

# THE MAGNIFICENCE OF JESUS



A Commentary  
On The  
Gospel of John

Volume II

John Chapters 11-21

by Tom Wacaster

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## PREFACE

After being asked if he enjoyed writing, a fellow preacher once commented: “I do not like writing, but I like having written.” We influence people and policies by what we put into print. The course of history has often been changed by the writings of men, whether good or evil, for the better or for the worse. Our own Declaration of Independence is a prime example of this undeniable fact. There is power in the pen. The power is derived in the permanence of that which is written. The spoken word may be soon forgotten, but put something in writing and it is there for succeeding generations to examine and re-examine. Even today we reap the benefits of the writings of those who blazed the trail in restoring the New Testament order of things on this continent. Mike Vestal has pointed out that, “Written encouragement can travel any distance on earth. It can go places we will never go. It can go to missionaries, widows, prisoners, patients and parents. When one receives written encouragement he has a keep-sake he can hold on to.”

A number of years ago my wife and I had the opportunity to do some mission work in Zimbabwe. Loy Mitchell, a missionary working in that country, believed in the power of the printed page. He was constantly active in passing out all sorts of printed material. Even while driving in his automobile, he would throw out a handful of tracts whenever he passed a group of native Zimbabweans walking alongside the road. He once told me that he received a request for Bible study from some remote location in Zimbabwe, quite removed from his base of operation in Mutare. It was not uncommon for a man to read a tract, write and request a Bible study, and then pass the tract along to someone else who would likewise request a study.

Our God recognized the power of the written word. His message for a lost and dying world is bound up in 66 books that we call the “Holy Bible.” John told us that “these things are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). And Paul reminds us, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 14:4).

Over the years I have learned that there is power in the written word. While living in Ada, Oklahoma, I had the opportunity to attend East Central University. On one occasion a new class was commencing, the roll was being taken, and upon my name being called, the gentleman next to me said in a somewhat urgent voice, "I need to talk to you after class." It turns out that he was the new 'pastor' of a denomination in town and was likewise trying to improve his education. After class he told me that he had known *of* me for a number of years. It seems that an article I had written some four or five years previous came into his hands in the town where he previously preached, and he was so impressed that he ran it in his church bulletin; a denominational church bulletin at that! Shortly after moving to Ada, he decided to run that same article in the bulletin where he now preached. When he handed it to his secretary, she asked him if he was acquainted with me. He was shocked to learn that I actually lived in Ada. He was even more shocked when it turned out that I was assigned a seat next to him in our class at East Central University. He and I had conversations over the course of that class, but it never led to any real serious study. What I learned from that encounter, however, is that the written word of God can, and will go to many places we ourselves may never have the opportunity to visit.

I have also learned after more than 43 years of writing bulletins and books that there is great power in the written word to express ideas. Words mean something, and carefully chosen words can do much good. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Give me twenty-six little lead soldiers [i.e. the alphabet in a printer's case] and I will conquer the world." Silence the written word of God and you will plunge the word into chaos. Daniel Webster recognized this and penned the following more than two centuries ago: "If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country, I do not know what is going to become of us as a nation. If truth be not diffused, error will be. If the power of the Gospel is not felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end." It is precisely for that reason that I find value, and pleasure, in writing.

Like any other worthwhile endeavor, writing a book takes time and effort. My study of the gospel of John stretches out over more than thirty years. The book has always intrigued me (as has every other book of the Bible). I have struggled with some of the passages in John, but I have been enriched beyond measure by the wonderful portrait of Jesus my Lord that emerges from a study of this gospel. He truly is “The Magnificent One.”

I hope you benefit from this second volume of my commentary on John. It has truly been a joy in its development, and I have been enriched beyond measure in my study thereof. I hope you can say that same thing after your careful study of this wonderful book.

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## DEDICATION

One of the curious aspects of writing is the inability of the author to see his own mistakes; even when read multiple times, grammatical errors, mistakes in spelling, and poor wording find a way of getting past one's own proof reading of the finished product. The first commentary I published was a little paperback on the epistle of Paul to the Galatians. I had proof read the manuscript at least half a dozen times, and had asked two or three others to help me examine the finished product before sending it to the printer. Unfortunately, the final product was *not* free from errors. In fact, when I opened the box to examine the work, I flipped the book open to a randomly selected page, and staring me in the face was a spelling mistake. I suddenly realized the importance of a thorough proofing of a manuscript.

I want to dedicate this second volume of this two-volume set to two wonderful sisters in Christ who have played an important role in providing my readers with a product that is as free from grammatical and spelling errors as humanly possible. They have spent countless hours proofing both of the volumes that make up this two volume set. They not only checked spelling errors, and suggested grammatical changes in a number of sentences and/or paragraphs, but they took the time to check out every passage to which I made reference for accuracy and applicability to the point under consideration.

The assistance from these two sisters in Christ has played an important part in producing a product that I hope you will find enjoyable, encouraging, and enlightening – without those glaring errors that distract from its purpose.

It is to these two wonderful women – Sue Fuller and Linda Wilson – that I dedicate this second volume on “The Magnificence of Jesus: A Commentary on the Gospel of John.”



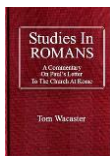


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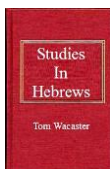
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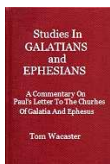
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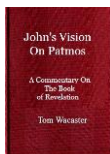
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## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

### “I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

*The Seventh Sign: Raising Lazarus, 11:1-44*

The raising of Lazarus is the final sign John records. It is the greatest of the signs and serves as irrefutable proof of the Lord's deity, only to be exceeded by the resurrection of the Lord Himself. I cannot think of a better chapter to begin this second volume on the “Magnificence of Jesus.” John 11:1-44 excels in lifting up the Christ. Morgan paid tribute to the beauty of this chapter:

It will readily be conceded that the story found in the first fifty-three verses of this eleventh chapter of John is one of the most wonderful in all the records of our Lord's ministry. It is full of colour, of life, of movement. In it there is a remarkable merging of pathos and of power. It is at once a threnody of sorrow, and an anthem of victory. In this story are manifested essential human conditions, and the power and glory of the Lord (Morgan, ESword Module).

With this miracle the die is cast, and the determination of the authorities to put the Lord to death is completed. It is rather curious that none of the other gospels include this story of Lazarus, and its absence in the parallel passages is used by critics as a basis for denying the reliability of John's record. Such ignores the fact that John wrote at a much later date than Matthew, Mark, or Luke. We are told by John that the Jews sought to put Lazarus also to death (12:10) because he was a living example of the marvelous power of Jesus. It is likely that this antagonism existed well beyond the death and resurrection of Jesus. Consequently, when the earlier gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) were written, Lazarus may have still been alive, and any mention of his resurrection could well have aroused unnecessary persecution. When John wrote his account, Lazarus may have died by then, or the danger of persecution ceased.

Modernists suppose that this chapter contains a fable based on Luke's record of the death of a man by the same name. Of course they start with the false premise that the story of Lazarus and the rich man is a fable as well. They also ignore the fact that the Lazarus in Luke's record, and this Lazarus, are two different people; one was a beggar, the other the brother of Mary and Martha. Lazarus was a common name, much like our John, or Bob. The preponderance of evidence compels us to take this chapter as authentic, Lazarus a real person, and the miracle genuine and trustworthy.

If Lazarus' resurrection was not historical, how does one explain the fact that the event has been commemorated for nineteen centuries and perpetuated [sic] in the name of the village where it happened? 'Bethany is called 'El Azeriyeh,' meaning 'The Place of Lazarus.' If this memorializes nothing more than John's 'drama,' behold a greater than Shakespeare is here. To suppose that a fisherman of Galilee could have written any such drama requires more faith than believing a miracle (Coffman, 271).

This miracle is recorded with such detail that it is clear that John was present. It should be noted that this was a physical miracle and all the wrangling in the world cannot reduce it to some kind of modern day slight-of-hand "faith healing." This miracle was performed under such conditions that it could be tested as to its viability. For one thing it was performed on a dead man; he was incapable of having any kind of faith at all. In addition, there were hostile witnesses present, and if this miracle did not actually occur surely these enemies of the Lord would have brought it to the attention of those who proclaimed its reality!

There are six distinct parts in John chapter 11, four of which will be addressed in this portion of our study. The first movement takes us to Bethany, to the house of Mary and Martha. In three verses (11:1-3) John gives us a vivid picture of the trouble that had come upon this family. The urgency is summed up in the plea of the sisters: "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (11:3).

The second movement (11:4-16) takes us beyond the Jordan where Jesus and His disciples had gone in order to escape the increasing animosity of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Upon hearing the news of Lazarus' sickness, the Lord delays His departure for two days (11:6), and then, along with His disciples, makes the two day journey to Bethany. Four days had now elapsed since Jesus received word of Lazarus' sickness.

The third movement (11:17-37) describes the events leading up to the miracle itself. Jesus had now arrived in Bethany. This particular section reveals the amazing compassion our Lord had for this family.

The final part of this section (11:38-44) contains the miracle itself. Seven verses tell the story; one-hundred-seventy words in my English Bible. A reporter working for any of our major newspapers would fill an entire section, if not an entire issue, of the *Daily Jerusalem Times* with what occurred in this small town just outside of the city of Jerusalem. I have no doubt that the miracle accomplished its designed purpose, and the outcome was (and still is) the glorification of our Lord. Truly Jesus was magnified on this occasion. We shall study these verses under the following headings:

The Scene at Bethany, 11:1-3

The Situation beyond the Jordan, 11:4-16

The Sadness around Bethany, 11:17-37

The Sign at the Tomb, 11:38-44

Let's take a closer look.

### *The Scene at Bethany*

11:1-3

~~ 11:1 ~~

*"Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha"*

The focus is on a man named Lazarus. Little is known of the man except for the fact that he was sick, and that he was the brother of Mary and Martha. Thanks to the inspired record of Luke, we

know something about these two sisters (Luke 10:38-42). Evidently Martha was the house keeper. She was hospitable because Luke tells us she “received” Jesus into her house (Luke 10:38). Here (and in Luke 10) we are told that Mary was the sister of Martha. It is curious that John puts Mary first, indicating that she may have been well known in the village.

“*Bethany*” was a village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, some two miles from Jerusalem. This particular village has been called “the village of Mary and her sister Martha.” The fact that John specifically states that Lazarus was “of Bethany” suggest that at the time of the writing Lazarus was not all that well known to John’s audience.

~~ 11:2 ~~

*“And it was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment,  
and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was  
sick”*

There are five women by the name of Mary mentioned in the New Testament: (1) The mother of Jesus, (2) the mother of Mark, (3) Mary Magdalene, (4) the wife of Clopas, and (5) the sister of Lazarus. This particular Mary is not to be confused with the sinner by the same name in Luke 7:36-37. We also know that Lazarus was the brother of this Mary and Martha. Other than the Lord, these three people are the principle characters in this chapter. Mary was well known for that memorable occasion when she poured myrrh over Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair. From John’s reference to that event we surmise that the story of Mary’s loving sacrifice was told far and wide and would have been well known by the readers of this gospel. In order to further identify this “Lazarus” of whom he was now writing, John was saying, in effect, “You will know whom I am talking about when I tell you that *this* Lazarus was the brother of Mary who anointed the Lord’s feet.”

~~ 11:3 ~~

*“The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he  
whom thou lovest is sick”*

*“The sisters therefore sent unto him”* - These two women were no doubt familiar with the power of Jesus to heal the sick, and when Lazarus became ill, they immediately dispatched messengers to Jesus to plead in behalf of their brother Lazarus.

*“Lord, behold”* - The Greek word translated “Lord” is *‘kurios,’* and while it may denote Lord in the spiritual sense, it could also simply mean “sir.” It is possible that their use of the word would indicate that perhaps these two women already recognized the divine nature of our Lord from their close association with Him. The original word here translated “behold” is often used as an interjection to denote *surprise*. The sisters were saying in effect, “Look! Lazarus whom you love is sick!”

*“he whom thou lovest”* - The original word translated ‘love’ is a warm, personal affection, and not the great degree of love signified by the word ‘agape.’ This is not to suggest that Jesus did not have the kind of love described by the Greek ‘agape’ for Lazarus, for indeed our Lord loves all men with the greatest degree of love possible. John wanted to convey to his readers the close and personal friendship that Jesus had with this family.

### *The Situation beyond the Jordan*

11:4-16

The scene now shifts from that humble abode in Bethany to some unknown place beyond the Jordan. The messenger arrives bearing the news of Lazarus’ sickness; then something happens that is rather strange.

~~ 11:4-5 ~~

*“But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”*

This passage reveals the motive behind the delay of our Lord. The sickness was “for the glory of God, that the Son might be glorified.” The most curious thing about this verse centers upon the words, *“This sickness is not unto death.”* There must be some reference here to the fact that Lazarus’ death would not be

permanent. Little did Mary and Martha know what wonderful blessing would be granted before the day was finished. Johnson points out that the delay “would make the miracle more striking, and would silence every caviller who might contend that Lazarus was not really dead” (Johnson, ESword). To say that this illness was ‘*not unto death*’ when in fact Lazarus did die, may produce difficulty in the mind of some. Bruce’s comments on this are helpful:

One might take the meaning to be: This illness is not so much one that will terminate in death as one which will demonstrate the glory of God. There is ample evidence for the biblical idiom in which ‘not, but’ means ‘not only, but also.’ But the words mean more than that: the glory of God was to be demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus from death, so that while the illness resulted in temporary death, it resulted more impressively in resurrection and life (Bruce, 240).

When Jesus spoke those words He did not mean that Lazarus would not die. In fact, Lazarus had already died when these messengers arrived. We can only take the words of our Lord to mean that Lazarus’ death would not be final. As Morgan pointed out, “Death is not the last word in the matter” (Morgan, ESword Module).

*“but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby”* – I cannot help but think that Jesus viewed this entire situation as an opportunity to display the glory of God; but God also intended to use the occasion as an opportunity to bring out the magnificence of the Son: “that the Son of God may be glorified.” Let that sink in.

*“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus”* - The original word here is not ‘*phileo*’ as before, but ‘*agape*.’ This is the strongest Greek word for love. It describes a love that is considerate of the well-being of another; a love that is devoted and willing to sacrifice. This side note from John was intended to inform the readers that it was not a lack of love that Jesus had for this family that caused Him to react to the news as He did. Just the opposite.



~~ 11:6 ~~

*“When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was”*

There are a number of things of interest here. The fact that Jesus intentionally delayed His journey suggests that He intended to demonstrate a greater role than that of a healer. It also shows the omniscience of Jesus in knowing when Lazarus would die. Just as amazing is the ability of Jesus to exercise patience so that the purpose of God could be fulfilled.

*“When therefore he heard...he abode...two days”* – Critics suggest that Jesus demonstrated a complete *lack* of compassion.

To the objection that it was unkind of Jesus to postpone aid just to carry out His own plans, there is the answer that He finally did return to Bethany in the face of bitter hostility and certain death. Because He was master of the situation, and because He was willing to jeopardize His own safety to bring consolation to the mourners, delay was not cruelty but constructive discipline (Tenney, 172).

Was Lazarus already dead at the time the messengers arrived with the news of Lazarus' sickness? Keep in mind that the delay was two days *after* hearing that Lazarus was sick. It is estimated that the trip from Bethany to where Jesus was would have taken one day. Jesus delays His departure for two days. Add to this the one day necessary for the trip to Bethany and you have four days. We know that Lazarus had been dead four days, so we can conclude that Lazarus had died the day the messengers arrived, if not shortly after the messengers left Bethany.

Why then the delay? It seems to me that Christ let enough time lapse for the death of Lazarus to be so certain that there could be no doubt about the miracle. Guy N. Woods expanded this thought, noting, “Delay, by deity, in granting a favor is not a denial of it; often, it is to provide occasion for a greater one. Not infrequently, when our petitions are not granted it is because the Lord is withholding the less in order to bestow the greater blessing” (Woods, 229).

Men may delay out of improper motives, or insufficient will power, but our Lord never delayed an action without a reason for doing so. We might learn a lesson here when it comes to prayer. Sometimes our Father will answer prayers quickly, without delay that at least is noticeable. Then there are times when the Lord seems to be unaware of our needs; His delay challenges our faith. Be assured, that anytime God delays in answering our prayers that it is for our benefit and not from any lack of love and concern on His part.

~~ 11:7-8 ~~

*“Then after this he saith to the disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. The disciples say unto him, Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?”*

Going to Judaea would have been extremely hazardous. The Jewish authorities were seeking to destroy Jesus. The fact that Jesus was returning “again” shows that the danger did not in any way deter Jesus from fulfilling His mission. The Lord’s decision to return to Judaea may have seemed unreasonable to His disciples, but Jesus knew it would provide another occasion to glorify the Father and bear witness of His Messiahship. The specific incident to which the disciples referred was probably the attempt on the part of the Jews to stone Jesus at the feast of Dedication (10:31), but of that we cannot be certain.

*“and goest thou thither again?”* - There is a marked contrast between the calm disposition of Jesus and the anxious disposition of the disciples. Our Lord was always in control of the situation, something that the disciples had evidently not learned at this point in time. While the disciples *doubted*, our Lord was *determined* to take advantage of a situation that would further glorify the Father.

~~ 11:9-10 ~~

*“Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him.”*

The “*twelve hours in a day*” is a simile, the purpose here to show that there is a definite time granted to men to work. Within that definite time span each one of us determines our eternal destiny. When the “night” of death comes, none of us can change our destiny. The word “day” also has the connotation of light, guidance, and help.

Christ loved to speak by simile, and he declares in this way that he knows just what he purposes to do. He is not stumbling in the dark. He is not groping in the night or walking uncertainly. He has a clear pathway on which the sun is shining” (Johnson, ESword Module).

Someone made this astute observation:

This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good, but what I do today is important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it! When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever, leaving in its place something that I have traded for it. I want it to be gain, not loss; good, and not evil; success, and not failure; in order that I shall not regret the price that I have paid for it (source and author lost).

The plan to return to Jerusalem, despite the danger that awaited our Lord there, was not some careless decision on the part of the Master. Any plans on the part of the enemies of God would be thwarted by divine providence.

“If a man *walk in the day, walk in the night*” - The Lord was not speaking of a man’s physical walk, though certainly the statement may be applied in that area. There is deeper meaning in our Lord’s words. One who shuts his eyes to the one and only true light of God’s word is walking in the darkness of spiritual night. Without the light of God’s word a man simply cannot learn to navigate the treacherous obstacles of life. The Psalmist recognized this and declared, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105).

~~ 11:11 ~~

*“These things spake he: and after this he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep”*

Physical death is frequently likened unto sleep. The promise of Jesus to “wake him out of sleep” was a reference to the resurrection that was about to take place. It would seem apparent from the verses that follow that the disciples did not understand the similitude of “sleep,” thinking of unconsciousness rather than actual physical death. This is interesting in view of the fact that for ages men have likened death to sleep.

*“I go, that I may awake him out of sleep”* - Concerning these words, Johnson quotes Thomas Arnold: “There seems to me to be contained in these few words one of the most powerful charms in the world to lull the bitterness of death, and to make us anxious to become such that we may humbly apply them to ourselves” (Johnson, 180).

The following similarities between death and sleep might be observed: First, both are *temporary*. Second, both *refresh* and *rejuvenate*. Third, sleep is a time of rest; so also those who die shall “rest from their labors” (Rev. 14:13). Finally, men eventually awake from sleep, and in the final resurrection all men will awaken unto one of two destinies.

~~ 11:12-13 ~~

*“The disciples therefore said unto him, Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death: but they thought that he spake of taking rest in sleep”*

The shallowness of their thinking is evident. There were a number of occasions when the Lord must have grown weary and frustrated with the inability of the disciples to grasp some of the most basic truths. The death of Lazarus came as a result of his sickness. He died in spite of his relationship to the Lord, or his relationship to those who were close to the Lord. He died in spite of the fact that his family was evidently good and well known in the community. Like all men, Lazarus had to face the inevitable

reality of death. But unlike all men, he would face death twice (cf. Heb. 9:27).

~~ 11:14 ~~

*“Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead”*

It is evident that the disciples did not understand the meaning of Jesus’ words, and responded as they did. So, Jesus then plainly said, “Lazarus is dead.”

~~ 11:15 ~~

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

Whether or not Jesus would have healed Lazarus had He been there, and thereby prevented his untimely death is not certain. We do know that the reason for delaying any healing and allowing Lazarus to die had a purpose; that purpose somehow connected to producing faith on the part of the disciples.

*“And I am glad for your sakes”* – This little phrase speaks volumes about the Lord. On this particular occasion it appears that Jesus was more concerned about the disciples, and the two sisters, than about Himself. He tarried for their sake; He went to Bethany for the sake of Mary and Martha.

~~ 11:16 ~~

*“Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him”*

There are two different views one may take of Thomas’ statement in this verse. Some have suggested that it was a statement of gloom and despair - “then let us go that we might die too at the hands of our enemies.” The other view is that his statement was one of courage. Tenney picked up on this:

The rejoinder of Thomas was quite typical of the attitude of these men and of Thomas himself. Pessimism was its chief note. In spite of the hints Jesus had given concerning His duty and in spite of the victorious ring in his voice, Thomas felt sure that doom and disappointment were

waiting for Him if He returned to the environs of Jerusalem...Paradoxically, Thomas exhibited also a real heroism. He expected that Jerusalem would mean the death of Jesus, but he was ready to die, too, if need be. His faith was courageous but not triumphant. He was resigned to the possibility of martyrdom as a matter of duty, but he did not entertain the concept of victory over death and all its powers. Faith had not yet passed from resolution to insight (Tenney, 173).

### *The Sadness around Bethany*

11:17-37

This next scene is just outside the village of Bethany. Jesus arrives, Lazarus has been dead for four days.

~~ 11:17 ~~

*“So when Jesus came, he found that he had been in the tomb  
four days already”*

According to ancient tradition, the soul of a deceased person hovers around the body for three days in hope of a reunion, but takes its final departure when it notices that the body has entered a state of decomposition. From that time forward it is irreversible. Of course, the tradition is false, since the Hebrews writer tells us that it is appointed unto men ONCE to die (Heb. 9:27). Any reunion of the body with the spirit would constitute the need for a second death.

~~ 11:18-19 ~~

*“Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs  
off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to  
console them concerning their brother”*

*“Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off”* - A furlong was just over 202 yards. Fifteen furlongs would have been less than two miles. But why would John mention this geographical location of the city of Bethany? It is not unreasonable to presume that, if John wrote this account after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., then Bethany may have suffered complete destruction along with her neighboring city.

~~ 11:20 ~~

*“Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house”*

Martha, in her characteristic way, left to go meet Jesus, but Mary set in the house. Notice similar character traits in Luke 10:38-39. It was a custom in the East for a grieving family to remain in the seclusion of the home. Martha would have none of it, and in her despair, she fled to the only One Whom she thought might somehow alleviate the great pain in her heart.

~~ 11:21-22 ~~

*“Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee”*

The statement of Martha is what brother Woods calls “a wistful lament; but not a reproach” (Woods, 236).

*“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”* - I don't think Martha was complaining as much as she was expressing her great faith in Jesus. I get the impression that Martha spoke out of an honest and sincere heart; as if to say, “Why did you not hurry? If only you had been here, things might have been different.” Her confidence is suggested by the words, *“And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee.”* She was not asking Jesus directly to raise Lazarus, but it is implied that she had this in her mind. As Bruce noted, “Her assurance in this respect has been compared to the assurance underlying the order given to the servants at Cana by Jesus' mother: ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (John 2:5)” (Bruce, 243). Martha's remarkable faith in Jesus is manifest here. She must have perceived a special relationship between Jesus and the heavenly Father.

~~ 11:23-24 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”*

*“Thy brother shall rise again”* - What is said of Lazarus is true of all men. The hour is coming when all who are in the grave shall hear His voice and shall come forth unto life. The belief in the resurrection was generally accepted by the majority of the Jews at that time, due in no small measure to the belief of the ruling class of the Pharisees that such was the case.

*“I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”* - Mary was familiar with the Old Testament teaching of the resurrection taught in such passages as Daniel 12. Great as her faith was in the resurrection, it did not remove the pain of the loss of a loved one.

~~ 11:25-26 ~~

*“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*

*“I am the resurrection, and the life”* – The implications of our Lord’s statement are profound. Jesus’ additional revelation (His fifth *“I am”* statement) concerns His identity as the One who raises the dead, who guarantees that those who believe in Him may die physically, but it will not last forever (verse 26). In effect Jesus was saying, “Wherever I am there is resurrection.” Physical death will be openly and finally defeated at the future resurrection. The raising of Lazarus is a foreshadowing of that great event (cf. 1 Cor. 15). Woods makes this observation regarding Jesus’ statement that He is the “resurrection and the life.”

The personal pronoun is emphatic in the Greek text; ‘I, and no other, am the resurrection and the life.’ He was the origin, the design and the power of both; in no way were they obtainable except by him (Woods, 237).

*“He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live”* (verse 25). This is a simple sentence, with profound implications. “He that believeth on me” does not refer to someone with simple mental assent; “faith only” has never saved anyone, and it never will (James 2:24-26). Saving faith is faith that trusts in the Lord and submits to His words in obedient faith. Such is the person



who will be saved and receive the blessing pronounced here by our Lord.

*“though he die, yet shall he live”* – Even though the child of God must face physical death (as must all men, Heb. 9:27), he shall live. Now take a close look at the next part of this promise from the Lord.

*“Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die”* (verse 26) - Note carefully what Jesus did *not* say: “Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall live again.” That is not what Jesus said. The message: “He that believes on me, though he die physically, he does not cease to exist.” Compare this with how we often respond when someone might ask, “What ever happened to a particular brother?,” we might say, “He died,” or “He is dead.” Jesus was saying to Martha and Mary, “Lazarus is *not* dead! He is alive!” In just a few verses Jesus is going to call Lazarus. How could Lazarus hear the voice of Jesus if he were dead? Jesus expected Lazarus to hear, because the brother of Mary and Martha was not dead.

*“he that believeth on me”* - There is more here than a mere assent of the existence, or even the deity of Jesus. The only faith that is profitable is faith that leads a man to obey the Lord (James 2:14-22).

Dear reader, let these words of Jesus sink into your heart. If Jesus has it within His power to give life, and ultimately raise us from the dead, does that not give us cause for hope and joy? Oh, indeed it does!

Before leaving these two verses, here are some important truths that beg consideration:

First, death is not the end of our existence. Accept the fact that Jesus is the “resurrection,” and everything else falls into place.

Second, it is important to note that there is a difference between believing in a *doctrine* and believing in *Christ*. Martha may have believed in the resurrection of the last day, but here she is called

upon to believe in the very One in Whom that resurrection becomes a reality.

Third, Jesus' declaration that He is the "resurrection, and the life," is an affirmation of His deity. No man can give life except God. "Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:25, and 28). When Jesus declared, "I am the life," He claimed equality with the Father.

Fourth, while the resurrection is an ultimate reality, life in the Son is the truly great blessing. Jesus was more concerned with life than with the resurrection. This is because the resurrection is the natural outgrowth of life in Christ.

Finally, the sting of death is taken away in Jesus. As Coffman noted, "The Christian will of course pay the last debt to nature; but, because of that saving link with Christ, the physical death he must one day experience loses all reality" (Coffman, page 280).

~~ 11:27 ~~

*"She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world"*

The words, "*I have believed that thou art the Christ*" are in the perfect tense in the original, and might be rendered, "and now, as a settled attitude of soul, I believe!" It should also be noted that her confession, like that of Andrew (1:41), included her belief that Jesus is the Messiah, and like that of Nathanael (1:49), that Jesus is the Son of God. But in addition she confessed here her belief that Jesus was also the prophet foretold by Moses (1:45, and Deut. 18:15-19).

~~ 11:28-30 ~~

*"And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here, and calleth thee. And she, when she heard it, arose quickly, and went unto him. (Now Jesus was not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha met him.)"*

The parenthetical statement makes it clear that Jesus had not yet come into the village. It would appear that Martha did not want the crowd of sympathizers to know that Jesus had come; thus the reason for the secrecy in informing Mary of the Lord's presence. But Martha's efforts to keep the Lord's presence a secret would soon be frustrated by the desire of the crowd to follow the two of them back to Lazarus' grave.

~~ 11:31 ~~

*"The Jews then who were with her in the house, and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there"*

The Jews who had come to mourn with the family and to offer consolation concluded that Mary was going to the tomb to weep. I get the impression that Martha bore up to the death of her brother better than Mary, who seems to be a woman of tender and sorrowful disposition. These Jews thought it best not to leave her alone, and immediately arose to follow her to the tomb.

~~ 11:32 ~~

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

*"and saw him, fell down at his feet"* - McGarvey concluded that Mary reacted "in grief and dependence, but with less self-control than Martha" (McGarvey, Four Fold Gospel, Electronic Edition). While Martha may have stood as she conversed with the Lord, Mary "fell down at his feet." Her reaction was an act of adoration. We find her where she was in Luke 10:39 – "at the Lord's feet." I was impressed with Morgan's comparison of the two events:

Then, prosperity was their portion; then the sun was shining. Jesus was a doubly welcomed Guest in that home. Martha magnificently tried to express her love in service, and broke down. If amid the pressure of service there is no time for quietness and meditation, we always break down. Martha became distracted herself, and then she grumbled at her sister, and criticized her Lord. Mary took time to sit

at His feet. Now, when the clouds had blotted out the sunshine, when sorrow had come, and her heart was breaking, she went back to the same place, back to His feet (Morgan, ESword Module).

*“Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”* – Mary uttered the same words as Martha had a few moments earlier. It may be that the two of them had discussed the matter following Lazarus’ death and prior to Jesus’ arrival.

I would not de-emphasize the place of either of these women. The difference in their demeanor and their reaction on this occasion are but a wonderful example of the varying personalities that make up the body of Christ. Consider the following contrasts between Mary and Martha:

- (1) Martha was active, meeting Jesus at the outskirts of town; Mary remained in the house, mourning the death of Lazarus;
- (2) Martha’s statement lays the stress on MY brother, while Mary’s statement emphasized my BROTHER;
- (3) Martha expressed assent to the general resurrection (verse 24); Mary made no statement regarding her expectations;
- (4) Martha was vocal; Mary was tearfully silent.

I don’t know about you, but I am thankful for the Marys and Marthas in the Lord’s kingdom.

~~ 11:33-34 ~~

*“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see”*

*“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping”* - The deep compassion of our Lord is manifest in this touching scene. Seeing Mary weeping (denoting the idea of an audible cry, even a wailing), our Lord is said to have “groaned in the spirit.” The ASV has an alternate rendering, “was moved with indignation in the spirit.” Bruce tells us that the “verb *‘embrimaomai,’* means literally ‘snort (with indignation)’ and regularly indicates displeasure of

some kind” (Bruce, 246). The same word was used in Mark 14:4 to express the spectators’ indignation at the waste of the precious ointment in Simon the leper’s house in Bethany. It is a word which “conveys the notion of anger, indignation; angered and indignant...with death itself which brought such sorrow to himself and to the sisters whom he loved” (Woods, 241). What would move our Savior to such emotional sorrow and groaning in the spirit? Reynolds, in the Pulpit Commentary, concluded:

Death itself caused this indignation. He saw all the agony of it in millions of instances. There flashed upon his spirit all moral consequences of which death was the ghastly symbol. He knew that within a short time he too, in taking upon himself the sins of men, would have taken upon himself their death; and there was enough to raise in his spirit a divine indignation, and he groaned and shuddered (Reynolds, ESword Module).

As our Lord looked upon the crowd, their sorrow and suffering, and even the tomb, all was a “silent memorial to the devastation that death had wrought on the human race. He was angered against man’s great enemy. Death to Him was not an impassable barrier, but a call to battle” (Tenney, page 175). The realization that Lazarus would face the temptations of life once again may have contributed to the Lord’s sorrow as well. It is almost impossible to read these verses without being deeply impressed with the human nature of our Lord. While you and I may be surprised that Jesus, Who was capable of preventing the death of Lazarus, and even now able to raise him from the dead, should become so agitated in the spirit that He would weep openly, to Him it was a part of His humanity coupled with His divine nature. We must not forget that our Lord shared in the common lot of humanity and was able to sympathize with the weaknesses and infirmities of mankind. This entire episode tells us that Jesus was a real human being.

*“Where have ye laid him?”* – Jesus did not ask the question to obtain information. He was indicating to her and those about that He was about to take action. And as these two heart-broken sisters, along with the mourners and onlookers followed, a most remarkable thing happens.

~~ 11:35-36 ~~

*“Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him!”*

*“Jesus wept”* – The sheer number of explanations for our Lord’s actions are an indication of the inexplicable mystery behind these words. How are we to understand the words? The verb rendered with our English “wept” is a different term than that describing the weeping of Mary. Here the Greek word (*‘eklausen’*) means to shed tears, and was used in Luke 19:41 to describe our Lord’s weeping over Jerusalem. So powerful was the weeping of our Lord that it is said Jesus was “troubled” (vs. 34). Bruce tells us that the word suggests the idea that our Lord ‘shook’ under the force of what was taking place. Not only did He shake, but when He was shown where the body of Lazarus lay, He burst into tears, as the ingressive sense of the aorist would suggest.

