 Peter 5:5).

Notably, in John 15:6, the word 'men' in regard to gathering has been inserted by the translators; the text simply indicates '*they are gathered*'. Again, the parallel with John 15:6 is clear: "*The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matt 13:39-42).

Thus both views have been presented, but only one can be what Jesus intended to convey. When issues regarding interpretation arise, there are some basic rules that almost all scholars will adhere to; firstly, *when the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise* – Arnold G Fruchtenbaum

Unfortunately, in this particular case, it is the plain sense we are struggling with! Therefore, two other rules can be employed to help us get to the bottom of this:

The Law of Recurrence: *This law describes the fact that in some passages of scripture there exists the recording of an event followed by the second recording of the event giving more detail to the first.*

The Law of the Context: *This states that a text apart from its context is a pretext – i.e. will probably not reveal the real meaning of truth of the text in question.*

By stepping back and looking at this portion of scripture as a whole, it helps us to see the context in which Jesus said what He did. Yes, Jesus was talking to His disciples, but we will also find that, by looking at the bigger picture, we see at least three times in this passage, Jesus seems to say the same thing, but in different ways – and that will be the key to help us unlock this conundrum.

John 15:6 (cont'd) conclusion

The upper room discourse is essentially Jesus' last opportunity to teach His disciples all that they would need to know before His crucifixion. It is here Jesus lays out the basic requirements expected of a disciple; specifically, that they have a servant's heart, an unconditional love for each other, a desire to obey His commandments, and that they bear fruit. To therefore suggest that one of these requirements is not in fact mandatory (i.e. that you can be a follower of Jesus yet not bear fruit) would seem to undermine the whole purpose of this teaching.

Of course we know there *are* born-again, Spirit-filled believers who *don't* demonstrate the nature of a servant *as they should*, who don't love the brethren *unconditionally*, who err in keeping His commandments, and who don't bear *as much* fruit as they should; but to say that born-again, Spirit-filled believers can bear *no fruit* is just not possible.

In verse 16 we will read that Jesus said: "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*" (John 15:16). The very purpose Jesus chooses His own is so that they might bear fruit, and that the fruit should remain. To postulate that a person whom Jesus chooses, and who has been filled with His Holy Spirit, could, for whatever reason, bear no fruit whatsoever, is to imply that Jesus was unable to sanctify (to whatever degree) that which He had saved. All believers bear fruit as Matthew 13 indicates, but some are clearly more fruitful than others (as defined by their moment-by-moment choices). We noted earlier in our study, regarding the four soils in Matthew 13, that only the last one is a true believer; the first didn't even get going, and the other two are false converts. Of the true believer it is said there *will be* fruit; but that there be will different measures of fruit for different people. "*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*" (Mt 13:23). In addition to this, throughout this discourse, Jesus has been showing the stark contrasts between what it means to be His disciple and the way of this world. The first of these is seen in the lesson on servanthood; this is not the way of the world. We then have the new commandment to love one another; again, certainly not the way of the world! Jesus then speaks of the peace that He gives and contrasts this to the pseudo peace the world knows. This is then followed by the contrast between born-again, Spirit-filled believers who will produce fruit, and unbelievers who produce no spiritual fruit because they are spiritually dead. The destiny of these dead branches is (as shown throughout the New Testament) to be cast into the fire and burned.

The question, of course, remains: how can we reconcile Jesus words 'every branch *in me*'? I believe our problem comes by assuming the analogy of the vine and branches is speaking of Christ and the church; if that were the case, 'every branch in me' would have to refer to believers. However, as Jesus is passing the vineyards on the way to the Mt. Of Olives, He chooses this object lesson for a very specific reason. The key is in the opening verse where Jesus says 'I am the *true* vine'. We have already mentioned that Jesus says this to contrast Himself with national Israel, but the question should be asked, 'why did God use the idiom of a vine to represent Israel?' Our answer comes from book of Isaiah: "*Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry*" (Isaiah 5:1-7).

John 15:6 (cont'd)

God had intended Israel to be fruitful, and a witness to the nations (Gen 12:2-3 / Psalm 22:23-27 etc.). Instead, through their rebellion they had become unfruitful and a degenerate plant (Jer 2:21). Had they remained faithful, they would have been a light to the nations to point them to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and ultimately to the Messiah as the one and only Saviour. Israel's leaders were resting in their 'spiritual superiority' as 'God's chosen nation' when John the Baptist rebuked them in Matthew 3: "*And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*" (Matt 3:9-12).

In John 15:1-6, Jesus effectively underlines that which He already told the disciples, that He was the *only* way to the Father (John 14:6). Israel were no longer a vine whose fruit would be to lead the nations to the Father. Neither could the vine of the earth (Rev 14:19) bear any good spiritual fruit. The only Vine of value was the True Vine. Through His propitiation for the whole world (1 John 2:2), all mankind now had the opportunity of abiding in the Vine. However, if any branch abide not in the Vine, it would be spiritually fruitless, and therefore taken away to wither and finally be burned. What an incredible picture of the person who rejects Christ!

Thus, from the context it would seem that the unfruitful branches in John 15:2 & 6 are not just false converts in the church, but any who reject Christ. Whether they be antagonistic to the gospel (Rom 1:18-21), self righteous (Matt 3:9), spiritually 'still born' (Matthew 13:20-22), or planted by the enemy (Matt 13:39 / Jude 12), it matters not. The result is the same: they bear no fruit (which does not mean 'works' but the fruit of righteousness), and their end is to be gathered up and cast into the fire – speaking of the judgment to come.

With this understanding, let's consider the first 6 verses again:

I am the true vine [the only genuine vine], *and my Father is the husbandman* [The vineyard belongs to the Father, who so loved the vineyard that He gave His only begotten Son as the true Vine]. *Every branch in me* [who became the propitiation for the sins of the whole world] *that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* [The world is divided into the saved and the perishing; those who are born again spiritually, who bear spiritual fruit, and those who are dead spiritually, whose end is to be burned]. *Now ye* [my disciples, in contrast to the world] *are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit* [if you have been cleansed by My word, continually abide in Me, for if I am in you, you will bring forth much spiritual fruit] : *for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me* [by rejecting that I am the true Vine, the way, truth and life], *he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

If there be any doubt that a true believer will produce fruit, read Romans chapter 6, which concludes with: "*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (Rom 6:21-23)

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. - Matt 7:20

John 15:6 (cont'd)

Before we move on, having now established what we believe to be the correct understanding of this verse, there is another, deeper and more personal way this passage can apply to each of us. Psalm 1 talks of faithful believers as being like *“a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper”* (Psalm 1:3). It will be that in your own life there are branches that are not bearing the fruit of righteousness, these the Father will need to remove. It maybe past-times, relationships, habits or whatever, but these unfruitful branches are taking the sap from that which is growing and bearing fruit. We need to allow our Husbandman in with His holy secateurs and remove that which is hindering your spiritual growth. We must not pity even our right hand: *“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell”* (Matthew 5:30).

Jesus did not say that everyone must cut off the right hand, but—“If your right hand offends you in your walk with Me, cut it off.” There are many things that are perfectly legitimate, but if you are going to concentrate on God you cannot do them. Your right hand is one of the best things you have, but Jesus says if it hinders you in following His precepts, cut it off. This line of discipline is the sternest one that ever struck mankind.

When God alters a man by regeneration, the characteristic of the life to begin with is that it is maimed. There are a hundred and one things you dare not do, things that to you and in the eyes of the world that knows you are as your right hand and your eye, and the unspiritual person says—“Whatever is wrong in that? How absurd you are!” There never has been a saint yet who did not have to live a maimed life to start with. But it is better to enter into life maimed and lovely in God’s sight than to be lovely in man’s sight and lame in God’s. In the beginning Jesus Christ by His Spirit has to check you from doing a great many things that may be perfectly right for everyone else but not right for you. See that you do not use your limitations to criticise someone else.

It is a maimed life to begin with, but in v. 48 Jesus gives the picture of a perfectly full-orbed life—“Ye shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest

John 15:7

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

The key to abiding in Christ is for His **words** to abide in you. The difference with the forth soil in Matthew 13:23, is that it represents the person who *heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit*. Such a person will ask in accordance with God’s will and is therefore promised his prayers will be granted. The implication is also found here that a life abiding in Christ will be a life of prayer continually, presenting our needs and requests before Him without ceasing.

John 15:8

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

It is God’s desire that His own bear much fruit, and by our fruit we will be known (cf. Matt 7:15-16)

John 15:9

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

This is another breathtaking verse; in the same way that the Father loved the Son, so the Son loves His own. What a motivation to continue as His disciples!

John 15:10

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

Having His word in us is the key to abiding, but keeping His commandments is the key to abiding in His love. Because we are loved so much, we should desire to keep His commandments out of love, loyalty and gratitude.

John 15:11

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

It is incredible that some believers do still choose to play around with the things of the old life, when Jesus has made available an abundant life (John 10:10), and a life of abiding in Christ will bring us a peace that passes understanding (John 14:27) and fullness of joy – not ‘happiness’, but joy; which is something that transcends the circumstances.

John 15:12

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

The great commandment of the Christian life is here reiterated. The 10 commandments were divided into two sections; 1-4 deal with our attitude to God; 5-10 deal with our attitude to our fellow men. This is what Jesus says to the lawyer in Matthew 22:37-40: *“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

It is taken as a given that His disciples love Him with all their heart, mind, soul and strength, so what has to be continually pressed on His disciples is their need to love one another – for this is a joy to the Father and a witness to the world.

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

This verse is so often quoted in regard to soldiers who have laid down their lives for their country, and indeed appropriately so; but we must never forget the greatest sacrifice of all, that God incarnate would willingly die in my place, paying a price far higher than I can imagine, to pay for an inestimable debt that I had accrued by sinning against the very same God now willing to redeem me! And on top of that, we are now called His friends!

John 15:14

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

If the highest power on earth were to come to you and allow you to become his friend, on the condition that you would do as he asked (and the requests would never be unreasonable), who would not jump at such an opportunity? How much more then should we grasp this offer with open arms!

John 15:15

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

In case the disciples were missing the magnitude of the invitation being put on the table before them, Jesus emphasises that He was not enlisting them as servants, but inviting them to be friends; friends who share secrets with one another. When the other half of that friendship is the omniscient God, the information flow is only going to be one way!

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

As we mentioned in our summary of verse 6, Jesus has chosen his own, ordained them, all with the express purpose that they should bear fruit that is lasting. This will keep us in constant fellowship with the Father who will grant our requests. *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil 4:19). For believers not to bear fruit, would indicate a failure on Jesus’ part. Indeed, some believers are more fruitful than others (some 100, some 60 and some 30 times – Matt 13:23), but fruit will accompany any true born again, Spirit-filled believer.

Notice also in this verse, it is Jesus who ordains, not a man in a religious robe.

John 15:17

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

This is the third time Jesus repeats this vital command (13:34 / 15:12). The question is, are we loving each other as we have been commended? And what have you done today to prove it? *“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”* (1 John 4:20-21)

John 15:18

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

We now get to another of the contrasts in this chapter, all of which were telling the disciples the same thing: If you are for Christ, you cannot be in the world any longer. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2 Cor 5:17)

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Back in John 7:7 Jesus said: *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil”*. In this verse we are now being told ***‘If the world hate you...’*** Is this a contradiction? Not at all. If the world hates us, we simply need to remember that Jesus is the object of their hatred. They do not really hate us. To prove it, try going along with the world and they will love you, but the moment you stand for Christ, you will be hated and persecuted because, just as Jesus said, *‘I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil’*.

****NB: It is strongly advised NOT to try going along with the world! See Proverbs 1:10-19****

John 15:19

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

As we commented above, if we go along with the world, don't rock the boat or question its morality, we'll get along just fine. *“[But] what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”* (Mark 8:36)

If we are Christ's, we are no longer officially resident on this earth, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Phil 3:20). Concerning the things of this life, Paul says we are to *“count all things but loss”* (Phil 3:8), and instead, seek to *“lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me”* (Phil 3:12)

John 15:20

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt 5:10-12).

Has the world kept Christ's sayings? Then they won't keep ours either!

Some translate the passage thus: If they have WATCHED my sayings, i.e. with an intent to accuse me for something which I have said, they will WATCH yours also: therefore be on your guard. Parateerein (NT:3906) has this sense, as we have had occasion to observe before; and perhaps teerein (NT:5083) has the same sense here, as it is much more agreeable to the context.

- Adam Clarke

John 15:21

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

This verse flies in the face of the modern gospel message which says: 'Become a Christian and you'll get peace, joy and lasting happiness. You have a God-shaped hole in your heart, become a Christian and everything will be all right'. What **is** promised by Jesus for all who will be His disciples, is persecution, rejection, hardship and very likely suffering – but “*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven*”!

*“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. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And **the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever**”* (1 John 2:15-17).

John 15:22-24

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

In these verse, Jesus specifically focuses on the immediate situation, and underlines again, that the Jewish leaders were without excuse for their rejection of Him. However they would try to defend themselves, their attitude toward Jesus demonstrated their inner relationship to the Father.

John 15:25

But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

Jesus here quotes from Psalm 69:4. This Psalm gives, what some believe to be, a profile of the childhood of Jesus, highlighting the abuse, hatred and ridicule He endured whilst growing up in Nazareth.

John 15:26

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

How would the Holy Spirit testify? By the fruit He produced in the lives of those chosen and ordained by Jesus. Notice here that Jesus refers to Him as Comforter; given the last few minutes, and all the talk of coming hatred and persecution, the disciples would need comforting!

John 15:27

And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

What an assignment was being given to the disciples here! An assignment they fulfilled to the letter, even though it cost them their lives! Such was the difference this carpenter from Nazareth had made in the lives of these individuals.

CHAPTER 16

John 16:1

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

Persecution and dark days were coming, and Jesus didn't want His disciples to lose heart: *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Gal 6:9).

John 16:2

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

The religious Jews had started the persecution against the church, much of which we see accompanying Peter and Paul through the book of Acts, but by the time John was writing this gospel, the wave had turned into a tsunami led by the Romans, as typified in the letter to the church at Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11). The religious Jews saw this 'new sect' as blasphemy against the Law of Moses (Gal 5:11), the pagan Romans called the Christians 'atheists' because they didn't believe in their gods. But all of this was nothing compared to persecution and martyrdom suffered at the hand of the Catholic Church. One Pope, in one afternoon, put to death more Christians than under the entire Roman oppression. All this was done by those thinking they were doing God a service. We then had the middle ages, the inquisition, and the countless faithful believers who died during the reformation.

However, unbelievably, persecution of the body of Christ is still on the increase. More believers have been martyred in the last 100 years than in the entire 19 centuries before that combined! For a detailed study of this, see 'A Woman Rides The Beast' by Dave Hunt, or go to www.persecution.com

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Camel Boy "Crucified"

Damare, a young slave boy, had his knees and feet nailed to a board and was left to die - *just for attending a church service*. Miraculously he survived and told The Voice of the Martyrs that he forgave his cruel tormenter, because Jesus was nailed and forgave him.

Learn the truth about Christian persecution! Subscribe now to The Voice of the Martyrs FREE award winning monthly newsletter. You will be moved and encouraged by testimonies like young Damare's, and more importantly, you will learn how to pray effectively, and discover practical ways to get involved.



John 16:2 (cont'd)

Up until now, in the West, we have largely escaped persecution, but it was J Vernon McGee who commented that the body of Christ [in the West] was heading for persecution, but that the persecution would actually come from the established, traditional church. More and more Bible-believing Christians are being ostracised by the mainstream church. 'America's Pastor', Rick Warren, in an interview in a Philadelphia newspaper said that he: '*despises fundamentalism in the church*'. The article went on to say: *Warren predicts that fundamentalism, of all varieties, will be 'one of the big enemies of the 21st century'*. '*Muslim fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, Jewish fundamentalism, secular fundamentalism - they're all motivated by fear. Fear of each other.*' (January 8th 2006 edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer).