There are two possible ways to interpret our Lord’s weeping here. (1) He was weeping over the death of Lazarus, and the sorrow of Mary and Martha. Most commentators have interpreted the passage thus. (2) He was weeping over the unbelief of the multitude in His ability to raise Lazarus and the fact that He was, indeed, the Resurrection and the Life. Whereas we have witnessed the amazing manifestations of His deity, here we see His humanity in the shedding of tears. (3) It may be that at this precise moment Jesus felt the full burden of sin and its consequences as manifested in the death of Lazarus and all that surrounded this mournful scene. Morgan put it this way:

He gathered up into His own personality all the misery resulting from sin, represented in a dead man and broken-hearted people round about Him. This was voluntary identification with the sorrow that issues from sin, and was the outcome of righteous wrath against the sin that caused the sorrow. It is a most remarkable unveiling of the heart of Jesus (Morgan, ESword Module).

It is right here that the magnificence of our Lord shines in this chapter. God in the form of flesh, has entered into our sorrow. It is not just the death of a loved one that drives us to our knees;

though that would be enough in and of itself. It is life itself, and with the increase in years comes the increase of sorrow. Listen to the words of Moses:

The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away (Psalms 90:10, emphasis mine, TW).

God is sharing our sorrow. Yes, He will wipe away every tear. Even if the Lord should delay His coming another 2,000 years, when measured in eternity it is but a short time. Thank God for that moment, no matter how distant in time it may be, when our God gives us comfort. He weeps with us now; He will comfort us then!

*“Behold how he loved him”* - Our Lord’s compassion for mankind is manifest on such occasions as this. The word translated “loved” is *‘philo,’* denoting a close and affectionate friendship. While it is true that Jesus loved Lazarus and his family, it is but a small example of the great love that Jesus has for all mankind; love so deep that He would willingly give Himself to die in our stead! When we look at the cross, and think of our Lord’s great sacrifice for the world, the same words come to mind with but slight alteration: “Behold, how He loved them!”

~~ 11:37 ~~

*“But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die?”*

The question asked by these Jewish authorities was cynical and “so constructed in the Greek as to require a negative answer and it was designed to be ironical, malicious and contemptuous” (Woods, 242). “Those hypocrites who had so stoutly opposed admitting that any miracle had occurred in the healing of the blind man appear here as perfectly willing to admit it if it can be made a tool of slander in the present case” (Coffman, 282). This rebellious demeanor still exists today in the form of those who would ask, “How can a loving God condemn anybody to hell?”

Whoever it was that asked this question spoke volumes about his/her hardened and unsympathetic heart.

*“Could not this man...have caused that this man also should not die?”* – Of course He could! Yet He did not. The answer lies in the previously spoken words of the Lord: “And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him” (John 11:15). It was not a question about His power, but rather His purpose. Someone once said that the “purpose of God means the resolving of all that appears to be discord into the harmony of God’s perfect will and perfect action.”

~~ 11:38 ~~

*“Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb.  
Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it”*

*“Jesus, groaning in himself”* - The original is not as forceful as in verse 33, but it implies our Lord’s ongoing indignation against the anomaly of death from which the whole of the human family suffered.

*“Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it”* - This was a common means of burial. Paupers were often thrown into some unmarked grave rather than burial in a “tomb” as is the case here. The fact that Lazarus had been buried in a cave suggests that the family may have been of considerable financial means. This would rule out his having been identical with the Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 because *that* Lazarus was a beggar.

### *The Sign at the Tomb*

11:39-44

We now come to the moment to which the previous 37 verses have but laid the background. Standing before the tomb, Jesus would now test the faith of His disciples, Mary, and Martha.

~~ 11:39 ~~

*“Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him  
that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body  
decayeth; for he hath been dead four days”*



*“Take ye away the stone”* - The delay of Jesus in coming to the city where Mary and Martha lived was well calculated to remove any doubt on the part of the witnesses that a genuine resurrection had taken place. It is also significant in this whole procedure of raising Lazarus that Jesus never does for man what man is capable of doing for himself. This divine economy in the working of miracles is evident throughout the New Testament.

*“Martha, the sister of him that was dead”* - The apostle was not trying to identify Martha, for this he had done earlier. Instead, it would appear that this information was provided to explain or even justify her intrusion upon the intentions of the Lord.

*“Lord, by this time the body decayeth”* - Was Martha attempting to give the Lord some advice? Was she protesting? Perhaps she dreaded being exposed to what would be in the tomb once it was opened. It would appear that she simply did not expect the Lord to raise Lazarus now in advance of the “resurrection day.” On a side note, there is not a “faith healer” alive today who has ever raised one single person who has been dead for four minutes, much less four days!

~~ 11:40 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”*

“If” is the magical key that unlocks the door to innumerable heavenly blessings. Salvation is conditional, and the meeting of heaven’s conditions is in no way construed as meritorious acts on the part of the obedient soul. What is about to follow can only exalt the Lord, for the sign itself would speak volumes as to the magnificence of our Lord.

Out of the deepest humiliation comes the highest glory. The putrefaction of the grave is a stepping-stone to his throne. More is meant than the physical resurrection of Lazarus. She would or might by faith see the glory of divine power and love which would, by what was about to happen, dawn upon her. Christ was going to prove to all that he could and would destroy the power of death, rob him of his sting, swallow up the grave in victory, and

proclaim the everlasting curse of this mysterious flesh of ours to be a vanquished foe (Reynolds, Pulpit Commentary).

~~ 11:41-42 ~~

*“So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.”*

This prayer was for the benefit of those who stood about. Jesus’ faith in the Father had never wavered; He was confident that His Father would hear Him now as He had done in the past, and would do in the future. One remarkable feature of this prayer is the fact that Jesus offered thanks before seeing any results, just as He had asked Martha to act in anticipation of what was about to happen.

*“that they may believe”* - The express purpose of this miracle, or any miracle for that matter, was to produce faith in those who saw the miracle (cf. John 20:30-31; Mark 16:20). We sometimes wonder how many of those Jews now present, and who witnessed firsthand the raising of Lazarus, actually came to believe.

~~ 11:43 ~~

*“And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth”*

The call for Lazarus to “come forth” was made with a loud voice, designed for the benefit of the multitude at hand. As Woods has pointed out, “It was important that all of these should note that Lazarus came forth AT the command of Jesus and BECAUSE of it” (Woods, 245). It has been suggested that the reason for calling Lazarus by name was because had his name not been called specifically, everybody in the graveyard would have risen.

~~ 11:44 ~~

*“He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go”*

*“He that was dead came forth”* (literally “come out the dead man”), the miracle being instantaneous and complete.

The Jewish system of preparing a body for burial provided for swathing it in bandage-like wrappings from the armpits to the feet, leaving the shoulders bare, and with a cloth (napkin) wrapped around the head. Such enswathement would effectively prevent any ordinary means of locomotion on the part of Lazarus. The only explanation of his appearance at the door of the tomb is that the power that galvanized him into life brought him forth to the door (Tenney, page 177).

Johnson makes this observation about this entire account of the resurrection of Lazarus:

The account recorded by John is plain, matter of fact, crowded with minute and natural details, exhibits no marks of painting and draws no conclusions. It is told as an eye witness would tell the story who had no opinions of his own upon the subject. He does not even say that the miracle was wrought, or the dead raised, but tells what he saw and leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions. Even a scientific commission could not report the facts with more absolute impartiality” (Johnson, ESword Module).

Some years ago I came across this wonderful sermon on John chapter 11. It was written by the late Franklin Camp, and is worth placing into this volume for your consideration.

#### HEAVEN’S CONCERN FOR EARTH’S SORROWS

If a person would read his Bible carefully, he would have no problem about whether or not heaven is concerned with the sorrows that men have to face in this world. This is dramatized in a number of instances in the New

Testament. I am thinking of one in particular. You will find this recorded in the book of John, chapter 11. We all know that a great portion of that chapter is taken up with the events which surround the death and resurrection of Lazarus. We know him as the brother of Mary and Martha. We know they lived in a place called Bethany. It is also a matter of interest that one would find the first of our Lord's signs performed at a wedding feast. Now we come to a miracle, which would be the last one before his death, and this one has to do with a death. It becomes easy to see that Jesus met life with all of its various extremes. As one has said, it is also of interest to see the miracle in John 2 has to do with a family, and so does this one in John 11 have to do with a family. We can safely say that heaven is concerned about the family and its joys and also its sorrows. This shows that Jesus, who came from heaven, was here to let us know just how much heaven is concerned. This sure helps us to live from day to day with the assurance that heaven is aware, and is interested in what happens in the life of each one of us. We have this assurance because of the things we can learn from John 11. We see "heaven's concern in the action and reaction of Jesus."

#### HEAVEN HEARS

When Mary and Martha sent word to the Lord that Lazarus was sick; you will find that the text said: "When he had heard therefore that he was sick" (John 11:6). That tells me that heaven hears when we send word that one of our loved ones is sick. In fact, as I write this, I am sure that there have been thousands of messages that have gone up from saints of God to heaven today in the form of prayers that concern the sick. Isn't it wonderful to know that heaven hears. We know that "his ears are open to their prayers" (I Peter 3:12). This is surely an assuring thing when we find ourselves in the midst of the sorrows of earth.

#### HEAVEN KNOWS

When you read the account of the death of Lazarus, you will find that the first knowledge you have of such is in the statement by our Lord when he said plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). No, He was not in the vicinity at the

time. He was some twenty-five miles away. But that distance had nothing to do with the fact of His knowing. He could know if He had been thousands of miles away. Distance does not limit the knowledge of God (Psm. 139:2-10). Darkness does not limit His knowledge for “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). Yes, He knows, and that is a comforting thought.

#### HEAVEN LOVES

One would need to take a moment and look at this chapter. You will find a statement like this: “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11:5). This statement by John came after the word had come to Jesus that Lazarus was sick (John 11:3-4). Jesus knew he was sick. But John affirms still that Jesus loved them. Now, we all know that sometimes it is hard to see that love when we face sickness and death. But we can be assured that his love is no less than if we were well and all things were wonderful. None of us doubt the fact that the Lord loved these good folks. We know He loved them in spite of the things they had to endure. If we can see that in their case, we can also see it in our own. Heaven loves in spite of the problems and sorrows of earth. Of this we can be sure.

#### HEAVEN REASSURES

After the death of Lazarus, Jesus came to the village of Bethany (John 11:17). When he arrived, Martha came to him with a broken heart saying: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:21). John said to her; “Thy brother shall rise again” (John 11:23). She said, “I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11:24). Then comes the word of the Lord to reassure her, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Yes, Martha believed in the resurrection, but Jesus reaffirms the fact and would let her know that such would occur. This would mean more to her at that moment than ever. She would now be able to see the doctrine of the resurrection in a new light. Now it would surely involve her brother. That makes it very personal. It is when we come to face some of the sorrows of earth that heaven’s reassurance means more than it ever has. Then it

becomes so very personal because it applies to our situation.

#### HEAVEN SEES

Notice what John has to say, When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled (John 11:33). Here is the case of the Lord's observation of what effect death had on the family and friends. You can be assured that the one who looked upon this scene would see far more than any other that might be an observer. Here is one who could see as no other. He would be able to see the reason for this whole thing. If sin had not entered the human family, there would have been no spiritual or physical death (Rom. 5:12-14). He could see the hurt and harm caused by sin, and here would be an example of such. It would not be a pleasant sight to our Lord.

#### HEAVEN MOURNS

You will notice that it is said, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). This occurred at the grave of Lazarus. This would take place in the presence of men and women. We know this is the case for some said, "Behold how he loved him" (John 11:36). Yes, we can know that heaven feels the sorrows that we have. This is a part of the sentiment you find expressed by the Hebrew writer when he said, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). I know he can mourn for I read of this when He stood at the tomb of Lazarus.

Yes, I know heaven is concerned with the sorrows of earth. I am glad.

Franklin Camp  
*Exposition of the Expositor*









## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### “ONE MAN SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE”

*Rejection and Seclusion, 11:45-57*

The apostle John now turns our attention to the effect that the raising of Lazarus had upon the multitudes. I have no doubt that, immediately following the resurrection of Lazarus, the news filled the streets of Bethany, extending beyond the borders of that small village to the very halls of the Sanhedrin. The fact that “many believed on him” (verse 45) aroused the Jewish leaders. Jesus could no longer be ignored; something had to be done, and done quickly, lest the multitude be carried away by the teaching of the Lord, and Rome descend upon Israel and take away whatever small vestige of authority and power these Pharisees and Sadducees possessed. The miracle at Bethany could not, and would not, remain hidden. Some evidently thought it their duty to take the news to the authorities. It is superfluous to seek a motive behind their action; John just tells us they went. If they expected a positive reaction from the Pharisees and Sadducees, they would be sorely disappointed. The news only served to agitate the ruling class, and out of darkened hearts and closed minds a crisis developed, even if it was only in their perverted way of thinking.

Recognizing the increasing antagonism, the Lord soon departed from their midst and from their city. From now until His death our Lord “walked no more openly among the Jews.” The next time He would come to Jerusalem would be six days before the Passover, not to teach the multitudes, but to give Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. The time for teaching was now past. With the bitter rejection on the part of the multitudes, our Lord departed and left Jerusalem, and the nation, to face the inevitable consequences of their choice. Sin is like that. When men are determined not to obey the Lord, all that remains is for Him to “give them up in the lusts of their heart” (Rom. 1:24).

There are four distinct movements in this short section. When the news arrived regarding the resurrection of Lazarus, the Pharisees and Sadducees immediately form a council to discuss

the matter. Never was a more evil conclave gathered. From the depths of hardened hearts there occurred a consultation that would begin the process that would eventually lead to the Lord's crucifixion. Once the plot was devised, it was solidified as "they took counsel that they might put him to death" (11:53). Finally from the midst of that meeting was issued the command that "if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him" (11:57). We will study this section under the following headings:

Council, 11:45-47a

Consultation, 11:47b-52

Counsel, 11:53

Commandment, 11:54-57

*Council*  
11:45-47a

The resurrection of Lazarus was the climax of all the miracles John chose to record. I am not suggesting that the other miracles were somehow insignificant. By no means, for John himself told us that all of the signs served the overall purpose of producing belief in the hearts of those who witnessed the mighty deeds of our Lord (John 20:30-31). This miracle was special, in a number of ways, and the astonishing nature of the miracle itself compelled many to believe. Take a closer look.

~~ 11:45 ~~

*"Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him"*

While these "Jews" may have come to console Mary, their kindness would not go unrewarded. They saw the miracle and could resist the truth no longer. Thus their visit to Mary became the occasion for their conversion. An amazing blessing arose from so lowly a kind deed as seeking to console someone gripped in the depths of sorrow. This may be what Solomon had in mind when he wrote, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting" (Ecc. 7:2).

Exactly how many came to believe is not recorded. I do know, however, that the *many* did not include *all*, for otherwise John would have told us so.

~~ 11:46 ~~

*“But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things which Jesus had done”*

Why speculate as to exactly how many the “some” were? What is astonishing is how these “some” could witness the same miracle as the “many,” and then allow the pressure from the ruling Jewish class to sway them as they did. I am still convinced that those who “went away to the Pharisees” did so with unfriendly intentions toward our Lord. McGarvey commented:

By the miracle Jesus had won many from the ranks of his enemies, but others, alarmed at this deflection, rush off to tell the Pharisees about this new cause for alarm. Farrar argues that these may have gone to the Pharisees with good intentions toward Jesus, but surely no friend of Jesus could have been so hasty to communicate with his enemies. But the way in which the Evangelist separates these from the believers of John 11:45, stamps their action as unquestionably hostile (McGarvey, ESword Module).

I often marvel at the unwillingness of people to think for themselves in matters of responsibility, and especially their spiritual responsibility.

~~ 11:47a ~~

*“The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council”*

This was not an ordinary *council*. The Greek word is ‘*sunedrion*.’ The Romans used the word to describe a gathering of magistrates, judges or ambassadors. Thayer tells us that when this word was used with regard to the Jewish assembly it referred to the Sanhedrin. This was not your ordinary town council meeting to discuss social issues:

[This is] the Sanhedrin, the great council at Jerusalem, consisting of the seventy one members, viz. scribes, elders, prominent members of the high priestly families and the high priest, the president of the assembly. The most important causes were brought before this tribunal, inasmuch as the Roman rulers of Judaea had left to it the power of trying such cases, and also of pronouncing sentence of death, with the limitation that a capital sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrin was not valid unless it was confirmed by the Roman procurator (Thayer, ESword Module).

From this point forward the chief priests (the Sadducees) take the lead in the attacks on Jesus. This is to be expected since the Sadducees did not believe in miracles, a resurrection, or an afterlife. It is ironic, however, that this group would league with the Pharisees, their common political enemy, to put a stop to the influence that Jesus was having on the multitudes. Be assured, this council was an uncommon union, with an unholy cause, to promote an unholy agenda.

*Consultation*

11:47b-52

~~ 11:47b-48 ~~

*“...and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation”*

Nothing is said by the apostle as to whether or not those who went and told the Pharisees actually believed on Jesus, but there was no way to escape the reality of the miracle itself. There appears to be no hesitation at all in their acceptance of the miracle, for how could they possibly have denied it? But as Coffman noted, “When Satan is unable to answer an argument, his response has always been to kill the witness; that was his response here, and another example of the same is found in the martyrdom of Stephen” (Coffman, 286).

*“The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council”* - The mighty works of Jesus were astonishing, and the

ever growing influence of Jesus could be seen in the multitudes who were now coming to believe in Him. Though the exact number of believers is not mentioned, the apostle's use of the word "many" (vs. 45) is intended to help us see the growing numbers who were being converted. The attitude of these blind Pharisees is summed up in the words, "gathered a council." Rather than conduct a search of the Scriptures, they "gathered a council." Rather than humbly submit to the evidence, they "gathered a council." How many enemies of God have, over the centuries, gathered a council in hopes that they might, by human councils and wicked decrees, overturn the evidence and defeat God? Indeed, "Why do the nations rage, And the peoples meditate a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us" (Psalms 2:1-3).

Things had progressed to the point where something HAD to be done. "This session is a notable event. It is the first case recorded in the Gospels where we meet with a formal account of the meeting of this great body" (Johnson, 181). Coffman likewise pointed out that "the testimony of Jesus' enemies in this place is invaluable, for it declares the resurrection of Lazarus to have been an authentic event and one capable of convincing any unbiased person that Jesus was the Christ" (Coffman, 286).

*"What do we? For this man doeth many signs"* - It would appear that this was a self reproach for doing nothing to this point. It is interesting that they admitted the signs, but rather than allowing the sign to reshape their concept of Jesus, they allowed the sign itself to become an obstacle to proper belief.

*"If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation"* - It would appear they were more concerned about their *national* well-being than their spiritual well-being. When men reach the point in their trek away from God that they become more concerned about the favor of men than the favor of God, they are well on their way to complete destruction. Their concern for what the Romans might do is indicative of their great disbelief. "Why they thought that Jesus would materially affect

the political situation may be due to the fact that they were aware of his claim to be the Messiah and THEIR concept of messiah was that he would be an earthly, temporal ruler” (Woods, 247). It is also significant that these rulers were more concerned about “our place” over “our nation.” Johnson points out that to “take away ‘their place’ would be to destroy the ecclesiastical organization” which they enjoyed (Johnson, ESword Module). It is ironic that eventually the Roman authorities did precisely what these men in the council feared. The armies of Titus and Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and forever disbanded the Jewish political system in the process. By the time this gospel was written the catastrophe they dreaded had taken place.

~~ 11:49-52 ~~

*“But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. Now this he said not of himself: but, being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad.”*

Caiaphas was “a Sadducee, a crafty, powerful, unscrupulous man, who was high priest for eighteen years, from A.D. 18 to A.D. 36, an unusual tenure of office in those times when the Romans made and unmade high priests at will” (Johnson, 181). He was the son-in-law to Annas (cf. John 18:13), who had been high priest from A.D. 6-15.

*“Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people”* - Caiaphas did not realize what he was saying. Here is a most astonishing prophecy, spoken not by a friend, but a foe, of Jesus Christ. No doubt, to Caiaphas, his statement was sheer cynicism, but it serves as a reminder that wicked men can be, and often are, used by the Lord to accomplish the divine will. And what was his “advice”? SACRIFICE THE ONE FOR THE MANY! “Ye who dwell on these scruples and fears do not even know the simplest

rule of statesmanship, that one must be sacrificed for the many” (Johnson, ESword Module).

*“that the whole nation perish not”* - What irony in these words, for they would soon set in motion events that would lead to the death of Jesus, and bring upon themselves the very evil they sought to avoid.

*“One man should die for the people”* – Caiaphas’ hatred of Jesus was not founded upon any fear that Jesus might precipitate a conflict with the Romans. Precisely the opposite! It was because Jesus was not the kind of king the Jews wanted that they rebelled against Him.

*“Now this he said not of himself”* - While Caiaphas thought that this advice was from his own mind, it is revealed that the words were prophetic. The elements of that prophecy included (1) a prophecy of the atoning work of Jesus’ death, and (2) the gathering of the Gentiles and Jews into one nation. “The high priest unwittingly proclaimed Christ as the true paschal lamb whose blood would atone for the sins of the world. By sacrificing Jesus, he brought about a blessing he never dreamed (the remission of sins), and compassed for the nation the very evil he sought to avert” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

### *Counsel*

11:53

~~ 11:53 ~~

*“So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death”*

Acting upon the advice of Caiaphas, they determined to put Jesus to death. It only remained that a convenient opportunity to do so might present itself. Before leaving this verse I thought it advantageous to share with you the following quote from Tenney:

Unbelief cannot remain static any more than can belief. By nature it is progressive. The unbelief of the Jewish leaders had long ceased to be a polite incredulity of the claims of

Jesus. His works were too numerous, too real, and too wonderful to be ignored or dismissed with contempt. Unbelief was compelled to declare its true nature which was selfishness. When Caiaphas said, 'If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation,' he conceded the cogency of Jesus' arguments and the actuality of His miracles. On the other hand, he and the hierarchy feared to risk the place of privilege and comfort which the Roman government, much as they hated it, had given them. At the council following this miracle, there was definite concerted agreement to dispose of Jesus by fair means or foul. The enmity which had made previous sporadic attempts to trap Him in speech or to capture Him now settled upon a policy of exterminating Him (Tenney, 177-178).

### *Commandment*

11:54-57

~~ 11:54 ~~

*"Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews, but departed thence into the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he tarried with the disciples."*

One interesting feature of this verse is the implication that Jesus was completely aware of the decision of the council. Seeing the time had not come for our Lord to give His life as a ransom for the many, He took precaution and departed to Ephraim so as to avoid the hostile activities of the Pharisees. The exact amount of time that Jesus remained in Ephraim is not certain, but it is clear that after this short period of isolation, He entered Jerusalem for the Passover and His eventual death upon the cross.

The increasing hostility of the Jews precipitated a crisis in their own minds. Out of this imaginary crisis came the command that would bring an end to the conflict between this man called "Jesus" and the Jewish leaders. The closing portion of chapter 11 through the end of chapter 12 describe the transition of our Lord's work from that of a public to a private ministry. After His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus made no appeal to the crowds. His



hour was come (12:23), and the narrative moves quickly to its conclusion.

~~ 11:55 ~~

*“Now the passover of the Jews was at hand: and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the passover, to purify themselves”*

*“the Passover of the Jews”* - Bruce had this observation: “John’s repeated designation of the Passover as ‘the Jews’ Passover’ - a form of words which he uses for other festivals too - suggests that he envisaged Gentiles as making up a substantial proportion of his reading public” (Bruce, 253). This Passover is the third one mentioned by John. The first (2:13 ff.) occurred before the arrest of John the Baptist (3:24). It appears to have been the Lord’s first visit to Jerusalem following His baptism, during which He performed some “signs” that led to limited faith in those who saw the signs. The second Passover occurred during the Lord’s Galilean ministry, but the Lord did not attend that Passover. When this Passover arrives, Jesus is in Judaea where He had been since the Feast of Tabernacles some six months earlier. During those six months the Lord had visited Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles in October, and the Dedication in December. When He was not in Jerusalem He spent time in Bethany, and now He retires to Ephraim. Ephraim lay about ten miles north of Jerusalem and would provide Him sufficient safety from the Pharisees in Jerusalem who were now aggressively seeking Him.

In order to get a fixed date for the Passion week, it should be noted that the first of these three Passovers fell in A.D. 28, forty-six years after Herod began rebuilding the Temple (cf. 2:20). This would make the year of this final Passover A.D. 30.

John does not record the final journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, but a study of Matthew, Mark, and Luke reveal that He passed through Samaria into Galilee where He joined a great throng of people who eventually passed down the eastern side of the Jordan, through Jericho, up to Bethany, and into Jerusalem. Notice Matthew 19:1-2, Mark 10:1, 32, 46, and Luke 17:1-11.

*“to purify themselves”* - In keeping with the Law (cf. Numbers 9:6 ff), Jewish pilgrims came up about a week before the Passover and spent the days in Jerusalem undergoing purification rites.

The amazing thing about *this* Passover was that it was just another Passover to those Jews living in and visiting Jerusalem. But to the Christians who have lived since that time, it has been *the* Passover, the one true sacrifice for all men of all ages.

~~ 11:56 ~~

*“They sought therefore for Jesus, and spake one with another, as they stood in the temple, What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?”*

There must have been a great commotion regarding Jesus. Would He come to Jerusalem? Would He enter the Temple? Or would He avoid the feast of the Passover as He had done the year previous? By now the news of the resurrection of Lazarus was well known so the curiosity of the multitudes at this point must have been extremely high.

~~ 11:57 ~~

*“Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given commandment, that, if any man knew where he was, he should show it, that they might take him”*

One possibility is that the order to the general public may have been given to intimidate Christ and his disciples so as to prevent their coming to the passover. It is more reasonable, however, that they were seeking Jesus so as to carry out their diabolical plan to put Him to death. This was nothing short of the order for Jesus’ arrest. Whether or not the multitude had a knowledge of the *intent* of the Jewish authorities to kill Jesus is not mentioned, but we are prone to agree with Bruce that it “was probably not a matter of general knowledge” (Bruce, 253).

### **Lessons**

- (1) The death of our Lord was not the result of some emotional frenzy on the part of the Pharisees. His death had been

calculated and planned. What hardened hearts they must have had! What blindness! Rather than admit the obvious, and bow to the implications of all the things they had witnessed, they chose instead to destroy the Giver of life, and rush headlong to their own destruction.

- (2) Jesus has the power to raise the dead. He declared, “I am the resurrection and the life.” He is capable of giving life to the dead, lifeless, decaying corpse in the grave. Beyond this, He is able, and willing, to give life to the soul that is dead in trespasses. Unfortunately, untold millions choose to remain in darkness, and dead in their sins.
- (3) We note that Jesus did only that which men could not do. He told those about Him to “Take ye away the stone,” and after the resurrection to “loose him, and let him go.” Men could not restore life to Lazarus. This Jesus had to do. But our Lord’s demand upon them to do what they could is suggestive of God’s partnership with man.

For those who might enjoy a good homiletic outline, I combined several sources to come up with the following:

- I. The Setting, 11:1-2
- II. The Summons, 11:3-16
- III. The Sorrow, 11:17-36
- IV. The Sign, 11:37-46
- V. The Scoffers, 11:47-53
- VI. The Sinister, 11:54-57

So far as this part of our study is concerned, the magnificence of our Lord was captured in the words of an enemy of the Lord. With evil intent to do Jesus harm, and “being high priest that year,” Caiaphas declared: “Ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (11:49-50). I have no doubt that Caiaphas may have patted himself on the back for such a brilliant scheme; an “expediency” as he called it. He may have even thought that the words were *his* words. But John tells us, “Now this he said not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the

nation” (11:51). The mystery of how God can take a wicked man like Caiaphas and use him to present one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible may never be fully understood this side of eternity. Be that as it may, the words of Caiaphas provide us with yet another glimpse of the majesty of Jesus Christ, and a look into the very heart of the gospel message.

“One man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.” No doubt Caiaphas was unaware of the full impact of his words. It is impossible, however, for him *not* to realize the fundamental principle upon which those words rested; after all, he was a high priest, familiar with the sacrificial system with which he was involved. He was speaking of making Jesus a *substitutionary sacrifice* for the nation. By divine prophecy, spoken by the mouth of that year’s high priest, heaven declared that Jesus was to be a substitutionary sacrifice, “and not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad” (11:52). To serve as a substitutionary sacrifice, there are at least four pertinent qualifications.

First, in order to qualify as a substitutionary sacrifice, Christ had to be sinless. Wherein would be the value of one sinner dying for another? Paul wrote, “We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:20-21).

Second, to qualify as a substitutionary sacrifice, Christ had to choose of His own free will to die in place of man. The author of Hebrews reminds us of this very truth (Heb. 12:1-2).

Third, in order to qualify as a substitutionary sacrifice, our Redeemer had to have a body of flesh; He had to be *like us*. Paul wrote the Philippians and reminded them that Christ “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7-8).

Finally, in order to qualify as a substitutionary sacrifice, Christ had to shed His blood as a sacrifice for sins. Permit me to deviate for just a moment, and I'll come back to what is unfolding at this point in the gospel of John. The book of Ephesians is a wonderful treatise on the church of Jesus Christ. There is a fine thread that runs through this epistle that is set forth in the first part of this letter, and upon which our attention is focused time and again. Succinctly stated, it is the amazing truth that "now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). It is the last seven words upon which I want to focus your attention. A glorious hope is held out to the recipients of this letter. Yes, at one time they were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). "But now..." - NOW - as members of the body of Christ their hopelessness and despair has been washed away. NOW - they no longer stand far off, but near to God and His Son. NOW - they are "in Christ," and in fellowship with the Father. NOW - they have access to every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). What a contrast! How can any Christian read these beautiful words and fail to bow in humble appreciation for having been cleansed? The word "nigh" could mean near in time or near in distance. Here the apostle is expressing, not physical distance, but spiritual distance. Paul sets forth a contrast between their former state where they were "without God, having no hope" and their present state wherein they enjoy fellowship with the Father. They were made "nigh" in that they were now permitted to draw near to God; and that is because of the blood of Christ!

The blood of Jesus is the ransom for souls in bondage to sin. Without the blood there could be no redemption (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The late Robert Ingersoll was fond of referring to Christianity as "blood religion." Although he said this in derision, it is true that Christianity IS blood religion. You cannot separate the blood of Christ from the preaching of the gospel. Why should this surprise us? If men will look at history they will notice that every upward movement in the history of the world is a movement that is paved with blood. It is because that in the shedding of blood we see the greatest devotion and love a man might have for another, whether it be love for God or love for one's fellow man. We call this vicarious suffering.

Go back to the words of Caiaphas: "One man should die!" That *One Man* had to be Jesus Christ for all of the above reasons. "No Caiaphas, it was not *any* man; it was not *some* man; it had to be the *one* man, Jesus the Christ!" His blood has purchased pardon for all men, though all men may not take the time to appropriate that blessing; and it is their loss.

Critics may ridicule Christianity as a "blood religion." I am thankful that it truly is just that. Some years back I filed the following. I do not know the author, but its message speaks the truth that lies behind those inspired words from the lips of Caiaphas:

This principle of vicarious suffering is the foundation upon which civilization has been built - in fact upon which all society has been built, civilized or uncivilized. It is also the essential principle of human progress towards that one, far-off event, towards which the whole creation moves. Not so many years ago there went forth from our homes thousands of fine young men. They crossed the rolling deep and pitched their tents on Flanders fields and in the valleys of the Argonne. When they started out, many thought it would be a lark. But the poetry of war soon vanished, and nothing was left but the prose. They lived in dug-outs. They marched and ate and slept in mud. They had ribs fractured, eyes put out, lungs filled with gas, limbs shot away. Thousand cried for water as they lay dying on the battlefields, and received it not. They were cold and weary and homesick. No one but Almighty God knows the length and breadth and depth of the awful anguish and suffering of those who fought, bled and died on those European battlefields. Why did fathers leave their homes and go to the front? Why did young men, postponing the day of marriage, press the last, long, lingering kisses upon the lips of the sweethearts, and then rush away into war with its uncertain future? I am still convinced that they died for a principle. I refuse to believe that it was all in vain - that a sacrifice is ever in vain. There may have been greed, graft and corruption mixed up with all of it, but there was nobility, too! Autocracy had to be overthrown, lest our own wives and daughters might have

to suffer what the innocent women and children of Belgium and France suffered. The war had its sordid side, of course; but surely all this bloodshed was not meaningless! A thousand times; yea, ten thousand times - no! I still believe that these men suffered to advance the cause of democracy and freedom. As for me I glory in the crimson line. I am thrilled when I read its suggestive meaning in the cup of the Lord's Supper. I am moved with an unexplainable ecstasy when I see the ancient altars dripping with the blood of the slain lambs. Now I understand why the destroying angel who passed over Egypt at the hour of midnight, passed over those houses where the blood was sprinkled on the door-post. Now, I know to whom Isaiah refers, when he writes of One "in red apparel coming in dyed garments"; whom John the Revelator refers to, when he describes that heavenly chieftain whose vesture was dipped in blood; what Simon Peter means when he writes of that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin; and what the writer of our text has in mind when he declares that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." I want to say to you, with all the power of emphasis and persuasion of which I am capable, that by the precious blood of Jesus you will be saved, or you will never be saved at all. In all ages God has never pardoned a single sin-sick soul except on the merits of our Savior's precious blood, and He never will. That lonely hill back of Jerusalem was the battleground of which the Prince of heaven fought with the powers of darkness, and won. There God turned an evil thing into a channel of blessing. There, Sin, in slaying the Son of God, slew itself.