This is just the tip of the iceberg; our very own (own as in UK based) Steve Chalk in an interview with a British newspaper said that teaching our Children that God created the heavens and the earth in six literal days was tantamount to child abuse! (I personally verified this comment with Steve Chalk himself, who unashamedly told me that the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis were 'Hebrew poetry, penned in Babylon' – so I guess Daniel, who grew up and lived in Babylon, and who ascribed the writing to Moses, was mistaken! (cf. Dan 9:11,13) – as was Joshua (Josh 8:31), and David (1 Kings 2:1-3), and Josiah (2 Chron 34:14). And as for Jesus... (see John 5:46 / Matt 19:4-8 / Luke 24:27), obviously Steve Chalk knows more than these – and presumably more than God who in Exodus 20:11 writes with His own figure that HE made heavens, earth, sea and all that is in them **in six days!** (cf. Ex 31:18). "*The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?*" (Jer 8:9)

Persecution against the body of Christ will increase, and the emerging is just another step down the road of making biblical Christianity unacceptable to our ever tolerant generation. Chuck Missler (for one) has gone on record say that he believes that the church began meeting in homes (*house to house* - Acts 2:46), and will be forced to return there before the coming of the LORD.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the [churches]: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

John 16:3

And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.
Jesus makes it clear that those who do such things are NOT connected to the true Vine!

John 16:4

But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

There is no 'dangling of carrots' to try and get the disciples to stay. Jesus tells it like it is. Sadly, so many churches today try to make 'Christianity' attractive to the world in the hope they might 'fancy a go'. They arrange 'seeker sensitive' and 'seeker friendly' services, and even encourage the congregation to leave their Bibles at home so as not to offend any visitors. The Word of God is replaced with self-help motivational talks, inspired by new age gurus (see Deceived On Purpose by Warren Smith). But Paul tells us: "*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God*" (Rom 3:11).

Jesus ensured that the disciples knew exactly what they were getting themselves into, it was not going to be a bed of roses – but the reward was out of this world (literally!).

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim 2:10-12)

John 16:5-6

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

These verses need to be taken together, for they share the same theme. The disciples were focussing on their own impending loss, yet none of them has stopped to ask Jesus about what He was about to endure.

John 16:7

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.

Despite the physical, emotional and spiritual turmoil that Jesus was about to endure, He chooses to focus on all that it will accomplish. Jesus had to go to Calvary to make a way for the Holy Spirit to come and indwell these earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7).

John 16:8

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

If only this verse would be read and understood, so much of what is attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit would be exposed for the sham that it is. The primary work of the Spirit is to bring conviction of sin – not cause people to bark or laugh uncontrollably, not to stage miracle crusades, in fact, nothing to do with the carnal life at all! When the Holy Spirit is working, there will be conviction of sin in our innermost being, true contrition that yields repentance. Jesus here gives His own commentary on what He has just said:

John 16:9-11

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Again, none of this work of the Spirit is to do with manifestations or ‘signs and wonders’. v9. Just as we have seen with the Jewish leaders, they had no excuse for not believing in Jesus, they were blind yet they claimed to see: *“If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth”* (John 9:41), so it is with anyone who rejects Jesus.

v.10 Jesus was going back to the Father after making a way for all men to be right-with-God (righteous), the Holy Spirit will reprove people if they chose not to avail themselves of His righteousness, particularly when it has come at such a price.

v.11 Ultimately, all men will be judged on every word, thought and deed. The prince of this world will not be standing by them to offer a defence – he will have his own problems!

John 16:12

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

This second of the two training sessions (en route to the Mt. Of Olives) has been a heavy one. It seems such a long time ago they were all in the upper room having their feet washed. It is incredible to review all that Jesus had taught them in these few short hours – yet there was more! Jesus, knowing they were already on ‘information overload’ tells them of session 3:

John 16:13

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.

This is another of the primary tasks of the Holy Spirit as assigned by Jesus. He is our teacher. Notice that the (along with the next verse) we are clearly told that the Holy Spirit will not seek His own glory (although as God He could), but rather He seeks to glorify Jesus. It is interesting to note that every time the Holy Spirit appears as a type in the Old Testament, He is an unnamed servant! (eg. Abraham=Father, Isaac=Son, Spirit=unnamed servant / Boaz=Redeemer, Ruth=gentile bride, Spirit=unnamed servant who introduces Ruth to Boaz!) In the next chapter we will be told that the truth Jesus speaks of, wherein the Spirit will guide us, is His Word.

John 16:14

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

So many of today's 'Spirit filled' ministries leave Jesus out of the equation; according to John, that is how we know another spirit is at work: "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world*" (1 John 4:1-3).

In both verse 13 and 14 there is reference to the fact the Holy Spirit will reveal things to us, particularly 'things to come'. How interesting that we find such an aversion in the mainstream church to talk about anything to do with prophecy. John tells us in Revelation that "*the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" (Rev 19:10).

No attempt has been made thus far to prove the trinity; however, Jesus in these two verses refers to the Holy Spirit as a 'person', with personality and consciousness. Contrary to what some cults teach, the Holy Spirit is not an 'impersonal force', but 'another' comforter 'of the same kind' (Greek: 'allos') as Jesus. We have shown throughout John's gospel that Jesus is God in the flesh. Now we are being presented with the Spirit of God as an equal member of the Godhead, yet, like Jesus, willing to submit to the will of the Father, always seeking to bring glory to Jesus.

John 16:15

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Here we see the Godhead working in unity, yet each fulfilling their separate rolls. The Father has given all things to the Son; the Spirit will take of the Son and reveal it to His servants.

John 16:16

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Within a matter of hours, Jesus would be taken from them, tried, crucified and buried. For three days and three nights they would not see Him. Then, after this short time had past, they would (to their inexpressible joy) see Jesus again, and from that point they would have His promise that "*lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matt 28:20), and "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Heb 13:5).

John 16:17-19

17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

Nobody wanted to ask the question because they were not sure if they were supposed to know the answer! Jesus, ever gracious, comes to their help:

John 16:20

Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

This is not what they were expecting; not that they were fearful of conflict, but as we see in the opening chapter of the book of Acts, the disciples were expecting a political upheaval (this is also what the Pharisees were fearing). None had understood Isaiah 53, and the need for Jesus to be led as a Lamb to the slaughter. Their sorrow would be real, but short lived. Note the similarity for us: "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" (Rom 8:18)

John 16:21

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

Jesus puts the coming 'pain' into context with this example, and then continues to say:

John 16:22

And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

The swing of emotion from Thursday evening, when Christ was buried in the tomb, to Sunday morning when they were told He had been seen and was risen, to Sunday evening when He appeared in their midst, is possibly as low and then as high as our system can experience. But this was to be no temporary high; it would forever change their lives, and nothing could ever take away the joy of knowing the risen Christ – not even the threatening of Rome, or the jeers in the Coliseum! The resurrection of Jesus stands as the centre piece of Christianity (see 1 Cor 15).

John 16:23

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

Jesus here hints at a relationship change; after His resurrection, many of their questions will have been answered; thus they will not need to ask Jesus the how & why questions. However they then enter into a relationship with the Father that only Jesus had enjoyed to that time. Jesus would tear the veil making a way into the holy place, all believers would now have direct access to the Father. Jesus had already told the disciples they were not servants but His friends; now as his friends, He grants them the liberty to ask anything and put it on His account.

John 16:24

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Up until now this opportunity did not exist, but the next 24 hours would change everything. Jesus had told them back in John 10:10 that He came to give them abundant life, this freedom of access to the Father is how that could be accomplished. It is easy to gloss over the magnitude of the privilege we have been granted. Babies in Christ may ask for many things, just as a child would ask a loving parent for what they desire; but the more you grow in grace, the less 'things' become important and the more the real joy is in abiding. Our prayers and requests will also change as we begin to experientially know that *"that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Rom 8:28), this knowledge will leave us content to pray *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matt 6:10). "God has ventured all in Jesus Christ to save us, now He wants us to venture our all in abandoned confidence in Him. There are spots where that faith has not worked in us as yet, places untouched by the life of God. There were none of those spots in Jesus Christ's life, and there are to be none in ours. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee." The real meaning of eternal life is a life that can face anything it has to face without wavering. If we take this view, life becomes one great romance, a glorious opportunity for seeing marvellous things all the time. God is disciplining us to get us into this central place of power". - Oswald Chambers

John 16:25

These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

Much of what Jesus said had been using earthly symbolism to convey spiritual truths, however after His resurrection Jesus would speak plainly to His disciples, revealing mysteries regarding the kingdom of Heaven: *"To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"* (Acts 1:3)

John 16:26-27

26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

27 For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

Jesus was not here implying that He would not intercede for them, for we have His word that He will (John 14:6 / John 17 / Heb 7:25), but simply that we would have direct access to the Father as we noted in verse 23. The barrier between us and the Father was removed by Christ: *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water”* (Heb 10:19-22)

John 16:28

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

Adam Clarke comments;

[I came forth from the Father] With whom I existed from eternity in glory.

[Am come into the world] By my incarnation.

[I leave the world] By my death.

[And go to the Father.] By my ascension.

These four words contain the whole economy of the Gospel of man's salvation, and a consummate abridgment of the Christian faith. This gave the disciples a key to the whole of our Lord's discourse; and especially to that part, John 16:16, that had so exceedingly embarrassed them, as appears by John 16:17 and 18.

Sometimes we are just like the disciples and are *“slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken”* (Luke 24:25). Jesus graciously condescends to explain to us in a way we understand. Dr Chuck Missler proposes an experiment in the supernatural: whenever you come across a passage of scripture that seems to make no sense, write it down, along with the reason it confuses you. Then pray the LORD to illuminate it for you. Over the next days or weeks you will either read somewhere else in His word, or be part of a conversation with someone, or hear a teaching on some other portion of scripture, or whatever else, but somehow God will reveal to you the meaning in a way that is so clear you struggle to see why it caused you a problem in the first place. That's when you check back with your note book to read how confused you were, and then rejoice that God really does reveal things to His friends!

John 16:29

His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

It seems here as if the light goes on for the disciples, what they had been struggling to comprehend now becomes clear, as evidenced by the following remarks:

John 16:30

Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

This section began in verse 16 with Jesus' statement that: *A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.* From verse 20 through 28 Jesus has been explaining the meaning of this to the disciples. What had amazed the disciples was that Jesus had known what they had been thinking, no-one had had to ask. This to them was just further evidence that this Rabbi was not just a great teacher, but the Son of God, who had been sent by God.

John 16:31

Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

This had been an incredible time of spiritual growth for the disciples; they had spent around three and a half years doing the practical, and the last few hours sitting through an intensive training course. Were they now ready? Not quite. One further test remained...

John 16:32

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

Insert Text

"Behold, the hour cometh . . . that ye shall be scattered". Jesus is not rebuking the disciples, their faith was real, but it was disturbed; it was not at work in actual things. The disciples were scattered to their own interests, alive to interests that never were in Jesus Christ. After we have been perfectly related to God in sanctification, our faith has to be worked out in actualities. We shall be scattered, not into work, but into inner desolations and made to know what internal death to God's blessings means. Are we prepared for this? It is not that we choose it, but that God engineers our circumstances so that we are brought there. Until we have been through that experience, our faith is bolstered up by feelings and by blessings. When once we get there, no matter where God places us or what the inner desolations are, we can praise God that all is well. That is faith being worked out in actualities.

". . . and shall leave Me alone." Have we left Jesus alone by the scattering of His providence? Because we do not see God in our circumstances? Darkness comes by the sovereignty of God. Are we prepared to let God do as He likes with us—prepared to be separated from conscious blessings? Until Jesus Christ is Lord, we all have ends of our own to serve; our faith is real, but it is not permanent yet. God is never in a hurry; if we wait, we shall see that God is pointing out that we have not been interested in Himself, but only in His blessings. The sense of God's blessing is elemental.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Spiritual grit is what we need.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world

'These things' meaning all of this discourse that began in the upper room with Jesus announcing His imminent departure. He had told them that their hearts should not be troubled, and spoke of the peace they would know, and the coming Comforter who would guide them into all truth. Furthermore, they had now been forewarned of the troubles they would face, and in the light of that, Jesus ends this discourse with this great encouragement: *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*. However tough things seem to be on the outside, *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*. However uncertain and confused we may become from time to time, *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*. Whatever difficulties or persecution we may face, *be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*.

Note that tribulation is promised to those who follow Christ. This flies in the face of the modern gospel of 'life enhancement' as we have already mentioned. The source of this tribulation is this unbelieving and Christ-rejecting world. This must not be confused with the coming time of Tribulation, from which we are expressly promised a way of escape (Luke 21:36), and to be delivered from (1 Thes 1:10). The source of the coming time of Tribulation is the wrath of God and the Lamb (Rev 6:17). There is no way, that having died to pay for our sin and save us from God's wrath, Jesus would then allow us to be subject to it along with the rest of the world. The peace and comfort Jesus has just promised would be shallow if we were still destined for judgment. Jesus is the propitiation (payment in full) for our sin, and, as He promised at the beginning of this discourse, He has gone to prepare a place for us and will come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is (Heaven), we may also be!

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

(1 Peter 4:14)

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. (Rom 8:35-37)

CHAPTER 17

John 17:1

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Thus, Jesus concludes His training session for the disciples and now sets His heart to pray for them. This is the real ‘Lord’s Prayer’ – the prayer the Lord Himself prays. It is a privilege to be allowed to ‘eves drop’ on this intimate moment between the Son and the Father, and we glean much from it. It is interesting to note that in Matthew 6, the passage we generally refer to as the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus lays out a model of how to pray. Consistent with what He teaches, Jesus Himself sticks to the same model as He prays here – see Appendix D ‘The Model Prayer’.

At the beginning of this week (as we noted in John 12), Jesus declared the hour had now come. This one week was what it had all been about; Jesus’ entire ministry had been focussed on that which would be accomplished from the triumphal entry on the 10th of Nisan (cf. Ex 12:3), to the world-changing event that would occur on the 17th - the Resurrection. In John 12 the expression ‘the hour has come’ is obviously used metaphorically to denote the final moments. That being the case, in John 17 we are in the closing minutes of the hour. Viewed literally, there may well have been less than an hour between this prayer of Jesus and the arrival of Judas. As a result of what would happen during the next 72+ hours, the Son and the Father would be glorified for all eternity.

Adam Clarke makes the following insightful comments linking what we have seen in the previous chapters to this prayer by Jesus: *Our Lord, who was now going to act as high priest for the whole human race, imitates in his conduct that of the Jewish high priest on the great day of expiation; who, in order to offer up the grand atonement for the sins of the people –*

1. Washed himself, and put on clean linen garments. This Christ appears to have imitated, John 13:4. He laid aside his garments, girded himself with a towel, etc. There is no room to doubt that he and his disciples had been at the bath before: see John 13:10.

2. The high priest addressed a solemn prayer to God:

a. For himself: this Christ imitates, John 17:1-5.

b. For the sons of Aaron: our Lord imitates this in praying for his disciples, John 17:9-19;

c. For all the people: our Lord appears to imitate this also in praying for his church, all who should believe on him through the preaching of the apostles and their successors, John 17:20-24.

Adam Clarke

John 17:2-3

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

No doubt as much for the benefit of those who could hear his prayer (cf. John 11:41-42), Jesus begins by summarising His underlying purpose.

John 17:4

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Jesus had remained faithful to the will of the Father, never deviating to His own plans. In this we see the perfect example of a life surrendered to God, whereby the Father will be glorified. I believe it was A.W. Tozer who commented that ‘the world has yet to see what God can do through a life that is fully yielded to Him’. Oh for men and women who would desire God’s glory more than their own (see Phil 2:5-8). Jesus however, was able to say He had finished the work; man cannot say that: Moses did not enter the land, Joshua did not finish the work of conquering the Land, David didn’t finish the temple, Paul was able to say he had finished his course, but the work continues. Only Jesus has fully completed the work God assigned Him, which is why there is salvation in no other Name (Acts 4:12).

John 17:5

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

What is this if it is not another declaration of Christ's deity? How impertinent it would be for a mere prophet or rabbi to pray such a prayer? Jesus had given up the majesty and glory of Heaven to come to this earth to redeem 'whosoever will come'. It is interesting to note the contrast between the last supper, where John reclines onto Jesus, and Revelation chapter 1 where John falls on his face as dead before the now restored glory of the Alpha & Omega.

We are all guilty of picturing the 'Sunday school Jesus', we should be reminded that when we see Jesus with our own eyes we will be seeing "*the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 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 1:13-18).

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14)

John 17:6-11

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Jesus had revealed the Father to His own (see John 14:9), now He prays specifically for them (in verse 20 it will be extended to all believers throughout the ages). The disciples training was almost complete, but they needed to be brought before the throne, for they were about to have their world torn apart, and thus, Jesus commits them to the Father's safekeeping. When the dust of the next 72 hours settles, these young men would take the gospel to the world, a calling higher than any of them could ever have imagined. Jesus had been faithful, but now, God's master plan rested on the shoulders of these precious saints.

John 17:12

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Jesus continues the above theme, stating that He had kept them while He was in the world, now He is passing the care of these to the Father.

Chuck Missler comments; Two different words for "kept": Eeteroun, from verb tero: "I keep" or preserve. Ephulaxa, "I guarded": Emphasizing sentinel duty over the souls of the Eleven.

Of the disciples the Father had given Jesus, only Judas was 'lost', but this was not due to inability or neglect on Jesus' part, but due to the hardness of Judas' heart, as had been prophesied (Psalm 41:9 / Psalm 109).

John 17:12 (cont'd)

We see this assurance we are kept underlined time and again throughout the New Testament: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Peter 1:3-5).

John 17:13

And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

The reason Jesus asks the Father to ‘hold fast’, ‘preserve’, ‘reserve’, ‘watch over’ the disciples is so they can have *His joy*. Jesus’ joy came from the security of knowing who He was, His relationship with the Father, and living a life in complete surrender to His will.

The Apostle Paul, knew experientially of the joy of which Jesus speaks; he wrote: *“for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day”* (2 Tim 1:12).

John 17:14

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Jesus has already addressed the attitude of the world toward the disciples, now He brings it before the throne. The world will never tolerate anyone who seeks to stand on God’s word. Again, we are not of this world, our citizenship is in Heaven, thus we should waste our time trying to fit in. (see 1John 2:15-17).

John 17:15

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

This is so important and tells us something very interesting: Firstly, Jesus does not want us to be taken out of this world; we are to be salt and light (Matt 5:13-16). *“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 2:15)

Jesus spoke in John 9:4-5 of a time coming when the light would be removed from the world; after which the world will be plunged into the darkest time in history (2 Thes 2:6-8). For now we are not to shut ourselves away but to be witnesses to the truth (see notes on John 14:12).

Not only is Jesus leaving us as His light bearers, but we are also not to be taken out of the world because we are undergoing a training programme in preparation for the coming kingdom. There is much in scripture that alludes to the various roles and responsibilities during the Millennial age, but the positions of honour are reserved for those who overcome here and now: *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”* (Rev 3:21). (see also Rev 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 21:7 / See also Rom 12:21 / Matt 25:14-28). For a detailed study on this subject, see *The Kingdom, Power & Glory* by Chuck & Nancy Missler – available from www.khouse.org – Another excellent book is *Destined For The Throne* by Paul E Bilheimer)

John 17:16-17

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

There are two important points we find here: Firstly, it is God’s Word that sanctifies us, (sets us apart from the world and for Him). If we are to grow as Christians we must *“desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2). *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Heb 5:12-14).

John 17:16-17 (cont'd)

1 Thessalonians 4:3 tells us *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification”* People may ask in any given situation what God’s will is; this verse answers the question: that you become sanctified. Why is it God’s will that you struggle in a particular situation? Answer: In order that you might be sanctified. Why did God allow this or that in your life? Answer: In order that you might be sanctified. Why did God allow His own Son to die on a Cross? Answer: That you might be sanctified.

The second point to be mentioned here is that we are told what truth is; we should not overlook the magnitude of this statement. The world searches for truth, some say truth is relative, others say there are absolutes; Pilate famously asked ‘What is truth’ (John 18:38); and many philosophers have spent their lifetimes asking the same question. Here Jesus tells us plainly and simply that God’s Word is truth – not it *contains* truth, but that the Word itself *is* truth. Jesus said I am *the* Truth (John 14:6). In John 16:13 we noted that the Holy Spirit will lead believers into all truth, if Jesus is the truth, and the Word is truth, the more we are led into the Word by the Holy Spirit, the more we will be into Christ.

Questions are sometimes asked about the other religions; are we to dismiss them and their sacred writings without having first taken the time to read and study them? Dave Hunt makes the obvious and reasonable point, that, with so many ‘holy books’ and other religious beliefs, it would not be possible to become an expert in them all, enabling a fair evaluation of the merits and validity of each. Thankfully the Bible makes it simple for us; it unequivocally states that it is the Word of God (over 300 times), and therefore it is truth. It consequently relegates all other sacred writings to the not-true category. If one is true, the others cannot be, for they are diametrically opposed in their teaching. Therefore, all we have to do to test this bold claim, is to put the Bible to the test. If we can prove its truthfulness and reliability and verify its claims, we need look no further to find the truth.

Anyone who actually sets themselves the task of validating the Bible quickly discovers it is not just a collection of ancient writings, but 66 books, written by around 40 authors, over a period of 1600 years, yet it is provably an *integrated* message from cover to cover, that has its origin outside our time domain.

The Bible is the only book in the world that speaks with authority about where we came from, where we are going when we die, and what we are doing here in the meantime.

The prophecies in the Bible repeatedly demonstrate its supernatural origin, with specific details being fulfilled hundreds and even thousands of years after they were written down. In addition to this the Bible can be proven mathematically (see the works of Dr Ivan Panin for a start!), it can be proven historically and archeologically (see the conclusions of Professor Robert D Wilson after a lifetime of study – or visit the British Museum and see the evidence of the Biblical record with your own eyes). It can be proven statistically – take the much publicised Bible Code, with undeniable equidistant letter sequences. You can visit Israel and see the caves at En Gedi, the fields around Bethlehem, the sea of Galilee, or walk the ancient streets on Jerusalem. You can also visit Babylon, Nineveh, Athens or Rome and find a living, breathing record demonstrating the accuracy of the Bible; or take the basic text and simply read it for yourself; as Jesus said: ‘Thy Word is truth’!

John 17:18

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Jesus had been preparing the disciples for over three years; they had now sat their final exam, and after His resurrection they would be given the ‘great commission’. It is easy to skip over, but there is an important ‘even so’ in the middle of this verse; God had sent Jesus on a specific mission, to fulfil His will, in the same way we have also been sent. This should make us reevaluate our priorities and goals and see if we are responding to the high calling with which we have been called!

John 17:19

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

As God, Jesus did not need to sanctify Himself, but as man (and in order that He might save us) He did. The writer to the Hebrews tells us: *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, [i.e. sanctified] he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Heb 5:8-9). We also read that He *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15). Thus, as Oswald Chambers puts it: *Our Lord transformed innocence into holiness by a series of moral choices. This He did so He could die as a spotless Lamb in our place. Jesus did not come to show us what a holy life was like: He came to make us holy by means of His death. The only way in which Our Lord does become our Example is when His life has been imparted to us. When we partake of His life through the experience of regeneration we are put into a state of innocence towards God, and we have then to do what Jesus did, viz. transform that innocence into holy character by a series of moral choices.*

–Oswald Chambers

John 17:20

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Now Jesus shifts the focus of His prayer from the immediate disciples to all those who would follow as a result of the witness of the 11 (this now includes you and I!).

John 17:21

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Unity is pleasing to God; we read: *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore”* (Psalm 133). I once had the opportunity to be involved with other local ministers in the planning of an outreach/witness event in our town. The idea was that the local churches would work together in unity, putting on an event to reach out to our local community. I proposed that we adopt a joint statement of belief, to show that, whilst there are differences in our styles of music, and we have different types of buildings (some traditional, some modern), ultimately there are core beliefs that unite us, fundamentals that demonstrate we are one body. To my amazement, one of the ministers immediately rejected the idea, stating that they had tried something similar in the past and it had caused too many problems! Not quite believing what I was hearing I questioned ‘Do you mean to say that there are not enough basic things we could all agree on to allow us to draft a joint statement of faith? We could start with our belief in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit; that God so loved the world...’ From the disgruntled mumblings I knew I had my answer! My pastor and I resigned from the planning team and God graciously engineered the circumstances so that our fellowship were unable to attend the event.

The real issue was the Word of God; true unity can only come from a foundation rooted in the soil of His Word. Paul said to the Corinthians: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10). How can this happen? Only through the Word of God. I have met believers from the other side of the world, and after just two minutes know we have unity; we could talk on any subject and have almost complete agreement, and where there are differences, there’s a genuine interest to understand the other position (Prov 27:17), because both are seeking to grow in grace and the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour (2 Peter 3:18).

Without the Word of God as the foundation, any attempt to work together is like two cats tied together by their tails and hung over a washing line: There you have union, but not unity! (I am indebted to the late Barry Smith for that fitting example!).

If we are united on God’s Word, there will be the unity Jesus here prays for, and the witness to the world that Jesus is the one sent by God as the only Saviour of sinners.

John 17:22-23

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Jesus qualifies His request in v.22 in v.23. The 'glory' He prays for, is that He will be in us, and that we might be one, united by His Spirit (who works in us). The result is that the world will see through our witness He has been sent by God, and *we* are loved by *Him*. Every time the world complains that 'Christians think they are special', they acknowledge there is something we have that they don't - and that is the love of the Father and the Son.

John 17:24

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

Back in chapter 14 we saw Jesus promise to come again and take us to the place He was going to prepare. This verse just speaks of the desire Jesus has to be united with His bride, that she might see His glory and majesty – what a day that will be!

John 17:25

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

The world is in spiritual darkness: *"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). We however, are not in darkness but are children of light. (John 9:25).

John 17:26

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.

Jesus declared the Father to us, the Holy Spirit continues to do the same as He convicts the world of sin, underlining how far short we have fallen of His glory. The express reason Jesus declared the Father to us is so that we could be restored to a right relationship with Him, thus enabling the Father to love us as He loved His own Son. *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 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"* (John 3:1-2).

Thus, this incredible prayer Jesus prays to the Father for His disciples, past and present, comes to an end. J Vernon McGee summarises this chapter and prayer as follows:

In review, this is what this prayer says about believers and the world:

1. Given to Christ out of the world (v. 6)
2. Left in the world (v. 11)
3. Not of the world (v. 14)
4. Hated by the world (v. 14)
5. Kept from the evil one (v. 15)
6. Sent into the world (v. 18)
7. Manifested in unity before the world (v. 23)

These are the requests of Christ for His own:

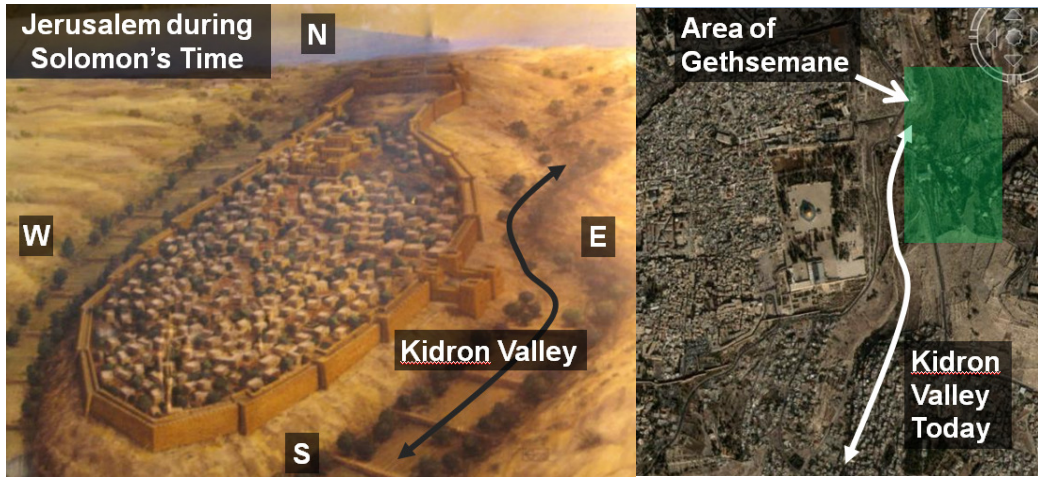
1. Preservation (v. II)
2. Joy—fullness of the Spirit (v. 13)
3. Deliverance—from evil (v. 15)
4. To be set apart—"sanctify" (v. 17)
5. Unity—"be one"—(this is not union) (v. 21)
6. Fellowship—"be with me" (v. 24)
7. Satisfaction—"behold my glory" (v. 24)

CHAPTER 18

John 18:1

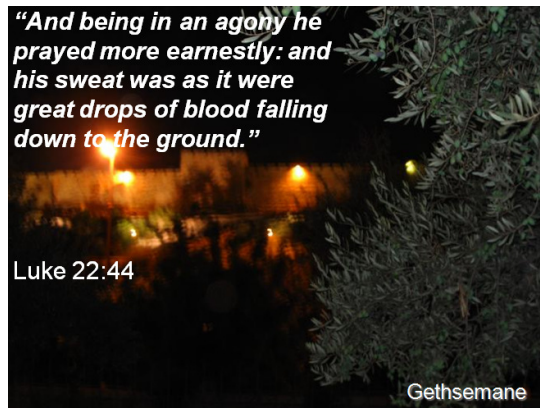
When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

With the training and the prayer now concluded, Jesus crosses what is known today as the Kidron valley, to the east of Jerusalem, en route to Gethsemane.



The exact location of Gethsemane is still open to debate, although it is believed to be around the northern end of the temple mount, across the Kidron valley.

Two interesting things can be drawn from what John does, and what he doesn't say: Firstly, he does not mention Gethsemane by name, nor does he recount the suffering that Christ endured in the Garden – was it too painful a memory to recall, even after all these years? ...that whilst His Saviour suffered, he had been sleeping? He does, however, specifically mention that they went over the Kidron brook. The name 'Kidron' itself means 'the black waters', aptly named as the blood from the countless sacrifices from the Temple Mount would be washed away in this brook. Certainly Jesus had to pass through the black waters at this time. However John may also be alluding to 2 Samuel 15:23, when David was forced to flee Jerusalem to escape from Absalom, passing over this brook. Significantly, on that occasion David had been betrayed by his friend Ahithophel. Now the Son of David crosses the same brook in the same circumstances.



For important background reading see Matt 26:36-47, Mark 14:30-36, and Luke 22:40-44.

John 18:2

And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

Judas evidently knew where to look for Jesus; but Jesus knew that Judas knew where to look! Jesus could have gone some place where Judas would not have found him, but, as we have noted already in our study, Jesus was set on completing the mission assigned Him by His Father, He was not about to run away. We saw in John 10:18 that Jesus said *"I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 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"*. The choice to go to Gethsemane this night was another demonstration of that fact.

John 18:3

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

This 'band of men' would have been a tenth of a Roman legion, meaning that around 400 – 600 trained soldiers were now accompanying Judas. This was not Judas' own work, but clearly the result of the manoeuvrings of the Jewish religious leaders who had been plotting to kill Jesus. The Roman Antonia fortress was situated on the Temple mount (probably just to the north of the Temple). The leader of the 600 strong Roman garrison stationed there was Chiliarchos – whose name is mentioned in the Greek in verse 12. Thus, it would seem that the entire garrison now come out to find and arrest Jesus. Along with the Romans were the temple police ('officers from the chief priests'). These had already been sent once to arrest Jesus back in John 7:32, but had returned 'empty handed' (7:45-46). Clearly, this multitude were armed and expecting resistance. To us, this seems like gross overkill, but that is because we look at this with the benefit of hindsight, and we know what Jesus had come to do, viz. lay down His life for the sins of the world. What we, however, need to keep in mind was that to all concerned – the Jewish leaders and the disciples – , they thought that Jesus was presenting Himself as the promised deliverer of Israel, who would free them from the yoke of oppression and bondage. What none of them realised was that this deliverance would be in two phases: Firstly Jesus would deal with the big issue: sin; and this meant He had to come as the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53: *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all".* (Isaiah 53:3-6)

Once this primary mission was accomplished, Jesus would indeed return to deliver Israel and establish His own kingdom, reigning from Jerusalem: Zacharias declared: *"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham"* (Luke 1:68-73). Gabriel also promised Mary: *"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end".* (Luke 1:31-33)

Psalms 2 speaks of Israel's coming deliver – this is what the disciples were hoping for, and the Jewish leaders *thought* was His intention (but feared lest it go horribly wrong and make matters worse, bringing the weight of Rome down upon them) - *"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel".* (Psalm 2:7-9)

In a nutshell, the Jewish leaders feared Rome, and did not want to upset the delicate balance that afforded them relative peace and some degree of authority over their own nation. They were anticipating a political move by Jesus (which in a sense they had now seen four days previous, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem being hailed as king). To them, this Man must be stopped at all costs: remember Caiaphas' words: *"Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not".* (John 11:50)

The disciples, on the other hand, believed in Jesus, and despite being impossibly outnumbered, but bolstered by the 'falling over', were ready to fight to take control... (see v.10, also Luke 22:38,49).