If it were not for the blood of Jesus, we could never draw near to God the Father, nor would we possess any hope of that heavenly home prepared for the redeemed of every age. Thank God for the blood of Jesus our Lord! I'll close this portion of our study with a quote from the late Rex A. Turner, Sr.

The Christian who tries, who reads his Bible, who corrects his mistakes, who gets up and tries again after a fall into sin, who does not let a day close without reflecting on his failures for the day, and who always prays for forgiveness should realize that he

is in touch with the cleansing power of the blood. What hope!  
What consolation! What a wonderful Savior! (Turner, 209).

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### “THE SUPPER AT BETHANY”

*Jesus in Bethany, 12:1-11*

The retirement of Jesus to Ephraim (11:54) was not due to cowardice, but in respect of the Father’s will regarding the precise time frame in which God was working. Our Lord’s seclusion beyond the Jordan was in order to defer His death on the cross until the time of the Passover. As chapter twelve opens we find the Lord coming out of seclusion in Ephraim and making His way to Bethany. The first part of chapter twelve closes our Lord’s private ministry in Ephraim, and opens the last chapter in His public ministry. From here till His death upon the cross we are confronted with what Johnson calls, “the most tender, solemn and sacred portion of the sacred story” (Johnson, ESword Module). The face of our Lord is now set toward Jerusalem, the shadow of the cross before Him. But before He would enter Jerusalem, He would turn aside to Bethany to visit with the family of Martha and Mary one more time. We are told by Matthew (26:6) that Jesus entered into the house of Simon the leper; by invitation it would seem. In order to show appreciation for the wonderful compassion that Jesus had expressed in raising Lazarus, it seemed fitting to give a supper in honor of the Lord. If Simon had intended this supper to be a private gathering of himself and some close friends, he would be disappointed. Consider who was there: Jesus (the guest of honor), Mary, Martha, Lazarus, some unnamed ‘*common people*’ and either the Pharisees themselves or someone representing the elite religious leaders who sought only to do Jesus harm. The focus of this portion of our study is the interaction of those who were present at this supper.

*Jesus*  
12:1

~~ 12:1 ~~

*“Jesus therefore six days before the passover came to Bethany,  
where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead”*

*“Jesus...came”* – The words are highly significant. “Jesus came” sums up the totality of our Lord’s earthly mission; or might we say, His “heavenly mission.” Paul tells us that Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). Had Jesus not come to this world Satan would have won the day, and humanity would be the worse for it. “Jesus came”! Thank God, “Jesus came”!

*“six days before the passover”* – There are varying opinions as to the exact day Jesus was crucified. The traditional view is that He was crucified on Friday. An alternate view is that He was crucified on Thursday. There is strong evidence for both positions. Sometimes I feel sort of like the man who was asked what view he held on the book of Revelation, to which he answered, “Depends on which commentary I read last.” If you were to ask me what day Jesus was crucified, I might reply in like fashion: “Depends on which argument I read last.” Later in our study I’ll provide you with evidence in favor of both a Friday crucifixion and a Thursday crucifixion. Having said that, it is important at this point to give at least some consideration to John’s reference to the *“six days before the Passover.”*

A search for all passages containing the words “day” and “Passover,” and which clearly refer to the eating of the Passover meal, revealed the following:

Exodus 12:5-6 – “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at even”

Leviticus 23:5 - “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, is Jehovah’s passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto Jehovah: seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread.”

Numbers 9:5 - “And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.”

Numbers 28:16 - “And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD.”

Numbers 33:3 - “And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians”

Joshua 5:10 - “And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho”

Ezra 6:19 - “And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month”

Ezekiel 45:21 - “In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten”

It seems clear to me that the Passover was to be celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Why, then, do so many claim that the Passover was always celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan? Keep in mind that the Jewish days began at sunset. In order to simplify our examination of whether the Passover was celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup>, let's use 6:00 p.m. as the beginning of the new Jewish day. According to Exodus 12:6, when the Jews were leaving Egypt they were instructed to “kill it in the evening.” Does that mean they were to kill the lamb before 6:00 p.m. on Nisan 14 just prior to the beginning of Nisan 15, or did they kill the Passover lamb *after* 6:00 p.m. at the beginning of Nisan 14, and just after Nisan 13? Read Exodus 12:5-6 again and see if you don't get the impression that the latter is correct.

According to Leviticus 23:5, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That same passage tells us that the Passover was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. That raises an interesting question: “Did the eating of the unleavened bread in observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread begin the day *after* the Passover meal, or did it *include* the Passover. From Exodus 12:18-19 we read:

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth

that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a sojourner, or one that is born in the land.

The conclusion I come to is that the Passover was celebrated the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since the Passover was eaten on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the lamb had to be killed on the 13<sup>th</sup> in preparation for observing the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> “between the evenings”; i.e. from sundown to sundown. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the 14<sup>th</sup>, and extended until sundown on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, seven days in all.

For those who hold to the traditional Friday crucifixion, the lamb would have been killed Thursday afternoon, and Jesus would have eaten the Passover with His disciples on Thursday evening. Sometime in the late hours of the night, and toward the dawning of the morning, Jesus would be arrested, tried, and crucified at 9:00 a.m. on the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Thus, when John refers to “six days before the Passover,” he must have been speaking of six days before the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

The *first day* before the Passover would have been the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Wednesday, 6:00 p.m. thru Thursday, 6:00 p.m.); the *second day* before the Passover would have been the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Tuesday, 6:00 p.m. thru Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.), and so forth, until we get to *six days* before the Passover, the day on which Jesus arrived into Bethany, namely the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Tracing the days backward from Friday (if Jesus were crucified on Friday), Jesus would be arriving into Bethany on the Sabbath (perhaps late on Friday just as the Sabbath day was about to begin). “On the morrow” (John 12:12) would be Sunday morning, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, exactly five days before the Passover. This is a very strong argument for a Friday crucifixion. Later I will re-visit this question as to what day Jesus was crucified; but for now, let us press on.

*“came to Bethany, where Lazarus was”* - Jesus left the safety of Ephraim and came to Bethany, less than two miles from Jerusalem. It was here that Jesus had called Lazarus from the tomb; and it was here that He would abide during the final week of His earthly life.

*Mary and Martha*

12:2-3

~~ 12:2 ~~

*“So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him”*

This event in the house of Simon the leper reveals a marked contrast between Mary and Judas, the two main characters in this narrative. Mary is the very embodiment of self-sacrifice, while Judas was the epitome of selfishness. Mary was willing to express herself with a precious and expensive gift; Judas proved himself a miser and a thief. Mary gave, while Judas criticized.

What a contrast! The love and devotion of Mary side by side with the avarice, hatred, and hypocrisy of Judas. Here on earth they may be seen together, and may be misjudged—the avarice counted prudence, and the free-handed devotion waste. And yet even here there is fixed between a gulf as great—nay, that same gulf—as that which separates heaven from hell (Scott, Esword Module).

We can only wonder why Judas allowed the devil to enter into his heart and make him betray the Lord. Tenney may have grasped the real reason why Judas played the part of a hypocrite:

Jesus' failure to claim royal titles and prerogatives for Himself when He exercised miraculous powers may have been the underlying cause for Judas' perfidy...Possibly Judas felt frustrated because the kingdom that he had anticipated was not about to materialize. If the kingdom were not to be immediately manifested, his relation to Jesus had put him in the anomalous position of gaining nothing and losing everything. Not only would he fail to obtain a post in a new realm, but he would, upon Jesus' death, be put under suspicion as a rebel. If he should take the alternative of betraying Jesus he would profit financially, and would square himself with the victorious priests. The action of Judas is a perfect illustration of repudiation as the natural result of unbelief (Tenney, 183).

*“So they made him a supper there”* – Whether Simon actually hosted this supper, or simply provided the place, is not certain. I am prone to think that he, along with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus cooperated in this joint effort to give honor to Jesus. Each one would have a personal reason to do so: Simon may have been the recipient of one of our Lord’s compassionate miracles; Mary and Martha had received their brother back from the dead; Lazarus, recalled from the hades world to enjoy a few more days with his loved ones! It is noted that “Martha served,” a noble character worthy of imitation by the followers of Christ. “Thank God for the Marthas of the world. But for them life would be an intolerable burden...those who do so will not be forgotten in that last great day” (Woods, 253).

*“Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him”* - This would suggest that Lazarus may have been treated as one of the guests of honor. It is also noted that this is the only New Testament reference to any activity of someone who had been raised from the dead. Lazarus is pictured as carrying on a normal life. The mention of his presence indicates that he, like others who loved the Lord, enjoyed the presence of Jesus on this particular occasion. In contrast, Lazarus represented everything in Jesus that the Jewish rulers hated. Being raised from the dead, his very presence spoke volumes about the power of Jesus. It was essential, therefore, that these rebellious, Jewish leaders put the man to death and suppress the growing tendency among the common people to believe on the Lord.

Now focus your attention on Mary for a moment. While Martha was busy serving, Mary’s attention was drawn to the Lord. Keep in mind that following the resurrection of Lazarus, that Mary had no opportunity to show her deep adoration and appreciation for giving Lazarus back to her. Now imagine if you will, Mary, sitting in Simon’s house, observing not only her brother, but the One Who had raised him from the dead. Her deep appreciation was now about to burst forth in praise and honor. Words escaped her, and in this one moment, she would express her love to Jesus in a most unique, and sacrificial way.

~~ 12:3 ~~

*“Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment”*

The “pound of ointment of pure nard” was “very precious” and costly. It was produced from the ‘*nardostachys jatamansi*,’ a small plant which is native to the Himalaya Mountains. The fact that Mary could afford the ointment suggests that the family must have been well off. By combining the accounts of Matthew (26:6-13) and John, we learn that Martha anointed the head as well as the feet of Jesus. Johnson points out that “the anointing of the head was also a distinction which was conferred upon the guest of honor” and that “it was an elevation of the custom to the highest point of honor when the head and the feet alike were anointed with oil” (Johnson, ESword Module).

*“wiped his feet with her hair”* - Here was an act of honor, respect, and deep appreciation. John’s mention of the odor filling the house would indicate that the smell might have been the first indication of what Mary had done! The incredible details of what occurred here is indicative of an eye witness to these events.

Some commentators suggest that this anointing is to be identified with that in Luke 7:36-50. But there are more differences than there are similarities. In Luke the anointing was in the home of Simon the Pharisee; here it was in the home of Simon the leper. In Luke the dinner was given by a critic of Jesus; here the dinner is provided by friends. In Luke the anointing took place in Galilee; here it is in Bethany. In Luke, Simon the Pharisee was rebuked; here Jesus rebukes Judas Iscariot. In Luke, the anointing was received as a token of the woman’s love; but here it was in preparation of Jesus’ burial.

*Judas*

12:4-6

~~ 12:4-5 ~~

*“But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, that should betray him, saith, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings, and given to the poor?”*

A covetous man can only see expenditure of monetary things upon others as “waste.” Judas still lives today in the hearts and minds of his modern counterpart. There is some question as to the chronological order of this event in John’s record. Matthew and Mark place it in the last week of Jesus’ ministry, while John’s account appears to have it prior to the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Coffman concluded, “While John’s account seems to say it was on Friday, it is not so stated. His words are, ‘They made him a supper there (not then)’ (Coffman, Theophilus Software). Robertson places the event in the sequence mentioned by Matthew and Mark, construing John as slightly unchronological here” (Robertson, ESword Module). I am more prone to place it right where John put it; prior to the triumphant entry of our Lord.

*“Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples”* - In Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9, it appears that the “disciples” presented this complaint, but here it is stated that Judas was the one who offered the objection. The fact is that both accounts are true. Likely Judas offered the complaint and the other disciples were caught up in the objection. Judas may have persuaded the others to go along with the objection so it would not appear that he alone was dissatisfied with what Mary had done.

~~ 12:6 ~~

*“Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein”*

*“he was a thief”* - We have to keep in mind that Judas was not a thief at the time Jesus appointed him to the apostleship. It is more likely that Judas was overcome by the temptation of handling the money assigned to him for safe keeping. Exactly how much time was involved in his journey into sin is not revealed, but I do not get the impression it occurred in a very short space of time. His access to the money may have slowly eaten away at his soul, eventually leading to a cold and calloused heart toward the needy, and eventually to his willingness to bargain away the Lord’s life for a mere thirty pieces of silver.



The words *“took away what was put therein”* in the American Standard Version margin read *“carried what was put therein.”* It was Judas’ responsibility to keep the contents of the treasury. The funds contributed to this “money box” or “bag” consisted of those contributions used to provide sustenance for Jesus and the disciples. It is rather ironic that the words in our English translation of this phrase speak volumes about Judas. Indeed, what was given in love by those who wanted to help support the Lord, Judas “took away.”

*Mary*  
12:7-8

John sees fit to provide us with a little more information about Mary. We are provided a glimpse into the heart of Mary, and what may have motivated her to lavish so great a gift upon the Lord.

~~ 12:7-8 ~~

*“Jesus therefore said, Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying. For the poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always.”*

*“Suffer her to keep it against the day of my burying”* - The idea is that they were to “let her alone.” Why? Morgan may have captured what was deep in Mary’s heart:

That is surely a revelation of what was in the heart of Mary. When that day she looked into His eyes, she saw the sorrow there. In a very little while after we shall hear Him say, “Now is My soul troubled.” Mary saw that. She remembered the day of her own sorrow, how she had seen those eyes first flash with indignation in the presence of the dead; and then melt into tears of tenderest pity and sympathy; and on this day she saw, as did none other, the sorrow unto death; and she said to herself, I wonder what I can do to show Him that I see (Morgan, ESword Module).

There is some additional information that Matthew gives us that helps us get a clearer picture here. For one thing, Matthew says

something about Mary's intent: "She hath wrought a good work upon me...For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial" (Matt. 26:10, 12). Don't tell me that Mary was unaware of our Lord's impending death! She was fully aware of what awaited the Lord. She may not have understood it; but she was aware of it.

A second thing that Matthew tells us has to do with the lasting value of what Mary did: "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13). There is something in Mary's gift that God considered worth including in Scripture; something for generations yet unborn to study and meditate upon.

This teaches us the important lesson that a good work for Christ does not die in the doing of it. It survives with immortal vigor, from generation to generation, and in it the doer lives, acting still, and, like Abel, though dead, yet speaketh. Mary, tender hearted, loveable Mary, generous, unselfish, and devoted, is pouring out her ointment still, and its fragrance which, at first, filled only the room in Bethany, is now flowing over the world and ever, as it spreads among its peoples, continues to win for Mary the Master's blessings (Woods, 256).

One will never know the far reaching influence of even the smallest of deeds.

Christ commanded that the record of this loving deed be preached throughout time till the judgment; and, in such a proclamation, she did in fact truly 'keep' the last drop of that precious perfume poured upon Jesus' feet...Did anyone ever give anything to Jesus without at the same time 'keeping it'? What is given to the Lord is kept; all else is lost; and can it be any different with this nard? Mary poured all the nard on Jesus; but she kept it all (Coffman, 294).

*"For the poor ye have always with you"* - Here is a truth that modern day politicians seem to have missed. The attempt to eradicate poverty, beginning with the "great society" of President

Johnson, and extending to the multitudinous entitlement programs of today speak volumes as to the ignorance of the simple truth expressed here by our Lord. There are a multitude of causes for poverty. Some of it is due to one's own selfish life style; and no doubt some due to circumstances beyond the control of its victims. The fact is, "the poor ye have always with you." How we treat those who find themselves in such a situation is a test of our loyalty to Christ, for in helping them in time of need, we actually serve Christ (cf. Matthew 25:34-46).

*The Common People*

12:9

~~ 12:9 ~~

*"The common people therefore of the Jews learned 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"*

"The common people" were those willing to hear and listen, as opposed to the Jewish authorities who had determined to destroy Jesus. As then, so it is now; it is the "common people" who are more open and receptive to the preaching of God's word. Although these on this particular occasion may have been motivated by curiosity, it is noted that upon examination of those things pertaining to Lazarus that "many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (12:11). Literally, the people were "going away and believing." The verbs are in the imperfect tense, describing continuing movement.

It is interesting to note that this multitude of "common people" came, "not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus." The record sets forth a remarkable contrast between those who honestly investigated the evidence, and the Pharisees who were so blind that they not only refused to face the implications of the miracle, but attributed the miracle to the power of Satan.

*"of the Jews"* - Here John uses the word with reference to the Jews as a whole, rather than in his characteristic reference to the religious hierarchy who opposed Jesus.

*The Chief Priests*

12:10-11

~~ 12:10-11 ~~

*“But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus”*

*“took counsel”* - The original word (*‘bouleou’*) suggests “resolve” (Thayer, ESword Module). These leaders deliberated with one another as to how they might *“put Lazarus also to death.”* But why would they want to put Lazarus to death? The fact that Lazarus was alive was evidence of the power of Jesus. If the Jewish leaders could somehow destroy Lazarus, they could deny that the man had ever been raised at all. But so long as Lazarus was alive the *propaganda machine* could not successfully refute the reality of the miracle, and must therefore cover it up. There is a touch of irony in all of this, for Caiaphas had said earlier, “It is expedient that one man should die.” The high priest, and those who were in collusion with him soon realized that the death of one man would not do! It had now become necessary that two die, instead of one. And this would be just the beginning. As Morgan noted:

Hostility to God as manifested in Christ, has been the characteristic of the world ever since, and it has ever been trying to get rid of Him. How many have they put to death in the endeavour? Pilate probably thought he had done the business presently when he put Jesus on the Cross. When he handed Him over it was with a sort of sense of relief, that it was done with. Done with! Within a couple of generations the power he represented had to repeat the martyrdom of Jesus ten thousand times in Rome itself (Morgan, ESword Module).

The seeds of hatred and animosity planted by Caiaphas were only the beginning. That hatred would not assuage until Jesus was dead and gone; and even then, the dragon “would go away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).

*“Breaking the Alabaster Cruse”*

by Tom Wacaster

An unknown author observed, *“Until our outward man--our soul--is broken, the fragrance of Christ in our inward man cannot come forth.”* Multiple sermons have been preached that focus upon the act of Mary in breaking the alabaster box and pouring the ointment upon the head and feet of Jesus (Matt. 26:6-7; John 12:13). John does not mention the cruse. For whatever reason, John only mentions the oil; not the container. John wanted us to focus our attention upon that which was “very precious” to Mary. The value of what was in that alabaster cruse was recognized even by the most avarice of heart, such as Judas’s. There is something in that wonderful act of Mary; something much deeper than a simple expression of thanksgiving, or an act of sorrowful remorse for what lay down the road for our Lord. Did the cruse have some sentimental value to Mary? Had it been given to her as a gift from someone close to her? Had she sacrificed more than a month’s wages (perhaps even a year’s wages) to purchase this “very precious” ointment, maybe as some kind of hedge against inflation; perhaps even an investment of some kind? These are questions that intrigue the mind, but must wait until eternity for an answer. Here is an act that would live in perpetuity, as declared by our Lord Himself: “Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her” (Matt. 26:13). What is the real lesson behind the breaking of the alabaster cruse? In my estimation it is this: When Mary broke the alabaster cruse she declared in that action the majesty of Jesus! Consider the following:

First, Mary is indicative of multitudes of precious souls who have given their best to the Master. The monetary value of that cruse of “very precious ointment” may never be fully realized. I don’t know if any of you men have ever shopped for “very precious” perfume, but I can tell you, it is not cheap. One source suggests that the 300 denarii it took to purchase this cruse of oil was the equivalent of a year’s wages. I could not prove that if my life depended on it. All I know is that it was not cheap, for otherwise Judas would not have responded the way he did. The point I am

trying to make is this: Mary recognized the majesty of Jesus and she wanted to give Him the best money could buy!

Second, Mary wanted to express her love for the Lord while there was still time. She must have realized the impending death of our Lord; her actions here prove that to be the case. Perhaps she had heard one of the Lord's prophetic statements regarding what would happen to Him upon His return to Jerusalem. The point I am making here is this: The mere desire to perform some kind deed and/or expression of love is of no value once a person has died; we must act while the object of our love is still alive. Some years ago the singing group, Mike and the Mechanics recorded *'In The Living Years.'*" A couple of stanzas of that song express this exact sentiment:

*I wasn't there that morning  
When my Father passed away  
I didn't get to tell him  
All the things I had to say*

*I think I caught his spirit  
Later that same year  
I'm sure I heard his echo  
In my baby's new born tears  
I just wish I could have told him in the living years*

Mary realized the importance of declaring the magnificence of Jesus while He was yet alive.

Third, Mary's appreciation for the magnificence of Jesus is seen in the fact that she performed this act in the presence of all. She was not ashamed of what others might say; she was only concerned with expressing her love for and appreciation of Jesus.

The story of Mary and her alabaster cruse is set in concrete (so to speak). Wheresoever the gospel has gone, men have read, and continue to read of Mary's selfless devotion to the Lord, and the price she was willing to pay to uplift Jesus in the eyes of those who happened to be at that supper in that little insignificant town of Bethany. How about you, dear reader? Can you not see

the magnificence of Jesus expressed in those events that unfolded in that small town of Bethany? Oh that you would!







## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

# “BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD”

*The Triumphal Entry, 12:12-19*

This particular moment in our Lord's life has often been referred to as His '*triumphal entry*'; and such it was, at least from heaven's viewpoint. The determinate council and foreknowledge of God was victorious over the council of wicked men. The first three words of this section connote victory: "On the morrow." With His earthly ministry now behind Him, the "morrow" brought to a climax our Lords' resolute determination to follow through with the Father's plan. This was now His hour!

Hailed by the multitudes as the Messiah, it would not be long before He would be accused of being a traitor, a criminal, and an insurrectionist. While the rulers continued to be hostile toward Jesus, the crowds proved themselves fickle, for within a short period of time this same crowd that welcomed Him "in the name of the Lord" would soon be crying out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

This chapter will take a closer look at those beautiful words of the multitude who took branches of the palm trees and went forth to meet Him, crying out, "Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (12:13). The popularity of Jesus was never greater than at this precise moment. But sin would soon soil even the most glorious moment, for while the multitudes glorified the Lord, the Pharisees were murmuring among themselves: "Behold, the world is gone after him" (12:19). We will study this section under the following headings:

The People, 12:12-13

The Prophecy, 12:14-15

The Puzzle, 12:16

The Proclamation, 12:17-18

The Pharisees, 12:19

Let's take a closer look.

*The People*

12:12-13

~~ 12:12-13 ~~

*“On the morrow a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel”*

“On the morrow” is generally accepted by commentators to be Sunday, commonly known as “Palm Sunday” because of the palm branches that were spread in our Lord’s path as He entered Jerusalem. The exact number represented by the “great multitude” was estimated by Josephus to be upwards of two million. The resurrection of Lazarus had aroused the multitudes, and there was a great expectation that an earthly kingdom was about to be established. “Hosanna” means “Save, we pray,” or “give victory now,” and is so used in Psalms 118:25. As to why Jesus allowed such homage to be paid, it goes without saying that He is God in the flesh and homage is rightly due Him. There were occasions, however, when Jesus had withdrawn from expressions of homage in order to avoid undue conflict with the Jewish leaders, but it was fitting on this particular occasion that He show Himself as King, the Messiah of His people. It should be noted, however, that although Jesus did not repudiate the title which they gave Him, He did repudiate the military and political ideas which the people associated with it by the action that followed.

*“took branches of the palm trees, and went forth to meet him”* - The palm tree has, from ancient times, been associated with the Semitic peoples. The palm tree came to be sacred both in Arabia and Assyria in the earliest age, and in Palestine the palm leaf appears as an ornament upon pottery as far back as 1800 B.C. The palm was used as decoration of the temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35, 7:36, and 2 Chron. 3:5). It was a symbol of beauty (Song of Solomon 7:7), and was symbolic of a righteous man:

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree:

He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.  
They are planted in the house of Yahweh;  
They shall flourish in the courts of our God.  
They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;  
They shall be full of sap and green (Psa. 92:12-14)

The spreading of palm branches was also a customary way of greeting heroes returning from battle. The action of the people demonstrated their high regard for Jesus at this point in His earthly ministry. As Jesus entered into Jerusalem it would appear that His popularity had risen dramatically among the people. Bruce has this interesting note:

Palm-branches figured in the procession which celebrated the rededication of the temple in 164 BC (2 Macc. 10:7) and again when the winning of full political independence was celebrated under Simon in 141 BC (1 Macc. 13:51). Later, palms appeared as national symbols on the coins struck by the Judaeans insurgents during the first and second revolts against Rome (AD 66-70 and 132-135). So well established was the use of the palm or palm-branch as a symbol for the Jewish nation that the Romans in their time used it on the coins which they struck to celebrate the crushing of the Jewish revolts. On this occasion, then, the palm-branches may have signified the people's expectation of imminent national liberation, and this is supported by the words with which they greeted our Lord (Bruce, 259).

*“the King of Israel”* - Jesus permitted this declaration of praise so as to bring about a confrontation with the religious leaders. Their intent was to kill Jesus AFTER the Passover (Matthew 26:1-5). But this was not according to God's plan, and their strategy would be overruled by God's providence.

*The Prophecy*  
12:14-15

~~ 12:14-15 ~~

*“And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt”*

It is interesting to note that many of the details surrounding our Lord’s triumphant entry are omitted by John. We must rely upon the other writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) to get a full picture of that amazing event. Woods points out that John’s omission of a great matter of these details is “evidence that the book of John presupposes the existence of Matthew, Mark and Luke” (Woods, 259). It is an interesting side note to observe that our Lord frequently used “borrowed” things in His ministry: This colt was borrowed; He once spoke to the multitude from a borrowed boat; He observed the Passover and instituted the Lord’s supper in a borrowed chamber; and He was buried in a borrowed tomb. “He had no rich trappings, but only the garments of others” (Matthew Henry, quoted by Johnson on page 189). Some years ago I wrote the following regarding this matter of what Jesus borrowed:

What Jesus Borrowed  
by Tom Wacaster

In the thirty-three years that our Lord sojourned upon this earth, He never once demonstrated a single shred of materialistic desire. I doubt seriously that He ever scanned the Jerusalem Daily News to see whether the stock market was up or down, called His bank to see how His investments were doing, or worried as to how much inflation might be eating away at His little “nest egg” tucked away in some shady corner of His humble abode. On no occasion do we find that He carried with Him one single farthing. When He was asked about paying tribute to Caesar, His disciples had to bring Him the penny, for He was penniless. His only “purse” was the mouth of a fish that Peter caught, and when they parted His garments they did not discover any coin or notes. On one occasion his disciples encouraged Him to eat, but He said unto them, “I have meat to eat that ye know not. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work” (John 4:32, 34), and warned all of us, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither

moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through and steal” (Matt. 6:19-20). He not only preached that message, but lived that message to its fullest extent. Our Lord never owned any property, never built a house, never laid by in store, never had a passbook savings account, and never placed an ounce of importance on what one might possess in this life. When His life was finished and His course completed, the only thing He could call His own was stripped from His sinless body and gambled away at the foot of the cross while their Master and Creator hung on the cross close by. Having no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58), He found His rest in the homes of those who were gracious enough to provide His daily sustenance, and grant Him a place of repose when the day was done.

Today Fortune 500 would rank our Lord a failure; Forbes Magazine would not waste paper and ink to mention His name; and few, if any who are enamored with this world’s material things would consider His words worth their attention. This they have demonstrated by their rejection of things spiritual for the glitter of the world. But history will attest that the greatest man that ever walked the face of this earth (if we dare call Him a “man”) was the most contented, and the most influential individual who has ever lived. Though He may have borrowed those things He needed from time to time, those who were gracious to “loan” unto Him what they possessed soon learned that their “investment” returned mighty dividends that could not be measured in monetary value. I do not know who penned the following, but it is certainly thought provoking:

They borrowed a bed to lay his head  
When Christ the Lord came down;  
They borrowed the ass in the mountain pass  
For him to ride to town;  
But the crown that he wore and the cross that he bore  
Were his own - the cross was his own!

He borrowed the bread when the crowd He fed  
On the grassy mountainside;  
He borrowed the dish of broken fish  
With which he was satisfied;  
But the crown that he wore and the cross that he bore

Were his own - the cross was his own!

He borrowed the ship in which to sit  
To teach the multitude;  
He borrowed a nest in which to rest -  
He had never a home so rude;  
But the crown that he wore and the cross that he bore  
Were his own - the cross was his own!

He borrowed a room on his way to the tomb  
The Passover Lamb to eat;  
They borrowed a cave for him a grave;  
They borrowed a winding sheet;  
But the crown that he wore and the cross that he bore  
Were his own - the cross was his own!

*“a young ass, as it is written”* - The passage quoted is Zechariah 9:9. It is significant that Jesus did not march into Jerusalem, leading a band of soldiers; He did not ride into Jerusalem on a horse, the symbol of war. Instead, He chose to ride in on one of the most humble of beasts, the symbol of peace.

*“Having found a young ass, sat thereon”* - Bruce suggested that “Jesus’ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey was an acted parable, designed to correct the misguided expectation of the pilgrim crowds and to show the city its true way of peace” (Bruce, 260).

### *The Puzzle*

12:16

A mystery does not necessarily remain a mystery forever, and things misunderstood can and will be brought to light when the truth is allowed to shine its rays upon that which men often find puzzling.

~~ 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”*

*“These things”* - There were a great number of things that the disciples did not, at that precise moment, understand. These things would become clear at a later date; their eyes would be opened to understand the significance and fulfillment of them when the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 16:13). Coffman had this significant observation:

The failure of Jesus’ most intimate and faithful disciples to comprehend the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies concerning him, was evidently due to their also having been so full of the ‘earthly kingdom’ idea which dominated the minds of the Jewish leaders. Not until after the resurrection did the apostles finally get everything into proper focus and have the full glory of the Saviour’s glorious work finally dawn upon their understanding. We should be thankful for this; because here is the positive proof that the disciples, having the attitude they held, could not possibly have contrived any such thing as stealing Jesus’ body, or any kind of hoax regarding his resurrection. As a matter of truth, they did not even expect his resurrection, having no thought of it whatever, till after it happened (Coffman, 296-297).

*“but when Jesus was glorified”* – Jesus was glorified by the signs and miracles that He had performed during His earthly ministry. He was also glorified by His teaching, His compassion, and His submissive obedience of the Father’s will. All of these things, and more, glorified Him in a most remarkable way. But the ultimate glorification of Jesus, and that to which these words refer, is the death of our Lord upon the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His subsequent ascension into heaven. Each of those elemental parts of our Lord’s ultimate glorification proclaimed heaven’s victory over those who refused to accept the evidence of His deity, refused to submit to His teaching, and who sought to silence His message. In His death our Lord frustrated every attempt on the part of the Pharisees to *put* Him to death. Jesus chose the hour of His death; not they. He *gave* His life; it was not *taken* from Him. In His death, He would “bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). The Lord was glorified in His resurrection, fulfilling the prophecy that His soul would not be left unto Hades, and His flesh would not see corruption (Acts 2:27). The Pharisees, Sadducees, and chief priests

may have thought they had won the victory, but our Lord was vindicated, and in that vindication He was glorified in the eyes of all those who willingly and lovingly believed that He had truly been raised from the dead. Finally, our Lord was glorified when He ascended into heaven, to sit at the right hand of God, to make His enemies His footstool, and to reign as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). It is the glorification of our Lord that gave power to the words of Peter on that memorable occasion when, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he proclaimed, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified” (Acts 2:36). No wonder they finally understood!

### *The Proclamation*

12:17-18

~~ 12:17 ~~

*“The multitude therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, bare witness”*

The crowd could not be silenced. Having the same “spirit of faith, according to that which was written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak” (2 Cor. 4:13), their voices would be heard, if only for the moment. The words for “bare witness” are in the imperfect tense, and literally read “were bearing witness.” There was nothing the authorities could do to stop this rising tide of popularity toward Jesus. It is ironic, as well as tragic, that the multitude now crying “Hosanna,” would later cry out, “Crucify him.” We temper that remark with the observation that at least some of those in this crowd were present when Jesus “called Lazarus out of the tomb,” and whether or not they were among those calling for the crucifixion of Jesus is not revealed.