John 18:4

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

Note the confidence when you know your life is in God's hands. Jesus knew where this was leading, and had already fought and won the real battle that evening: *"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:41-44). Now He steps forward and, almost as a playful gibe, asks them, 'Who are *all* you people looking for?

John 18:5

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

It seems from the answer it was the Romans who here respond, for even though at night, the others with them would have no doubt recognised Jesus. It is most likely that that this mission had been sold to Chiliarchos as 'an uprising against Rome by a dangerous activist'. It was Rome's responsibility therefore to take control of this situation. Judas would have been giving direction to Chiliarchos, and although John doesn't record it here, Judas had agreed on a sign to identify which one was Jesus: *"And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely"*. (Mark 14:44)

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:47-48)

John 18:6

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

This is one of the most amazing scenes in the whole of scripture! This army, of possibly up to 700 people, had come down from the Temple mount with their torches lighting up the night sky. They had crossed the Kidron brook and made their way through the olive groves, coming to an abrupt stop as a lone figure steps into the light. Those leading this army tells their enquirer they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, and just then Judas steps forward to kiss this man. The man whispers something in Judas' ear, which seems to unsettle him, and then He turns to the multitude and says 'I AM'. Suddenly, in what must have been a moment of sheer panic and confusion, all this multitude find themselves on their backs. Armour, helmets, swords, clubs and torches must have gone everywhere as hundreds of soldiers struggled back to their feet. What on earth had just happened? What had hit these men?

Our answer is found in Exodus 3:14 where God introduces Himself to Moses as the 'I AM'. Thus, Jesus is in effect saying (as He had done seven times already in the Gospel of John), that He is the same voice which spoke to Moses at the burning bush. These Roman soldiers, temple police and all who were with them had just come face to face with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! How many seconds, or even minutes past while they got their bearings?

John 18:7

Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

As the commotion quietens, no one is sure what to say. So Jesus asks the same question. (I am guessing that no-one wanted to answer Him this time!), but eventually, a few timid voices reply.

John 18:8

Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

This time Jesus lets them remain on their feet, but now He is the One calling the shots. They had intended to take all the disciples (Mark 14:51-52), but as a Good Shepherd, Jesus ensures the safety of His sheep; besides, as High Priest, where He was going He had to go alone.

John 18:9

That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

Writing around sixty years after the event John makes an important remark here. The saying that John refers to was not some quote out of the Old Testament, but rather the words that Jesus had prayed to the Father in the last chapter (17:12). The reason this is interesting is that it shows John perceived the words he was recording as being on a par with the countless Old Testament prophecies, and thus authenticating the divine authorship of his gospel.

John 18:10

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Peter, no doubt bolstered by seeing these tough soldiers on their backs, and still thinking they are going to be fighting for the kingdom, takes aim.... and misses! The Greek word for sword here indicates it was a short sword typically used to split helmets, which is what Peter seems to have been aiming for! The fact he missed is as much about grace as it is Peter's failings as a swordsman. We know from Luke's account that Jesus touched Malchus' ear and instantly healed him – much to the relief of Malchus, the amazement of the people, and to not give them a cause to arrest Peter there and then.

John is the only one who tells us it was Peter that did this, the other gospels, being written while Peter was still alive, not wanting to incriminate him after the event!

John 18:11

Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

It is interesting to note what the other gospels record here: Matthew says: *“Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”* (Matt 26:52-54). Again, Jesus had an ‘out’ even at this stage, yet chooses to be obedient to the will of the Father. Chuck Missler comments on the prophecies riding on the next 84 hours: *Furthermore, there would be no restoration of Israel, no gathering of the nations, no Millennium, no display of grace, no salvation, no revelation of the Father [that were] all contingent upon the His death and resurrection.*

Luke adds: *“Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness”.* (Luke 22:52-53). Evil does its most effective work under the cover of darkness.

John 18:12

Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

Bible commentators have noted that countless laws were violated in the arrest, trial and sentencing of Jesus, but none of that mattered to those who saw themselves as above the law. The first violation was that they were not permitted to carry weapons on a feast day; then they were not allowed to bind a prisoner before the trial unless resistance was offered (and Jesus offered none); no trial could be conducted at night, or on a feast day; and they were not to act upon the testimony of a traitor; and it was illegal for judges to participate in the arrest of the accused.

John 18:13

And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

Annas had been high priest from 6 – 15 A.D. but was deposed by Pilate's predecessor, Valerius Gratusand. Nevertheless, he had remained very influential in Jerusalem as vice president of the Sanhedrin. He was the father of a family that held office as high priest for 56 years, seeing 5 sons and a son-in-law (Caiaphas) in the role. The Law which they sought to uphold required the high priest to hold office until death (Ex 40:15 / Num 35:25), but Rome and not the Law of Moses ruled Israel at that time, appointing the high priest as it chose. Nevertheless, many Jews still saw Annas as their true high priest.

John 18:14

Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

As we mentioned in the comments on verse 3, Caiaphas saw the political threat posed by this carpenter from Nazareth who was now being hailed as a king by the people.

Here, Jesus stands on trial before these high priests. Ultimately, both Annas and Caiaphas will have to stand before the true High Priest with the roles reversed, and this time they will be judged – it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! (Heb 10:31).

John 18:15-16

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

There is debate over who this ‘other disciple’ is, but most conservative scholars believe it was John himself. John seems to have known the high priest, and is the only one to mention Malchus (v10). As we have noted, John never actually mentions himself by name in his gospel, which would be consistent if John is referring to himself here. Others suggest that this could have been Nicodemus, who would certainly have had the ability to get Peter admitted. At the end of the day, scripture does not give us the answer, so we can conclude that we don’t need to know.

John 18:17

Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

Strike 1: Back in chapter 13 Jesus had foretold Peter’s denial. How fickle is the human heart; only a short time before this, Peter had tried to launch an offensive against 600+ armed guards; now, before a servant girl his courage fails him.

John 18:18

And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

Peter stood with them: our desire to blend in, to fit into our surroundings, will always result in compromise. Jesus had pre-warned the disciples “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:18-19). We can either stand with the world or stand with Christ, but as Peter show us here, we cannot do both.

John 18:19

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

Remember that the underlying fear was a political insurrection; how many disciples did Jesus have? Where were they now? What were they planning? What was Jesus’ manifesto?

John 18:20-21

20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

If only the Jewish leaders had listened to what He had said, they would have realised that He was not seeking to overthrow the oppression of Rome, but to break the yoke of a far crueller oppression; an oppression that had kept mankind in shackles and darkness since Eden

John 18:22

And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

Who was this officer to speak on behalf of the high priest? Why get so upset? Jesus simply pointed out that He had not been hiding anything regarding is purpose and mission.

John 18:23

Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

Jesus just says it like it is; with simple questions or statements He continually pulled the rug out from under the self confidence of men. We read in Jeremiah *“Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD”* (Jer 17:5). Jesus is the Light of the world, and the light makes manifest (Eph 5:13). To the accusers of the woman caught in adultery He said: *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”*. (John 8:7), thus, He shakes the ground of their self righteousness, allowing them to see things as they really are. To this crowd that had come to Gethsemane to arrest Him He simply said: *“Whom seek ye?”* (John 18:4). Jesus wasn't looking to give directions, *‘If you go down this way for about a mile then turn left...’* No, Jesus was stopping these men in their tracks and asking them to think: *“Have you stopped to think, even for a moment, what you are doing? Just who is it you think you are seeking?”*

Jesus then said to them: *“Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me”* (Luke 22:53). Again, Jesus was causing them to think about their actions; having been too cowardly to take Him in broad daylight, why now at night and with all these weapons?

To the high priest (in verses 19-21 above), the question Jesus asks highlights that they had arrested Him without really knowing who He was or what He had said. When this officer challenges Jesus' answer, striking Jesus in the process, Jesus simply asks him *‘what is the basis for what you said and did?’* One day, all men will have to give an account before Him. And so Jesus will do the same to each person He is set before; asking, *‘what is your basis?’* *‘Upon what rock have you been building?’* *‘Are things really as you thought they were?’* If Jesus is wrong, then *‘bear witness’* of why: but if not, why do you not right now accept Him as Lord and Saviour?

John 18:24

Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

This revered high priest comes unstuck at the questions Jesus asks him, so now (and I think we could read *‘not knowing what else to do or say’*) sends Him to his son-in-law, the *‘official’* high priest as appointed by Rome. When we are challenged, we all tend to revert to the authority in our lives; a child will say *‘but my dad said...’* An employee will refer back to the boss, a student will say *‘but my teacher told me...’* Annas had started by sitting at the top of the table (playing the big man), but is now forced to take a lower seat; this was more than he could handle.

John 18:25

And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.

Peter had tried to *‘stand with them’*, but in reality he was standing alone. As a disciple the world will never really accept you; and, thus if we want to continue standing with the world, we will be forced to deny Christ.

John 18:26

One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?

Mercifully, God marks those who are His, so that whilst we may deny Him, He is ever faithful and cannot deny His nature and promise to keep those who have been committed to His care (John 17:11 / 2 Tim 2:12-13). Thus, even the world will bear witness against our sinful nature (see Joshua 24:27). How often have we been pulled up by the world? *‘But... don't you go to church?’* *‘I'm surprised to see you doing that, I thought you were a Christian!’* *‘That's not the kind of thing I would have thought a Christian should say!’* *‘Aren't Christians supposed to turn the other cheek?’* Of all the people for Peter to be standing next to, it *‘happens’* to be a relative of Malchus whom he had tried to kill! This is like when you find that the person you shouted at in traffic during the week, or the shop assistant you were rude to, walks into church on Sunday, and says: *‘I didn't know you were a Christian!’* Just like Peter, we never know whose paths the Lord will allow us to cross!

John 18:27

Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

Ding! Ding! The test is now over. I'm sorry, you didn't pass. So what lessons can you learn? Firstly that "*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD*" (Jer 17:5). And that "*in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not*" (Rom 7:18). Quite what Peter was trying to accomplish by following Jesus to the high priests palace we cannot be sure, but there was probably an element of '*but I've got to do something*'. Just as with Abraham (Genesis 16), and Saul (1 Samuel 13:6-14), whenever we decide we are going to 'help God', we inadvertently create an unnecessary problem that costs us. From this moment on, Peter no longer trusts in his own ability, but will learn to rely on the Lord, becoming a bold and powerful witness before the very people he here cowers from (see Acts 4:6-14)

John 18:28

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

John does not record the questioning before Caiaphas and his kangaroo court, the sentence being pre determined, but Matthew gives us a glimpse of this ordeal which lasted all night and until the following morning (see Matt 26:57-68). In all, Jesus endured six trials, three before the Jews and three before Rome:

Jewish Trials:

Before Annas (John 18:12-14)
 Before Caiaphas (John 18:19-24)
 Before the Sanhedrin (Matt 27:1,2)

Roman Trials:

Before Pilate (John 18:28-38)
 Before Herod (Luke 23:6-11)
 Before Pilate (John 18:39-19:16)

There is a sad irony here, as these Jewish leaders refuse to enter the gentile judgment hall lest they become ceremonially defiled and disqualified from eating the Passover*. The true meaning of the Passover had escaped these religious professionals; for while they would be killing their Passover lamb, in memory of the shed blood of a lamb that had secured their freedom from Egypt as a nation, the Lamb of God would have His blood shed to redeem the whole of mankind from the tyranny and bondage of sin, fulfilling all that was laid out in type in the celebration of Passover.

* Remember that the Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of the first month (Ex 12), and the meal could be eaten anytime from sundown on the 13th (when the new Jewish day and Passover would begin), until sundown on the 14th (when for the Jews, the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin). Jesus and the disciples had eaten the Passover meal the previous evening (as was the tradition), but for some reason, possibly because they had been plotting and arranging the arrest and trial of Jesus, the Jewish leaders had not, and were obviously intending to eat their Passover meal later that day.

John 18:29-30

*29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?
 30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.*

Frank Morrison, in his classic book 'Who moved the stone?', reasons that Caiaphas must have secured permission from Pilate for this hurried trial the night before, prior to actually heading out to Gethsemane; for if Pilate had been unwilling to try Jesus at such short notice, (the Jews not being able to pass the death sentence themselves) they would have been forced to delay the arrest until a later time. That Pilate agrees to the request is evidenced by the fact he rises so early, and permits the Jews to remain outside. Pilate had been sold the 'political insurrection' line, but upon examining Jesus, combined with a dream his wife had had during the night, Pilate nullifies any prior agreement he had with Caiaphas and seeks to fairly examine Jesus. The fact Caiaphas thought he had an agreement with Pilate, and that this was a 'done deal', is clear from the lack of any formal charges being presented – they hadn't anticipated it would be required. You can sense the frustration in the response of the Jewish leaders; now they had to try to convince Pilate – and that would not prove to be easy.

John 18:31-32

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

32 That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Pilate had granted them 600 soldiers to go and arrest this man, now he is being drawn in much deeper than he wants. Pilate, not in the mood for games so early in the morning, and certainly not interested in their religious squabbles, throws the ball back into the Jews court. As mentioned above, the Jews had already decided Jesus was worthy of death, but they needed Rome to agree for it to happen. The death penalty from Rome would be by crucifixion, so fulfilling numerous prophecies, including Jesus' own words. (Psalm 22:11-18 / Zechariah 12:10 / John 3:14 / John 12:32). Remember too that the Jews feared the reaction of the people, so if this can be dealt with by Rome, it would be 'out of the Jewish leaders' hands'.

John 18:33-34

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Once again, Jesus asks questions. In effect, Jesus is asking Pilate to make his own decision on who Jesus was. This is the way it must be for everyone. Your church or family cannot decide who Jesus is for you; you must decide yourself. This was the question Jesus had put to Peter:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". (Matt 16:13-16)

John 18:35

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

It mattered not if Pilate was a Jew or gentile, he would still have to make his mind up as to who Jesus really was. The Jews had not given a valid reason for his arrest and being delivered to Pilate, so now Pilate tries to see if Jesus will tell him what this is really all about:

John 18:36

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Jesus here responds to the charge that Caiaphas had no doubt brought the night before to secure Pilate's participation in this trial; that being that Jesus was a political activist. Jesus lets Pilate know His agenda is not to usurp Rome (for now at least! See Dan 2:43-44).

Pilate is out on a limb and wants to get off. He would like to help Jesus. He is inside the court, alone with Jesus; the Jews are waiting outside because of their scruples about contaminating themselves. Pilate would be happy if Jesus would simply say He is not a king and that would get Pilate off the hook. Who is on trial? Pilate or Jesus? - J Vernon McGee

John 18:37

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Just when Pilate might be beginning to get a grasp of this situation, and why it is that the Jews had brought Him here, Jesus in effect says: *'The Jews have said that I am claiming to be a king, and you feel obligated to accept their accusation., So you are saying I am a king: Well, I am a king, and am destined to rule and reign, but the issue is not land or territory, but truth. All who respond to the witness I give and find the truth will acknowledge Me as King.'*

You can almost detect a long silent pause as Pilate tries to get his head around this...

John 18:38

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Of all the questions ever asked, this has got to be one of the most important. What is truth? How can we know? What way do we have of assessing our certainty about anything? Is truth absolute?

One thing Pilate does know is that he is way out of his depth here, so doesn't ask any more questions! What he *has* found out for himself, is that there is no fault, at all, in Jesus.