~~ 12:18 ~~

*“For this cause also the multitude went and met him, for that they heard that he had done this sign”*

There were actually two multitudes; the one moving along with Jesus enroute to Jerusalem; the other, in Jerusalem, now going out to meet Him in the way. It was the raising of Lazarus from the dead that precipitated such an enthusiastic multitude. John



is the only one of the four gospels that links that miracle with the enthusiasm of the multitude. “The popular frenzy at the thought of seeing one who could do such a thing increased as Jesus approached Jerusalem, an immense throng being caught up and swept along by the momentum of such a demonstration” (Coffman, 297).

*The Pharisees*

12:19

~~ 12:19 ~~

*“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Behold how ye prevail nothing: lo, the world is gone after him”*

It must have been extremely frustrating to the Pharisees to witness what appeared to be almost universal acceptance of the Lord. Despite all they had done, and had planned to do, they were powerless, at least at the moment, to put a halt to what was taking place.

*“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves”* – I get the impression that the Pharisees were criticizing one another. One group blamed the other saying, “Don’t you see that you are not prevailing against him in any respect? Why, look, the whole world is gone after him!”

Why would the Pharisees become so angry by the crowd’s reaction? Did these religious leaders want a King, someone Who would deliver them from the stranglehold that the Roman government had over their nation? After all, was it not an earthly king they sought and fully expected? And now, with Jesus’ acceptance on the part of the people, and loud *‘hosannas’* from the multitude in praise of their king, why would the Pharisees be so concerned about “the world going after Him”? The answer is found in the *way* Jesus entered the city – riding upon the “colt foal of an ass.” Bruce had some comments relative to this question:

The choice of an ass as the royal mount, both in the oracle and in its historical fulfillment, underlines this king’s peaceful policy; had a war-horse been preferred, a militant

policy would have been equally clearly indicated. But he offered Jerusalem the policy of quiet and patient submission as the right one to follow, and the city did not recognize the things that made for peace, with disastrous consequences. Whether the pilgrims appreciated his action is doubtful; even the disciples' comprehension was slow in dawning. The authorities thought they understood what was involved only too well (Bruce, 260-261).

By riding into Jerusalem upon the foal of a colt, Jesus demonstrated the nature of His kingdom. The coming kingdom was not to be established by a sword, but by complete submission to the Father's will. We are well within the bounds of truth when we declare that no nation upon the face of this earth has ever managed to establish on-going peace by the sword. Only in Christ will nations "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" (Isa. 2:4).

As we come to a close of this particular portion of our study, consider for a moment the majesty of our Lord from the viewpoint of His triumphant entry into the Holy City. Throughout history there have been those momentous events that have shaped history itself. Some days are so significant, so life changing, so impressive, that each one of us can remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when we received news of the unfolding of events on any given occasion. Where were you when terrorists flew two jetliners into the twin towers? Where were you when John F. Kennedy was assassinated? Where were you when the Challenger burned up on reentry into this earth's atmosphere and took the lives of those brave astronauts who were returning from that journey in space? We remember, don't we? Imagine, if you will, that *you* were in the city of Jerusalem on this quiet Sunday morning. Early that morning, beginning from Bethany on the south-east side of the Mount of Olives, two of the disciples were sent to fetch an ass colt to the Lord. Having received this animal, a symbol of peace, our Lord mounts the animal, and then makes His entrance into the city. He is met by a crowd from the city, who took their outer garments and spread these along the path before the Lord. Others anxiously tore branches from the palm trees as a token of their joy and enthusiasm, and spread these along the pathway.

As the Lord, His disciples, and the crowd made their way into the city, the morning rays of the sun would have shone on the Temple, in all its majestic beauty. The outcry from the multitude must have been deafening, as they cried out their shouts of 'Hosanna'! Hailed as King, Jesus was being magnified by the loud praises being offered. It must have been quite a spectacle, and could not help but be impressed in the memories of all who witnessed it. Recorded by all the gospel writers, this event demonstrates the magnificence of our Lord in a most wonderful way. And though the 'Hosannas' would eventually fade, and the cries for execution would prevail, the simple fact remains that the magnificence of Jesus Christ has been declared by millions who, over the course of more than 2,000 years, have embraced His teaching and obeyed His will. Multitudes have extolled the majesty of Jesus:

"I know men, and I tell you Jesus Christ was not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and other religions the distance of infinity. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon sheer force. Jesus Christ alone founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men will die for Him. In every other existence but that of Christ how many imperfections! From the first day to the last He is the same; majestic and simple; infinitely firm and infinitely gentle. He proposes to our faith a series of mysteries and commands with authority that we should believe them, giving no other reason than those tremendous words, 'I am God.' (Napoleon Bonaparte).

"If ever man was God, or God man, Jesus Christ was both" (Lord Byron).

"Can it be possible that the sacred personage whose history the Scriptures contain should be a mere man? Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man, loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest

rewards of virtue, he exactly describes the character of Jesus Christ. What an infinite disproportion between the son of Sophroniscus and the Son of Mary. Socrates dies with honor, surrounded by his disciples listening to the most tender words—the easiest death that one could wish to die. Jesus dies in pain, dishonor, mockery, the object of universal cursing—the most horrible death that one could fear. At the receipt of the cup of poison, Socrates blesses him who could not give it to him without tears; Jesus, while suffering the sharpest pains, prays for His most bitter enemies. If Socrates lived and died like a philosopher, Jesus lived and died like a god. Peruse the books of philosophers with all their pomp of diction. How meager, how contemptible are they when compared with the Scriptures! The majesty of Jesus Christ strikes me with admiration” (Rousseau).

That multitude, on that bright Sunday morning, recognized what others have admitted and embraced since that memorable day back in 30 A.D. Truly, the magnificence of Jesus shone on this occasion.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### “IF I BE LIFTED UP”

*The Seventh Discourse, 12:20-36*

Like some of the other discourses of our Lord recorded by John, this one contains the give and take that occurred between Jesus and the multitude on this particular occasion. The discourse itself has two parts. The first arises out of the request from certain Greeks that they might see Jesus (12:20-22), followed by an “answer” from the Lord (12:23-32). The second part of the discourse arises out of a question from the “multitude” regarding what the law had to say about the Christ and our Lord’s statement that He must be “lifted up.” Here Jesus admonishes them to walk in the light “while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not” (12:35). We have, then, two parties, two requests, and two answers from the Lord, all of which make up this seventh discourse of the Lord recorded by the apostle. We will study this discourse under the following headings:

The Greeks, 12:20-33

The Multitude, 12:34-36

Let’s take a closer look.

*The Greeks*

12:20-33

~~ 12:20-21 ~~

*“Now there were certain Greeks among those that went up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus”*

“Now there were certain Greeks” – There are two different words used to refer to Greeks, both of which are translated with the same English word. The first word, *hellenes*, referred to Greek speaking Gentiles. The second, *hellenistae* were Greek speaking Jews. John uses the first word in order to convey the fact that these Greeks who approached Jesus were not Jews; they

were Gentiles. The fact that they had come to the feast to worship indicates that they were proselytes; but Gentiles nonetheless.

*“these therefore came to Philip”* – It is likely that they approached Philip because his name was Greek, and also because he was a disciple of Jesus.

*“asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus”* – They were not seeking the location of Jesus; they wanted a conference with Him, a face to face meeting if you will. Brother Woods pointed out that “this is one of the first indications of interest on the part of non-Jews in the teaching of the Lord, a concern which eventually was to sweep over the entire Gentile world as a mighty river, bringing salvation to uncounted multitudes of people then in the morass of paganism” (Woods, 262). The fact that they addressed Philip with the word “sir” suggests that they had respect for him, due no doubt to his association with the Lord. Meditate for a moment on their request. Was it made out of mere curiosity? The “miracle worker” and “teacher” had come to Jerusalem, and these Greeks may have wanted to see Him themselves. But I think there was more here than simple curiosity. As Gentiles they had come to realize the emptiness of the traditions of their fathers. Their religion had left them disillusioned and disappointed. Having heard of His teaching, these Greeks wanted to know more; thus the reason behind their request. Bruce picked up on this, and coupled with the actions of Jesus during this, His last visit to Jerusalem, came to this conclusion:

The Greeks’ curiosity about Jesus may have been stirred simply because everyone was talking about him. But there could have been a more special reason. Between verses 19 and 20 a day or two had elapsed. Jesus was no longer on the road to Jerusalem, but teaching daily in the temple precincts. And in the meantime, according to Mark 11:15-17, he had expelled the traders and money changers from the precincts - that is more especially from the outer court - in order that the place might fulfill its divinely ordained purpose of being a ‘house of prayer for all the nations’ (Isa. 56:7). Did these Greeks recognize his action as having been undertaken in the interests of Gentiles like

themselves? If that court was cluttered up with trade and traffic, their privilege was diminished thereby (Bruce, 263).

Whatever the reason for their request, it was certainly a noble one, and one that should weigh heavy on the hearts of all men. Would you “see Jesus”? Or are you content to merely leave the investigation to others?

~~ 12:22 ~~

*“Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: Andrew cometh, and Philip, and they tell Jesus”*

Philip may have come to Andrew because he was uncertain as to what to do about this request of these Greeks. The significance of John recording this incident is better appreciated when we consider the separation of Jews and Greeks, and the complete isolation of one from the other. Johnson had this note:

Beyond the court of the Gentiles in the temple grounds was an inscription over the gateway: ‘Let no Gentile go farther under pain of death.’ No pious Jew could sit down to eat at the table of a Gentile (Acts 11:3, Gal. 2:12). If a heathen were invited to a Jewish house, we learn from the Mishna, that he could not be left alone in the room, else every article of food or drink on the table was to be regarded, henceforth, as unclean. Milk drawn from a cow by heathen hands could not be used. It was not lawful to let either house or field, or to sell cattle, to a heathen, and any article, however distantly connected with heathenism, was to be destroyed. In distant lands, or districts of Palestine where the Gentiles were numerous, the Jews became less intolerant, but in Jerusalem the aversion was most intense. An illustration of this is afforded in the address that Paul delivered from the steps, after he was rescued from the temple mob, which listened to him patiently until he spoke of the Lord sending him to the Gentiles, on which his listeners were at once transported into fury (Johnson, ESword Module).

Philip takes the request to Andrew, and Andrew once again plays a vital role in bringing someone to Jesus.

~~ 12:23 ~~

*“And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified”*

The antecedent of “them” is Philip, Andrew, the disciples of Jesus, and the Jewish people. In fact, the remainder of the passage does not mention the Greeks again. While it is true that these Greeks were part of the general audience to which Jesus appears to speak in the following verses, there is no way to be certain if Jesus made a direct response to the Greeks at all. It is apparent, however, that the request on the part of these Greeks was the occasion for what followed.

*“the hour is come”* - Contrast this with previous statements made by or about our Lord:

“And Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come” (2:4)

“Jesus therefore saith unto them, My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready” (7:6)

“They sought therefore to take him: and no man laid his hand on him, because his hour was not yet come” (7:30)

In my estimation the “hour” to which Jesus referred was the events that would unfold during the next week, namely His death and resurrection. John does not record our Lord’s agony in the garden. That agony which our Lord suffered is pictured in this chapter, even as the Lord admits that His soul is troubled (vs. 27). The “hour” encompasses the emotional stress that pressed upon the heart of our Lord, described perhaps more fully in those inspired records of our Lord’s time in the garden, but no doubt apparent here.

What follows interprets this “answer” Jesus now gives to His disciples. It seems clear to me that the “answer” to the request of these Greeks is not exhausted in verse 23. All that follows – His illustration of the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying (12:24), His reference to His soul being troubled (12:27), His



reference to the “judgment of this world” (12:31), and His reference to His being “lifted up from the earth” (12: 32) – all of this is His answer to the Greeks and to His disciples. Morgan summed it up like this:

The hour had come to which He had been moving through all the public ministry, the hour which evidently, in His own mind, from the beginning, was the consummation and the culmination of everything. In that first year of His ministry they had challenged Him when He first cleansed the Temple, as to what right He had to do it; and He had given that mystical answer, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” He was then looking to the consummation and the culmination. Now He said that hour had come (Morgan, ESword Module).

*“the son of man should be glorified”* – Dear reader, don’t miss this important point. The *hour* when our Lord was glorified was the *hour* when He died for our sins, and was raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). This is obvious by the very nature of what follows. He would be glorified by His death, referred to here in two ways: (1) the first being His actual death, (2) the second in the figure of a seed being sown in the earth to produce a harvest. Jesus was granted the honor to die for the sins of humanity, and in this He was glorified by the Father.

~~ 12:24 ~~

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit”*

*“Verily, verily”* – I have pointed out previously that these words were never used to introduce something new, but always as an elaboration on something that had preceded, or an extension of some thought already expressed.

*“Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone”* – Johnson had this note:

This statement, prefaced by the verily, verily, that gives solemn emphasis, enforces a great truth. The grain of

wheat may remain in the granary for a thousand years and be preserved, but it is useless there. It neither reproduces, nor is food. Grains were found in the wrappings of Egyptian mummies that were 4,000 years old, but they had never produced another grain. It is when it falls into the ground and undergoes dissolution, that it brings forth fruit. It is fruitful by giving itself up. So too, Christ must give himself up. Must die, be placed in the ground, before he can be glorified and draw all men to him (Johnson, ESword Module).

What is the message Jesus wanted to convey to these Greeks? How is it that this is the “*answer*” to their request? If we are not careful we will miss it. Jesus said in effect, “If you would see Me, it must be through the cross! The way of the cross reveals Me, and the way of the cross is the way you must travel if you would truly see Me!” The illustration is arresting. Consider a grain of wheat. You can look at that bare grain, but you will not see what it truly is until it is planted in the ground, germinates, and finally bears its full fruit.

~~ 12:25 ~~

*“He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal”*

The core message of our Lord’s ministry, and that of the apostles’ writings, is one of self-denial. Service to others is stressed in a number of New Testament passages. Guy N. Woods and Robert Taylor were right on target here:

To love one’s life is to make one’s own desires the principle by which one lives, the very indulgence of which leads to the loss of that held most dear; whereas, one who makes this life secondary to the interests of the next life will preserve it unto everlasting life in the world to come (Woods, 264).

Priority of earthly life forfeits the next one. Dedicated saints who love less this life and love more the one that is yet to be are doubly blessed. They get more of what is really important in the here and now and will have the

ultimate of eternal riches in the there and then (Taylor, 181).

The truth in this verse is that which underlies the full extent of what constitutes the exaltation of our Lord. When men love their own life, and live for this world with its pleasures, honors and earthly gains, they shall lose their life. “The man who says he will get as much out of life as possible, the worldling, is the one who ‘loveth this life.’ The one who disregards present pleasures, or worldly interests, but dedicates his life to Christ, is the one who hateth his life” (Johnson, ESword Module).

*“he that loveth his life”* - To love one’s life is to seek the interests of the flesh; it is to place the priorities on the physical man rather than seeking and serving the interests of God’s kingdom. To “hate” one’s life is to give priority to the advancement of the cause of Christ over one’s own life’s interests. It is to fully deny self, and in the words of Paul, “to buffet” the body and “bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” (1 Cor. 9:27).

~~ 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 the Father honor”*

*“Let him follow me”* – It is foolish to claim to love the Lord while refusing to do His will. The construction here is literally, “let him keep on following me.” The two-fold blessing for such devotion is (1) entrance into that heavenly realm where Jesus and the Father abide, and (2) honor from the Father.

~~ 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”*

*“Now is my soul troubled”* – These words reveal the *nature* of the hour of which Jesus spoke. The precise construction in our English may hinder a proper understanding of the verse. I would think that the question, “What shall I say?” is more closely associated with the next phrase. It is as if Jesus acknowledged

the troublesome nature of the hour, and then adds, “What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?” He then answers His own question: “It is for this very cause – my death upon the cross – that I came unto this hour.” Tenney took another approach:

Two alternatives occurred to Jesus: He could ask to be delivered from the hour of His passion, or He could go through it. The natural revulsion of the human will against the possibility of death was well illustrated by His first alternative: ‘Father, save me from this hour.’ It was His instinctive reaction to danger, but the initial impulse must not be confused with the basic purpose. The second alternative expressed the real will of Jesus: ‘But for this cause came I unto this hour’ (27b). Not caprice, but principle governed the decision of the Son of God (Tenney, 188).

If one will compare the words here with those of our Lord in the garden, he will get a clearer picture. Here the Lord exclaims, “Father save me from this hour.” In the garden He would pray, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matt. 26:39). Here He adds, “But for this cause I came unto this hour.” In the garden He adds, “Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42). In both instances I have no doubt that Jesus was struggling with the temptation to call it quits; to acquiesce to the temptation from Satan, and thus avoid the troubling nature of that hour that was now upon Him.

*“for this cause came I unto this hour”* – These words express the resolve of our Lord in much the same way those words in the garden did. With such resolve, our Lord walked unwaveringly toward the cross. Indeed the hour had come for Jesus to be glorified; but that process involved His arrest, scourging, crucifixion and resurrection. No wonder He acknowledged that His soul was troubled.

~~ 12:28 ~~

*“Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again”*

*“Father, glorify thy name”* - A number of sources see in these words the Lord’s complete submission to the will of the Father, a refrain echoed throughout the Lord’s earthly sojourn.

*“There came a voice out of heaven”* - There are only three occasions in which the Father spoke from heaven. The first was when Jesus was baptized, a type of His later burial in the tomb; the second was on the Mount of Transfiguration where they spoke of His impending death; and the third, here, when Jesus struggled from within about His coming death. These things show the tender and agonizing interest that the Father had in the suffering of Jesus.

*“I have both glorified it....and will glorify it”* - God had glorified the Son by the miracles that Jesus had wrought during His earthly ministry. Jesus would be glorified again in His resurrection, and His exaltation to the throne.

~~ 12:29 ~~

*“The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to him”*

The differing opinions on the part of those present are notable. Some thought it had thundered; others that an angel had spoken. We should take note that people often hear something quite differently, depending upon their background and their interests in this life. On this particular occasion the ears of those in the audience were not attuned to the agony of our Lord, nor did they understand the full import of what Jesus had been telling them. The very idea of death and dying in order to be fully glorified ran completely contrary to their earthly way of thinking. Thus the need for the Father to verify the words of Jesus and put His stamp of approval on what Jesus was now telling them.

~~ 12:30 ~~

*“Jesus answered and said, This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes”*

*“This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes”* – Our Lord’s will was in submission to the will of the Father. The voice from heaven was for the benefit of those to whom the Lord had

been speaking. The inability of the multitude to understand the force of the words of Jesus demanded some kind of heavenly intervention. With their crass materialistic mindset, there was no way they could have appreciated the full import of our Lord's words. They *should have* understood the message. Sadly they did not.

~~ 12:31 ~~

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

The repetition of the word "now" indicates that the things of which Jesus spoke were on the verge of being accomplished. The word "judgment" is from the Greek *'krisis'* from which we get our English word "crisis." The climax of our Lord's earthly mission was about to be accomplished. The time had come for Jesus to be glorified, and for the devil to be "cast out." "Satan's reign began to decline at Calvary and it will be totally terminated at the end of the age" (Woods, 268).

~~ 12:32 ~~

*"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"*

We come now to the very heart of our Lord's seventh discourse. Herein is the full meaning of the *'hour'* to which He referred. I find it rather curious that John is the only gospel writer who records these words of our Lord; words that declare the magnificence of our Lord for the simple reason that they express the very purpose of His earthly mission.

*"If I be lifted up"* – Though the words literally mean "to lift on high; to exalt" (Thayer), metaphorically they mean "to raise to the very summit of opulence and prosperity" (Thayer). Literally, and figuratively, it conveys the thought of being elevated (Strong). The word *'if'* is not conditional, but a statement of certainty: "As surely as I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto me" (Woods, 268).

It is difficult to realize the tremendous faith which this expression reflects. We hear these words through nineteen

centuries of Christian history which followed them; but, when Jesus made the statement here, there was little visible evidence to make anyone believe that these words might literally come true. It must have seemed to those who heard it the most presumptuous statement ever made. After all, Jesus was an unschooled peasant from the obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee. He owned nothing, had no political power, and was surrounded by a group of men who, while honest, were rather unimpressive. How hollow his words must have sounded to those critics out on the fringe of his audience (Baxter, 12).

In these words our Lord prophesied not only His death, but the very *manner* of His death. He knew well in advance that He would be crucified and not stoned. This is all the more remarkable when we consider the fact that stoning was the manner of capital punishment according to Jewish law.

*“will draw all men unto myself”* – The truth of our Lord’s declaration has been realized, perhaps far more than mortal man could ever begin to imagine. More has been written about Jesus than any other human being. Friends and foes alike have been drawn to Jesus; some to speculate, some to seek fault, and others to embrace His teaching and obey His will. The import of these words is astonishing. Jesus would not raise an army, organize a riot, or establish a political party in order to lead the masses. But He would *“draw all men”* unto Himself, and in so doing change the course of history, and the outcome of eternity.

The glorious manner in which the daring words of this prophecy have been fulfilled defies explanation. Jesus of Nazareth is the most conspicuous and the mightiest of all the personalities ever to make themselves known on earth; and, in the last decade alone, there have been more beautiful buildings constructed and dedicated to the honor and worship of Jesus Christ throughout the world than have ever been constructed and dedicated to any one hundred of the greatest kings and rulers who ever lived; and still Jesus marches on (Coffman, 302).

~~ 12:33 ~~

*“But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die”*

*“signifying by what manner of death”* – It was only by death on a cross that Jesus would be “lifted up.” No other manner of death fulfills this prophecy; only by crucifixion on a cross could Jesus be lifted up. What is it about the cross of Christ that draws men to Jesus? Surely it is not the fact that it was some instrument of death, for other means of execution remain to this day as symbols of only infamy and disgrace. Who has ever written a song about the electric chair, or what poet has ever glorified the gas chamber or the hangman’s noose? But let men erect a cross in their yard, or display it upon a billboard, and immediately the attention of those who see that cross is drawn to that one figure in history Who made that cruel instrument famous, yea glorious. Let someone display an electric chair in the front of their yard and the onlooker might wonder why such a display, but his attention would not be drawn to any particular figure in history. On the other hand, let a man put a cross in his yard and immediately those who pass by think of Christ and Christianity. Even as I write these lines the ACLU is seeking to remove a war memorial in the state of California for no other reason than the fact that it is in the shape of a cross. From the fields of Arlington Memorial Cemetery in Washington, D.C., to the beaches of Normandy, and around the world, grave yards have been graced with small crosses at the head of each tomb declaring the hope that men have in a resurrection - a resurrection found only in Christ, and made possible because of His death upon the cross and His resurrection three days later. Oh yes, “On a hill far away, Stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame!” For 2,000 plus years the cross of Christ has cast its beacon of hope across the tumultuous seas of human misery and sin, and the message of the gospel is so closely associated with that cross that to speak of the one is to bring to mind the other. It has been nine centuries since Abbot Rupert wrote the following tribute to the cross of Christ:

We venerate the cross as a safeguard of faith, as the strengthening of hope and the throne of love. It is the sign of mercy, the proof of forgiveness, the vehicle of grace and



the banner of peace. We venerate the cross, because it has broken down our pride, shattered our envy, redeemed our sin and atoned for our punishment. The cross of Christ is the door to heaven, the key to paradise, the downfall of the devil, the uplifting of mankind, the consolation of our imprisonment, the price for our freedom. The cross was the hope of the patriarchs, the promise of the prophets, the triumph of kings and the ministry of priests. Tyrants are convicted by the cross and the mighty ones defeated, it lifts up the miserable and honors the poor. The cross is the end of darkness, the spreading of light, the flight of death, the ship of life and the kingdom of salvation (<http://www.rc.net/wcc/throne1.htm>).

Dear friend, that cross, and all that it stands for demands some kind of response. Men can ignore it, ridicule it, mock it, and seek to eliminate its presence, but in so doing they stumble over the One Who Himself said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself” (John 12:32).

*The Multitude*

12:34-36

~~ 12:34 ~~

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

Unable to reconcile their preconceived notion of the promised Messiah, someone (perhaps the multitude as a whole) presented two questions to the Lord. The first was a theological question; the second personal. Consider each of these for just a moment.

*“We have heard out of the law”* – Whoever asked the question, it is obvious he had at least some understanding of the law, albeit a perverted understanding. Likely their quote has reference to passages like Psalms 89:36, Isaiah 9:6-7 and Daniel 7:13-14, passages that speak of an everlasting kingdom and unending rule of the coming Messiah. Taking such passages, and straining them through the traditional glasses of Pharisaic interpretation, they were in effect saying: “You cannot reconcile your statement with the teaching of the scriptures; you now concede that you are to

leave the earth; that you are going to die. But the Messiah is to be here forever; therefore you cannot be the Messiah.”

“*who is this Son of man?*” – More literally, they were asking, “Who is this ‘The Son of Man?’” The Greek contains the definite article. This question was in reference to our Lord’s self-designated description of Himself. There were a number of occasions when He spoke of Himself as ‘the Son of man’ (see such passages as Matt. 8:20, 9:6, 10:23, 11:19, Mark 8:38, 9:9, 14:62, Luke 9:22, 9:58, 12:40, 18:8, John 3:14, 6:27, 8:28, to name but a few). What is ironic about their question is the fact that Jesus made the answer to this question the fundamental bedrock of His authority. Well into His earthly ministry He asked His disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” (Matt. 16:13). The *correct* answer to that question was given by Peter: ““Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). It was upon the very truth that Jesus is the Son of God that our Lord established the church. Now this multitude was asking one of the most important questions a person can ask: “Who is this Son of man?” The answer Jesus would give to these two questions was not what they expected.

~~ 12:35 ~~

*“Jesus therefore said unto them, Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth”*

It is interesting to note that Jesus did not answer their theological question. Knowing He was about to conclude His teaching ministry, the Lord is making one last compassionate call to the multitude of Jews who were quickly letting the light pass from them. Having told them that He was the light of the world (John 8:12), He is now telling them that they were about to put that light out and plunge themselves into darkness. That night lay in the not too distant future; a night when they could no longer listen to, or learn from, the Master. “He who came into the world as the light which enlightens every man was about to leave it through the darkness of the cross” (Tenney, 190).

The day, for the nation of Israel, was far spent. The door of opportunity for the people of the Jewish religion was not yet closed but would soon be. For them the midnight hour approached and, if they were to walk in the light at all it must be now (Woods, 270).

~~ 12:36 ~~

*“While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light. These things spake Jesus, and he departed and hid himself from them”*

Five times in two short verses, our Lord uses the word “light.” The last part of this verse through verse 43 should be treated as a parenthetical statement provided by John with the purpose of explaining the reason for the hard hearts of the Jewish leaders and people. It is abundantly clear from verses 44 through the close of the chapter that the Lord was still crying out to the people in order to give them one last chance to respond to His words.

*“and he departed and hid himself from them”* - Once men reject the opportunity for learning, God departs from them. These Jews had let that opportunity pass them by. They had rejected Him; He would now reject them. As B.W. Johnson put it: “Unbelief closed their spiritual eyes to his words. Unless there was belief and a reception of the light they could not become children of the light. With those words he retired from their midst” (Johnson, ESword Module). Johnson then concludes his thoughts on this section with some noteworthy comments and a beautiful poem by Cowper:

Christ himself had struggle of soul. He was tempted in all points as we are. The cross was as hard for him to endure as it would be for us. He fought the conflict in soul, he gave up his life, and the Father spoke his approbation. He gave up but he gained. First the cross and then the crown.

With all his sufferings full in view,  
And woes to us unknown,  
Forth to the task his spirit flew;  
Twas love that urged him on.

Lord we return to thee what we can;  
Our hearts shall sound abroad --  
Salvation to the dying man,  
And to the rising God (Johnson, ESword).



## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### “THE WORD THAT I SPAKE”

*A Prophecy and a Plea, 12:37-50*

We come now to the close of the Lord's public ministry. There remained those precious moments that He would spend with His disciples just prior to His death, during which time He would teach and encourage those men whom He had selected, seeking to prepare them for what lay ahead. In these fourteen verses John provides us with a two-fold summary of the overall fruit of the Lord's public ministry. The first (12:37-43) focuses on the Lord's signs, the second (12:44-50) on the Lord's teachings. John summarizes the results of our Lord's miracles with the simple words, “But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him” (vs. 37). John had selected seven miracles for his readers to consider – from the turning of water to wine, to the resurrection of Lazarus – signs that provided convincing evidence of our Lord's deity and authority; “yet they believed not on him” (37b). Even some of His disciples turned away “and walked no more with him” (6:66). From a purely human standpoint, the earthly ministry of Jesus was a failure. Were it not for the eleven men who would follow the Lord to the Garden of Gethsemane, and a small handful of those who remained loyal, all would have been lost. John had been with Jesus throughout, observing and recording the signs, and now he provides us with a sad summary of the impact those signs had had upon the multitudes: “yet they believed not on him.” Were it not for those few who remained loyal, the words would have a touch of hopelessness to them.

In addition to the signs were the words of our Lord. Who among us is not awed by the message of our Lord as recorded by John (or any of the gospel writers for that matter)? The discourses recorded by John manifest the wisdom of our Lord, and leave us falling prostrate before Him Who spoke those words. “I am the Bread of life,” “I am the light of the world,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” “I am the door,” “I am the Good Shepherd,” and “Before Abraham was, I am”! Six “I am” declarations, astonishing each one of them, but when considered

together, paint a self-portrait of our Lord unlike any of the other gospel writers. Those words, coupled with the signs the Lord performed, declare in no uncertain terms the magnificence of our Lord; and “yet they believed not on him.”

The second part in this section contains the words of the Lord Himself, wherein He provides us with a summation of His work. It is not so much a summary like we saw in verse 37, but a pronouncement of judgment for the disbelief of the multitudes. This short discourse contains one last plea, one last invitation, one last warning! For those who would believe the signs, listen to His words, and accept the invitation, Jesus holds out the promise that they would not “abide in the darkness” (verse 46). For those who refused His words, and rejected the signs, “the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (verse 48).

Let’s consider the last part of this chapter under two headings: (1) A prophecy, and (2) A plea.

### *A Prophecy*

12:37-43

I have selected to title this section “A Prophecy” for the simple reason that the disbelief of the multitudes did not catch God off guard. Their stubborn rebellion and consequent rejection of the signs and words of our Lord were prophesied by Isaiah, as we shall see momentarily. Let’s take a closer look.

~~ 12:37 ~~

*“But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him”*

“so many signs” - John only records seven of the miracles of Jesus; a mere fraction of all the miracles Jesus performed while on this earth (John 20:30-31 and 21:25). The unfortunate reality is that these Jews did not believe on Jesus in spite of the abundant evidence. John makes three points in this paragraph. The first was that unbelief was *simply not reasonable* in view of the abundant signs that Jesus had performed in their midst: “*Though he had done....yet they believed not.*” To willfully reject

such astounding evidence takes a mind that refuses to reason properly.

~~ 12:38 ~~

*“that the word of Isaiah 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?”*

The second point was that *unbelief was prophesied*. John draws our attention to Isaiah 53:1 wherein it is prophesied of the rejection of Jesus. God had, through the prophet Isaiah, predicted the very state of things which now existed. The question remains even to this day, “who hath believed our report?” Unfortunately the statistics are not much better now than then. Rather than believe the inspired “report” provided by John (and the other inspired apostles), men choose instead to shut their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts; all in fulfillment to heaven’s prediction centuries before the Lord ever came to this earth.

~~ 12:39-40 ~~

*“For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them”*

The third point John makes is that unbelief is *the product of a rejection of the truth and a hardening of the heart as a consequence of that rejection*. It was not God’s decree that they disbelieve, but their unbelief came as a result of their own choice. Johnson wrote,

The cause of their unbelief is not that Isaiah said thus and thus, but he points out the cause of their unbelief in what he said. The reason why they could not believe was not that God had decreed their unbelief and destroyed their free agency, but that, in the exercise of their free moral agency, they made themselves, by the operation of God’s moral laws, incapable of belief (Johnson, ESword Module).

Exactly how God blinded their eyes seems to present a problem to some, especially those who imbibe the doctrine of John Calvin. Disciples of Calvinism seem to think that God blinded their hearts by some direct operation, or some pre-determined plan from eternity. Were that the case, they would not have been responsible for their hardened hearts and lost condition. On the other hand, if God did it by some divine law of the universe that declares that those who willfully turn away from the light blind their hearts against the truth, then those who do so are morally responsible for their blindness. Unbelievers disbelieve because they choose NOT to believe. It can be said that *God* blinded their eyes because their blindness was the result of the spiritual law that states that spiritual blindness will follow willful rejection of the truth as sure as night follows day. It is said in the Old Testament that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. But it is also said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. When Pharaoh chose to close his eyes to the truth, he chose, in the exercise of his freewill, to harden his own heart. But it was God's law that those who harden their hearts shall be hardened, and hence it could be said that, by this law, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. It is extremely important to note that in Matthew 13:15 our Lord told us HOW God blinded their eyes. Jesus clearly states that , "And their eyes they have closed." Their heart was hardened by the application of God's immutable law to their own actions. As Johnson noted, "The Lord, having constituted as the righteous law of moral government, that sin should produce darkness of heart and moral insensibility, declared that he would allow the law to take its course" (Johnson, ESword Module).