John 18:39

But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

Pilate, desperate to come up with a way out of this mess, thinks he has found the solution in a custom they had...

John 18:40

Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate's problem has just doubled, Not only did this clever plan backfire, meaning Jesus was not off the hook, but Pilate was now facing releasing a convicted criminal as well.

The Bible makes it clear that Pilate had no question regarding Christ's innocence:

“He knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Matt. 27:18).

“... I am innocent of the blood of this just person...” (Matt. 27:24).

“For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy” (Mark 15:10).

“Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them” (Luke 23:20).

“... I have found no cause of death in him ...” (Luke 23:22).

“... I find in him no fault at all” (John 18:38).

“... From thenceforth Pilate sought to release him ...” (John 19:12).

“... Pilate, when he was determined to let him go” (Acts 3:13).

In spite of all this, Pilate did not have the courage to release Him.

CHAPTER 19

John 19:1

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

This was the standard treatment for convicted criminals, possibly Pilate thought that if he consented to this, it would be sufficient punishment to satisfy the Jews, and he could *then* release Jesus.

John 19:2-3

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

The soldiers had not been party to the conversation between Pilate and Jesus; to them, Jesus was just another prisoner. In having the crown of thorns put upon His head - thorns being symbolic of the fall - Jesus is identified with the curse placed on this world (Gen 3:17-19).

J Vernon McGee comments on the brutality of the Roman soldiers: *The soldiers took this opportunity to have their fun with Him before He was crucified. When it says "they smote him with their hands," it means they played a cruel Roman game with Him. They could mutilate Him and do anything they wished with Him. All the soldiers would show the prisoner their fists. Then they would blindfold the prisoner and all but one would hit him as hard as they could. Then they would remove the blindfold, and if the prisoner was still conscious he was to guess which soldier did not hit him. Obviously, the prisoner could never guess the right one. They would continue this until they had beaten the prisoner to a pulp. I believe that the Lord Jesus was so mutilated that you would not have recognized Him. "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14).*

John 19:4

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

After this, Pilate hoping he had *now* done enough through the scourging and beating brings Jesus out to the assembled crowd:

John 19:5

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

It seems that Pilate was hoping that seeing the beaten and bloodied face of Jesus would finally silence this crowd. It is as if Pilate says *'is this what you wanted?'*. Seeing another suffer usually awakens sympathy in our hearts, and that was what Pilate was banking on here.

John 19:6

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

To Pilate's dismay, rather than sympathy, he is met with inexplicable hatred. The Jewish leaders' concern had been that Jesus would lead an uprising against Rome. After this, even if Jesus were released, He would have been a marked man, and any step out of line would have been swiftly reprimanded by Rome. Surely they had got what they wanted?

When we try to fathom the reasoning of the human heart we must never forget that 'it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked' (Jer 17:9) – particularly when driven by the god of this world (1 Cor 4:4).

Although Pilate knew the Jews did not have the authority to mete out capital punishment, out of sheer frustration he throws this back at them and declares 'I find no fault in Him'.

John 19:7

The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

The law the Jews refer to is most likely Leviticus 24:14-16, where the punishment for blasphemy was stoning. Passing the problem back to Pilate, the Jews finally give a reason why Jesus – according to their understanding – should be killed. Now Pilate’s day just got a whole lot worse, for he discovers that he is not just dealing with an ex carpenter from Nazareth, but someone who is claiming to be the Son of God!

John 19:8

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

He already thought Jesus was innocent of the charges that had been brought against Him,, and is feeling somewhat backed into a corner, but this new information was troubling to him indeed!

John 19:9

And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Pilate immediately hurries back to the judgment hall to see Jesus again; and ask Him ‘ *just where are you from?*’. To Pilate’s amazement, Jesus remains silent.

John 19:10

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Pilate, desperate to know the truth of this situation, tries to reason with Jesus; ‘*I can release you if we work together here*’. So often we are like Pilate, trying to reason with God; if only He would co-operate with our plans, everything would work out fine. But what we fail to do is see the bigger picture. There is more at stake than our little problems, God is working behind the scenes to save all who have ears to hear, the ‘whosoever wills’. If Jesus had wanted out, He could have hid in the Garden, or not come to Jerusalem in the first place. But as we have noted, Jesus and the Father were one, and that included in mission and in purpose.

John 19:11

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Jesus says here what Paul reiterates in Romans 13: “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*” (Rom 13:1). Despite how haphazard the world may seem, God is still on His throne, and not even a sparrow lands without Him knowing about it. Pilate had never been in charge of this situation, but now he is told that he only has the power and authority he does because God has ordained it to be so. Psalm 75:6-7 states: “*For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another*” This lesson is for all people of all time; we may think our ability and intellect have afforded us our varying degrees of success in this life, but, as Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way (see Daniel ch.4), “*the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*” (Dan 4:25).

Although not exonerating Pilate, Jesus makes it clear who it is that is taking the lion’s share of the blame for this situation.

We must, of course, remember that Jesus laid His life down voluntarily, “*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*” (John 10:18). If anyone is to be blamed for the death of Jesus, it is you and I, for it was for our sins that He had to suffer and die: “*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*” (Isaiah 53:4-6)

John 19:12

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

If Pilate was unnerved before, he was even more so now. This had been compounded by something John doesn't mention, but Matthew records: "*When he [Pilate] was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him*" (Matt 27:19). Claudia Procula was the granddaughter of Augustus Caesar, and had been in the palace the evening before when, no doubt, her husband had received a hurried visit from the high priest in regard to trying a political rebel called 'Jesus'. Thoughts of this Jesus would have been on her mind as she retired to bed a short while later. When the morning light woke her, her husband was already nearing to the conclusion of this most unusual trial. Startled because of her dream, she sends a most urgent message to her husband – a message that compounded his anguish!

In a desperate last ditch attempt to secure the verdict they needed, the Jews back Pilate into a corner he cannot escape from. Though they cared nothing for Caesar or Rome, it suited their purpose to toe the party line for now.

John 19:13

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

The choice has now come down to Pilate's job or his conscience. If he releases Jesus as he wants to, the Jews are threatening to bring this to the attention of Caesar, and this is a price Pilate is not willing to pay. Convictions are one thing, but when there is a cost involved it reveals where are real treasure is.

John 19:14

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

You sense here that Pilate is deliberately attempting to wind up the Jewish leaders (!), yet his comment has a deeply insightful and prophetic tone.

The sixth hour would have been mid-day (12:00 PM), the hours of the day being counted from 6:00 AM.

The 14th of Nisan, as well as the Feast of Passover, was the last opportunity to prepare meals and get things ready for the Feast of Unleavened Bread the next day (which for the Jews started at sundown). Israel had 52 Saturday Sabbaths throughout the year, and a further 18 that were fixed by the date, (that would therefore not necessarily fall on a Saturday - much like Christmas Day for us). In Leviticus 23 we are told: "*In the fourteenth day of the first month at even* [i.e. the day begins at sundown] *is the LORD's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread* [beginning on the 14th till the 21st, see Exodus 12:18-19]. *In the first day* [i.e. the 14th] *ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein*" (Lev 23:5-7). By 'servile work' it means work for which remuneration would be received, viz. something you would get paid for. Therefore, unlike a regular Sabbath where "*ye shall do no work therein*" (Lev 23:3), on certain Sabbaths, some work was permitted (see also Exodus 12:15-16).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th however was one of three special Sabbaths as indicated by Exodus 23: "*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 – hence why so many were gathered at Jerusalem in Acts 2], *the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering* [the Feast of 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)

Because of this, the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th of Nisan was classed as a 'High Sabbath' (as we will see John allude to in verse 31 of this chapter). In verse 14 here, John makes mention it was the day when they prepared for the passover – a term we have already noted is used by Mark, Luke and John to refer to the 'festival' starting on the 15th. (see again Luke 22:1 and notes on John 12:1).

John 19:15

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priest answered, We have no king but Caesar.

The Jews no more saw Caesar as their king than they did enjoy being under Roman rule! However, to them, they saw obedience to Caesar as the lesser of two evils (the other option being ‘squashed’ by the might of Rome as the result of an uprising led by Jesus. I believe it was Spurgeon who once said: ‘of the choice of two evils, choose neither!’

John 19:16

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

So Jesus’ ‘fate’ was sealed. It is incredible to stop and consider the great number of prophecies that were being fulfilled through these proceedings. Whilst sceptics may try to say Jesus intentionally fulfilled prophecy, not even a hardened sceptic would venture to say that Jesus was manipulating the Jewish leaders here; His back had been ripped to shreds by the flogging, and a crown of thorns pushed into His head. These events just go to show the power and accuracy of the prophetic word, and the unfathomable depths Jesus had to stoop to, to purchase and redeem you and I.

John 19:17

And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

This ‘place of a skull’ was so named for a very specific reason: Around a thousand years before this, a young shepherd boy, in one of the great ‘good vs. evil’ stories in the Bible, had taken a stone out of a brook and slain a giant by the name of Goliath. In many ways, David was a type of Christ: despised by his brethren, persecuted, but ultimately reigning over all Israel. David’s killing of Goliath is also a dramatisation of that which had been told in Genesis 3:15: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”*

David had, with a stone (constantly an idiom used of Jesus – Mark 12:10), bruised the head of this giant.

In 1 Sam 17:54 we are told: *“And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem”*. This apparently strange verse is not made any easier when we realise that, at that time, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Jebusites (Judges 1:21). It was not until sometime after that David conquered it and made it his capital (2 Sam 5:4-9). So the question has to be asked, what was David doing taking the head of his conquered foe to the home of his enemies?

One probable answer is that David intended to strike fear into the hearts of the Jebusites by this demonstration of God’s deliverance. It was a warning to the Jebusites: *‘the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob has given this land to their descendants because of your iniquity; and your days are numbered’*.

However, in what appears to be one of the most dramatic models we find in scripture, David apparently took this head of the giant to Jerusalem and buried it in the place that then bore his name – Goliath of Gath – Gol-gath-a.

Referring back to Genesis 3:15, the word in Hebrew translated ‘heel’ is ‘aqeb’, which can mean any part of the foot. Playing out this ultimate cosmic drama using Pilate and the Jews as his pawns, Satan has Jesus’ feet bruised (with the nail that pierced His feet), but Jesus, in the manner of a conquering king (Joshua 10:24), puts His feet, in effect, right on Goliath’s head – Golgotha – the place of a skull- symbolising His victory over, not only Goliath, but the real power behind him, viz. the Devil.



John 19:18

Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Here Jesus is crucified as a criminal, while the real criminal – Barabbas – went free. In this there another type that perfectly illustrates the great exchange that bought our freedom. Barabbas means ‘son of the father’. We were all the sons of our father, the devil. But Jesus as the Son of God, because God so loved the world, gave Himself for us, taking the punishment we deserved, as violators of God’s holy law.

“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 3:13)

John 19:19-22

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Why was it that the Jews were so upset about this sign? And why was Pilate so insistent that he would not change it? And why also is John so precise in telling us what was written (‘and the writing was...’), and that Pilate did not want it changed? The answer to these questions is found in the Hebrew words:

- *Yeshua (Jesus)*
- *Ha-Notzri (of Nazareth)*
- *V'Melekh (the King)*
- *Ha-Yehudim (of the Jews)*

Taking the first letters of what Pilate wrote would give us Y H V H – the tetragramaton, the unpronounceable name of God (that we render Jehovah or Yahweh). Thus, in what seems to be an intentional act by Pilate, he puts a sign on the cross implying ‘This is GOD’! No wonder the Jews were so incensed!

John 19:23-24

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

‘When they had crucified Jesus’ i.e. nailed Him to the cross.

John draws our attention to Psalm 22, and the incredible prophecy, inspired by the Holy Spirit 1000 years before: *“Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psalm 22:11-18).* For David to have ‘guessed’ such precise details of this event, at a time before crucifixion was even thought of, is just not possible. So, as John declares, this is the fulfilment of prophecy, proving once again the Word of God to be exactly that, and demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah and only Saviour of sinners.

John 19:25-27

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Although John refers to Mary as Jesus' mother here, it is interesting to note that Jesus never calls her mother.

For those who have experienced the death of a loved one, the emotion of this situation is tangible; and when the sense of impending loss and emptiness would have been overwhelming, Jesus cuts through their tears by giving Mary charge over John, and John charge over Mary; Jesus no doubt knowing that this responsibility would engender solidarity and strength for both to carry on.

It is also a testimony to the undefiled character of Jesus that, when under such immense duress, He doesn't get snappy, or easily riled, but rather demonstrates the heart of a Shepherd, still caring for His sheep.

John 19:28

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

John frequently uses the little Greek phrase 'meta tauta', 'after this', but usually the this is plural, i.e. 'after these things'. Here John very deliberately uses the singular, 'after this one specific event (or specific sequence of events)'. What John has in view is the accomplishment of all that Jesus came to do, viz. to pay in full for the sins of the world. In his first letter John will remind us: "*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). This was the moment when it was finally accomplished. This was the greatest moment in the entire history of mankind. The resurrection gives us the hope of new life, but the crucifixion gives us the assurance that our debt has been paid in full.

John 19:29

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

The scripture that was fulfilled here was Psalm 69:21: "*They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink*" Once again we see the Holy Spirit working through David in dictating events that would not take place for a thousand years. Whist Jesus said 'I thirst', He had no way of ensuring He would be offered vinegar in order to fulfil this prophecy. Those who reject the authority of scripture do so very unadvisedly!

John 19:30

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

It must have taken all the strength Jesus had left, to push up with His pierced feet to allow Him to take a deep breath before declaring 'Teleo' 'Paid in full!' – but never has a more triumphant cry been uttered in this universe!

As we are told in Ecclesiastes 12: "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*" (Eccl 12:7), and so here Jesus gives up the Spirit who had indwelt Him, who then returned to God.

For us, we died spiritually back in Adam, in the Garden. But through Jesus' death and resurrection, we can be justified freely (Rom 3:24), born again (John 3:8), and then indwelt by the same Spirit who had indwelt Jesus. It is for this reason Paul can say "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*". (Gal 5:16). In our own strength this would have been impossible.

John 19:31

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

As we have already noted, this day was the 14th Nisan, the day when the Passover lambs would be killed. Paul highlights the significance of Jesus dying on this day: *“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”* (1 Cor 5:7). According to the Law, whilst the Feast of Passover was a feast day, certain work was permitted, hence it had also become known as ‘the day of preparation’, in getting ready for the 15th, The Feast of Unleavened Bread when no work was permitted. It was for this reason that they were so keen to get Jesus’ body off the cross and into the tomb before sundown.

The reason they requested the legs be broken was that a victim of crucifixion could hang on the cross for days before dying; by breaking the legs, the victim would not be able to push up in order to take breaths, and would therefore suffocate.

John 19:32-33

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

No doubt to their surprise, they find that Jesus was already dead. This would also suggest that the extent of His pre crucifixion scourging was extreme, significantly weakening His body and no doubt resulting in extensive blood loss.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:4-5)

John 19:34

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

In order to ensure Jesus was really dead, this Roman soldier pierces Jesus side. The fact that blood and water came out, and that it was distinct enough for John to note shows beyond any doubt that Jesus’ was really dead. From a medical perspective...

John 19:35

And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

The Biblical record is not some cunningly devised fable, but a series of eye witness accounts so that we can know that our faith is rooted in real historical events that have been verified and recorded for us.

John 19:36

For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

For the Roman soldiers to be given an order to break the victims legs, and then for one of them not to do so when they came to Jesus is extraordinary. They could have been severely punished for such disobedience, yet once again, the Word of God had to be fulfilled. The scripture here referred to is part of the incredible model found in Exodus 12, where were read: *“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: [on the tenth day of the month, Jesus was ‘taken’ by the people as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey – He was the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world]. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. [Each person was to participate in the Passover meal, you could not rely on another eating for you, and so all men must partake of Jesus Christ for themselves; another’s faith will not suffice].*

John 19:36 (cont'd)

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goat [Jesus was tempted in all points, as we are, yet without sin – without blemish]: *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month* [it was now the 14th of the month as Jesus was led up the hill to Calvary, bearing His cross]: *and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel* [the Jewish leaders had stirred up the whole crowd against Jesus] *shall kill it in the evening* [the word translated ‘in’ is ‘Beyn’ in Hebrew, which means between – and between the evening when the Passover began, and the following evening when the Feast of Unleavened Bread began, Jesus was killed – He that know no sin, became sin for us] (Exodus 12:3-6)

A few verses later on, in Exodus 12:46, when we have recorded the Passover meal itself, Moses prophetically says: *“In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof”*.