~~ 12:41 ~~

*"These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him"*

Isaiah looked down the corridor of time, and seeing the marvelous glory of the Lord as manifested by His miracles, and ultimate death, burial, and resurrection, prophesied that physical Israel would harden their hearts in spite of the abundant evidence to the contrary. It was the glory of Christ to which Isaiah pointed. The "glory" spoken of in Isaiah chapter 6 was the "glory" of Christ. Isaiah was speaking of Jesus Christ when he made the statements in Isaiah 6:10. It is significant, therefore,



that the term “Jehovah” (as used in Isaiah 6) is applicable to the Christ as much as it is to the Father. This is something our Watchtower friends simply refuse to admit.

~~ 12:42-43 ~~

*“Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God.”*

*“Of the rulers many believed on him”* but the *“did not confess it.”* You and I might find that contradictory, for how could someone truly believe and refuse to confess the name of Christ before men? It has been observed that intellectual faith is really the climax of unbelief. John has shown that to be true by telling us that “they knew, they believed the truth, they had been convinced of the truth, but they would not confess it; and they would not confess it because of that most unworthy attitude of loving the glory of men rather than the glory of God” (Morgan, ESword Module). The New Testament does not hold forth a single solitary ray of hope for those who refuse to confess the Christ before men (Matt. 10:32-33). Even though these rulers believed, they adamantly refused to confess that belief. Held in check by the Pharisees, these rulers would not confess their belief, adding fear and cowardice to their sin. The passage in James 2:17-26 is a clear and unmistakable assertion that faith without works is dead. Their fear that they might be “put out of the synagogue” silenced what little bit of faith they might have possessed and plunged them into the kind of darkness that renders the heart insensitive to the most compelling of evidence.

*“they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God”* - Here is the reason for their refusal to confess the Christ: they loved the glory of men above the glory of God. They sought the approbation of the mortal over the divine, and in so doing they actually gained neither.

I'll close this portion with an appropriate quote from Bruce:

If, when he ‘came to his own place’, he received no welcome from ‘his own people’, as the prologue says (John

1:11), it was not because they had no opportunity of giving him the welcome which was his due. They had every opportunity and indeed incentive: they searched the Scriptures which bore him witness, but would not come to him for the life which he alone could impart (John 5:39 f.); 'although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they would not believe in him' (12:37) (Bruce, 276).

*A Plea*

12:44-40

John does not provide us with any details of where or when these words were spoken, but the context, along with the flow of the passage, leads me to conclude that if there is any separation of time, it is not much. Many of the themes that occupied the Lord's teaching are apparent in the closing words of this chapter, leading me to conclude that these words of our Lord are, indeed, among the last, if not *the* last words He would speak publically. Brother Taylor was thinking along the same line:

In these seven verses we have a summation of the Saviour's sentiments frequently expressed to them. Numbered and noted they are: (1) Belief in Christ makes mandatory belief in God; (2) To have seen Christ was the eloquent equivalent of seeing the One who sent Him - the Father; (3) Jesus is the great light come into the world assuring each believer a stately shield against walking in darkness; (4) Those refusing to hear and heed the Christ stand self-condemned. They refuse to hear Him who came to save the world; (5) To reject Christ and receive not His words means a final rejection on judgment day; (6) We are going to be judged by His words; (7) Jesus spoke precisely what the Father legislated; (8) In NO sense did Jesus ever disparage the commandments of God as religious leaders en masse currently do; (9) Jesus lovingly linked God's commandments with everlasting life. Commandment violators are not on their way to heaven; (10) Jesus spoke what He heard from the Father and that minus addition, subtraction, alteration, modification or substitution (Robert Taylor, 185).

~~ 12:44-45 ~~

*“And Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me”*

The force of these two verses is its affirmation of all that Jesus had attempted to accomplish during His earthly ministry. It was His intent to point men to the Father; to get them to understand that He had been sent from the Father, and that to believe on Himself was to believe on the Father who sent Him. The inseparable unity of the Father and the Son shines in such passages as this.

~~ 12:46 ~~

*“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness”*

*“I am come a light into the world”* - The very mission of our Lord was to illuminate the minds of men. Men need not abide in darkness. Unfortunately the multitudes chose darkness over the light. Jesus came to bring the light so that men “may not abide in the darkness.” The choice is clear; the difference in the consequences is striking. Experience has taught us that those who abide in the light will enjoy life, have their doubts removed, and their questions answered. They will live on a higher plain, and enjoy a happier, more contented life. On the other hand, those who choose to abide in the darkness will find themselves constantly living under the cloud of unbelief, suspicion, and confusion in this life, and separated from God for all eternity in the life to come.

~~ 12:47-48 ~~

*“And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them 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 sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day”*

The theme of an impending judgment runs like a fine thread throughout the entire Bible. The final judgment upon the nation of Israel came in less than four decades following the death of

our Lord when Titus descended upon the nation, and the city, and obliterated the social fabric of that nation forever. The judgment upon Israel and Jerusalem is a sample (yea, a very small sample) of what awaits all men who refuse to listen to the words of our Lord.

*“hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not”* - The man who hears the sayings of Jesus and refuses to keep them stands condemned. Jesus did NOT say such a one would not be judged at all, for the very purpose of the Lord’s ministry was to save men from the wrath of the Father. The purpose of the Lord’s earthly sojourn was to save them because they already stood condemned.

*“my sayings, the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day”* - The absolute standard of authority for one’s salvation is the word of Jesus Christ. When “the last day” comes, every single person who has ever lived will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged by His word.

~~ 12:49-50 ~~

*“For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak”*

Jesus never lost sight of the fact that His mission was the mission of the Father. This point He emphasized throughout His walk upon this earth. The unity of the Father and Son, and the absolute submission of the Son to the Father, is one of the paramount themes throughout the gospel of John.

This entire chapter is the last opportunity for the Jews to believe and accept the Christ. Our Lord would now turn His attention to the disciples so as to provide them strength and encouragement for what lay ahead. Thus closes John’s record of the life of Christ so far as it pertains to those outside the confines of His disciples. The world had rejected Him; He would now turn His attention to a fuller revelation of Himself to the disciples. There are, however,

some significant observations that beg consideration before we can move on to the next chapter.

First, I find it extremely significant that our Lord never requested men believe Him as a man, but as the messenger of God; as the prophet foretold by Moses (Deut. 18:18). The Lord's submission to the Father stands in stark contrast to the arrogance of man. As Coffman pointed out

The rule of thumb for claiming attention on the human level is this: a bishop has spoken; a pope has published an encyclical; the council has made a decision; an archbishop has said, etc. etc. Not even the holy Christ himself, while on earth as a man, demanded that his words be accepted on the basis of any earthly trust or position that he occupied, his sole claim upon human credibility and acceptance being in this alone, that he delivered the true word of Almighty God! This is the unique significance and authority of the word of Christ (Coffman, 308).

Second, belief in Christ is belief on the One that sent Jesus (verse 44-45). Christ and the Father are so inseparable that to have faith in the One is the have faith in the Other.

Third, the man who believes in Jesus, does not walk in darkness (verse 46). Merrill Tenney had this observation: "Faith is not intellectual and spiritual complacency, resting on fixed conclusions which have long since ceased to be vital. Facing light requires facing enlargement of understanding and new ventures in experience" (Tenney, 195-196).

Finally, unbelief is a refusal to listen to the words of Jesus (verse 48). That same unbelief will face us in the judgment day. Those who have submitted to that word will enjoy the blessings of heaven for all eternity; those who have rejected will have an eternity of remorse for their failure to listen to the words that Jesus spoke, words recorded by divine inspiration and preserved by the providence of God.

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The Word That Jesus Spoke  
By Tom Wacaster

The Psalmist wrote, “I will delight myself in thy statutes...thy testimonies are also my delight...Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold” (Psa. 119:16, 24, and 127). How do you feel about the Bible? Are your sentiments the same as those of the Psalmist? Do you view the Bible as a legal document, a rule book that sets forth so many rituals to be slavishly followed? Can we echo the sentiments of the Psalmist?

Consider for a moment the simple reference that Jesus makes to the “the word.” Those two words are synonymous with “the word of Christ” (Col. 3:16), “the word of God” (Phil. 1:14), and “the word of the Lord” (1 Pet. 1:25). More than anything else, this same body of truth is simply called “the word.” This brief description implies an element of specificity. It refers to a body of truth that was so unique, so specific, that it could be called “the word” and folks knew what was meant. We are “cleansed by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:26), and we are to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). We are to be “doers of the word” (Jas. 1:22), and, as Jesus points out with regard to all men, “the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). Interestingly, various phrases are used to describe this “word.” If we want to know about the kingdom of Christ, it is the “word of the kingdom” that teaches us (Matt. 13:19). If we desire to know about grace, we study “the word of his grace” (Acts 20:32). That same body of truth is the “word of this salvation” (Acts 13:26), “the word of the truth” (Eph. 1:13), “the word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19), “the word of good tidings” (1 Pet. 1:25), “the word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22), “the word of life” (Phil. 2:16), “the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19), “the word of faith” (Rom. 10:8), “the word of promise” (Rom. 9:9), and “the word of the gospel” (Acts 15:7). Thus, when Jesus said, “the word that I spake,” He was implying a divine *standard* that would meet all men in the judgment.

Consider also that this “word” has its origin in God, was demonstrated by the Christ, delegated to the apostles, and delivered to all men through the process of divine inspiration. We are speaking here of its *source*. The phrase “word of God,”

“word of the Lord,” and their equivalents, appear more than 300 times in the Bible. It is not the product of private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20), but rather that of the Holy Spirit “combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13). This makes the Bible a very special book. One poet put it this way:

There is a Treasure, rich beyond measure,  
Offered to mortals today;  
Some folks despise it, some criticize it,  
Some would explain it away.

Some never read it, some never heed it,  
Some say “It’s long had its day”;  
Some people prize it, and he who tries it,  
Finds it his comfort and stay.

God gave us this Treasure, rich beyond measure,  
The Bible we call it today,  
Let us believe it, gladly receive it,  
Study, and learn to obey.

Finally, consider the implication of the words, “the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48b). Does that not imply that the word will remain so long as this earth shall stand? Indeed it does. I do not know who wrote the following, but I first came across this little quote a number of years ago:

No fragment of any army ever survived as many battles as the Bible; no citadel ever withstood so many sieges; no rock was ever battered by so many hurricanes, and swept by so many storms. And yet it stands! It has seen the rise and fall of Daniel’s four empires. Media and Persia, like Babylon, which they conquered, have been weighed in the balance and long ago found wanting. Greece faintly survives in its historic frame; and Rome of the Caesars has long since ceased to boast. And yet the Book that foretells all this still survives. While nations, kings, philosophers, have died away, the Bible engages now men’s deepest thoughts, is examined by the keenest intellects, stands revered before the highest tribunals, is more read and sifted and debated, more devoutly loved and more vehemently assailed, more defended and more denied,

more abused, than any other book the world ever saw. It survives all changes, yet, it is borne along till the mystic angel shall plant his feet upon the sea, and swear by Him that liveth forever that time shall be no longer. The Old Book stands!"

This word is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12), it is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), it is "incorruptible" (1 Pet. 1:24-25), and it will "judge us in the last day" (John 12:48). Nations may rise and fall, and the years come and go, but the word of God will *stand*.

Each one of us is faced with a choice; a choice that will have eternal consequences. Dear reader, will you not choose to embrace the word that will judge you in the last day? I'll close this portion of our study with the following poem by Jack Gray:

Where childhood needs a standard  
Or youth a beacon light,  
Where sorrow sighs for comfort  
Or weakness longs for might,  
Bring forth the Holy Bible,  
The Bible, There it Stands!  
Resolving all life's problems  
And meeting its demands.

Though sophistry conceal it,  
The Bible! There it stands!  
Though Pharisees profane it,  
Its influence expands;  
It fills the world with fragrance  
Whose sweetness never cloys,  
It lifts our eyes to heaven,  
It heightens human joys.

Despised and torn in pieces,  
By infidels decried -  
The thunderbolts of hatred  
The haughty cynics pride -  
All these have railed against it  
In this and other lands,  
Yet dynasties have fallen,  
And still the Bible stands!



To paradise a highway,  
    The Bible! There it stands!  
Its promises unfailing,  
    Nor grievous its commands;  
It points man to the Savior,  
    The lover of souls;  
Salvation is its watchword,  
    Eternity its goal.





## CHAPTER THIRTY

### “HE TOOK A TOWEL”

*Washing The Disciples’ Feet, 13:1-20*

With this chapter we begin the final episode in the life of the Lord. There are a total of five chapters in this portion of John’s gospel (13-17), and the majesty of our Lord shines throughout. Morgan summarized these five chapters thus:

For the devout student of the oracles of God, the wonder of this section never ceases. Like the alternating lights and shadows on the Urim and Thummim upon the breastplate of the high priest of old, the story proceeds, radiant with glory, and yet almost terrible with deep darkness (Morgan, ESword Module).

Chapters 13 and 14 stand as a monumental reminder of the great humility of our Lord and a wonderful example of what it means to be a servant in the truest sense of the word. Jesus did not *play the part* of a servant; He *was a servant*! It was His serving heart that brought Him to this world in the first place. Read Philippians 2:5-8 and see if you don’t get that impression. For Christ, being a servant was not something He *had* to do, but something He *wanted* to do. That was His very nature. So the things that transpire in this section should not surprise us; but they should awe us, motivate us, encourage us, and help us truly see what it means to be a servant.

We are now invited into that upper room where our Lord will *demonstrate* the meaning of a true servant (13:1-11). John will tell us of the *constancy* of Jesus’ love for His disciples, and the Lord’s *consciousness* of His mission. As the events unfold we see Jesus taking a towel, girding Himself, and pouring water into a basin. What does He do? He *washes the feet of His disciples*, not as an ordinance, but to provide an example of true discipleship. In so doing He sets the *example* of true service. His *example* is followed by *explanation* (13:12-20). “Know ye what I have done to you?” There is a sense in which this small band of disciples could *not* have missed what He had done; but in the deeper sense, they were not cognizant of the full impact of His action.

How could they be? They were still enamored with visions of grandeur and glory of some earthly King, sitting on some earthly throne, and wielding earthly power. It would take the *towel* in the hands of the *Teacher* to impress upon them the need to be a *servant* rather than a *superstar*. We need the lesson of this chapter as much, if not more, than that little band of disciples.

We shall study this passage under the following headings:

The Moment, 13:1a

The Motive, 13:1b;

The Master, 13:2

The Message, 13:3-20, consisting of (1) our Lord's example, 13:3-11, and (2) our Lord's explanation, 13:12-20.

Let's take a closer look.

### *The Moment*

13:1a

As the chapter opens we find a group of thirteen men, including the Lord. That number would soon be reduced by one, when Judas goes out from their number. The central figure is Jesus; as well it should be. The others will be seen only as they interact with Jesus. With the Lord's public ministry now behind Him, Jesus will spend these last few hours alone with His disciples; a few hours of close fellowship that would eventually give way to the final consummation of our Lord's very purpose for coming to this earth.

~~ 13:1a ~~

*"Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto his Father"*

Right now I am particularly interested in the first part of this verse. John provides us with a description of the time frame in which this momentous event took place: "*Now before the feast of the passover*" (13:1b). The fact that this meal is said to have taken place "before" the Passover, has led some commentators to

conclude that this supper was not the Passover. Coffman is representative of those who hold this position:

We take these words in their simplest and most obvious sense as declaring that the supper about to be narrated occurred in advance of the Jewish Passover; and, although it resembled the passover in so many details, it was nevertheless not technically the passover. Jesus was crucified on the Preparation (19:31), and the passover was eaten after sundown the day Jesus died. There is no way the Passover itself could have been called the Preparation. The synoptics are in perfect harmony with this, Matthew making it clear that Jesus ate this meal reclining (26:20), which he would not have done had it been the passover (Coffman, 309).

I want to come back and deal with the precise day of this meal in the upper room later, but for now, let's press on with our study of this solemn occasion, noting simply that John has provided us with a reference to the *moment*. This was not just *any* moment; it was the Lord's "*hour*." "Jesus knowing that *his hour* was come that he should depart out of this world" (13:1b, emphasis mine, TW). Whereas "before the feast of the passover" identifies the "earthly hour," this second part of verse one addresses the "spiritual hour" of the occasion. When we read these words we are immediately struck with the awareness our Lord had regarding what lay ahead. The first recorded reference to this particular *hour* is in John 2:4 where He told His mother, "mine hour is not yet come." When the Jews attempted to arrest Him on two previous occasions they did not succeed, because His *hour* was not yet come (John 7:30; 8:20). When the Greeks came seeking to see Jesus, our Lord prayed, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). Now His hour has come; and with regard to this hour John tells us that it was the 'hour' when Jesus "should depart out of this world unto the Father" (13:1). There is nothing said about the method of our Lord's departure to the Father; simply the fact thereof. John would have us focus, not on the *method* of His death, but the *moment* of His departure to the Father. As Morgan put it:

The New Testament accounts all reveal Him as moving with the mien and attitude of One carrying out a Divine program; His soul troubled, but always seeing through the gloom to the glory (Morgan, ESword Module).

The death of Jesus was no “accident,” nor was it a “thwarting” of God’s intended design, as the premillennialist would have us to believe. Our Lord *intended* to die, and the precise time of that death, and the occasion of it, were known by the Father and our Lord well in advance of its fulfillment.

Yes, it was our Lord’s *hour*; but it was not an hour of earthly glory, but spiritual victory. Jesus would not come as a conquering earthly king, but a servant with a towel, and eventually a victor over death and the grave. Our Lord’s *hour* is the ultimate manifestation of His majesty, as we see Him crucified for the sins of the world, buried in a borrowed tomb, and then raised three days later as our victorious Savior. His *hour* was not a 60 minute span in time, but the merging of time and eternity when the prophecies from the foundation of the world were fulfilled, and Jesus was granted His position of authority at the right hand of God, to reign as “the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). Yes, the *moment* had come for the glorification of our Lord.

*The Motive*

13:1b

~~ 13:1b ~~

*“having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end”*

The second half of this verse reveals the motive behind the moment.

If there is any time when a man’s attention is presumed to be necessarily and properly directed to himself, that time is the time when danger is present and when death approaches. But when our Savior’s hour was come, when the shadow of the cross fell athwart his path, he seems to have been signally unselfish in all his actions, and disinterested in his very thoughts. Humiliation, suffering,

and death were immediately before him; but it is beautiful, instructive, encouraging to see how warmly his heart beat for his friends, and how anxious he was to use the closing days of his ministry for their spiritual profit (Spence, *Pulpit Commentary*, ESword Module).

Unfolded before us is the constancy of our Lord's love for these disciples. The words "*unto the end*" mean that He loved them unto completion. This is not so much a time reference as it is the degree of love that Christ had for His disciples. It might be better translated, "He loved them to the uttermost." Not only did Jesus love them to the end of His earthly sojourn, but He loved them absolutely, completely, and without reservation.

Far, far more than meets the eye is in the remarkable statement, 'he loved them unto the end.' This is love unparalleled as to its depth, its breadth and its length. It is love to the uttermost limits. This teaches us that divine love differs wholly in nature and extent from that merely human; it is a kind of love that is not affected by the failure of its objects nor is it diminished by the unworthiness of those on whom it is bestowed (Woods, 280).

Take a close look at our Lord's love for these men, and then extend that love in a much broader sense to the love He has for all men. First, His was a love that could not be quenched by evil. Even though He knew there was a traitor in the midst, Jesus continued to love him, and always would. Second, His love went beyond the barriers of social class. Jesus was divine; yet He took upon Himself a form of a servant, left heaven, and came to minister to His inferiors. Third, the love our Lord had was an active love. Here we see Him washing the feet of His disciples, a symbol of that greater act of love when Jesus left the comforts of heaven and came to this earth to "seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Fourth, Jesus' love was a cleansing love. This act of washing the disciples' feet looked forward to that time when He would "wash" them fully by the shedding of His blood.

Countless stories have been told in an effort to communicate the degree of love that Jesus had, and continues to have, for lost humanity. He was willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice. The

following story, whether true or not, might help us realize the extent to which men will go when motivated by love:

By the main warehouses that are right down on the river there is a daily operation that occurs. To keep all the barges able to come in you have to constantly dredge the channel. And when the sand comes up out of the bottom of the river and is dumped on the side it makes wonderful places to play because it creates these huge sand hills and kids love to play on them. There's really nothing more fun than playing on those huge sand hills and there's nothing more dangerous. Because when the sand comes out of the river bottom, it's wet and it creates a crust on the top of the hills. You can get on the top of them and they will collapse and the sand will sink you down inside the hill. Some years ago two brothers didn't come home for dinner and their bikes were found outside the fence where the dredging had been going on. The family began to search frantically as well as other rescuers for the two brothers. They finally found one. He was buried up to his chin in the sand. Because of the pressure of the wet sand and muck around him he was not breathing so they began to dig frantically. When they uncovered him down to his waist he regained consciousness and the family, in hysterics, began to say, "Where's your brother? Where's your Brother? Where's your brother?" And what he said was, "I'm standing on his shoulders."

*"having loved his own"* - In the opening chapter of John's gospel it was stated: "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not" (1:11). His public ministry now behind Him, the Lord turns His attention in the few remaining hours He has upon this earth toward those who could be truly called "his own." Jesus had a deep love for those men who would serve as ambassadors for His kingdom. They were *in the world*, and would remain so after His departure.

*The Master*

13:2-3

~~ 13:2 ~~

*"And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing*



*that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God”*

There are at least two things that beg attention as we give consideration to Jesus, *‘The Master.’* First, consideration should be given to the background of this event as recorded in Matthew 20:20-28 and Luke 22:24-27. Keep in mind that James and John had asked to be given positions of honor above the other disciples. As the events recorded in John 13 transpire it seems evident that the disciples had still not learned the important lesson of humility. As Johnson noted:

It may be that the very act of taking their seats at the table had, once more, stirred up in the minds of the apostles those disputes about precedence which, on previous occasions, our Lord had so tenderly and carefully rebuked. The mere question of a place at the table might seem too infinitesimal and unimportant to ruffle the feelings of good men at an hour so supreme and solemn; but that love for ‘the chief seats at feasts,’ and elsewhere, which Jesus had denounced in the Pharisees, is not only innate in the heart, but is so powerful that it has, at times, caused the most terrific tragedies (Johnson, ESword Module).

Now that He was alone with His disciples, the lesson on humility, and what it meant to be a servant, could be impressed upon their minds in a most unique way. It is appropriate that the last few hours of our Lord’s life upon the earth would be spent with His disciples. The events in this chapter occur during the night before the Lord was arrested, tried, and later convicted the following day. The gathering about the table was one in which the participants reclined, and the table was rather low to the floor. With regard to the occasion of the feast at hand, the similarities between the paschal lamb and Christ as our “Passover” are remarkable. Credit is given to B.W. Johnson for the thoughts here. The paschal lamb is the anti-type of Jesus our Lord in the following ways:

- (1) Each sacrifice was a “lamb,” with Christ being the “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29);

- (2) Each was a “male” of the first year, being in their prime. Jesus was the first born to Mary, and died in His 33<sup>rd</sup> year upon this earth. By any standards the Lord was in the prime of His life.
- (3) Both were without blemish; the lamb physically, and our Savior morally and spiritually;
- (4) Both were “set apart.” The paschal lamb four days before the 10th of Nisan, Jesus on Sunday at the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, four days before His crucifixion;
- (5) The paschal lamb was slain, denoting the death and sufferings of our Lord;
- (6) Both were killed between the two evenings of the Passover;
- (7) As each Israelite was required to have a lamb, so Christ died for all mankind;
- (8) No bone was broken in either one;
- (9) The paschal lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs, denoting our partaking of the Christ with the bitterness (as is oft the case) of repentance;
- (10) The blood of the lamb had to be applied to be effectual. Today we apply the blood of Christ when we are baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3-5);
- (11) The feast looked forward to future deliverance from bondage in Egypt. Even so with Christ as our Lamb who gives us the hope of eternal life with the Father in full expectation of the coming judgment;
- (12) Both the paschal lamb and Jesus Christ our Savior offer the protection from the wrath of God.

*“And during supper”* (13:2) is the better translation over the KJV, *“and after supper.”* I get the impression that Jesus arose near the beginning of the feast, washed the disciples feet, and then sat back down to give His explanation of what, and why, He had performed this lowly task.

*“the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot”* - It is significant that Judas was not always under the influence of Satan. There was some definite point in time when the devil entered his heart. Nor was Judas under some sort of irresistible compulsion to sin. His sin, like that of others, was one of choice. It was covetousness which led him to sin. But why did Jesus not rebuke Judas here? Woods has this explanation: “Even in this

the Lord showed love and kindness. It has been observed that if the Lord had uncovered the wicked scheme of Judas and unmasked him before the rest of the disciples it is not likely that Judas would have left that room unscathed” (Woods, 281).

~~ 13:3 ~~

*“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God”*

This verse is the heart of this particular point in our study. According to this verse Jesus was fully aware that the *“Father had given all things into his hands.”* Additionally, Jesus was aware that He *“came forth from God, and goeth unto God.”* This is why Jesus could teach with full authority (Matt. 7:28-29). He was cognizant of His divine authority. Second, He was aware that He *“came forth from God.”* This particular aspect of our Lord’s nature was revealed in the first chapter as John opened his account of the life of Christ. Finally, Jesus was aware that He *“goeth unto God.”* I cannot help but think that this “going” to the Father was an awareness of more than just His return to the Father. Jesus was aware of what awaited Him as King of kings, and the regal royalty with which He would be crowned.

### *The Message*

13:4-20

We come now to the third, and longest, portion of this section. Jesus was about to turn that upper room into a classroom. In doing so, He would proceed to teach His disciples a lesson in life; a lesson right out of the textbook of God’s divine will. The message would be communicated in two distinctive parts. First, Jesus would give an *example* of the message He wanted to convey. Second, He would then *explain* that message in fuller detail. Thus, by *demonstration* and *declaration*, the Lord would instruct His disciples in a most needed course in “Humility 101.” Consider each of these methods our Lord used as He teaches His disciples.

### *Demonstration of His Humility, 13:4-11*

The *deed* precedes the *discourse*, His *example* before the *explanation*. It would take both to impress upon their minds the lesson Jesus wanted to teach them.

~~ 13:4 ~~

*“riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself”*

*“he riseth from supper”* – Jesus interrupted the Passover meal to demonstrate an important lesson that was sorely needed by the apostles.

*“took a towel, and girded himself”* – The towel girt about the loins in the East was what Morgan calls, “a badge of slavery.” What Jesus was about to do was the task of a lowly slave, *not* that of the guest of honor, and certainly not that of a Master Teacher!

*“and washeth”* – The disciples must have looked on in amazement as the Lord – the majestic, magnificent Jesus – took upon Himself this task of washing the feet of the disciples. The words suggest that Jesus actually took the role of a common servant. Here is a glimpse, a mere microcosm, of the earthly mission of our Lord. Before coming to this earth, our Lord enjoyed the abundant riches of heaven. But He “arose” from that position, laid aside the garments of heavenly splendor, and came to this earth *as a servant* in order to seek and save that which was lost, and “wash” them in His blood. As here, men today must submit to that washing in order to enjoy the benefit of the atoning work of our Lord. What unfolded here made an impression upon Peter, for he would later write of our obligation to gird ourselves with humility (1 Peter 5:5).

~~ 13:5 ~~

*“Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded”*

Sandals were the common footwear during that time. When someone entered the home of a guest, it was the accepted practice for one of the household servants to wash the feet of the guests who were present. It is implied here that no such servant

was available, and none of the disciples, at that point, had volunteered to wash the feet of the other apostles.

The disciples, unwilling to engage in such a menial and lowly task, arranged themselves around the table unwashed. The washing of the feet in that day always occurred on entrance, and never after the guests had assembled and the meal was ready to eat and thus it was obvious that none of the disciples intended to act. When this became apparent, Jesus took the towel, girded himself and began the humble task (Woods, 282-83).

The backdrop which occasioned this remarkable act of service on the part of Jesus was the dispute among the disciples as to who would be the greatest. They had evidently not yet learned the lesson of what constituted greatness as evidenced by their unwillingness to take upon themselves the act of washing the filthy feet of those who had entered into the house. Evidently the ceremony had actually started without the customary foot washing. Paul would later allude to this incident in Philippians 2:5-9 when he wrote of Jesus taking upon himself the form of a servant.

~~ 13:6-7 ~~

*“So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter.”*

*“So he cometh to Simon Peter”* - How many disciples’ feet Jesus may have washed prior to His coming to Peter is not recorded, but when it came time to wash Peter’s feet, Peter would refuse to let the Lord wash his feet. Was it because he was embarrassed for not having washed the Lord’s feet? Perhaps it was because Peter felt that he was unworthy, and that it was he who should be washing the Lord’s feet, and not the other way around. While the exact reason may never be known this side of heaven, the Lord would use the situation as an object lesson for an important lesson to Peter and the others.

*“Lord, dost thou wash my feet?”* - The words “*thou*” and “*my*” are emphatic, and it is likely that Peter drew back his feet in an

attempt to prohibit the Lord from proceeding. To Peter the whole incident was absurd, and quite embarrassing.

*“What I do thou knowest not now”* - These words give some indication that what the Lord was doing, at least in its deeper significance, was not discernable with the eyes. In other words, it was NOT the washing of the feet as some sort of a religious ordinance that Jesus was here instituting, but a deeper, yea much deeper, object lesson that He was seeking to teach His disciples; a lesson so profound, so significant, that the disciples would not immediately perceive it on this occasion.

~~ 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”*

*“Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet”* - Brother Woods points out that “the Greek sentence is a double negative of denial, and the extent of it unto the ages. ‘You shall by no means wash my feet so long as the world stands’” (Woods, 284). This is so typical of Peter. The information provided in the scriptures suggests that Peter was somewhat impulsive with his words and actions. There is a little Peter in each of us. As brother Woods noted, “Peter, with all of his early faults, is truly an admirable person. His heart overflowed with love for Jesus; he could never do enough and though his weaknesses often possessed him, his determination to do right always triumphed” (Woods, 285). What great comfort there is in knowing that God can work with such individuals!

*“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me”* – Notably, the Lord did *not* say, “If I wash not thy feet!” Instead, He said, “If I wash *thee* not.” These words could certainly be applied spiritually. If one is not washed in the precious blood of the Lamb, he has NO PART with the Lord! Jesus was telling Peter, in effect, “If you are not submissive to me, you will not be my disciple.” Coffman agreed: “Here Jesus spoke of washing in a different sense. Unless Peter should be washed of his false pride and ambition, unless he should share in that ultimate cleansing of the soul that would result from Jesus’ sacrifice, thus being truly ‘washed,’ he could have no part with Jesus” (Coffman, 312).

Yes, the literal act was to remove the dirt from the feet of the disciples; but it was also intended to symbolize the lesson of humility and service for all successive generations.

~~ 13:9 ~~

*“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head”*

If any man would come unto the Savior, it must be completely. The washing of the “hands” suggests the cleansing of the life from the defilement of actions, while the washing of the “head” suggests the purifying of the thoughts and intents of the heart. No doubt Peter could not grasp the full import of what our Lord was telling him.

~~ 13:10 ~~

*“Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all”*

*“He that is bathed needeth not to save to wash his feet”* - The words “save, his feet” appear in a number of the early manuscript, but is absent from the Codex Sinaiticus, the Vulgate, and the Greek text known to Origin. Bruce made this observation:

If the phrase be retained (as it most certainly should be), then it suggests that in addition to a once-for-all cleansing (‘bathing’) there is a need for a repeated washing of the feet. In the literal sense this is quite intelligible: a man might have washed all over at the beginning of the day, but if he walked outside he would need to wash his feet on entering the house (Bruce, 282).

Seeing that Jesus was teaching an object lesson, there must have been some spiritual truth the Lord was seeking to convey to the disciples. Johnson also picked up on the spiritual implications of this verse: “He who is once cleansed by the blood of Christ only needs, after this, to come to Christ for partial cleansing; for the forgiveness of the special sins that make him unclean” (Johnson, ESword Module). The intended lesson in this entire incident is to demonstrate that those who are clean in the sight of God are to be servants.

*“and ye are clean, but not all”* - Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him. But the spiritual nature of these words is as applicable. “Not all who enter into his service ostensibly are cleansed. Some do not enter through the ‘Door of entire obedience,’ but are thieves and robbers” (Johnson, ESword Module).

~~ 13:11 ~~

*“For he knew him that should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean”*

*“For he knew him that should betray him.”* - It is sometimes asked, “If Jesus *knew* that Judas would betray Him, then why did He choose Judas to be a part of the twelve?” It seems reasonable to assume that it had something to do with the fact that Judas retained the right to do as he wanted, even after his initial calling and following. It must be remembered that when Judas was first called Judas that Satan had not yet entered into him. And it may be that our Lord’s knowledge of Judas’ ultimate choice was a “self-imposed” limitation that Jesus placed upon Himself during His earthly ministry. Beyond that, I must confess my inability to answer the question.

#### *Declaration of His Humility, 13:12-20*

Having demonstrated the lesson on humility, the Lord now proceeds to deliver a discourse on the deeper meaning of what He had just done. Upon completion of washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus puts on His garments and sits down. He then asks them if they knew what He had done, and points out that they were to “do as I have done to you.” Take a closer look.

~~ 13:12 ~~

*“So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?”*

*“Know ye what I have done to you?”* - The question which Jesus presents to His disciples shows us that, while they knew the ACT, they did not understand the SIGNIFICANCE of the action. The



lesson so needed at this hour was that “genuine greatness is along the road of useful service” (Woods, 287). When Jesus asked this question, He was not soliciting some simplistic answer from the disciples. Of course they *knew* what He had done; He had washed their feet. The question our Lord asks is forceful, and seeks an answer much deeper than the physical act of washing feet. “Do you know what I have really done?” is what He was asking.

~~ 13:13-15 ~~

*“Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.”*

“Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord” - The verb “call” means to address someone with respect.

“Teacher” - The word is rendered “Master” in the KJV. The ASV is more accurate.

“ye also ought to” - The very words suggest an obligation on the part of the disciples to DO as Jesus has done. The question naturally arises as to whether Jesus was pointing to the *action* of washing the feet, or a deeper lesson behind that action. Those who see in these verses nothing more than the literal foot washing intended as some kind of church ordinance have missed the lesson Jesus was trying to teach His disciples. I do not get the impression that Jesus was asking them if they were aware He had washed their feet. Could the disciples look beyond the foot washing to what *motivated* that foot washing? Jesus was saying, “Ye ought to follow the example of humility, self-sacrifice, and service unto others,” regardless of the form that service might take.

“For I have given you an example” – Note carefully that Jesus says He had given them an *example*, not an *ordinance*. Foot washing is mentioned only one more time in the New Testament in 1 Timothy 5:10. There it is listed as one of the works of the worthy widow. That foot washing belongs to the class of works demonstrated by the worthy widow rather than some kind of

church ordinance, is demonstrated by the fact that when we turn to the inspired history of the church as recorded in Acts and in the Epistles, it is silent concerning any such ordinance. Brother Woods was correct when he noted, "There are two ways in which one may follow the example of another; one, in form, the other, in the spirit in which given" (Woods, 288). An example of a church ordinance is the Lord's Supper. We find it immediately upon the establishment of the church, and instructions appearing in a number of the letters concerning the regulation of it and participation therein. No such instructions are given with regard to foot washing.

~~ 13:16 ~~

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, a servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him"*

The key word here is "*greater*," used twice by the Lord. Who was to be the greatest in the kingdom? The one who, like the Master, would be willing to take a towel and stoop in humble service unto another.

To follow the Lord's example the necessary thing is not that he should gird on a towel and go through a form, but that he should drink in the Lord's spirit. Spiritual pride has been one of the greatest perils of the church. The Lord seeks to guard against it (Johnson, ESword Module).

Jesus demonstrated such humility on a number of occasions, not the least of which was His willingness to leave the glories of heaven and come to this earth and take the form of a servant (Philippians 2:5-8).

~~ 13:17 ~~

*"If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them"*

The meaning of this verse is, "If ye understand the meaning of my act, happy are ye if ye exemplify the same spirit in your lives." Of course the deeper truth, and one that finds application in every facet of the Christian life, is that it is not enough to simply hear the truth. In fact it is not even enough to hear and understand the truth. One must hear, believe, and then *do it*.

Jesus affirmed at the beginning of His ministry, “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 who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). See also Matthew 7:24, Luke 6:48, Mark 3:35, and John 9:31.

~~ 13:18 ~~

*“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me”*

We have already seen hints of the treachery of Judas (cf. 6:70-71, 12:4, 13:2). Now Jesus would be more specific.

*“He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me”* - To eat the bread of someone, and then do him harm, manifests an wicked and evil heart that is lacking in both love and compassion. The words “lift up his heel against me” is from the image of a wrestling match in which the opponent tries to trip or cause his opponent to fall. Literally the words mean “has given me a great fall,” or “has taken a cruel advantage of me.”

*“that the scripture may be fulfilled”* - The betrayal by Judas was foretold by the prophets. Peter clearly stated that “the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David, concerning Judas” (Acts 1:16). In Matthew 26:15, and 27:3-10 we see the fulfillment of Zechariah 11:12-13.

All this raises an interesting question. If God knew Judas would betray Jesus, why did the Lord choose him in the first place. Regarding the selection of Judas, Johnson makes these observations:

Why was such a man chosen to be one of the twelve? (1) There was needed among the disciples, as in the Church now, a man of just such talents as Judas possessed; the talent for managing business affairs. (2) Though he probably followed Christ at first from mixed motives, as did the other disciples, he had the opportunity of becoming a good and useful man. (3) It doubtless was included in God’s plan that there should be thus a

standing argument for the truth and honesty of the gospel; for, if any wrong or trickery had been concealed, it would have been revealed by the traitor in self-defense. (4) It is a relief to modern churches to know that God can bless them, and the gospel can succeed, even though some bad men may creep into the fold (Johnson, ESword Module).

Does this mean that Judas was *obligated* to betray the Lord; that his destiny was somehow fixed? Who could believe it? Bruce addressed this point:

This does not mean that Judas in particular was driven to his act of treachery by a decree of fate against which he would have been fruitless to struggle. Even if Jesus' betrayal by one of his intimate companions was foreseen, it was by Judas's personal choice that he, rather than anyone else, eventually filled that role (Bruce, 287).

It should be remembered that the fact that just because God can foresee future events does not impose upon those events that they necessarily must follow any more than a man's knowledge of some past event somehow caused that event to occur.

~~ 13:19 ~~

*"From henceforth I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he"*

*"I tell you before it come to pass"* - One reason for Jesus warning His disciples of Judas' betrayal was to help guard their faith, so that when it DID happen, instead of being a crushing blow to their faith, it might actually increase it. Had the Lord not given them some indication that Judas would betray Him, when Judas did act as he did, then the disciples might have concluded that Jesus could be deceived by one of His very own, and thereby produce some doubt in their mind as to the Lord's deity. As Woods pointed out, "Thus, that which would certainly have weakened their faith actually became an immovable support for it!" (Woods, 291).

*"ye may believe that I am he"* - The pronoun "he" is not present in the Greek, making this verse one in a number of verses

containing the I AM statements of our Lord. The use of these words “associate him with the burning bush of Horeb, when Moses asked the name he should report to the children of Israel of the God who had appointed him as their leader, he was told to say, ‘I am that I am hath sent thee’” (Johnson, ESword Module).

~~ 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”*

To receive the messenger that brings the words of the King is to receive the King Himself. Thus, to receive Jesus is to receive the Father Who sent Him. When men refuse to hear the message proclaimed by God’s faithful teacher and preacher, they in fact are refusing to hear the Lord.

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#### JESUS: THE MAGNIFICENT ONE WHO SERVES

By Tom Wacaster

The fact that Jesus came to serve should not surprise us; nor should it surprise us that our Father in heaven is a serving God, seeing that Jesus is the “effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance” (Heb. 1:3). I doubt that we will ever come to fully appreciate and love our God to the fullest degree possible until we come to see God the Father, and His Son, as servants in the truest sense of the word. Indeed, “The majesty of God is seen in his power, but the deeper majesty of God is seen when God permits himself to be delivered up to the power of man in order to serve man” (McGuiggan, 76). Beloved, if you wish to see Jesus in all His majesty, look at Him as John saw Him: a servant willing to take a towel, gird Himself, and wash the feet of those so far beneath Him that only love could have motivated such an action. But why would He do that? Why would a God, Who has it within His power to forcibly coerce us into submission, stoop to serve? Why would He condescend to mankind? Perhaps the Psalmist entertained the same question when he penned these words:

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The  
moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;  
What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of  
man, that thou visitest him?  
For thou hast made him but little lower than God, And  
crownest him with glory and honor.  
Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy  
hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psa.  
8:3-6).

The answer to the question as to why God is “mindful” of man is revealed in this 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of John; it is demonstrated in that upper room where Jesus met His disciples, and washed their feet. The answer lies in the undeniable fact that God wanted to win the hearts of men, and the pathway to achieving that goal is through service. To put it bluntly, a bold slave is more powerful than a timid king. While it is true that “never a man so spoke,” it is also true that never a man so acted! By taking the role of a servant, Jesus manifested His greatness as a leader. Israelmore Ayivor is credited with the following: “A true leader is a person whose influence inspires people to do what is expected of them to do. You cease to be a leader when you manipulate with your egos instead of convincing by your inspirations.” Beloved, if you have not grasped the vision of this Magnificence of Jesus, you need to go back and read again the first 20 verses of this chapter. I am glad that Jesus picked up that towel. Aren’t you?



## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

### “AND IT WAS NIGHT”

*The departure of Judas, 13:21-30*

The section now before us is filled with foreboding. It begins with a sad note – “When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in the spirit”; it ends with an even sadder note – “and it was night” (verse 30). It is not the physical night that captures our attention, but the spiritual night that engulfed Judas in his avarice and sin. Judas’ departure into the dark night is symbolic of the darkness of his soul. The action of Judas stands in stark contrast to the action of Jesus recorded in the first part of the chapter. There are two points that beg consideration before we actually look at the text itself. The first has to do with whether or not Judas stayed around long enough to partake of the last supper with Jesus and the other disciples. There are varying opinions, but suffice it to say, I think Judas had left that upper room before Jesus ate that meal with the disciples. The preponderance of the evidence in the four gospels points squarely to the fact that he departed prior to the institution of the Lord’s Supper. There is a lot of symbolism in this fact, not the least of which is the fellowship our Lord extended to those who were truly His disciples. Before Jesus could open up His heart and speak more deeply of things that were to unfold over the next 24-36 hours, it was necessary that Judas be excluded. The second point that begs consideration has to do with the role Judas played in the betrayal of Jesus. There are two extremes we must avoid. Some have thought to excuse Judas on the grounds that his actions were predetermined by God, and prophesied in the Old Testament; that somehow Judas was not responsible for his actions. I reject that outright because it robs the man of his free will. The other extreme is that Judas was actually the devil incarnate, or that he took up some form, as was the case when the serpent appeared before Eve in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-4). Luke tells us that “Satan entered into Judas” – not that Judas is Satan (Luke 22:3). According to Luke’s record this occurred sometime before the Passover. John also tells us, in the passage now before us, “after the sop, then entered Satan into him” (John 13:27). I don’t get the impression that Judas was somehow Satan

incarnate, or that he was something other than a mere human being who allowed the temptation of avarice and greed to get the better of him. The omniscience of the Lord can be seen in the fact that Jesus knew in advance that He would be betrayed, and who it was that would betray Him. This section could as easily be titled, "The Dismissal Of The Traitor," since the necessary steps are taken to prompt Judas' dismissal so that Jesus might be with the other men to communicate certain things to them that needed to be said. With these thoughts in mind, let's take a look at the text.

~~ 13:21 ~~

*"When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in the spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me"*

The deep compassion of the Lord, even for a man like Judas, is demonstrated here. The awareness that one of His own company would betray Him explains why "he was troubled in the spirit." I have no doubt that the Lord's countenance revealed that troubled spirit and it must have made a distinct impression upon John. The same words occur in 11:33 and 12:27, and the original "implies indignation mingled with sorrow" (Johnson, ESword Module). Jesus had earlier revealed that He would be betrayed (Matt. 17:22, 20:18), but He saw it necessary now to let the disciples know that the betrayer would arise from within their own ranks. Why Jesus chose to expose Judas at this point in time seems rather obvious. It was to His faithful disciples alone which Jesus wanted to share the words of chapters 14-17.

~~ 13:22 ~~

*"The disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake"*

The statement of Jesus aroused curiosity on the part of the disciples. Such a statement was of profound significance and could easily have caused mistrust within the ranks. It was only natural that the disciples would begin to ask, "Is it I?" (Matt. 26:22). By comparing the other accounts it is evident that Judas must have asked the question as well, probably in an attempt to conceal his wicked intentions. Had he remained silent, the other



disciples would have immediately known that he was the one spoken of by the Lord.

~~ 13:23 ~~

*“There was at the table reclining in Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved”*

*“at the table reclining”* - The customary method for such occasions was to stretch one’s self out on a couch, and use the left arm to support oneself. This would leave the right arm free for use in eating. John would have been reclining next to Jesus, and it would have been easy to simply lean back toward the breast of the Lord and seek the desired information.

The disciple *“whom Jesus loved”* was John. We can draw this conclusion from the following considerations: (1) This “un-named” disciple is mentioned frequently in this gospel (cf. John 1:35, 40; 18:15; 19:27; 21:3, 4, 8; and 21:23). It is difficult to explain why John would repeatedly refer to this un-named disciple unless it was himself to which he referred. (2) Such a writing trait would coincide with the humble character of John. Brother Woods picked up on this:

This is revealing to us in that it not only enables us to have a glimpse into the heart of John but also to see the response which Jesus felt to the disciple. It is significant that Jesus does not love others without discrimination but that his love is prompted by that which he recognized as loveable on the part of those who are the objects of his care (Woods, 293).

*“one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved”* - Were these words recorded in order to suggest that Jesus, in some way, loved John more than the other disciples? I don’t think so. These words actually reveal the grateful heart of the disciple who wrote this biography of the Lord. These words, “whom Jesus loved,” are not so much a description of an exclusive love that Jesus had for John. They are an expression of John’s deep gratitude for the fact that Jesus did, indeed, love him.

~~ 13:24 ~~

*“Simon Peter therefore beckoneth to him, and saith unto him,  
Tell us who it is of whom he speaketh”*

*“Simon Peter beckoneth to him”* - The nearest antecedent is John, not Jesus. Peter was encouraging John to ask Jesus, *“Tell us who it is.”* “Beckoneth” translates a Greek word that means “a nod; a signal.” Peter did not ask John out loud, or with so many words, and it is likely that he expressed the sentiments of the other disciples as well. Peter may have even whispered these words to John.

~~ 13:25 ~

*“He leaning back, as he was, on Jesus’ breast saith unto him,  
Lord, who is it?”*

The details provided by John is another indication that he is the author, and that the gospel was not a second or third generation biography written from second hand information. The writer was an eye witness to the events which occurred here.

*“He leaning back”* - Keep in mind that the disciples were in a reclining position. It would have been easy, therefore, for John to lean his head back and ask Jesus in a low tone, “Who is it?”

~~ 13:26 ~

*“Jesus therefore answereth, He it is, for whom I shall dip the  
sop, and give it him. So when he had dipped the sop, he taketh  
and giveth it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot”*

Jesus’ answer does not seem to have been loud enough for all of the disciples to hear; the Lord was answering John’s request, not broadcasting Judas’ evil intentions. I don’t get the impression that any of the disciples, other than John, heard the words of Jesus. Had the entire group of the disciples known that Judas was about to betray the Lord, Judas may not have escaped without serious injury. As brother Woods noted, “Our Lord’s kindness and compassion are shown at a time when the best of men would have felt it proper to expose the traitor and to castigate him for his crime without mercy” (Woods, 294).

The act of dipping the “sop” was not uncommon at such an occasion.

The act of the giving of a sop must be interpreted by the customs of the East, and of that particular time. In our country, people, at a banquet or a dinner, have the habit, if wine is being drunk, of lifting the glass, and saying, I drink to you. That is exactly what the giving of the sop was at an Eastern meal. It was a sign of friendship (Morgan, ESword Module).

The liquid into which the sop was dipped was some sort of a broth. It was customary for the host to dip a piece of bread in the sauce of bitter herbs and pass it to each person at the table (Ex. 12:8). So there would not have been anything unusual about Judas receiving the sop. The fact that Jesus dipped the bread in the sop and gave it to Judas at that precise moment served as a sign to John.

~~ 13:27 ~~

*“And after the sop, then entered Satan into him. Jesus therefore saith unto him, What thou doest, do quickly”*

*“And after the sop, then entered Satan into him”* – There is a sense of finality in the words recorded here. Morgan picked up on this:

Judas took the sop. He responded to the friendly gesture. Then Satan entered in. How did he get in? Judas let him in. Judas sat there, the nefarious purpose in his heart. He had already made up his mind. When Jesus handed him the sop, He said by the action, The door is still open to come back. Satan was on hand. There does not seem to have been hesitation; but for a moment at least, Judas stood between the friendly gesture of Jesus, and the appeal of Satan to carry out the nefarious business. He yielded. Satan entered. In that moment his doom was sealed. The sop was his last opportunity (Morgan, ESword Module).

John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is describing the end result of a process that had been developing over a period of time. In John

6:70-71 he (Judas) was referred to as “a devil”; a ‘*diabolos*,’ a false accuser. In John 12:6, Jesus calls Judas a thief. In John 13:2 we learn that Satan had “put into the heart of Judas Iscariot” the temptation to betray the Lord. We come now to the present verse wherein we learn that Satan had now entered into Judas. Up to this time he may have had some doubts and impulses to do better, but now he plunges headlong into the darkness and allows Satan to take complete control.

The entering of Satan into Judas at this time indicates an unusually malevolent entry; because Satan had been in Judas before, as for example, when he bargained for the thirty pieces of silver. Therefore, this indicates that Satan took possession of Judas permanently, in consequence of his judicial hardening, a fact suggested, and even demanded, by the fact of Jesus’ command for Judas to act quickly. Until this point, there had been hope for Judas; but, after Satan took him over, his descent into wretchedness and death was swift, dramatic, and irrevocable (Coffman, 318).

The wickedness of Judas was so enormous that the Holy Spirit selected these words to describe the condition of Judas’ heart.

When it became apparent to him that Jesus knew of his duplicity and faithlessness, he felt no compunction of conscience, he made no effort to justify his act nor was there the slightest disposition to turn back from his fatal course. The devil took full possession of his faculties, inflamed his heart further against the Lord and his cause, and spurred him on to pursue his wicked course (Woods, 294).

The implications of this are staggering. Once a man opens his heart to evil, the devil will take full advantage of the opportunity and lead that man ever deeper into sin. By the same token, when a man draws near to God in fullness of faith, God will draw near to him and strengthen his ability to resist temptation.

*Why Did Judas Betray The Lord?* There a number of things that may have contributed to Judas’ wicked deed. Certainly his misconception of the “kingdom” played a part. If he believed that

Jesus' would somehow establish an earthly kingdom, that belief may have caused him to become discouraged when Jesus did not establish an earthly kingdom and thereby overthrow the Roman authorities. Also, Judas must have resented the rebuke that he received from Jesus when he complained about the wasting of the ointment during the supper at Bethany (John 12:3-7). Whatever motivated him to betray the Lord, it was his choice. His covetous heart and inordinate love of money drove him to commit one of the darkest deeds in the annals of history.

*"What thou doest, do quickly"* – Jesus was telling Judas to proceed with his wicked scheme and to quit pretending that he was a true follower of the Lord. Jesus' words had the force of saying, "In view of the fact that you are a traitor and hypocrite, the sooner you leave us the better" (Woods, 295).

~~ 13:28 ~~

*"Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him"*

This supports our conclusion that only John (and perhaps Peter) heard the words of Jesus' regarding the 'sign' as to who would betray Him.

~~ 13:29 ~~

*"For some thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus said unto him, Buy what things we have need of for the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor"*

*"because Judas had the bag"* - This would indicate that Judas served as treasurer among the group of disciples.

*"Buy what things we have need of for the feast"* – Some have concluded that if Judas were actually going out to buy provisions for the feast, then Jesus and His disciples were *not* eating the Passover at that time. It is argued that if Jesus and the disciples were eating the Passover, then it would have been unlawful for Judas to shop for additional provisions on the Sabbath Day. According to Spence (*Pulpit Commentary*), Talmudic authorities are divided as to whether or not the meal they were engaged in was the Passover, or simply a meal that preceded the Passover.

Taking the traditional view that Jesus was crucified on Friday, and that this was Thursday night, it is possible that Judas was going to obtain additional provisions to last through the night. It must also be observed that the reason for Judas' departure, so far as the disciples were concerned, was mere conjecture. John only records what the other disciples *thought* Judas was doing. At the close of this chapter I have provided an examination of whether these things occurred on Wednesday night, or Thursday night. If the supper in the upper room occurred on Wednesday night, then Jesus was crucified on Thursday; if on Thursday night, then He was crucified on Friday.

*“or that he should give something to the poor”* – These words suggest that the beneficent attitude stressed by the Lord during His earthly ministry was adopted by the disciples and put into regular practice.

~~ 13:30 ~~

*“He then having received the sop went out straightway: and it was night”*

*“having received the sop”* – The symbolism in Judas' receiving the 'sop' is significant. John is careful to focus our attention on the 'sop,' perhaps as a representation of the triviality of Judas' reward. As Coffman noted, “It was a mere trifle, a financial sop, a mere handful of change that he received for betraying the Saviour” (Coffman, 319). Men have sold out Jesus for much less, and some for more; but in the final analysis, whatever men take in exchange for their soul is nothing more than a 'sop' when compared to the true riches offered by our Lord.

*“went out straightway”* - Judas realized that his evil intentions were known by the Lord. It would be senseless to pretend loyalty to the Lord any longer, and so he casts aside all hesitation and gives himself wholly to following through on his evil plan. At this point Judas could have repented and begged forgiveness. This he did not do. Instead he allowed Satan to remain in his heart, and casting away all restraints, moved with haste to his intended purpose.

*“He went out”* – These words are also very symbolic, with connotations denoting all that Judas left behind as he left that little band of disciples and the Lord.

Sin always casts the sinner out. The parents of all living sinned and were cast out of Eden; Jacob sinned and lied against his brother and his father’s sightless eyes and went out that night to rest his head upon a stone; Gehazi sinned and lied to Elisha and went out a leper white as snow; the prodigal son sinned and lusted after the wine shops and bright lights of the far country and went out from a loving father to be a swineherd; Peter sinned and denied the Lord and went out into the darkness to weep; Judas sinned and betrayed the Lord and went out to a suicide’s death and eternal infamy. On and on the record of sin repeats the monotonous tale, ‘Out, out, out ...’ Always out! And the present day is no exception. Sin enters men’s hearts, and then they go out: out from the homes of father and mother, out from the love of wife and child, out from the sacred fellowship of the church, out from the Bible school, out from the prayer meetings, out from the study of the word of the Lord, out from the tender devotions of the family, out from every decent and uplifting influence, out from hope and salvation; and, finally, when sin is done with the sinner, it casts him out into eternal darkness and remorse. When sin is permitted to have dominion over a man, his epitaph has already been written, ‘And he went out!’ (Coffman, 320).

*“and it was night”* - These words express more than the fact that it was dark outside. I don’t think it was the Holy Spirit’s intention to simply designate the time of day. It is rather a designation of the condition of Judas’ heart after the light went out in his soul. “The night into which he went was a fitting symbol of the great darkness which now possessed him. Quenched was the last ray of light from his lost soul” (Woods, 295-96).

#### ON WHAT DAY WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED?

Various theories have been developed in an effort to harmonize Matthew 12:40 with other passages that indicate Jesus was

actually in the tomb for slightly less than 40 hours. Matthew 12:40 reads: “for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” I readily admit that arguments for a Thursday crucifixion are appealing, having taken that position for a number of years. The traditional view has long been that Jesus was crucified on Friday, and after careful consideration of the evidence at hand, I am convinced that it is the correct view. Ultimately the position one might take on the matter does not affect his salvation. These are matters that might *intrigue* and *interest* us, but they are not essential to one’s relationship with God. For that we are thankful. With that being said, please consider the following:

First, much of the evidence for a Thursday crucifixion is circumstantial. The proper interpretation of that evidence is often a matter of opinion, and efforts to substantiate any particular point with scripture is often lacking. For example, it is argued that since Judas departed to engage in some kind of business activity or benevolent deed proves that the day in which the disciples met with Jesus in the upper room could not have been the Passover, because the Passover was treated as a “Sabbath Day,” and any business activity would have been strictly prohibited. As we will see later, not *all* activity was prohibited. Additionally, John is careful to point out, “Some thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus said unto him, Buy what things we have need of for the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor” (John 13:29). It was only the other disciples’ *presumption* that Judas was going out to purchase some supplies or see to some benevolent needs of the poor.

Another argument by those who contend for a Thursday crucifixion is seen in the opening words of this chapter: “Now before the feast of the Passover,” etc. The conclusion drawn in defense of the Thursday crucifixion is that this meeting in the upper room simply could not be the Passover if, indeed, those things occurred *before* the Passover. An important point to consider here is, do the words “*before the Passover*” refer to the *day* before the Passover, or those things that would take place in the upper room before they *ate* the Passover? The words indicate the latter, since it clearly says, “before the feast of the Passover.”



It is conceivable that John was referring to the things that Jesus did (washing the disciples feet) *before* they entered into the Passover meal itself.

I will make some comments relative to the arguments used in defense of a Thursday crucifixion as we get to specific passages that still remain in our study. For now I want to turn our attention to a defense of the Friday crucifixion. A proper rebuttal of the Thursday crucifixion involves a comparison of the chronological order of events as they unfold, beginning with John's statement regarding the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. I have already analyzed John 12:1-12 from a chronological viewpoint, and if you have not read that I encourage you to go back and read Chapter Twenty in this book, "The Supper At Bethany." That passage is a strong argument for the Friday crucifixion in and of itself.

I am thankful to Dan Flournoy for providing me with an article written by Michael Scheifler in defense of the traditional Friday crucifixion. In my estimation Scheifler's little treatise is one of the best I have come across, and I have taken the liberty to adapt some of his material here, and condense 25 pages of his material into a concise presentation of some of his stronger arguments. If you desire a copy of his treatise let me know and I'll send you a copy. Or you can obtain it at the following website: [www.aloha.net/~mikesch/pasover.htm](http://www.aloha.net/~mikesch/pasover.htm).

First, Jesus died on the cross at the ninth hour (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:33-37). Reckoning according to Jewish time, this would have been about 3:00 in the afternoon. It would have also been about three hours prior to the beginning of the new Jewish day, seeing that the Jews reckoned time from sunset to sunset, rather than midnight to midnight.

Second, Jesus was buried on the *preparation day* (Luke 23:54, John 19:31, 19:42). This terminology (*'preparation day'*) was used to refer to the day before the Sabbath. The question remains as to which 'Sabbath Day' followed this *preparation day*: the regular Sabbath day, or the first day of unleavened bread, since that day was also considered a Sabbath. Based on Exodus 16:5, Scheifler concludes that the preparation day (*'paraskeue'*),

mentioned in Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54, John 19:14, and 19:42-43 refer exclusively to the sixth day of the week, noting that “the day of preparation” is never used to refer to a day before any of the other special Sabbath occasions, such as the feast of unleavened bread; that the “term *always* means what we call Friday, in both scriptural and non-scriptural usage” (Scheifler). The ISBE supports Scheifler’s conclusion: “It is used as a technical term indicating the day of the preparation for the Sabbath, that is, the evening of Friday” (ISBE, ESword Module). McClintock & Strong are of the opinion that the words ‘*preparation day*’ could also refer to the day that preceded any of the ‘Sabbath occasions,’ including the Passover. So, while this particular point is not conclusive, it by no means forces us to take the position that the crucifixion occurred on Thursday. Scheifler quotes from Josephus to support the view that the ‘*preparation day*’ exclusively referred to the day before the *seventh day sabbath*:

Caesar Augustus, high priest and tribune of the people, ordains thus: Since the nation of the Jews hath been found grateful to the Roman people, not only at this time, but in time past also, and chiefly Hyrcanus the high priest, under my father Caesar the emperor, it seemed good to me and my counselors, according to the sentence and oath of the people of Rome, that the Jews have liberty to make use of their own customs, according to the law of their forefathers, as they made use of them under Hyrcanus the high priest of the Almighty God; and that their sacred money be not touched, but be sent to Jerusalem, and that it be committed to the care of the receivers at Jerusalem; and that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it, after the ninth hour. — Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XVI, Chapter VI.2 (as quoted by Scheifler).

Third, in Leviticus 23:1-7, a distinction is made between the work that could be done on a Sabbath day and the day of the Passover. The emphasis that follows is mine.

And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, The set feasts of Jehovah, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations,

even these are my set feasts. Six days shall work be done: but **on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest**, a holy convocation; ye shall do **no manner of work**: it is a sabbath unto Jehovah in all your dwellings. These are the set feasts of Jehovah, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, is Jehovah's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is **the feast of unleavened bread** unto Jehovah: seven days ye shall eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do **no servile work**.

Servile work is that work done for an employer or as an occupation. Non-servile work was *not permitted* on the *seventh day Sabbath*, but it would have been permitted on the Passover, unless the Passover occurred on the *seventh day Sabbath*. Presumably the burial could have taken place after sunset *if it was the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, but not on a seventh day Sabbath*. This is a strong argument for the day of preparation in the gospels to have been a Friday; the day before the seventh day Sabbath.

Fourth, the following is recorded by Luke regarding the events following the crucifixion and prior to the resurrection: "And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested on the sabbath day *according to the commandment*" (Luke 23:56, emphasis mine, TW). What "commandment" would this refer to, if not the 4<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments? Thus, Jesus was crucified on Friday, laid in the tomb on the day of preparation for the seventh day Sabbath.

Fifth, the argument that Jesus was not actually in the tomb three days and three nights has been addressed by a number of capable scholars. When we try to use literal western thinking, and apply it to the Biblical text, we are failing to interpret the passages in the light of the customs and use of idioms at the time in which the document was written. One of those Hebrew idioms is that a certain portion of a day is often spoken of as a full day. A good example of that can be seen in 1 Kings:

1 Kings 12:5 – “And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.”

1 Kings 12:12 – “So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.”

In order to establish a reasonable time frame I want to include here a number of passages addressing the issue at hand. I have underscored some of the words I want you to pay close attention to:

Mat 16:21 – “From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.”

Mat 17:22-23 – “And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men; and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up. And they were exceeding sorry.”

Mat 20:18-19 – “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify: and the third day he shall be raised up.”

Mark 9:31 – “For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again.”

Mark 10:33-34 – “saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again.”

Luke 9:22 – “saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.”

Luke 18:32-33 – “For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully treated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.”

John 2:19 – “Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

Act 10:38-40 – “even Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – “For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.”

Note: “the third day,” “after three days,” “in three days,” and “on the third day” are different ways of referring to the same span of time. There is no doubt that the “third day” was the very day Jesus was raised from the dead, the first day of the week. Consider two passages:

Luke 24:1-3 – “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.”

Luke 24:21 – “But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Yea and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass.”

A careful analysis of these two passages reveals the following pertinent facts: First, the first day of the week, the day Jesus was raised from the dead, and the “third day” are synonymous. It also shows that Jesus was raised precisely according to His own prophecy.

One more point begs consideration, namely, “Which Sabbath day followed the day of the Lord’s crucifixion?” Those who contend for a Thursday crucifixion maintain that it was the day before the Passover, making both Friday and Saturday two successive Sabbaths; the first being the Sabbath of the Passover, and the second being the regular seventh day Sabbath. Let us see if that holds up under investigation. To do that I want bring in some additional passages (again, I have underscored some words for later reference):

Mark 16:1-3 – “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb when the sun was risen. And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?”

Matthew 27:62 thru 28:1 – “Now on the morrow, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: and the last error will be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a guard: go, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them. Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”

Note again that Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and Salome, arrived at the tomb on the first day of the week. We also learn from the passage in Matthew that the chief priests and

the Pharisees went to Pilate on the “day after the preparation.” Keep in mind that the day of preparation was the day before the *seventh day Sabbath*, as we noted above.

If we ignore the chapter and verse divisions in Matthew 27:62 thru 28:1, and rearrange the punctuation without rearranging the words themselves (keeping in mind that the Greek had no such punctuation marks), then verses 27:66 and 28:1 could read thus: “So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them now late on the sabbath day. As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.” Schiefler makes this observation:

Since Jesus was to rise the third day, the Roman guards were put in place immediately at the end of the Sabbath, because they anticipated the body being stolen by the Jews sometime on Sunday, the third (i.e., the next) day. Had they anticipated the theft on Saturday, then the guard would have been in place by Friday evening, (the preparation day) (Schiefler).

The inescapable conclusion is as follows: Jesus was raised on the first day of the week, the 3<sup>rd</sup> day following His crucifixion; the watch was put in place by the soldiers on the Sabbath, the 2<sup>nd</sup> day; Jesus was crucified and buried on the 1<sup>st</sup> day, Friday. Those who defend a Thursday crucifixion find themselves unable to explain a corollary to the present argument. If Jesus was crucified on Thursday, then using the Biblical means of counting days, Jesus would have been raised on the fourth day. Thursday would have been the first day, Friday the second day, Saturday the third day, ending at evening. Hence, Jesus was raised on the fourth day (if in fact He was crucified on Thursday).