(There is also an allusion to that fact that Jesus’ bones would not be broken in Psalm 34:20).

A further scripture prophetically fulfilled here, as we have already noted, is Psalm 22: *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint* [but not broken!]: *my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws* [hence Jesus’ cry ‘*I thirst*’]; *and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones* [again, none is broken]: *they look and stare upon me”*. (Psalm 22:14-17)

John 19:37

And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

Not only in Psalm 22 do we find reference to Jesus being pierced, but also in Zechariah 12, where we are given a glimpse of the events leading up to the Second Coming: *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem* [these nations will be under the command of Antichrist and will come with the intent of destroying Jerusalem and Israel in the infamous battle of Armageddon – but in the midst of Israel’s darkest hour, Jesus will return to deliver them...]. *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”* (Zech 12:9-10). Finally Israel will realise that Jesus is their Messiah, and seek Him repentantly.

John 19:38

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

Joseph was apparently one of the wealthiest men in Jerusalem (Matt 27:57) and had significant respect among both the Jews and Romans, hence Pilate is happy to grant His request. Joseph’s being a disciple ‘secretly’ does not necessarily mean ‘cowardly’, for in Mark’s account we read: *“Joseph of Arimathaea, and honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus”* (Mark 15:43). If Joseph’s fear of the Jews was regarding his own reputation or standing, he needed not to get involved at all, especially at this stage. This act indicates his love for Jesus was greater than his fear of man.

John 19:39

And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

Ever since that meeting in John chapter 3, Nicodemus had seen what the majority of the other Jewish leaders could not, viz. that Jesus truly was and is the Son of God, sent into the world to illuminate our need to be re-born spiritually if we are to ever enter the kingdom of Heaven. The Holy Spirit sees fit to record all that we bring as an offering (cf Numbers 7).

John 19:40

Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Although they had time to wrap Jesus' body with the linen and spices, evidently, because it was almost sundown, they did not have time to properly embalm the body, hence the need of the women to return at the earliest opportunity (after the Sabbaths), on the Sunday morning to complete the task (Mark 16:1).

John 19:41

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

There is conjecture regarding the location of the garden tomb, but the pictures here are of a garden tomb right beside Golgotha that seems to tick all the boxes:



John 19:42

There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

As we have already noted, at sundown the new Jewish day would begin, and on this particular day (the Thursday) the new day was to be the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Friday), when no work was permitted, being a 'high Sabbath'. Following this there would have been the regular Saturday Sabbath. Thus the earliest opportunity for the woman to bring the spices to the tomb would have been Sunday, and they come at the break of dawn...

CHAPTER 20

John 20:1

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Jesus had been crucified on the Thursday 14th Nisan, being the Feast of Passover (Lev 23:5 / 1 Cor 5:7). As the evening came and the new Jewish day – the Feast of Unleavened Bread – was about to begin, His body was wrapped in linen and laid in the tomb by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; but because no work at all was permitted on that day (see again John 19:31), there had not been time to embalm the body. Luke tells us: *“And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day[s] [Plural] according to the commandment”*. (Luke 23:55-56).

Although John only mentions Mary Magdalene by name, Luke records: *“Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles”* (Luke 24:1-10).

Despite this announcement by these ‘two men’ in shining garments, the women, even though they ‘remembered His words’ (saying that He would rise again), evidently still did not believe that Jesus had actually risen. John continues...

John 20:2

Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

There is no reason to see a contradiction here as some would suggest. Although Luke says the women came to the eleven (‘and to all the rest’ cf. Acts 1:21-22), this does not conflict with what John tells us here. It is reasonable to assume that Mary would go specifically to Peter and John as they had been the closest to Jesus of all the disciples, and would even at this stage have been looked upon as leaders of the group now that Jesus was gone.

John 20:3-4

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

As in verse 2, John does not mention himself by name, although makes the point that he can run faster than Peter!

John 20:5-7

5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Although John is a little hesitant, Peter in familiar style just goes straight in! It is interesting that John comments about the position of the grave clothes; for if the body had been taken by someone it is not reasonable to conclude that they would have removed the burial clothes and neatly arranged them as John observes (see also Luke 24:12).

John 20:5-7

Although I have not been able to verify the accuracy of the following, it is certainly provocative:

Why did Jesus fold the linen burial cloth after His resurrection? I never noticed this.... The Gospel of John (20:7) tells us that the napkin, which was placed over the face of Jesus, was not just thrown aside like the grave clothes. The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded, and was placed at the head of that stony coffin.

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved.. She said, 'They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where they have put him!' Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple out ran Peter and got there first. He stopped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying to the side. Was that important? Absolutely! Is it really significant? Yes!

In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand a little bit about Hebrew tradition of that day. The folded napkin had to do with the Master and Servant, and every Jewish boy knew this tradition. When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was exactly the way the master wanted it.

The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out of sight, until the master had finished eating, and the servant would not dare touch that table, until the master was finished.

Now if the master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers, his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the table. The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded napkin meant, "I'm finished." But if the master got up from the table, and folded his napkin, and laid it beside his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because..... The folded napkin meant, "I'm coming back."

John 20:8

Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

That which was believed here was the report of the women saying that *They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him (v.2)* this is indicated by the following verse:

John 20:9

For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

The words of Jesus to the disciples on the Emmaus road come to mind: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25)

John 20:10

Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

What must Peter, John and the others have been thinking as they returned home; their world had been turned upside down already; now what was happening?

John 20:11

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

Luke indicates that Mary and the other women had gone into the tomb when they had first arrived early that morning, and found that the stone had been rolled away. On that occasion they (i.e, Mary was not alone) had seen two men. "And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.." (Luke 24:2-6)

Dr Luke makes the point at the beginning of his gospel that he had personally verified the details he recorded, and he specifically uses the Greek word to indicate that these were 'men' (aner) and not 'angels' (aggelos).

John 20:11 (cont'd)

A provocative conjecture suggests that these two witnesses were actually Moses and Elijah, a view that seems to be supported by the strange event on the Mt. of Transfiguration, where Luke tells us: “And, behold, there talked with him two men [aner], which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30-31). Thus, it was precisely these events that had been the topic of the conversation when they had appeared and talked with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:30-31). Was it that Jesus was requesting Moses and Elijah to present to be witnesses of His actual resurrection? (see Deut 19:15).

After seeing these two men, Mary and the other women went back to get Peter and John and then returned with them to the tomb. Peter and John were clearly at a loss and so had left, but Mary felt compelled to stay.

John 20:12

And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

This time Mary is alone* and, as she stoops to look into the tomb, sees two angels (aggelos).

*except for possibly ‘the other Mary’ – see Matt 28:1,9

John 20:13

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

Despite Jesus’ own words, the testimony of the two witnesses earlier, the neatly folded grave clothes, and the - quite frankly incredible – appearance of these angels, Mary is convinced that the body has simply been removed.

John 20:14

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Quite how Mary managed to take her eyes off these angels is a mystery, but as she turned around she was greeted by an even more incredible sight – that she doesn’t immediately appreciate. Up to now, Mary and the others had been walking by sight and not by faith (2 Cor 5:7), and the natural mind does not understand or see the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 3:14).

John 20:15

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.

Mary mistakes the ‘voice of the LORD that walked in the Garden’ (Gen 3:8) with the voice of a gardener.

John 20:16

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

It is not until Jesus calls Mary by name that she recognises Him. The same is true with us, we (if we are Christians) have been called by name (John 10:3 / 1 Cor 1:9 / 1 Thes 2:12 / Jude 1:1); it was then, when we realised that the Saviour had a personal interest in us, that our eyes were opened and we, for the first time, recognised Him for who He is.

[Rabboni] This is a Hebrew word denoting, literally, my great master. It was one of the titles given to Jewish teachers. This title was given under three forms:

- (a) Rab, or master-the lowest degree of honor.
- (b) Rabbi, my master-a title of higher dignity.
- (c) Rabboni, my great master the most honorable of all.

This title, among the Jews, was only given to seven persons, all persons of great eminence. As given by Mary to the Saviour, it was at once an expression of her joy, and an acknowledgment of him, as her Lord and Master. It is not improbable that she, filled with joy, was about to cast herself at his feet. - Barns

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

There is a lot written about Jesus' words here. Did Jesus actually go back to the Father after His resurrection, only to come back for the numerous post-resurrection appearances He made? Or is this in reference to His ascension (recorded in Acts 1)? Why is it that Mary could not touch Him here, yet Thomas – a week later – was encouraged to do so? I suspect that there is a model to be seen here, of Christ and the Church, the Groom and His bride:

All the others had deserted the tomb, their concern for the 'body of Christ' had been short lived; whereas Mary was not prepared to give up on the body of Christ, and hence had stayed at the tomb. An interesting passage can be found in Song of Songs:

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"
(Song 3:1-6)

Here we have a woman who has lost the one she loves; she searches for him and will not give up. She finds watchmen and asks if they know where he is. She then turns from them and immediately finds the one she loves. The Shulamite then takes hold of her beloved and will not let go until the marriage is consummated, yet she says that it can only be at the time he appoints, when he returns in glory to claim his bride, and as the passage goes on to say, at that time he will be crowned (see Song 3:11)

The model: Mary as representative of the true church does not get tired of seeking Jesus, and longs to be united to Him. But that heavenly marriage cannot be consummated until He chooses, hence Jesus will not let Mary be joined to Him now (remember, Mary wants to hold Jesus out of deep love, not unbelief as with Thomas). But the day is coming when He will return to claim His bride, and at that time He will be crowned with the crowns of the saints (Rev 4:10), and joined to His bride for eternity!

We must not neglect the rest of this verse: *"but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"*.

Jesus here says what Paul will later confirm: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren"*. (Rom 8:29). *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together"* (Rom 8:16-17). John also comments on this incredible adoption program we are beneficiaries of: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1).

John 20:18

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

The sheer excitement and emotion that is concealed in this verse is breathtaking! Imagine Mary's walk back from the tomb, rehearsing what she was going to say, just trying to process the magnitude of this! What must Peter and John have thought, knowing that they left just too soon... if only they had waited!

(For a comparison of the gospel accounts of the events surrounding the resurrection, see Appendix E.)

John 20:19

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

There is much in this verse; let us first recap: during the morning's excitement and the to-and-fro-ing from the tomb, it had only been Mary Magdalene and the women with her who had seen Jesus, none of the other disciples had. However, sometime later that day Jesus had also appeared to Peter. It was no longer a question of the women seeing a vision, for Peter himself had seen the risen Lord (1 Cor 15:5 / Luke 24:34). As they were together in the evening sitting and talking about this, and no doubt about what would happen now, two other disciples came rushing into the room overflowing with excitement. They had been on their way to Emmaus, when Jesus had joined them and walked with them. At first they did not recognise Him, but when they sat down to eat, Jesus broke the bread and their eyes were opened! But He had then disappeared from their midst (Luke 24:13-33). The excitement was reaching fever pitch, but so was the fear. What would the Jews do now? Would the authorities now want to take all the disciples and silence them? Should they stay in Jerusalem, or go to Galilee as the angels had said? Emotions were already strained to the limit; but suddenly, in a split second that must have felt like an age, they realised that someone else was in the room with them! The door was locked, they was no other way in or out, yet there He was, standing in from of them all!

What we have translated as 'Peace be unto you' may be better translated for us 'it's all right, calm yourselves'

How did Jesus effect entry into a locked room? Clearly His resurrected body was no longer blood-drive, but Spirit-drive, able to operate in dimensions beyond this natural order of things. This gives us a clue as to what our eternal resurrection bodies will be like also.

"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).

John 20:20

And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

There is conjecture regarding how much Jesus' appearance had been altered by the horrific suffering He had endured, including the ripping out of His beard (Isaiah 50:6). Was this the reason the disciple on the road to Emmaus did not at first recognise Him? Is that also the reason why it was not until Jesus had shown His hands and side that 'they were glad'?

John 20:21

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

Again, Jesus calm's them down for He has something important to say, and that is: there is no time for sitting back, the work for the disciples was not over, it was just beginning....

John 20:22

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

...but that work was not to be accomplished by natural strength or ability (they had all learned the hard way how fickle their own hearts were when tested). The work that Jesus spoke of was to be accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although the Holy Spirit had not yet fully come – only when Jesus returned to the Father would the Spirit be sent as Jesus had said in John 16:7 – He was here being given to the disciples in the same way as God had enabled under the old covenant (Ex 35:31 / Num 27:18 / Judges 3:10 / Judges 6:34 etc.)

John 20:23

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

This is not to give us the power to forgive sin, only God through Christ can do that; but rather this is to say that the disciples were to go out in the power of the Spirit to testify to the resurrection of Jesus. Any who would respond to the teaching of the disciples, their sins would be remitted. But those who rejected the gospel, their sins would be retained.

John 20:24-25

*24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.
25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

This account is so well known that it needs little comment, other than to mention the significance of the fact that Thomas (Didymus means 'the twin') had missed the outpouring of the Spirit of Truth (in v22), and it is therefore no real surprise that he now doubts. The natural mind is darkened to the things of the Spirit (1 Cor 2: 14).

John 20:26

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

In just the same way Jesus had appeared to the others the week before, He now appears again, seemingly specifically for Thomas' sake...

John 20:27

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.

Jesus immediately turns to Thomas to address this issue of doubt. We can take great comfort in this act of Jesus'; all of us have doubts from time to time, but Jesus condescends to reassure us personally that He lives, that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He is the Shepherd who would leave the 99 to save the one! (Matt 18:13).

This verse also confirms that Jesus still bore the marks of His suffering even in His resurrection body. It has been said that the only man-made thing in heaven will be the nail-prints and scars on the 'Lamb as it had been slain' (lit. 'the Lamb with the marks of slaughter on it'). (Rev 5:6).

John 20:28

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

How humbled we feel, like Thomas here, when we see the utter senselessness of our doubt, when we come face to face with who Jesus is, how impertinent that we should have ever of doubted. Oswald Chambers said: *Suppose God is the God you know Him to be when you are nearest to Him, what an impertinence worry is!* - and this applies equally to doubt.

Thomas had spend the best part of three years with Jesus, heard Him say He would rise from the dead, and now had his closest friends all confirm that Jesus was risen – yet he still doubted.

Thomas here had a great opportunity to believe by faith, to believe that the events of the last few days were a part of God's plan, and not merely the schemes of man, yet contrary to the advice in Proverbs 3:5-6, he trusts in his own understanding.

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

Note in this verse: once again in the gospel of John, we have the declaration that Jesus is God.

John 20:29

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Here a blessing is promised to all those who believe by faith, which includes the multitudes down through the centuries to you and I. We must mention though, that such a faith as you and I can have, believing in the risen Jesus without having seen Him with our own eyes, is NOT a blind faith. The evidence is overwhelming that Jesus did rise from the dead:

Lord Lyndhurst (1772-1863), recognised as one of the greatest legal minds in British history wrote: "I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet."

Sir Edward Clarke a respected lawyer, said the following: "As a lawyer I have made a prolonged study of the evidence for the events of the first Easter Day. To me the evidence is conclusive, and over and over again in the High Court I have secured the verdict on evidence not nearly so compelling."

However, it is not just the evidence of the resurrection that underpins our faith, there is of course the word of God itself, which as we noted in John 17:17 is true (and can be proved to be so). In addition to this we have the testimony of history; the fact that the disciples went from being frightened hiding fugitives to men and women who stood before leaders and rulers, willing to lay down their lives to declare that Jesus was risen (see Acts 25:14-19). Napoleon, the famous French emperor said: "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have all founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him."

But arguably the greatest evidence that Jesus is risen is found in our own lives – the way He has taken wretches like you and I, and transformed us by His Spirit into 'sons of God' (1 John 3:1). Furthermore we are being renewed daily (2 Cor 4:16), and we have the priceless gift of His Spirit as the guarantee, not only of the reality of all of this, but also of our eternal security in Him (Eph 1:13-15).