There are some other passages in John yet to be studied that are often used to argue for a Thursday crucifixion. I will address these later as we get to them.







## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

### “LOVE ONE ANOTHER”

The New Commandment, 13:31-38

The final part of this section provides us with a wonderful *discourse* from the Savior. Even in the shadow of the cross our Lord is not concerned with His own wellbeing, but that of the disciples. He seeks to comfort them in their hour of sorrow. There is a close connection between the passage now under investigation, and those dealt with in the previous chapter of our study. Whereas John 13:21-30 gives the account of the exclusion of Judas, these verses (13:31-38) give the account of the comments of Jesus as the *result* of that exclusion. I have selected to address these verses separately because of the sheer beauty of the words spoken by the Lord in this short discourse.

Beginning with verse 31, and running through the end of the sixteenth chapter, we have one long farewell address to His disciples, consisting of three parts: (1) A discussion designed to prepare them for what lay ahead (13:31-14:31), in which Jesus attempted to prepare His followers for the shock of His sudden departure; (2) a discussion on various relationships (15:1-27), in which He explained the new relations which would obtain among them after His departure; and (3) a discussion on revelation (16:1-33), in which He laid down the principles by which they might maintain their connection with Him in the future. Johnson's colorful description of this section is worth including in these notes:

We have entered upon the Holy of Holies of the Gospel history. The farewell discourses of our Lord, extending from chapter 13:31 to 17:26, are unique even in this unique Gospel of John who was nearest the heart of Jesus and best qualified to drink in those words of comfort and instruction before the great sacrifice of the cross. Lang calls them “the most mysterious and most holy of the sayings of Christ, and a spiritual ante-celebration of his own glorification and that of his people in the new celestial life opened up by his prophets, and the farewell address of Paul to the Ephesian elders. Such an evening as the 14th of

Nisan in the year of the crucifixion occurred only once in the world's history; the full meaning of eternity was condensed into a few hours. The last words of our Lord to his eleven disciples combine the deepest emotion with serene repose; they are unutterably solemn, weighty and comforting; they seem to sound directly from heaven, and they lift the reader high above time and space. We have more here than words; we have things, verities, acts of infinite love going out from God and going into the hearts of men (Johnson, ESword).

~~ 13:31 ~~

*“When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him”*

*“When therefore he was gone out”* – Take note of the power of choice which Judas exercised. His was a self-excommunication! God never excludes a man from heaven; the man excludes himself. We often speak of God sending men to hell, but such is inaccurate in view of the free-will of men to choose whether or not they will serve God. As Morgan put it, man chooses, but God “ratifies human decisions” (Morgan, ESword).

After Judas left, there appears to be a complete change of atmosphere. Jesus could now relate to His disciples more fully those things they would need to hear.

*“Now is the Son of man glorified”* - Four times in these two verses reference is made to either God being glorified, or the Son being glorified. These are not four different ways of addressing the same “glory,” but four distinct truths relating to the glory of the Father and the Son.

First, “the Son of man [is] glorified.” Interestingly, this is the last occasion which John records where Jesus uses the title, “the Son of man.” Ten times John makes reference to, or quotes the Lord, with regard this title. The first was in chapter one when Nathanael came to Jesus; this is the last. In the case of Nathanael, Jesus promised that “Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile” (John 1:47) that he would see the “angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” (John 1:51). Now Jesus

uses that same title, “the Son of man,” even as the hour of His death draws ever closer. Now! “Now is the Son of man glorified.” Why now? Why *after* Judas’ expulsion? I think it is because the tension is now gone. Judas has dismissed himself, choosing to give himself over to his own avarice and greed. With Judas gone Jesus could turn His attention to His disciples and provide them with words of comfort and consolation, unencumbered by the presence of a hypocrite and the negative influence he might have on the other disciples. Now Jesus could tell that little group of disciples, “Do not focus on the darkness. Be aware that through all that lies ahead, the Son of man is glorified!” Jesus could show conclusively that His impending suffering and death were still under His control. With the path to the cross now cleared, we come face to face with a truth that we otherwise might miss. The greatest glory in life is that which comes through sacrifice. In any walk of life, genuine glory belongs to those who have sacrificed all; not to those who have survived, but to those who have laid down their life for their fellow man. Lord Binyon is credited with having written the following tribute to those who gave their life for some great cause: “They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.” Barclay draws attention to this very truth with a simple illustration from everyday life: “In medicine it is not the physicians who made a fortune who are remembered; it is those who gave their lives that healing might come to men. It is the simple lesson of history that those who have made the great sacrifices have entered into the great glory” (Barclay, ESword Module).

No wonder Paul could write, “But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto men, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14). Jesus could now enter into His greatest struggle, unhindered by any concern regarding the loyalty of those men who remained. It is a paradox, is it not, that the hour of our Lord’s greatest suffering would be the hour of His ultimate glory.

*“God is glorified in him”* – Here is the second statement of glory: In Jesus, God has been glorified. It was the obedience of Jesus that brought ultimate glory to the Father.

There is only one way for a man to show that he loves and admires and trusts a leader; and that is by obeying him, if need be to the bitter end. The only way in which a child can honour a parent is by obeying him. Jesus gave the supreme honour and the supreme glory to God, because he gave to God the supreme obedience, even to a Cross (William Barclay, Daily Bible Studies, ESword).

~~ 13:32 ~~

*“and God shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall he glorify him”*

There is a different rendering in the KJV, where it reads, “If God be glorified in him.” Vincent (*Vincent’s Word Studies*, ESword) points out that most ancient authorities omit this. The American Standard is, therefore, the superior rendering. That being said, how is it that God glorifies Christ in Himself? I will be the first to admit that this is a puzzling statement. I think it has something to do with God’s great love for Christ; that from within the depths of God’s very being, divine love for the Son, and the expression of that love by the Father on different occasions, God thereby glorifies the Son. Let me put it another way. If God had remained aloof, detached from the life of Jesus during the Lord’s earthly sojourn, there might have remained some question regarding the glory of Christ. If an earthly father brags on his children, does that not glorify them in the eyes of others? The same is true with the Father and the Son. When God thundered, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17), Jesus was glorified in the Father.

*“and straightway shall he glorify him”* – Here is the last of the four *glory* statements. The key word here is “straightway.” It is as if the Lord were saying, “Now shall the very purpose for which I came be realized!” Quoting Hendriksen, Coffman made this observation: “Whenever we think of Christ’s suffering, we never know what to admire most: whether it be the voluntary self-surrender of the Son to such a death for such a people, or the willingness of the Father to give up such a Son to such a death for such a people” (Coffman, 322). God would glorify the Son one

more time – on the cross at Calvary, followed three days later by the Lord's resurrection.

~~ 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 unto you"*

*"Little children"* - The word "children" appears frequently in the New Testament to refer to Christians and suggests several things, not the least of which is the need for teaching and guidance. It is used here as an expression of tenderness and affection. This is the only place in the gospels where it is said Jesus addressed His disciples as "little children." Morgan's comments were very touching:

He had never talked that way before, so far as the records reveal, *teknia*, "Little children." It is a word of infinite tenderness. It is the diminutive plural of the word His mother used to Him when she found Him in the Temple, having lost Him. She called Him "Child," always a word of tenderness, and always a word that recognized peril, and the necessity for care over the little one. The very method of address is suggestive of all that was in His heart at the time. Troubled in the presence of treachery, confident as He moved along the line of a Divine program of victory to glory; and then He looked round to those that were left, and He said, Little ones; I am with you for a little while (Morgan, ESword Module).

The words as used by the Lord must have impressed John, and the apostle incorporated this phrase a number of times in his letters (1 John 2:1, 12, 18, 28).

*"yet a little while I am with you"* – Jesus did not conceal the fact that He would soon be leaving them. There is something very tender and personal in the Lord's final hours with His disciples. Not only do the gospel accounts show that He loved them to the end; it also shows that, as their friend, the thoughts of parting from them no doubt produced extreme sorrow in His heart, as no doubt it did in theirs. As Barnes put it: "A parting scene at death

is always one of tenderness; and it is well when, like this, there is the presence of the Savior to break the agony of the parting pang, and to console us with the words of his grace” (Barnes, ESword).

*“Whither I go, ye cannot come”* - Jesus had told the Jews that where He was going, they could not come. This must have puzzled the disciples, as it did the Jews, but in a different way. Jesus would temper the shock of this news shortly when He promises the coming of the Holy Spirit. Keep in mind that, while Jesus spoke similar words to the Jews, one thing He said to them that He did *not* say to His disciples was, “Ye shall die in your sins.”

~~ 13:34 ~~

*“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”*

*“a new commandment”* - The newness of this command is not in the command itself, for it was contained in the Old Testament. Rather it was the *degree*, “even as I have loved you.” Reynolds addressed this in the Pulpit Commentary:

So new a type of love is given that, as the Greek expositors generally have urged, there is a deeper intensity in the love than can be found in the Mosaic principle, “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” In this commandment, which embraces the whole law, self-love is assumed, and is made the standard for the love of neighbor, based on a new principle, and measured by a higher standard, and even mean more than love of self altogether. Christ’s love to his disciples was self-abandoning, self-sacrificing love (Reynolds, Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module).

Brother Woods suggested another view on this command:

The love which Jesus requires differs from the love the law commanded as the warm, intimate love of closely-knit members of the family differs from the regard and affection we often feel for deeply appreciated neighbors. The phrase, ‘even as I have loved you,’ is sometimes interpreted to mean to the extent that I have loved you,

but this is impossible for fallible human beings. The meaning is, Love one another because I have loved you, and, to the extent possible, in the same way (Woods, 297).

But why this admonition in the midst of such sorrow? Why did our Lord say something about the love they were to have for one another in the context of His impending departure from them? The Lord knew that it would be necessary for His disciples to remain united, and their devotion and love for one another remain intact. Tenny touched on this:

The differences of temperament and the jealousies which He had already witnessed would alienate them from one another unless some powerful cohesive force were found to hold these tendencies in check. A disunited band of disciples would fall as easy prey to their enemies, and would afford a poor instrument for His subsequent plans. Therefore, He issued to them a new commandment: "Love one another; even as I have loved you" (34). This mutual love would be the permanent badge of discipleship, and the foundation of unity among them (Tenny, 211).

If the Lord's church is to be successful in its mission, the same bond of unity, and demonstration of love will be necessary. Rob the church of its love among brethren and you rob it of that one element that makes the church so lovely and appealing.

~~ 13:35 ~~

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

It is the love of Jesus that has taken up residence in the hearts of His disciples that sets them apart from an unloving world. It is precisely this kind of love that amazed the heathen in the first century and ignited a flame that would spread across the Roman empire, a flame expressed in the simple words, "Behold how these Christians love one another." Love of the brethren one toward another did more than amaze the heathen; it also pointed men to the One Who demonstrated such love in His own life, and taught men how to love others in return. That love transformed a world that had no hope - a world that focused on self rather than

others – into a selfless people who, to this day, are more concerned about others than themselves. With such love, missionaries have sacrificed family and homeland to travel to distant lands to preach this gospel of love; to build hospitals, assist refugees, and care for orphans. Where, or when, have atheists ever built a hospital, established orphan homes, or sacrificed life and limb to help others? Brother Woods summed up this kind of love with these soul stirring words:

Love is to be a mark or token by which Christians may be distinguished from people of the world. These distinguishing features do not include manner of dress, nor peculiarity of speech - these distinctions may easily be counterfeited - but by love, the only characteristic of Christians which Satan cannot fabricate! Historians of the early church have often directed attention to the fact that the love Christians exhibited was utterly without parallel in the heathen world. Tertullian's famous statement well illustrates this: 'The heathen are wont to exclaim with wonder, See how these Christians love one another! For they (the heathen) hate one another; and how they are ready to die for one another! for they (the heathen) are more ready to kill one another' (Woods, 298).

*"If ye have love one to another"* - Literally, the Greek means, "If ye keep on having love." If love is the badge of discipleship, then the absence of such love in the life of an individual is one clear mark that he is not a follower of the Lord. John would expand upon this kind of love, and address the implications of the absence of such love in his first letter (1 John 3:13-20).

~~ 13:36 ~~

*"Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered, Whither I go, thou canst not follow now; but thou shalt follow afterwards"*

I have no doubt that the disciples listened to the words of Jesus with utter bewilderment. What would they do? Where would they go? Who would carry on the work? Peter appears to be the first to speak: *"Lord, whither goest thou?"* I find it interesting that Jesus' reply is not really an answer. It appears to be an evaluation of Peter's intention. Jesus plainly tells him, *"Wither I*



*go, thou canst not follow now.*" Jesus knew that Peter was focused on the physical, not the spiritual. Jesus had told His disciples about His death; in fact, He had been telling them for six months. But Peter (and perhaps the other disciples) wanted to know where He would be! When once they grasped the significance of the Lord's impending death, they were anxious to die with Jesus, if for no other reason than to remain with Him. This brings us to the next verse where Peter's impetuous response appears, along with the Lord's unexpected observation.

~~ 13:37 ~~

*"Peter saith unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee even now?  
I will lay down my life for thee"*

Little did Peter realize that before his life was over that the words he was about to speak would come to pass. The courage, and yes even the faith of Peter is notable. I think Peter was sincere, but he was lacking in strength, as we shall see later when Jesus is arrested in the Garden.

~~ 13:38 ~~

*"Jesus answereth, Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice"*

*"Wilt thou....till thou hast denied me thrice"* - Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. That is not surprising, particularly in view of the Lord's omniscience. Peter would falter, and his "vow" to lay down his life for the Lord would prove easily broken.

I'll close this part of our study with a short quote from William Barclay. I will admit that when it comes to 'theology,' William Barclay does not measure up to others who have touched on some of the amazing theological themes contained in the Bible. But when it comes to practical application, Barclay occasionally out does himself. See what you think:

There is something very lovely in the relationship between Jesus and Peter. (i) Jesus knew Peter in all his weakness. He knew his impulsiveness; he knew his instability; he

knew how he had a habit of speaking with his heart before he had thought with his head. He knew well the strength of his loyalty and the weakness of his resolution. Jesus knew Peter as he was. (ii) Jesus knew Peter in all his love. He knew that whatever Peter did he loved him. If we would only understand that often when people hurt us, fail us, wound us, or disappoint us, it is not the real person who is acting. The real person is not the one who wounds us or fails us, but the one who loves us. The basic thing is not his failure, but his love. Jesus knew that about Peter. It would save us many a heartbreak and many a tragic breach if we remembered the basic love and forgave the moment's failure. (iii) Jesus knew, not only what Peter was, but also what he could become. He knew that at the moment Peter could not follow him; but he was sure that the day would come when he, too, would take the same red road to martyrdom. It is the greatness of Jesus that he sees the hero even in the coward; he sees not only what we are, but also what he can make us. He has the love to see what we can be and the power to make us attain it (Barclay, *Daily Bible Studies*, Esword).



## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

### “LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED”

*The Eighth Discourse, 14:1-31*

This discourse actually began in 13:31, but for the purpose of our study we will be examining only the portion of the discourse that appears in 14:1-31. The main body of this discourse is sandwiched between two identical phrases (“Let not your heart be troubled”) appearing in 14:1 and 14:27b. Those six words (in our English) leave the impression that the disciples were anxious. That is not surprising. Things were not going well for that little band of disciples. The Lord had foretold His death, their concept of the kingdom was not materializing, one of their own number was a traitor, and as the last chapter closes, Jesus told Peter, “The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice” (13:38). These disciples needed to be comforted.

As the discourse unfolds, Jesus would be interrupted three more times, either in the form of a question or a statement. The first question appeared in 13:36: “Lord, where are you going?” This would be followed by three more interruptions. The second question is in 14:5: “Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?” The third interruption is in the form of a statement or request, and appears in 14:8: “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” The last question is in 14:22: “Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” John also records the Lord’s answer to each question and/or statement. I won’t say the questions are incidental, for they are not. I will say, however, that the everlasting value of this chapter is in the message of comfort to those whose souls are troubled. I need this chapter. You need this chapter. All of us, at some point in our life, will need the message of this chapter. It has been read at the grave side of departed saints, and the bedside of those stricken with severe disease. This chapter is a beautiful refuge for those struggling with life’s challenges.

Much of how we deal with life depends on our perspective of life itself. How we react to trials will determine whether we will grow

strong or crumble under the pressure. In their darkest hour, these disciples desperately needed something to hold on to. Therein is the value of this chapter, not only for those eleven men in that upper room, but for every child of God regardless of time or place. For a moment, try to put yourself in the shoes of these eleven men. What would you need to hear to get you through the night of despair that was staring these men in the face? I think Jesus was telling them to keep their focus on things eternal rather than things that are temporal. If you are troubled, discouraged, disappointed, or depressed, let me suggest that you listen to what the Lord told these disciples. His instructions to them are as applicable today as they were then.

Textually speaking, the chapter (including the remote and immediate context) can be divided thus: The events in the upper room (13:1-14:31), consisting of (1) the washing of the disciples' feet (13:1-20), (2) the departure of Judas (13:21-30), and (3) the discourse (13:31-14:31). It is challenging to distinguish between the *intended* message, and the *interruptions* by the disciples with their questions and comments. In fact, I found it almost impossible to break the chapter down into some kind of systematic arrangement. I'll walk you through what I perceive to be the give-and-take between the Lord and the disciples. If you will think along the lines of *instruction* and *interruption* it might be helpful. Let's take a closer look.

### *Instruction*

14:1-4

~~ 14:1 ~~

*"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me"*

*"Let not your heart be troubled"* - Our English word does not convey the full depth of anxiety the disciples must have felt at that precise moment. The Greek word is '*tarasso*,' and Thayer tells us the word means "to cause one inward commotion; to take away his calmness of mind, disturb his equanimity; to strike one's spirit with fear and dread" (Thayer, ESword Module). I might say I am "troubled" about a particular social issue, but were I to say I am "terrified," or "filled with anxiety" with regard

to that particular matter, that would be quite different. I think the latter term would come closer to conveying the depth of anxiety that filled the hearts of these eleven men.

For just a moment I want you to turn your attention away from the anxiety of the disciples and focus on the Lord. In so doing you will see something that not only magnifies Jesus at this precise moment, but provides us with a glimpse at His wonderful personality that qualifies Him to guide the disciples through this their darkest hour. The wonderful humility and selfless spirit of our Lord is demonstrated once again in this passage. He was fully aware of the impending betrayal, the mock trial He would experience, the scourging He would endure, and His agony on the cross. Yet with all that awaited Him over the next thirty-six hours, Jesus thinks *not* of Himself, but His disciples, and seeks to comfort them in this most trying moment.

*“your heart”* - The word “heart” is singular in the original, and embraces not only the intellectual part of man, but the emotional as well. There were several factors that, individually, might not have been so overwhelming; but when combined, they created an avalanche of travail and sorrow that would burden even the strongest of men. No doubt the disciples were troubled by the uncertainties which faced them. Their expectations for an earthly kingdom were quickly being dashed, not by the power of Rome, but by the very words of Jesus Himself. Their longings and expectations of a temporal reign of the Messiah on an earthly throne in Jerusalem would never be realized; this they seemed to have finally grasped. One of their number had gone out from them producing some doubt as to whether or not the cohesiveness and loyalty of the others would remain intact. As brother Woods pointed out, “It is indeed impossible for us to fully comprehend the mental distress and agitation of heart which overwhelmed them in that sad hour” (Woods, 301). Yet, even in face of such anxiety, Jesus tells them, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

*“Believe in God, believe also in me”* - The consensus among the sources I consulted is that the words contain a statement of fact followed by an imperative: “Seeing you believe in God, believe also in me!” He was asking them to maintain their faith, even in

the face of overwhelming odds. There was no reason for these men to doubt the Lord at this point. Jesus had never let them down and it was certain He would not do so now, regardless of what the circumstances might suggest. Jesus was calling on them to trust the guidance that He would give them, and that the Holy Spirit would provide later. If they were to survive they must maintain their faith in God and Christ.

If you would “let not your heart be troubled,” *keep your faith in God and Christ*. It is always easy to look on the dark side of things. Negativity is passive. It takes more energy to keep our focus on God than to allow the distractions of the world to bring about fear and anxiety. I read once that when Thomas Edison’s laboratory burned, he arrived at his lab, and made this remark: “There goes all my mistakes!” Let us never forget that God gives the increase. Jesus was telling the disciples, “Keep your focus on the right Person! Believe in God! Believe in Me!” No matter what might come our way let us remember, *there is a God in heaven*. A God Who is always there, always dependable, always able, and always loving us and watching over us. Dear reader, if you are troubled, the *last* thing you want to do is cast off your faith in the Father and Jesus Christ!

~~ 14:2 ~~

*“In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you”*

*“In my Father’s house”* - Keep in mind that Peter had asked, “Where are you going?” Jesus is giving the answer: “I am going to my Father’s house!” Some have suggested that the Father’s house is the church. This is easily refuted when we take into consideration the following facts. (1) When Jesus spoke these words, the Father’s *house*, whatever it was, already existed. But the church was not yet established. (2) Jesus *left the earth* to go to the Father’s house. (3) Since the Lord went to heaven to thus prepare a place for the disciples, the house likewise is in heaven.

*“many mansions”* - The original literally means, “a place to stay” (Bruce, 297). Whether this “place” that our Lord is going to prepare for us consists of individual mansions, or rooms within

the Father's house is inconsequential. The promise made by our Lord is that in heaven there is abundant room for all.

*"I go to prepare a place for you"* – Our heavenly home is in a state of preparation. We may not understand the *how* of that preparation, but we trust in its reality nonetheless. It has been observed, in a figurative way, that each one of us is providing the material for that mansion based upon what we provide by laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21).

It is a comforting thought to know that our Lord is preparing a place for each one of us, to receive us unto Himself when he comes again. If you would "let not your heart be troubled, always remember *there is a place in heaven awaiting the faithful*." It is a *real place*: "If it were not so, I would have told you." It is a *prepared place*: "I go to prepare a place for you." It is a place where God the Father and Jesus His Son abide: "I will receive you unto myself." Take your eyes off heaven and all hope goes with it! I sometimes think how horrible life would be if there were no hope of heaven. It is that hope of heaven that keeps the faithful going. The words of the poet are thought provoking:

*Across the Threshold*

By Floyd Cantwell

Soon shall come the time of parting,  
O how glorious it will be;  
When I step across the threshold  
Of the mansion built for me.

Free from earthly care and sorrow,  
Safe at last in heaven's bourn!  
When I step across the threshold  
On that great triumphant morn.

There to rest in peace forever,  
There eternity to spend,  
When I step across the threshold  
And my journey here shall end.

Needless then all earthly treasures;  
Riches there I'll find untold;

When I step across the threshold  
Of that city paved with gold.

I shall wonder at His mercy,  
At his gracious love and care,  
When I step across the threshold  
To that land so bright and fair.

There I'll hear the angel chorus  
In praising voices blend;  
When I step across the threshold  
Where time shall never end.

And I'll meet departed loved ones  
On yonder golden strand  
When I step across the threshold  
Into the promised land.

But to greet my loving Savior,  
The greatest joy of all,  
When I step across that threshold  
In answer to His call.

~~ 14:3 ~~

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

*“And if I go”* - This is not a statement of uncertainty; it is rather an introduction of a reality regarding the Lord's return. The Lord's departure had been foretold by Jesus Himself, and communicated to His disciples on a number of occasions.

*“I come again”* - This is a clear statement of the Lord's return, described in greater detail in passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. In that passage the apostle Paul seeks to comfort the disciples in much the same way the Lord does here. Of particular interest in Paul's admonition are the words, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15). It might be beneficial to compare the relationship between the “word of the Lord” presented in Paul's epistle to the words of Jesus, recorded here by divine inspiration. No doubt each passage compliments the other, and both provide great comfort to every faithful saint who



has struggled with life's challenges. Yes, Jesus "will come again!" To that end we labor; on that we rest our hope!

*"and will receive you unto myself"* – Robertson tells us that the word literally means, "And I shall take you along" (Robertson, Esword Module).

*"that where I am, there ye may be also"* – Herein is the promise that encourages every saint to remain faithful. Heaven is a real place where God the Father and Jesus Christ dwell. It is a place where each of us long to go, to be united with the Father and the redeemed saints of all ages. Peter tells us that we have an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, *reserved in heaven for you*" (1 Pet. 1:4, emphasis mine, TW). As Coffman noted:

Here in these beautiful words of Jesus lies the secret of the Christian's triumph over every mortal disaster. When things on earth have issued in their superlative worst; when even life itself ebbs and the soul contemplates that ultimate terminus in the grave, then let the worshipper lift his eyes to see the City Foursquare coming down out of heaven from God. Such a refuge only Zion's children know (Coffman, 326).

~~ 14:4 ~~

*"And whither I go, ye know the way"*

In order to further comfort the disciples, Jesus tells them that they know the way. Jesus knew their hearts and minds better than they knew themselves. The Lord sees great potential in these men and is confident they will succeed in carrying out His mission if they will but remain faithful. Jesus implied that they were already aware of the way to eternal life, though they may not, at this point, be fully aware of all that it entailed. The "whither" is the place, the "way" is through obedience to the Father's will.

The message for us is clear: if you would "let not your heart be troubled," be assured that *the way is clearly revealed*. "Ye know the way!" (14:4). God has graciously provided a map – a spiritual

map – that provides us with all the information necessary to get us to heaven. Unfortunately, the majority of mankind never investigate, or if they do so, they allow themselves to be deceived by the false teachers who would lead them astray (Matt. 7:15-20). The word of God is so simple, so clear, so plain, that as one brother was fond of saying, “It take six years in a seminary to mess up the word of God!” It is not a matter of one’s *inability* to know the way but his *unwillingness* to study and learn. Is your heart troubled? Open up God’s word, and *learn the way home!*

*Interruption*  
(14:5-10)

There are actually two interruptions that would occur before the Lord returns to His intended message. To each question and/or comment, the Lord provides an answer or comment.

~~ 14:5 ~~

*“Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest;  
how know we the way?”*

The question is in response to the closing words in verse 4: “Ye know the way.” Thomas’ question actually consists of a statement, followed by a question. Agreeing with Peter, Thomas affirmed, “we know not whither thou goest.” His question - “How know we the way?” - when considered in light of his statement, was more precisely, “How can we know the way if we don’t even know where it is we are going?” Lovingly, and patiently, the Lord will now address Thomas’ question.

~~ 14:6 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life:  
no one cometh unto the Father, but by me”*

Verses six and seven contain some of the most astonishing claims imaginable. If Jesus was not divine, these two verses alone would forever brand Him as an imposter and usurper unworthy of the least of our devotion. Take a closer look.

*“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* - The construction shows that the three nouns, “way, truth, and life” are co-ordinate. Jesus

was saying, “I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life” (the emphasis is mine, TW). He is the *way* for those who are lost, the *truth* for those in ignorance, and the *life* for those who are spiritually dead.

Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou must follow; the truth which thou must believe; the life for which thou must hope. I am the inviolable way; the infallible truth; the never-ending life. I am the straightest way; the sovereign truth; life true, life blessed, life uncreated. If thou remain in my way thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on eternal life (Bruce, 299).

Pay close attention to the pronoun “I.” It is emphatic and has the meaning of, “I (and no other) am the way, the truth, and the life.” Only a divine being could have spoken words like these and not be guilty of blasphemy. Being the “way,” He - and He alone - can show the true path to heaven. Being the truth, He - and He alone - presents the embodiment of what is necessary to impart eternal life.

“*No one cometh to the Father, but by me*” - These words stress the exclusive path that leads to salvation. There is no other way to come unto the Father but through Jesus Christ. If the Lord’s statement seems somewhat exclusive (and to some, even offensive), the student must keep in mind that it is the incarnate Word Who thus speaks. Bruce touched on this:

If God has no avenue of communication with mankind apart from his Word (incarnate or otherwise), mankind has no avenue of approach to God apart from that same Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us in order to supply such an avenue of approach. Jesus’ claim, understood in the light of the prologue to the Gospel is inclusive, not exclusive. All truth is God’s truth, as all life is God’s life; but God’s truth and God’s life are incarnate in Jesus (Bruce, 298-299).

If you would “let not your heart be troubled,” make sure you *walk in the right path*. There is only *one way*, *one truth*, and *one* ultimate

life at the end of that way. Truth is the essential element in this, for without an absolute standard of truth one would never know whether or not he is walking in the right path. Pick up an outdated road map and attempt to make a journey that requires precise directions and you will quickly learn what I'm talking about. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Perhaps some of our Senate investigations of the past have been tempted to ask the same question. More recently we are told that the CEO's of corporate America are being called into question for their business ethics, and it seems as if they have been infected with a case of "I-do-not-recall-itis" [if I may be allowed to coin a new term]. Much of the dishonesty, lying and cover-up that has plagued our nation, especially in politics but not limited thereto, has put a damper on a desire to know the truth and/or the ability of some to tell the truth. It is a fact, however, that truth is truth, and all the lying and cover-up will not change a lie into truth. Political correctness, coupled with a "relativistic" approach to life's moral, ethical, and spiritual issues may be popular in this 21st century, but it has an eroding effect upon the love for truth and the pursuit of the same in the lives of the average man. Are we really surprised to find corporate CEO's who "cook the books" to make the company look good? For eight years during the Clinton presidency we were told that moral integrity has nothing to do with job performance, and the Chief CEO in the political halls of America manifested a complete lack of respect for others while seeking his own self-gratification at the expense of the people whom he had been elected to serve. When called into question for ethical misconduct, he who occupied the White House in Washington D.C. lied under oath, and although reprimanded for perjury, was never punished. The American people, fueled by the liberal media and political spin masters, were convinced that morals have no bearing upon job performance. So why should we be shocked when corporate America simply follows his example? Unfortunately this disrespect for truth has been around since the creation of man. But by the same token, when disrespect for truth infiltrates the very fabric and foundation of a society, self-destruction is not far away. It was noted by one historian that America's greatness was to be found in her churches. While we in no way condone any aspect of error or religious division, we recognize that the spiritual make up of our founding fathers played a large part in God's providential blessings in the

establishment of this nation and its preservation through the years. I wish I could say that only the political and business circles were infected with a large disregard for the truth, but such is not the case. The religious scandals that have rocked "Christendom" in the last twenty five years have opened the door of secrecy so that we are now getting a glimpse into the religious corruption that comes as a result of a lack of love for the truth. From Protestantism to Catholicism, the Roberts, Bakkers, and polluted priesthood of America's religious leaders, it is quite evident that truth has fallen on hard times. Lies are told in the name of religion, the "people" are duped into believing a falsehood, and the truth, once again, suffers. Is it any wonder that some theologians are now declaring that truth is unattainable, and that even if attained, it is constantly changing? The American people, due in part to gullibility and in part to ignorance, have bought the notion that truth is some mystic, far away, unreachable ideology, and have long since ceased the search for truth. We have left it up to the "preachers" to do the searching for us, and we act shocked when these "religious racketeers" take us to the cleaners. Dear reader, only the truth will make you free. Forget the dishonest political leaders, the hypocritical religious leaders, the unethical corporate leaders, and the failure of so many to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and get on with searching out the truth for yourself! Therein is freedom! Therein is the only way to life eternal!

~~ 14:7 ~~

*"If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also:  
from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him"*

Keep in mind that the disciples were asking Jesus where He was going. His answer: "I am going to the Father." Here is, therefore, an immediate application of His answer to that question. It is as if Jesus was telling them, "I am the *way* to the Father, I am the *truth* about the Father, and I am the very *life* offered by the Father." With that bit of information, this verse becomes a little clearer.

*"If ye had known me"* – If the disciples had grasped the true nature of His kingdom and the continual emphasis He had

placed on the spiritual over the material, they would have known the Father's purpose in sending Him. The salvation of the souls of men through Jesus Christ our Lord was the eternal purpose of the Father, and was in the process of being carried out before their very eyes.

*"ye would have known my Father also"* - Had they truly understood Jesus' mission they would have immediately grasped the deeper nature of God and His purpose in saving men. Paul focused on this eternal purpose of God in his letter to the Ephesians:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:8-11).

*"From henceforth"* – God's wonderful scheme of redemption was about to break upon these men. In less than two months, these men would receive the Holy Spirit, be endowed with the power on high, and finally grasp the full meaning of what it means to know Christ and the Father. Jesus speaks in the present tense, not because they were presently aware of the meaning of all that was happening, but because the certainty of it was so absolute that Jesus speaks as if it were already present. The majesty of Jesus to the glory of the Father would come as "the word of prophecy made more sure...as a lamp shining in a dark place" and the "day-star arise" in their hearts (2 Pet. 1:19).