Paul comments: "*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 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*". (1 Cor 15:17-22)

John 20:30-31

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

Many other signs... It must have been incredible for John to write his gospel, thinking back to all the things that he had seen and witnessed firsthand; in his first letter (which can be considered a mini-sequel to his gospel) he says: "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*" (1 John 1:1-3)

31 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 openly and unashamedly states his ulterior motive for writing this gospel – that we would know that Jesus is God. For it is only in God (the Father of spirits (Heb 12:9)) that we can have life. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb 12:2).

CHAPTER 21

Chapter 20 concludes as if it were the intended ending of John's Gospel, and many scholars have noted that chapter 21 seems to be a post-script. However as we study this chapter we will see the relevance of that which John records here, not least to dispel two rumours that had begun to circulate by the time that John was writing his gospel; namely that John himself would not die (see comments on verse 21-23), and that Peter had been permanently rejected as a disciple because of his denial of Christ. On this second point, it is important to note that in Mark 16:7 the angels at the tomb tell the women to go and tell the news of Jesus' resurrection to His disciples and Peter. Thus it appears, for a short while at least, Peter had brought upon himself that which he had confessed with his own lips around the fire in the high priests courtyard: *"Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not"* (John 18:17). In this chapter we will see Jesus shine a spotlight on Peter's heart. Just as Joseph had drawn a confession from his brothers before entrusting them with the knowledge of who he was, so Jesus graciously restores Peter, drawing from him a confession of his love for his Lord, and then entrusts him with a task which (we know from his letters), he applied himself to with all earnestness.

John also documents for us infallible proofs of Christ's resurrection, showing that He was not merely a ghost or an apparition, but a living breathing man, able to eat and drink like any other living person.

John 21:1

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

The disciples had remained in Jerusalem for at least one week after the resurrection, for it was eight days after the resurrection Sunday that Jesus appeared again to them with Thomas now present. However, John tells us 'after these things' (meta tauta), the disciples made their way back up to the area of Galilee, and just as the angels had said at the tomb, Jesus now appears to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee 'on this wise', i.e. this is how it happened:

John 21:3

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Seven disciples: Simon Peter, Thomas (Didymus), Nathanael, (also called Bartholomew - first mention after Chapter 1), James, and John, and the two unidentified, who were probably Andrew (Peter's brother), and Philip (usually with seen with Nathanael).

John 21:3

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

Peter's decision to go fishing was no doubt due to the fact that they needed food to eat. Adam Clarke comments: "Previously to the crucifixion of our Lord, the temporal necessities of himself and his disciples appear to have been supplied by the charity of individuals: Luke 8:3. As it is probable that the scandal of the cross had now shut up this source of support, the disciples, not fully knowing how they were to be employed, purposed to return to their former occupation of fishing, in order to gain a livelihood" This is obviously the practical reason for this decision to go fishing, however, there is an important lesson for us to learn here:

Back in Matthew 4, Peter had left his nets to go and follow Jesus; now he is returning to them. He had got to a place in his spiritual life where he did not know what to do next, but rather than wait for the Lord (who had promised to meet them at Galilee - Mark 14:28 / Mark 16:7), Peter now reverts to the safety of that which he knows, effectively returning to the 'old life'. We see here something we can all relate to I'm sure; that when the circumstances get beyond us, when we are no longer in control and we don't know what to do next, we so often revert to the old familiar ways, for in them there is a kind of comfort. *"We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic"* (Num 11:5). Of course, our selective memory chooses to forget the cruel taskmasters that made our lives a misery.

John 21:3 (cont'd)

Paul will tell us that when we choose to follow Christ *“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor 5:17), and in Paul’s letter to the Romans he urges us to consider ourselves dead to the old way of living (before we found Christ), (see Romans 6:6-11). In times past we ordered our own steps, we worried about what we would eat, and what clothes we would wear, our concern was for the things of this life, but now Jesus says that we are to *“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (see Matt 6:31-33). Jesus promises a ‘care-free’ life if only we will trust Him in everything. Peter will later write, quoting Psalm 55: *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you”* (1 Peter 5:6-7).

For the best part of three and a half years, Peter had walked by faith, and God had provided exceeding abundantly above all that he had imagined (Eph 3:20). Now Peter, just as he had done when walking to Jesus on the water (c.f John 6:19-20 / Matt 14:25-32), starts to look at the practical issues, considering his environment: ‘who is going to pay the bills? How will we survive?’. Peter was thinking, *‘what are going to eat for breakfast? We can’t just sit around and do nothing’*. But as noted, Jesus had already promised to meet them in Galilee, Peter did not stop to consider that Jesus already knew their needs (Matt 6:32), and little did Peter know that Jesus had already planned to provide their breakfast (and it wouldn’t be from that which Peter caught either!). Jesus has resources beyond our imagining; ‘the cattle on a thousand hills are His’ (Psalm 50:10). The issue here is one of trust – trust that Jesus is more than sufficient for our circumstances.

John 21:4

But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

It was probably still getting light and the disciples were out on the lake, in the distance they could see the silhouette of a figure standing on the sea shore...

John 21:5

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

The question in the Greek is in the negative, i.e. ‘you haven’t caught anything have you?!’ Their answer is abrupt. None of us like failure, particularly when we have toiled ‘all night’.

John 21:6

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

For those who have studied the behaviour of fish, you will know that they cannot actually discern whether a fishing net is hanging off the left, or the right side of a boat. In fact, if they could discern the net at all, they would flee! Jesus’ request in the natural is ludicrous; but this is an object lesson, specifically designed to contrast the natural and the spiritual.

John does not record the mutterings that must have followed this request of Jesus. At least four of those on this boat were experienced fishermen who had fished these waters countless times in the past; yet for some reason they grant the request of this stranger on the shore, and haul up the nets from the left side of the boat, and drop them about six feet to the right of where they had just been!

But then, beyond their wildest dreams, the net starts to move as a shoal of fish take up residence! Realising they have a haul, they try to bring the net back up into the boat, but because of the sheer number, they cannot lift it. There could be only one explanation for this incredible event, and John instantly perceives it...

John 21:7

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, had a discernment for the spiritual that Peter, at least at this stage, doesn't seem to share. But what Peter lacks in insight he makes up for in enthusiasm. And whilst the others are left struggling with this net, he grabs his outer clothes and jumps in, wading as fast as he can to the shore.

NB: For 'naked' most scholars read 'undressed'. A person can be in a state of undress without being naked, and such appears to be the case with Peter.

John 21:8

And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

The boat was about 350 feet from the shore, so now the others have to drag this heavy net back to land – without Peter!

John 21:9

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Jesus doesn't need our fish – He already has enough! We strive so hard to get results, only to find that the God's objective was not for us to achieve a measure of success, but to abide with Him. Oswald Chambers comments: *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.*

John 21:10

Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

What was the point of them bringing this multitude of fish? After all, Jesus already had fish cooking. Whilst God does not need anything we can bring, He still, by His grace, chooses to use us.

There is an object lesson in these verses and that is as follows: If we try to do things in our own strength, (out of our perception of a particular need), we will fail. Peter was doing just that here. We can fish all night, but not catch a thing. But when we walk with the Lord and obey His commandments we will produce an abundance. The secondary lesson is that we are not to rejoice in successful service (a full net), but rather, that we can fellowship with the Lord. Jesus didn't need Peter's fish, and He does not need anything that we can bring. All He wants is our obedience, and for us to join Him at the meal He is preparing.

John 21:11

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, and hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Peter now goes back to help drag this net onto the beach, and John tells us that there were 153 large fish, but the net did not break. Scholars have mused over the 153, and what significance it might have; Cyril of Alexander proposed that this represented God and the church:

100 = number of fullness of Gentiles (Mt 18:12);

50 = the remnant of Israel; (not sure how this is deduced?!)

3 = the Trinity ----- That may be clutching at straws, but Augustine goes one better!:

10, the number of the law;

7 the number of grace.

10+7=17; The sum of the numbers 1 to 17 = 153. (!!!)

As we are not told, and there is no clear answer, we may be better waiting until we get to heaven and asking the question then. It may of course be that John was simply trying to communicate that the net was really full, and 153 large fish would have been an impressive haul.

Note also that the net was not broken, i.e. 'not one of them was lost' whom Jesus had commanded His disciples to go and 'catch'.

John 21:12

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

As mentioned above, this was the real purpose: that the disciples would rest from their labour and come and dine (fellowship) with Him. The same invitation has been extended to all; there is a marriage coming and all are invited.

There is a peculiar remark by John here, that none of the disciples dared to ask Him who he was – yet they know it was the Lord(?). Some have speculated that there was something about His appearance that had changed, possibly his face was still disfigured from His ordeal? But this is not mentioned when He first appeared in the upper room.

Possibly a better explanation is that they were still coming to terms with the fact that they had seen Him crucified, and buried, yet here He was alive. Even though they had seen Him twice in the locked room in Jerusalem, and He had assured them He was not a ghost, it would be only natural for them to doubt what they had seen because it was so far from the norm – it was going to take some time for this to sink in! I think what John is trying to convey is the questions that each of us would have wanted to ask had we been there: ‘Lord, is it *really* You?’ ‘How did you rise again?’ ‘Are you here to stay?’ ‘Are we going back to Jerusalem to sort them all out!?’ John makes it clear that they know it was the Lord, but this must have been such a surreal experience.

John 21:13

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

Once again we see the Master serving.

John 21:14

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

1st time: the evening of the resurrection (John 20:19); 2nd time a week later (John 20:26), and now by the shore of Galilee. John makes this point so we are in no doubt that Jesus really had risen, and this was no hallucination. There were eleven plus a multitude in the locked room, here there were seven people, and Paul will tell us that Jesus appeared to over five hundred at one time (1 Cor 15:6).

John 21:15

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

Verse 20 indicates that Jesus now takes Peter aside for a private chat. Jesus starts by addressing him by his full name; when someone addresses you in that way, you know it’s serious!

Back in the garden of Gethsemane Peter had boasted “*Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*” (Matt 26:33). Now Jesus asks him in effect, ‘*So Peter, do you really love me more than all men?*’ No doubt embarrassed by his former ostentatious declaration of loyalty, having also suffered the humility and anguish of the Lord’s piercing gaze when he denied for the third time - “*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly*” (Luke 22:61-62) – Peter now cagily answers *Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee* but omits the ‘more than these’. Although not clear in the English, Jesus asked Peter ‘*Do you love Me unconditionally more than the others?*’ (the Greek word is ‘Agapao’). Peter had learned a great lesson in humility, and now cannot make such a pretentious claim, so replies, ‘*Yes Lord, you know that I have affection toward you*’ (The word Peter uses is ‘Phileo’, and can be understood as a rational, calculating fondness and care).

Jesus then give a command: ‘Feed My lambs’. Peter was no doubt expecting to be chastised, but is give a commission instead.

John 21:16

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Jesus now restates His question, but this time it is just about Peter and Jesus, the others are not to be considered. Jesus again uses the word ‘agapao’, ‘Peter, do you – forgetting about the others – love Me unconditionally?’ and Peter once again responds with ‘phileo’. ‘Lord, you know my heart, and that I love you as much as I am able’. Peter, no doubt feeling inadequate by the exposing of his shortcomings, is once again surprised that Jesus increases his responsibility to that of feeding mature sheep.

John 21:17

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Finally Jesus condescends to the level that Peter is able to commit to, and asks him ‘Do you have (phileo) affection for Me?’ Peter clearly understands that he has fallen far short of the standard Jesus would have of him, and is further humbled that the One he confessed as the ‘Christ, the Son of the living God’ (Matt 16:15-16) should stoop down to meet him where he was – yet that is the message of the gospel, that the infinite God would stoop down to reach sinful man, and provide a way – through the cross- for us to be lifted up, to now sit with Christ in heavenly places, having been adopted as the sons of God! (Eph 2:6 / 1 John 3:1-2)

Peter acknowledges the sovereignty of Christ in his declaration, much like David’s in Psalm 139, that Christ knows all things.; He knows the depths of the human heart, there is nothing hidden from Him, there is no place we can flee from His presence or gaze, He knows our thoughts and all our ways.

Knowing his own weakness, it must have therefore come as a surprise to Peter that Jesus underlines the commission He is giving him – to have the incredible responsibility of feeding His sheep. Jesus had already used this type of analogy back in Chapter 10, where He said: *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine... As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”* (John 10:11, 14, 15, 27)

I don’t think that Peter was under any illusion what was being asked of him here; Jesus was saying that He was entrusting Peter with feeding - with spiritual food - His young lambs, but not only that, but also feeding Christ’s full grown sheep too.

There is a very interesting observation here, and whilst not strictly a point of doctrine, it can be defended from the Word: Excluding, in the main, the established and mainline churches, most Pastors I know were first given charge of ‘lambs’ before being given charge over ‘sheep’. My own Pastor faithfully served as a youth leader for many years before being given pastoral charge over sheep; and most others I know served in youth or children’s ministries before entering into the role of Pastor/Minister. Paul, in giving the requirements makes the point that before entering into such a role, the individual must have first been tried and proven faithful, and must certainly not be a novice; with another qualification being that they must hold fast the Word of God, and be able to teach others (See 1 Tim 3:1-16 / 4:13-16 / 5:17-18)

Thus Peter here is being appointed as a teacher, to feed the flock of God. We know that Peter earnestly sought to fulfil his commission because of his own remakes in his 1st letter: *“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. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”* (1 Peter 5:1-5)

John 21:18-19

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Accepting our call to serve the LORD is an acknowledgement that our lives are no longer our own, but that we have surrendered them to the will of God – come what may. Here Peter is told of the cost that will accompany the privileged position he has just been given.

Are we ready to abandon all to Him, trusting entirely in Him and leaning not on our own understanding? Will we let Him direct our paths, even if it costs us everything? (Prov 3:5-6). Jesus said: *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”* (Matt 16:24-26)

John 21:20

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

The fact Peter notices John following implies that he and Jesus had taken a short walk to have this conversation. Whilst Peter needed to see his own true state before Christ, Jesus does not seek to humiliate him in front of his friends.

Having now been faced with what lay ahead for himself, Peter enquires about his closest friend, *‘what is to happen to John?’*

John 21:22

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Jesus simply points out here what Paul will later say in Romans 14:4 *“Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand”*.

We can sometimes get caught up thinking about how and why God is dealing with another person in this way or that way, or even get frustrated because we are ‘cumbered about much serving’, while a Mary in our lives just appears to be doing nothing and sitting at Jesus feet (see Luke 10: 39-42). Whilst Peter’s motive in asking this question was most likely his concern for his friend, there may have been a twinge of *‘if I have got to suffer, will he get away without having to endure it?’* Jesus’ answer is to remind him (and us) that we all stand before Him as individuals, and our performance will not be judged compared those around us, but by the fruit we produce in direct proportion to that which we have been entrusted with: *“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”* (Luke 12:48)

See Appendix F – ‘Others may, You cannot!’

John 21:23

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

The disciples were hanging on every word of their risen Saviour, but, having so frequently misunderstood what Jesus was trying to convey, John dispels the rumour that had evidently begun, suggesting that he would not die until Jesus returned. What had no doubt added fuel to that fire was the fact that Rome had tried to kill John, but had failed! Legend has it that John was put into a vat of boiling oil – but miraculously had not suffered. Fearing the public reaction to this inexplicable situation, the Roman Emperor, unsure of how to dispose of this man, then exiled him to Patmos where John received the Revelation. Eventually, John was released from Patmos and returned to Ephesus to resume his role Pastor there.

John 21:24

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

Some feel that this epilogue was added by the Ephesian elders as it refers to John in the third person. Certainly, by the end of the first century the writings of Paul were already collected by the church at Ephesus, and the canon of scripture is believed to have been settled around this time. The only scripture to be written after this time were John's three letters, which continue his presentation of the Deity of Christ. Whether these last two verses were written by John or not, the fact remains that John **was** an eye witness of Jesus, ministry, arrest, trial, crucifixion and empty tomb. He then saw, handled and spoke to the resurrected Jesus. He, more than any other human being, is qualified to comment on these things. In his first letter he opens by declaring: *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked upon**, and our **hands have handled**, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."* (1 John 1:1-3)

John 21:25

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

This seems to be the voice of experience speaking, the voice of someone who has not even begun to tell us all he had seen and heard. Oh, for a few hours to sit and listen to John recount his memories of the days around Galilee, those serene moments sat listening as Jesus taught. Then of the journeys to Jerusalem and the things *not* recorded in his gospel of the conversations between Jesus and the Pharisees! And ultimately of his feelings as he stood for six hours at the foot of a cross, watching his LORD and master dying for him – that is the one thing I most wish we could hear, for how it would impact our thinking, how the image of our tortured Saviour, carrying mine and your sin would stop us in our tracts! How it would fill our heart with the same grief the Holy Spirit feels at the slightest hint of sin in our lives.

How we would love to hear more! *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.*

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Appendix A **Rules of interpretation**

- 1) The Golden Rule: *When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise*

- 2) The Law of Double Reference: *This law observes the fact that often a passage or a block of Scripture is speaking of two different persons or two different events that are separated by a long period of time.*

- 3) The Law of Recurrence: *This law describes the fact that in some passages of scripture there exists the recording of an event followed by the second recording of the event giving more detail to the first.*

- 4) The Law of the Context: *This states that a text apart from its context is a pretext – i.e. will probably not reveal the real meaning of truth of the text in question.*

- 5) The Law of First Mention: *This law states that the first time a word or idea is used in Scripture is usually indicative of its meaning in subsequent usages.*

- 6) The Law of Expository Constancy: *This law states that the Bible is consistent with its use of ideas or figures throughout the Bible (eg ‘fowls of the air’ as seen in Matt 13 are ‘workers of iniquity’ and whenever fowls are seen in Scripture they are usually seen in this light.*

- 7) Scripture is self interpreting: *Any passage of scripture that on the surface may seem to be difficult to understand will be explained elsewhere in scripture, thus eliminating guesswork and human opinion as to its meaning.*

Appendix B

Numerology In The Bible

By numerology we mean the study of numbers and the way they are used. Almost all occasions that numbers are used in the Bible they have greater significance than just the surface application. Below is a list of numbers 1 – 12 and the implications that are associated with them.

- 1) **Unity** – The Nature of God Deut 6:4 / Zeh 14:9 / Eph 4:4-6 /
- 2) **Witness** Gen 21:30 / Deut 19:15 / John 18:18 / 2 Men at the tomb / 2 men at His ascension / Rev 11:3 two witnesses / OT & NT – “the volume of the book is written of me” Psalm 40:7
- 3) **Divine Perfection** Trinity = Father/Son/Spirit / Nature (Space = LxWxH / Time = Past/Present/Future / Matter = Solid/Liquid/Gas) / Holy, Holy, Holy
- 4) **Earth** – 4 ‘corners’ Isaiah 11:12 / Rev 7:1 4 Angels ref: earth. / 4 World Empires / 4 seasons /
- 5) **Fullness / Completeness ref: Man** / Luke 16:28 Lazarus’ 5 brethren / Luke 12:6 5 sparrows not forgotten by God/ Luke 14:19 5 Yoke of Oxen / Matt 25:15 5 Talents / Matt 25:2 5 wise & 5 foolish / Rev 9:5 5 months of torment / Gen 43:34 Benjamin’s portion 5x greater/
- 6) **Man** / Created on the sixth day / six days to work / 666 / 6 water pots in John 2 representing mankind / One less than 7, i.e. not complete.
- 7) **Complete (Divine)** / 7 Days in a week / 7 Kingdom parables in Matt 13 – Church age) / Daniel’s 70 weeks (Israel’s future) / 7 Spirits of God Rev 1:4 / 7 Churches / 7 Bowls / 7 candlesticks /
- 8) **New Beginnings** / Octave / New week / Jesus = 888 in Greek/ 8 people on the Ark / Bethlehem is listed 8x in NT /
- 9) **Judgment/Finality** “In the beginning God...” = 999 / John 19:30 (the ninth hour) “It is finished” / Bottomless pit occurs 9x in NT...so does ‘rest’ (we have a choice!!!)
- 10) **Mans Government** / 10 Commandments / 10 Kings / 10 Crowns / 10 days of Trib Rev 2:10 from World Government / 10 Plagues on Egypt
- 12) **God’s Government** / 12 Apostles / 12 Tribes of Israel /

Appendix C

John 14:3: To be or not to be? What is your position?

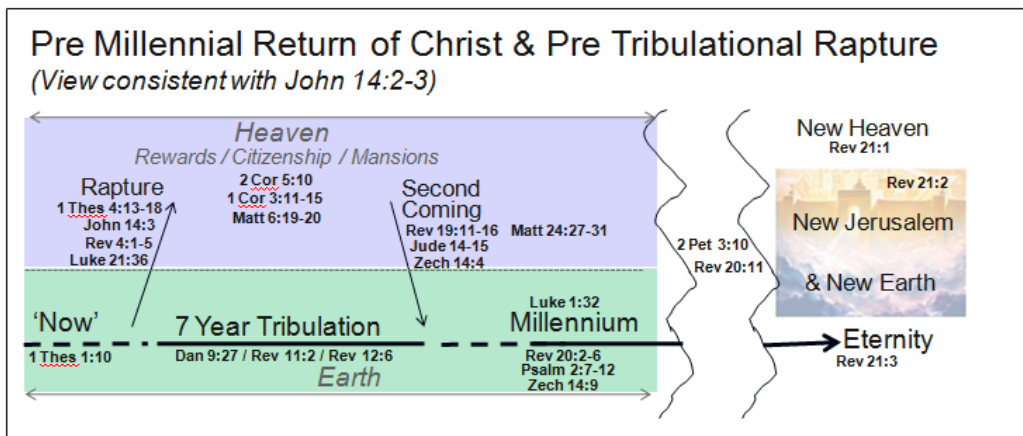
For those who hold to a Post-Tribulational, Amillennial, or Post Millennial view point, as well as groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, there is an insurmountable problem presented by this verse, for they all have to deny it or ignore it.

The JW’s do not believe that all believers will go to heaven – so why did Jesus make this promise? They might argue that Jesus said this to just His disciples, but if that were true, He still broke His promise because Jesus didn’t come back to receive them to Himself before they died. The JW’s belief makes a mockery of the clear teaching of this and the numerous other verses that promise believers a heavenly dwelling with rewards for our labour. (see again Matt 6:20).

The Amillennialists not only deny that Jesus will come back for His own and take them to the place He has prepared for them (ignoring the clear teaching of this verse), they also deny the coming Millennial reign of Christ. This view is so clearly rebutted by the countless scriptures in Old and New Testaments. Gabriel foretold and promised Mary that Jesus would reign on the throne of David (Luke 1:32). Psalm 2 talks of the One who will rule the nations (on Earth) with a rod of iron (see also Matt 25:31-32 / Rev 20:4). Amillennialists (generally) hold to the view that the church will win the world for Christ, He will then return (either figuratively or literally), and we will then enter the eternal order – where our dwelling will be the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven (Rev 21:2). Thus, in that scenario, believers simply by-pass heaven, going from ‘now’ into eternity, presumably missing out on the promised treasure(?). If it were to be argued that believers who have already died *do* go to Heaven (which indeed they do), it still doesn’t satisfy Jesus’ promise that He would come and *‘receive you unto Myself’* – are we to believe that Jesus ‘comes again’ to receive each believer that dies?(!) and when then would these souls receive their resurrection bodies?

Post-Tribulationists - who believe in a literal Millennium, but place the Rapture at the time of the Second Coming - have their own unique problem. This verse (John 14:3) tells us that at the time Jesus receives us to Himself, He will take us back to His Father’s house. But at the Second Coming Jesus comes back to this Earth, setting His feet on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4), then establishing His throne in Jerusalem (Zech 14:16). If it were argued that Jesus quickly takes us back to His Father’s house (where our treasure and citizenship are), and then returns to Earth Himself, He would still fail to keep His promise *that where I am, there ye may be also*. We cannot be in Heaven, in His Father’s house, and on Earth where Jesus is, at the same time.

Finally, we have the **Post-Millennialists** – who believe Jesus will return at the *end* of the Millennium (a perplexing view considering that the Millennium is the specific time prophesied when Jesus will establish His throne and rule on the Earth – surely necessitating He be here???). The issue here is basically the same problem that the Amillennialist has: If Jesus comes back (Second Coming) *before* receiving us to Himself (Rapture), we by-pass heaven and go straight into eternity and our dwelling in the New Jerusalem. Again, in this scenario, Jesus does not fulfil His clear promise in this verse: *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*



Appendix D

The Model Prayer

We are all familiar with the Lord's Prayer as recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 (see also Luke 11:2-4). As we noted in our study, this is really the 'disciples prayer'; the real Lord's prayer is recorded for us in John 17, but having told His disciples how they should pray, it is interesting to note the Jesus Himself follows the same model: (the **highlighted text** is from Matthew, the *italic text* is from John 17, [notes are bracketed]):

⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,

¹Father, the hour is come; [Jesus begins His own prayer by addressing it to His Father, who is in Heaven]

Hallowed be thy name.

glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee;[Jesus' desire was to glorify His Father]

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come.

²As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. ³ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.[The coming kingdom will see Jesus reigning with all power (John 5:22), and with a rod of iron (Psalm 2 / Rev 2:27), it will be an eternal kingdom. The purpose of the coming kingdom is for the only true God to be their God, and they His people (Rev 21:3), and the Lamb will be the only light (Rev 21:23)]

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

⁴ I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. ⁵And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.[Jesus had come to do His Father's will on earth, now He was returning to Heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father]

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

⁶ I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. ⁸ For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.[Jesus' meat was to do the will of Him who had sent Him (John 4:34). Jesus said in Matthew 4:4 that 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. Here Jesus has given them the words that proceeded from the Father – this is real bread (see John 6:57-58)]

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

⁹ I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. ¹⁰ And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. [How we need our debts forgiven, and who better than the Saviour of the world to intercede for us! The world is cold, hard, self seeking and unforgiving, but we are to be the exact opposite, bringing glory to the Father. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". (Matt 5:39-48)]

¹³ And lead us not into temptation,

¹¹ And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. ¹² While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [Jesus kept his own while He was in the world; He now passes the care of all those who would follow Him to His Father. To be kept is to be garrisoned, guarded and preserved. We make a mistake if we think that after overcoming a temptation, we pass the test and can move onto the next level. All the time we are in these bodies we will battle with temptation. Jesus' prayer is not that we would be excused from the trial, but that we would abide in Him and so not run into it. The joy we have in Christ and the knowledge that this world is not our home, combined with protection afforded us by the father will 'lead us not into temptation'. See 1 Cor 10:13]

but deliver us from evil:

¹⁵ I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. ¹⁸ As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. [Evil surrounds us, and like a roaring lion the enemy seeks to devour (1 Peter 5:8). Whilst we have a part to play in resisting temptation (Heb 12:4), Jesus here prays for divine intervention against the evil that would seek to destroy us]

For thine is the kingdom,

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; [Jesus here prays for a real kingdom with a multitude in willing subjection to the King]

and the power,

²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. [The power of the Godhead is the unity; the power of the church is that it is one in Christ. 'A threefold cord is not quickly broken' (Ecclesiastes 4:12) – see also 1 Cor 1:10]

and the glory,

²² And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: ²³ I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. ²⁴ Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. [The only real glory is God's; no other measure of success or honour can even compare. Because of Christ we are to be partakers of that glory for eternity (see Rom 8:18 / 1 John 3:2). We can only imagine what it will be like when we see with our own eyes the full glory of the risen Christ!]

for ever.

²⁵ O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. ²⁶ 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. [Throughout eternity God's greatness and love will be declared. Forever we will know the love of the Father, Christ dwelling with us and in us (see 2 Cor 6:16 & Rev 21:3)]

Amen.

Appendix E

The Resurrection – Order of Events In The Gospels

When comparing the different accounts given by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, of the events surrounding the resurrection, there can, at first glance, appear to be discrepancies in their reports. We must of course remember that, just because one of the gospel writers chooses to focus on certain aspects of the event, omitting some details whilst including others, does not negate the testimony of the others, and visa-versa.

When I was younger I had the opportunity to attend a youth retreat over a long weekend. There were various activities planned interspersed with Bible teaching sessions. At the start of one session, one of the youth leaders came into the classroom where we were all seated and whispered something to the youth leader about to start the teaching session. We could all see from the body language that something was wrong. The leaders left the room and then returned with a concerned look on their faces. Speculation had already begun among the young people as to the cause of this unscheduled interruption. One of the leaders then announced that another youth group had just arrived at the centre where we were staying; there had been a double booking. As they had booked earlier than us, and had a larger group, we would have to pack up and vacate the premises. We all indignantly started to present our reasoned arguments as to why *we* should not be forced to leave. There was quite a commotion! After a while one of the youth leaders appealed for a moments calm; the whole thing had been a set up! There was no other group! We did not have to leave. We were then asked to get into four groups and each group was to write a report of the events we had just witnessed. When completed, each group took turns in presenting their version of events to the rest. We were amazed that, whilst we had all been present and witnessed exactly the same series of events, we had all produced completely different accounts. One of the four groups had focussed on certain aspects, and omitted details, that the other groups thought were of great significance. One group picked up on things that the others had missed. Of course, all the reports were true, but all told a different story.

We saw in a very real and practical way how four people could all be witness to the same events and yet record four contrasting accounts, all equally true.

We know that John was actually there at the tomb that morning. Matthew would have been with the disciples, and although may not have actually visited the tomb himself, would have heard from the woman of all that happened. Mark, who wrote his gospel on behalf of Peter, is effectively another eyewitness account from Peter's perspective, and Luke verified his account from eyewitnesses, specifically believed to include Mary the mother of Jesus. Thus all accounts are true and can be trusted as first-hand eyewitness statements of what took place. One of the greatest evidences that these accounts are not contrived is that they *do* differ, yet not contradict each other. If they were all the same it would imply a collaboration.

From the four accounts (Matt 28:1-10 / Mark 16:1-11 / Luke 24:1-12 / John 20:1-18), the order of events appears to be as follows:

Mark 16:1-3

- 1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.
- 2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.
- 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

Matt 28:2-4

- 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.
- 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
- 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Mark 16:4

- 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

Matt 28:5-6

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Luke 24:3

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

Mark 16:5-8

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Luke 24:4-9

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

John 20:2

2 Then she [Mary] runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Luke 24:10-11

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

John 20:3-17

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 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.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

Matt 28:9-10

9 And as they [the women] went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Appendix F **Others may... You cannot**

If God has called you to be really like Jesus, He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put upon you such demands of obedience, that you will not be able to measure yourself by other Christians; and in many ways, He will seem to let to let other good people do things which He will never let you do.

Other Christians and ministers, who seem very religious and useful, can push themselves, pull wires and work schemes to carry out their Christian goals, but these things you simply cannot do. Others may boast of their work or their writings or their success, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing, and if you ever try it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works. Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, but most likely God will keep you poor, because He want you to have something far better than gold, namely, a helpless dependence on Him and the joy of seeing Him supply your needs day by day out of an unseen Treasury.

The Lord may let others be honored and keep you hidden and unappreciated because He wants to produce some choice, fragrant fruit for His coming glory, which can only be produced in the shade. He may let others do a work for Him and get the credit for it, but He will make you work on and on without others knowing how much you are doing; and then, to make your work still more precious, He may let others get the credit for the work which you have done, and thus make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes.

The Holy Spirit will rebuke you for little words or deeds or even feelings, or for wasting your time, which other Christians never seem to be concerned about, but you must make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign and He has a right to do whatever He pleases with His own. He may not explain to you a thousand things which puzzle your reason in the way He deals with you, but if you will just submit yourself to Him in all things, He will wrap you up in a jealous love and bestow upon you many blessing which come only to those who are very near to His heart.

Settle it then, that He is to have the privilege of tying your tongue, or chaining your hand, or closing your eyes, in ways that He does not seem to use with others. Now, when you are so possessed with the living God that your secret heart becomes pleased and delighted with this peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life, then you will have entered the very vestibule of heaven itself.

-G.D. Watson (1845-1924)