~~ 14:8 ~~

*"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"*

The answer to Thomas' question elicits an immediate response from Philip. Jesus was going away. These men wanted to know where He was going. When they were told Jesus was going to the

Father's house, they naturally desired to know the way. They wanted to go with Jesus, and so Philip declared, "Show us the Father!" As if to say, "Show us the way so that we can see the Father too!" I have no doubt that Philip was thinking in physical concepts. His request to see God was an example of walking by sight rather than by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). He failed to realize that Jesus was not an ambassador *from* God, but rather Immanuel, God *with* us. Philip wanted to see God with the same eyes with which he presently saw Christ. Like the other apostles, his thinking was confined to the concrete and not the abstract; the material rather than the spiritual. So, when asking where Jesus was going, they were thinking of some physical location; some place where they could see God as they were now looking at Christ. Let us be careful, however, lest we conclude that these men now with Christ were *incapable* of deep theological concepts. To say that Philip was puzzled is not the same as saying he was indifferent to it. I think there was more here than simply curiosity. If only God would come down to his level so he could see the Father with physical eyes, *then* he might believe. Tenney observed:

Philip is the representative of the dull but earnest seeker, who desires to know God but who finds that no concept of Him adequately fulfills his desire. It is the New Testament echo of Job's passionate cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find him" in Job 23:3 (Tenny, 217).

In order to answer the question – or rather to respond to Philip's request – the Lord would impress upon Philip's mind the fact that he (Philip and the apostles) had already seen the Father when they looked upon Jesus Himself.

~~ 14:9 ~~

*"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?"*

Jesus was so unified with the Father that to see Him was to see the Father. The character and teaching of Jesus is a clear manifestation of the Godhead, though in bodily form. "As surely as Philip could perceive Jesus with the senses which he

possessed and have the assurance of His actual physical existence, so could he be assured that the Father was real” (Tenney, 217). Philip’s thinking is a demonstration of some longing deep within men to seek God. Unfortunately, man has always had a propensity to desire what he can see with the physical eye over and above what is unseen. It is this longing for some kind of “tangible god” that lies at the root of idolatry. While God cannot be represented by idols of man’s imagination, God can, and has been seen in the incarnate Immanuel.

~~ 14:10 ~~

*“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works.”*

The question to Philip focused on the very core of the Lord’s mission. If Jesus was not as close to the Father as He had intimated throughout His earthly ministry, then His words meant nothing, and He would have been dishonest; perhaps even deceitful. We have already seen numerous instances where Jesus declared His complete and absolute submission to the will of the Father. Jesus reminds them on this occasion, *“the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself.”*

~~ 14:11 ~~

*“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake”*

The “works” to which Jesus refers are, without a doubt, the miracles He performed, and the words that He spoke, all of which attest to His deity and His right to claim, “if you have seen me you have seen the Father.” If they had any doubts whatsoever as to the legitimacy of the Lord’s claims, let them reflect for a moment on the works they had witnessed over the past three and a half years.

*Instruction*  
(14:12-21)



With verse twelve the Lord returns to His instructions to the disciples. I say that for two reasons. First, He picks up the use of the third person plural of ‘you,’ indicating that once again He is speaking to all of the disciples. Second, there is also the use of the double, “Verily, verily,” indicating (as mentioned earlier in our study of Nicodemus), not a new topic, but a continuation and elaboration upon something begun at some earlier point.

Do not lose sight of the basic message: “Let not your heart be troubled.” Returning to that overall theme, the Lord tells them there is comfort in knowing of His power, realizing their possibilities and responsibilities, awaiting the coming *Paraclete*, and leaning on the promises of God.

~~ 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 the Father”*

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you”* – As with other occasions where the Lord uses this phrase, what He is about to say is trustworthy, dependable, and worthy of close and careful consideration. One might as well say, “Truly, truly,” for this is precisely what the words mean.

*“he that believeth on me”* – The pronoun refers to the men gathered with the Lord in that upper room. A basic rule in hermeneutics has to do with keeping a passage in its context. It is unreasonable and presumptuous to take a promise and make a universal application unless there is a compelling reason for doing so.

*“the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do”* - The apostles were the only ones of whom it could be said they did “greater works” than the Lord. The “greater works” refers to the wider opportunities which the disciples had, and their extended work far beyond the limitation of the “house of Israel.” Coffman had this extended remark on this very point:

The very nature of Jesus' appearance on earth required miraculous manifestations of his power; but those miracles, wonderful as they were, had an inherent limitation. Jesus' miracle of the feeding the five thousand was as nothing compared to the feeding of all the populations of earth throughout history through the operation of God's natural laws. Similarly, the miracle of creating Adam and Eve was as nothing compared to the perpetuation of humanity through the ages by means of the natural laws of procreation. Just so, the miracles attending the establishment of the church, or kingdom of heaven, on earth, and even including the miracles wrought by Jesus, are as nothing compared to the salvation of countless millions of men through the operation of God's spiritual laws which were set in motion by Jesus (Coffman, 332-333).

At the time of the Lord's death, He had about five hundred disciples. Following His ascension to the Father, and the proclamation of the gospel on the day of Pentecost, that number began to multiply. In a single day there were 3,000 added to the Lord's church, with multitudes to follow during the life time of the apostles.

~~ 14:13 ~~

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

Behind the Lord's promise is the authority that was given Him by the Father. The purpose of granting those things asked of the disciples is in order that "the Father may be glorified in the Son." "Whatsoever" is obviously limited in its scope. They could not ask for something out of harmony with the will of the Father and expect to receive it.

~~ 14:14 ~~

*"If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do"*

Twice in as many verses we have the words, "ask in my name." To do something in the name of Christ is to do it by His divine authority. Paul affirmed the same thing in Colossians 3:17.

Take another look at verses 12-14. On this occasion Jesus gives His disciples at least three promises. There is the promise for their success: "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 the Father" (14:12). There is a promise of answered prayer: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (14:13). There is the promise of God's providential watch care: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I **do**" (14:14, emphasis mine, TW). If you would "let not your heart be troubled," *meditate on the promises of God*. I can think of no better way to overcome anxiety than to meditate on the promises of our God. Caution must be exercised, however, lest we expect an immediate fulfillment. We must realize that God works according to His timetable. Abraham was given the promise of a son, but he had to endure long, wearisome years before Isaac would be born. David was promised a kingdom and a crown, but he suffered as a poor fugitive, dwelling in caves and hunted like some wild animal, before the throne would be given to him. Paul was assured that none of the lives onboard the ship on the way to Rome would be lost, but the vessel was wrecked. The promises of God are sure; their fulfillment certain. Divine revelation teaches us so, and history has proven God faithful when it comes to the promises He gives. Herbert Lockyer wrote the following in his book, *All The Promises of the Bible*:

The worth and excellency of the promises are enhanced by the evidences that every one of them can be realized. Behind every promise we have the Word and oath of Him who cannot lie, that so by these promises, we have consolation. Christ is made our Surety, not only of all God's promises, which He ratified by His own blood, but of all the promises concerning His blood-washed children. As the truth, He will ever act in harmony with His own nature (Lockyer, 22).

Some years ago I came across this beautiful poem regarding God's promises during time of trial and tribulation:

*What God Has Promised*  
by Annie Johnson Flint

God hath not promised  
Skies always blue  
Flower-strewn pathways  
All our lives through;  
God hath not promised  
Sun without rain  
Joy without sorrow  
Peace without pain.

God hath not promised  
We shall not know  
Toil and temptation,  
Trouble and woe;  
He hath not told us  
We shall not bear  
Many a burden  
Many a care.

God hath not promised  
Smooth roads and wide,  
Swift easy travel  
Needing no guide;  
Never a mountain,  
Rocky and steep,  
Never a river  
Turbid and deep.

But God HATH promised  
Strength for the day,  
Rest for the Labor,  
Light for the way,  
Grace for the trials,  
Help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy,  
Undying love.

~~~~~

~~ 14:15 ~~

*“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments”*

There is more here than a simple statement of a relationship between love and obedience; though that in itself is a truth that many in the religious world seem to have either overlooked or

completely ignored. John would later write, “Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:2-3). When we love Christ as we should, we will have no difficulty in submitting to His will, regardless of what we might think of the command.

If you would “let not your heart be troubled,” *don’t forget to keep God’s commandments*. “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (14:15). After more than forty years of preaching and writing on the subject of baptism, it has become abundantly clear that some simply want to haggle with God in an attempt to get around the simple command of our Lord contained in Mark 16:16. Why some think they can ignore God’s word and still have the peace that passes understanding, is a mystery to me. Peter tells us: “For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:10-11).

~~ 14:16 ~~

*“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever,”*

*“I will pray the Father”* - There are three words in the Greek which are translated with our English word “prayer” or “pray.” One word means “to make request of another,” the second means “to ask,” and the last means “to entreat.” The last word implies the petition of an inferior to a superior, and it is *never* used with regard to Christ’s prayers to the Father. It is the first of these words that Christ uses here. He would “make a request” of the Father.

*“another Comforter”* – Our English word translates ‘*parakletos*,’ and denotes one who is called alongside as a helper or defender. A better word would be ‘*Advocate*.’ “It does not mean ‘sympathizer’ so much as ‘advocate,’ one who is called in to defend against accusation and to represent a client in court or to transact business for him” (Tenny, 220). “*Another*” indicates that the disciples already had a Comforter, Christ, but “another” one would come. The fact that the Holy Spirit is “*another comforter*”

indicates that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are two distinct entities. This shows that the position held by the Oneness Holiness Pentecostals is false. This point is even clearer in the original language. In this verse, the word “another” is translated from ‘*allon*,’ and means “another of the same kind.” Jesus could only say that if He and the coming Comforter were distinct personages. In 1 John 2:1 Jesus is called our ‘*paraklete*,’ but the word is translated ‘*advocate*.’ In fact the passage in 1 John 2:1 is the only other time the word is used outside the gospel of John. The Latin word ‘*advocate*’ is the exact equivalent of the Greek word ‘*paraklete*.’ This promise for “another Comforter” was made here to the disciples. The presence of the Holy Spirit would provide comfort and help in the absence of Jesus. More will be said about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our study of John chapter 16.

*“that he may be with you for ever”*- The Holy Spirit would be with the apostles during their earthly sojourn and mission as ambassadors for Christ.

~~ 14:17 ~~

*“even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you”*

*“the Spirit of truth”* - He is called the ‘spirit of truth’ because it would be His task to provide the revelation of divine truth to the disciples (cf. Acts 5:32, 1 Cor. 2:8-13; Heb. 2:4) The Spirit’s work was that of revealing truth to the disciples.

*“whom the world cannot receive”* - The English word “receive” translates ‘*lambano*,’ and means, “to take with the hand, lay hold of, any person or thing in order to use it; to take up a thing to be carried; to take upon one’s self; to take in order to carry away; without the notion of violence, i.e. to remove, take away” (Thayer). While the world could see and/or lay hold upon the Lord (which they did when they crucified Him), such would not be possible with regard to the Comforter. They would not be able to see Him, touch Him, lay hold on Him, or in any way restrict His activity.

“*ye know him*” - “Ye” is speaking of the apostles. They “know him” in that they recognize His teaching and submit to His influence.

If you would “let not your heart be troubled,” *lean on the Paraclete*. Following the Lord’s departure, these men would need “another comforter.” The same can be said of anyone who might be facing difficulties in their life. Although we do not enjoy the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, or His miraculous presence with us, it is foolish to conclude that the Holy Spirit does not comfort us in our sorrows. He does this through the word.

“And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18).

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

These are just a few of the wonderful passages that promise us comfort through the word of God; the very word that the ‘*Paraclete*’ brought to the apostles.

~~ 14:18 ~~

*“I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you”*

The word “desolate” signifies *orphans*. The same word is used in James 1:27 and is translated “fatherless.” The Lord assures the disciples that they would not be left ‘*orphaned*,’ or abandoned.

If you would “let not your heart be troubled,” *rest on the wonderful assurance that God will never forsake us*. The Hebrews writer stressed this same point: “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself

hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?" (Heb. 13:5-6). I used to think the passage in verse set forth the same truth in two different ways: "I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee." I have now come to realize that there are two distinct promises in that verse. First, when God said, "I will not fail thee," He was telling us of His great power to care for us. Second, when He said, "Neither will I in any wise forsake thee," He was telling us of His *willingness* to care for us. If God were to tell us only of His power, and never indicate His willingness and desire to help us, there would not be much comfort during times of trial. On the other hand, all the promises to care for someone in the absence of the ability to carry through with the promise, would leave one in a constant state of doubt and hopelessness. I'm glad that God is both powerful, and willing, to give us help in time of need.

~~ 14:19 ~~

*"Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also"*

*"a little while"* - The day following these words to the disciples, the Lord was crucified.

*"the world beholdeth me no more"* - Following His resurrection the Lord appeared only to the disciples on various occasions. The 'world' was not granted that opportunity. But even in His appearances to the disciples the Lord's appearances were all in His spiritual body.

~~ 14:20 ~~

*"In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"*

There is a three-fold relationship that is promised to the disciples that would come to them "in that day." The specific day is likely the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them and endowed them with miraculous power, part of which was a



knowledge of those things promised by the Lord while He was with them.

~~ 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 unto him”*

*“hath my commandments”* - This is more than simply possessing the commandments in mind, or on written paper. To have the commandments is to lay them up in one’s heart and to keep them (Psa. 119:10-11).

*“and keepeth them”* – This is more than a mere slavish adherence to a set of rules. It is not some kind of mechanical formality, or some ritual we go through on Sunday morning. The entire gist of the passage, summed up here in the word “keepeth,” is an “intelligent, meaningful and precious conformity to the commandments because of him who imposed them” (Woods, 314).

*“he it is that loveth me”* – The acid test of love for the Master is the attitude one possesses toward the word of Christ. Any claim for love of Jesus, void of full compliance to the will of God, is nothing more than that – a claim; and an empty one at that.

*“and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father”* – The inseparable association of the Father and the Son is here depicted in the love that God has for those who love Jesus and keep His commandments.

### *Interruption* (14:22-24)

The closing words of the previous verse may very well have triggered Judas’ response. The question, along with the Lord’s “answer” to that question, is recorded in verses 22-24.

~~ 14:22 ~~

*“Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”*

*“Judas (not Iscariot)”* - This Judas is distinguished from the Judas who betrayed the Lord, the later having already gone out from the disciples. This Judas was the son of James; he is also called “Thaddaeus, whose surname was Labbaeus” (KJV) in Matthew 10:3.

The question of Judas shows that he did not understand the nature of the Lord’s kingdom. The Jewish belief was that the Messiah would show Himself to the world and rule in some kind of earthly, physical kingdom. This of course the Lord denounced as He stood before Pilate (John 18:36). This dullness of understanding stayed with the disciples until the Holy Spirit descended upon them and gave them full knowledge of all things.

*“Lord, what is come to pass”* – As if to say, “Lord, what needs to happen in order for You to manifest Yourself to us? And how is it that You will manifest Yourself to *us*, and not the world?” The question arises out of the statement the Lord had made in verse 17 and 19. It remained a mystery as to how Jesus could manifest Himself to them, but not the world.

~~ 14:23-24 ~~

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me”*

*“Jesus answered”* – Oh, the patience of our Lord! The Lord would, once again, take the time to address those things troubling the disciples.

*“If a man love me”* – Jesus will only manifest Himself to those who love Him, and keep His word. “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself” (John 7:17). It is only when a man is determined to love God, seek His will, and do His will,

regardless of the cost, that God will manifest Himself unto that man.

*“He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words”* – This is a negative way to express the same sentiments in verse 23. Disobedience arises from the absence of love for the Lord.

*Instructions*  
(14:25-31)

There is a sense of finality in these last seven verses. “These things have I spoken” (vs. 25), “Peace I leave with you” (vs. 27), “Ye heard” (vs. 28), “I go away” (vs. 28), “Now I have told you before it come to pass” (vs. 29), “I will no more speak much with you” (vs. 30), and “Arise, let us go hence” (vs. 31); all of this points to the fact that we are looking at what was intended to be the concluding remarks in this discourse.

~~ 14:25 ~~

*“These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you”*

Notice that the words “these things” stands in contrast to “all things” in the next verse. While Jesus was “yet abiding” with the disciples, the teaching they received was limited, due no doubt to their inability to receive the full truth at that stage in their spiritual development.

~~ 14:26 ~~

*“But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you”*

*“the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit”* - The “Comforter” is identified as the Holy Spirit. We note that (1) the Father would send the Holy Spirit, (2) the Holy Spirit would teach the disciples all things, thus suggesting that a complete revelation would be provided to the disciples, and (3) bring to their remembrance those things spoken by the Lord while He was with them. There are two important points to note: First, it was God’s intention to bring the process of revelation to a close at an early point in the

existence of the church. The fact that these apostles would be guided into all the truth implies that once they had died, divine revelation of the “mystery” would have been completed, if not before. If it is the fact that the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the knowledge of “all things,” as well as a remembrance of those things the Lord taught while He was with the disciples, then there is nothing left. “Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). Second, it is in this promise that the authenticity of the Gospels is grounded. The gospel was revealed by the Holy Spirit, not concocted by human minds. If the gospel is nothing more than the imagination of men then it would be unreliable. I cannot think of a better expression of this truth than that offered by Guy N. Woods as he quotes David Lipscomb:

David Lipscomb, one of the soundest teachers of the word to live since the close of the apostolic age, in commenting on the promise of the Lord to his apostles, penned these words: “He was to teach all things needful to their well-being and to guide them into all truth, and to recall to their remembrance his teaching. Man is forgetful and a divine Monitor is sent to them to call to their memory all things he had taught them. The ground for their reliance on the certainty of the word of God is that the Spirit of God guided them into the truths stated. All departure from the word of God concerning entrance into the church and into Christ come from the idea that the Spirit teaches outside of the word of God. All additions to the church in its order, organization, and work come from the idea that the Spirit dwells in, guides, and directs the church apart from his teaching in and through the word of God. To give up the word of God as the only direction and guidance of the Spirit is to give loose reign to the dreams and imaginations, the reasonings, and philosophies of men as the direction of the Holy Spirit. It is to substitute these for the revelations of God when ‘men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit’ (2 Peter 1:21). No uninspired soul ever learned a spiritual truth save through the words of the Bible.” The words of this learned and saintly man are eminently true. When men affect to be receiving “revelations” in addition to and apart from the word of

God they reveal that they are not only not satisfied with what the Bible teaches they are also unwilling to acknowledge it as the final, complete, and all-sufficient revelation of the will of God for man. They should take heed to its solemn warnings to all who would in any manner add to it, subtract from it or otherwise modify it. When men began to imagine that their hunches, their intuition, and their dreams are leadings of the Holy Spirit, they do not hesitate to renounce the clear, plain teaching of the Spirit through the New Testament in the pursuit of their fantasies, and thus make shipwreck of the faith (Woods, 317).

~~ 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 fearful”*

While this promise certainly applies to the disciples at this precise moment in their lives, it also means that every child of God would have the same kind of peace that accompanies obedience and faithful adherence to the commandments of the Lord.

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you”* - The repetition of the word is emphatic. It is the peace that Christ offers that enables the troubled heart to overcome all doubts and fears. It is unlike anything the world has to offer. It is, as Paul describe, a peace “that passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). Tenney’s comments are noteworthy:

The final gift was peace, defined in terms of Himself, “my peace” (27). Paradoxically, He bequeathed it to the disciples in the very moment when it seemed farthest from Him. Jesus had said a few days before, “Now is my soul troubled” (12:27), and He was yet to experience a fuller agony in Gethsemane, where He “began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled” (Mark 14:33). His peace did not consist in freedom from turmoil and suffering, but in a calm undeviating devotion to the will of God. Like the compass of a ship, which steadily points north no matter how the ship may be rocked in a storm, Jesus’ mind was at

rest because of His trust in the Father. Precisely for this reason He bequeathed a different peace from that of the world which consists of temporary compromise or of heedless complacency. Jesus found tranquility in adherence to the will of God even on the verge of the cross (Tenney, 225).

~~ 14:28 ~~

*“Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I”*

*“I go away”* - Here is yet another reminder that Jesus was about to leave them as previously announced. But His departure would soon turn to joy when He would come to them following His resurrection.

*“ye would have rejoiced”* - Had they fully understood the mission of Jesus and what would follow His ascension back to the Father, they would have truly rejoiced; something they did at Pentecost, never looking back.

*“I go unto the Father”* - Three events that would unfold in the very near future are presented in this verse. First is the Lord’s going away (His death and burial), His coming again (His resurrection), and His going to the Father (His ascension).

*“the Father is greater than I”* - The Lord was *not* saying that He and the Father are of a different *nature*, and therefore God the Father is greater in power or character. The Father is greater than the Son in the sense that the Son submitted to the Father in all things. The entire ministry of Christ declares the Son’s obedient submission. He taught what the Father taught Him, He did the works of the Father, He obeyed the Father’s will, He went where the Father sent, spoke what the Father revealed, and gave Himself to die according to the will of the Father. Only through complete submission to the Father could Jesus magnify the Father; and only by our submission to the words of Christ can we magnify Him in our life.

~~ 14:29 ~~

*“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe”*

Though unable to fully grasp the significance of what was occurring, they would later understand and believe. Jesus felt it necessary to inform them of those things that would unfold. Had He *not* told them in advance of His impending death, then when the events that would transpire did take place, the disciples would have doubted that He was truly divine.

~~ 14:30 ~~

*“I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me”*

*“the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me”* - There was absolutely nothing that the Son and the “prince of the world” had in common. This was proven at the Lord’s temptation (Matthew 4:1-11). The “prince of the world” is Satan; his coming is a reference to the imminent arrest and crucifixion of the Lord.

*“hath nothing in me”* - There was nothing that could serve as justifiable grounds for the arrest, mock trial, and condemnation of the Lord. Bruce provides another explanation:

The ‘ruler of the world’ is about to meet his downfall, as Jesus said a few days earlier. He does not know this; his plan is to overthrow the sent one of God; but there is nothing in Jesus that he can lay hold of so as to gain an advantage over him. The outcome of the impending spiritual conflict will be Jesus’ vindication, as the one whose love for the Father is exhibited in perfect obedience to his will (Bruce, 306).

Jesus was about to traverse the stronghold of Satan: death! In so doing, the Lord proved Himself far more powerful than Satan. In that sense Satan has nothing on the Lord; he has no advantage whatsoever. Jesus was fully aware that death would not, yea could not, take Him captive. He was able to pass through death without fearing the consequences.

~~ 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”*

*“that the world may know”* - The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was a manifestation of His love for the Father. It was Jesus’ willingness to give Himself - to enter into the realm of death itself – that demonstrated His great love for the Father. The depth of love that Jesus had for the Father was foreign to the world; they had no concept of such love.

*“Arise, let us go hence”* - At this point the feast in the upper room draws to a close. The Lord now instructs His disciples to arise from the table, put on their garments, and prepare to leave the room and head for the garden, wherein He would enter into what was perhaps His greatest temptation.

Before I bring this chapter to a close there is one more lesson I want to bring to your attention.” It is not directly stated, but it is there nonetheless. If you would *“let not your heart be troubled,” keep in mind that when Jesus comes again, our efforts to serve our God will all have been worth the effort.* Look again at verses 20-21: “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 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 unto him.” I am fully aware that these words had a very special meaning to the disciples. They would come to a full knowledge and deep appreciation for everything the Lord had promised. They would know, in the fullest sense of the word, that their loyalty to Christ would bring joy and happiness. Can’t the same thing be said of every child of God? Is it not true that when our Lord comes again, “in that day ye shall know” and appreciate the cost we had to pay, however great or small, will have been worth it all? Indeed we will. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (Rom. 8:18).

Be Calm In Thy Soul  
by Tom Wacaster



Bobby Key once wrote the following: “Most of us visualize our days surrounded by a tight circle of problems, annoyances, and responsibilities which are fast closing in upon us. Each day finds us with a dozen problems to solve, a dozen appointments to keep, and a dozen decisions to make. This is not a true picture of our lives. No matter how busy our days or how crowded our schedule, we live our lives one moment at a time. We solve our problems one at a time. Our appointments are kept one at a time. It is only when we view them all at one time that we feel emotionally drained” (Bobby Key, *Four State Gospel News*, 6-93, page 2). I can relate to that, can’t you? Most of us, at one time or another, have found ourselves pressed from various sides, our schedules full, and our days literally crammed with so much activity that we scarcely have time to turn around. As hard as we try to avoid it, we find ourselves anxious about a number of things, and peace of mind and heart allude us. Or, as one author put it:

I have joined the new ‘Don’t Worry’ Club  
And now I hold my breath!  
I’m so afraid that I will worry,  
That I’m worried almost to death!

We long for escape from our anxieties, do we not? We long for calmness of soul, heart and mind. There are some who seem to radiate serenity. Their lives manifest an attitude which we all long to possess. It seems like they seldom have any problems at all, and when they do face an occasional crisis, it flows past them like water off a duck’s back. Well, at least that is what it looks like from our perspective. But sometimes appearances can be deceiving. Asaph tells us (Psalms 73) that even the wicked may appear to possess peace of mind. “When I saw the prosperity of the wicked...there are no bands in their death...they are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men....Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish” (Psa. 73:3-7).

Then, there are those who fit the profile described by another Psalmist: “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to

and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end" (Psalms 107:26-27). I have come across individuals who are so "tied up in knots" that they make me nervous just to be around them. We used to call such folks "worry warts"; though I admit I do not know where the term comes from. Worry is what Mac Layton calls "sadness with pessimism." Layton then makes this observation:

It is thinking that things will persist and not get better. It is rooted in a behavioral choice that says the world is bad, defeat is certain, and the future is hopeless. Anxiety borrows trouble; depression withdraws; it constantly maximizes the bad and minimizes the good (original source not known).

Some years ago I came across a Peanuts Cartoon. Lucy, the eternal optimist, told Charlie Brown, "I have a cure for anything for just one nickel." Charlie Brown, the eternal pessimist says, "Do you mean you can cure deep down, black bottom of the well, no hope in the world loneliness?" And Lucy replies, "For one nickel!"

Does Charlie Brown's diagnosis describe you? Fortunately we don't have to endure such negativity! Since Jesus told the disciples that worry is actually a by-product of a lack of faith, it seems obvious that anxiety is a consequence of poor choices and negative thinking.

Now let's flip the proverbial coin to the other side. Do you long for the peace that passes all understanding? It is a fact that our God promised us peace, such that the world has never known, nor will it ever know. In fact, the whole of God's word points to a life that is "life indeed." Some years ago I filed the following comment away for later use: "The lake must be calm if the heavens are to be reflected on its surface." Our purpose in this life is to "reflect" the glory of Christ (cf. Matthew 5:16, 2 Corinthians 3:18). If we are not letting the image of our Lord shine in our lives, perhaps there is a need for a calming of the troubled soul within. With these thoughts before us, let me suggest the following:

First, begin every morning with some quiet time with the Lord and His word. I try to arrive at the office early enough to spend some time reading from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. I look for something in those passages that might help me to have a better day; to help me face the temptations that might come my way.

Second, follow the Biblical admonition to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). When things go sour at work, or during the early morning traffic rush, pause for a word with God. It does not have to be long; only earnest; and you don’t have to close your eyes or prostrate yourself to be heard. In fact, if you are driving I would hope you would not attempt to do either; it might only tend to increase your worries!

Third, cut down on your television, video games, and browsing the internet. You might also try cutting back on the nightly news and the daily talk radio programs. I am not suggesting that any of these things are bad; they just tend to turn your thinking to things negative and pessimistic. Instead, take time to fill your mind with things that are “pure, lovely, of good report” (Philippians 4:8). There is entirely too much pessimism and “crisis” level information that comes through the public media.

Fourth, count your blessings. After spending some 18 months in South Africa, and working for the same amount of time traveling back and forth to Ukraine, I can assure you that we are a blessed people, materially speaking. After more than a decade of traveling to Ethiopia, India, Nepal and Russia, my conclusion has only been strengthened. Putting that aside, most of us would admit that beyond the physical, we have eternal “riches” in Christ. The physical things with which we surround ourselves are nothing compared to those spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. Brethren, the child of God is on his way to heaven. Let us rejoice in that truth, and allow it to calm our minds and our hearts in the here and now. The calm serenity that characterizes the child of God actually goes a long way in magnifying our Lord, does it not? Even more, the fact that Jesus could promise, and then provide, such peace and serenity speaks volumes about the One Who said, “Let not your heart be troubled!” Let me close with the words of the Psalmist. “Then they cry unto the Lord in

their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distress. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still” (Psalms 107:28-29).



## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

### “I AM THE TRUE VINE”

*The Allegory Of The True Vine 15:1-11*

The cross now casts its shadow over the late evening hours. Within 12 hours our Lord would be crucified. There is no doubt the Lord was fully aware of what awaited Him as the night begins to unfold. Yet He continues to reach out to comfort the disciples in their distress and uncertainty.

The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters contain the final discourse of our Lord. There are four distinct parts in this discourse that are woven together so as to provide a beautiful cloak of comfort for the disciples in this their greatest hour of need; three of these are in chapter fifteen, one in chapter sixteen. I will treat each of these separately. The first part of chapter fifteen centers upon the allegory of the vine and the branches (15:1-11). Apart from Jesus, the disciples would not, could not, bear fruit that would glorify the Father. But by abiding in Him their “joy may be made full” (15:11b). The second part of chapter fifteen focuses our attention upon the disciples’ relationship with one another. Echoing the words spoken earlier in 13:34-35, Jesus reminds them of the need to keep His commandments and “love one another” (15:17), summed up in the beautiful words, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (15:13). Just as the Lord was about to lay down His life for them, they would demonstrate their love and friendship to the Lord by following in His footsteps. The third part of chapter fifteen will focus on the relationship of the believer to the world (15:18-27). The “servant is not greater than his lord” (15:20), and the disciples should expect to receive the same kind of treatment He has received. The hatred from the world would run deep, and the persecution would be severe.

Let’s turn our attention now to the beautiful allegory from the lips of our Lord (15:1-11). There is some question as to exactly where the words of this chapter were spoken. There are three possibilities. First, this allegory on the true vine was spoken in the upper room just prior to their departure. There may have

been a pause as they stood by the door. The mood would have been somber, to say the least. Jesus had comforted the disciples; now He needed to say something to prepare them for what lay ahead. John does not give us any indication as to any movement into the streets, other than the closing words of chapter fourteen: "Arise, let us go hence" (14:31). So we are left to wonder how much time passed between the command and their actually having gone forth.

It is also possible that Jesus spoke these words as He and the disciples passed through the Temple area. Jesus often worked with portrayals from everyday life to teach a lesson. The parable of the sower, the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son are just a few examples of this. Throughout the Old Testament Israel is portrayed as a vine or vineyard of God. The house of Israel is portrayed as a vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. In Jeremiah 2:21 God said, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate branches of a foreign vine unto me?" Ezekiel likens Israel to the vine in Ezekiel 15:1-8 and 19:10-14. God calls Israel a "luxuriant vine" in Hosea 10:1. The Psalmist, in looking back on Israel's deliverance from Egyptian captivity, wrote: "Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt: Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it" (Psa. 80:8). Barclay tells us that the vine had actually become a symbol of the nation of Israel, and that the emblem appeared on the coins of the Maccabees. That same symbol appeared on the front of the Holy Place. Jesus may have paused at some point, pointed to the emblem of the vine, and spoke to His disciples.

A third possibility, and the only one that remains, is that Jesus spoke these words as they made their way along the road that leads to the garden of Gethsemane; perhaps upon their arrival at the garden itself. Hastings provided this beautiful picturesque description of what this might have been like:

The discourse which follows might very fitly have been spoken on the road to Gethsemane. It is almost a mile's walk from the house of the Last Supper – down the stair street, past the fountain of Siloam, out of the water gate, turning to the left up the valley of the Kidron, past the priestly tombs, under the great mass of the temple – to the

Garden of Gethsemane. They walked between gardens, where just at that time, according to custom, the vines were being trimmed, the cuttings from which had been thrown into the street to wither. You have in the account of Jesus' discourse on the way one of those unconscious eye-witness pictures of the surroundings; how, as they walked down that street, they trod on these withering vine branches, and saw the vine stocks from which they had been cut. It was this which suggested, and from which Jesus took, the striking and vivid figures for the parable of the vine (Hastings, 2).

The imagery of that journey from the upper room to the garden could not help but impress the minds of the disciples, and provide an excellent backdrop for what Jesus was about to tell them. It is not, however, the *place* where the discourse was delivered that is important; it is, rather, the abiding *principles* that magnify our Lord in the eyes of those who would read this gospel of John. The sheer beauty of this chapter compels us to stop and linger, drinking deeply from the words of Jesus; almost smelling the aroma of the freshly cut branches and clusters of grapes as we, with the eye of faith, journey along that road from the upper room to the garden.

The primary focus of this allegory has to do with the relationship of Jesus to the disciples. I see two distinct movements. First, there is the allegory itself, intertwined with the application, 15:1-6. This is followed by the blessings we have in Christ if we abide in Him, 15:7-11. We will take these up one at a time.

*The Vine and the Branches*

15:1-6

~~ 15:1 ~~

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman"*

*"I am the true vine"* – The Gospel of John is rich in allegories used by our Lord, and this chapter is no exception. The "I am" is a pronoun of the first person. Jesus frequently used these words, not merely as *representative* of something, but rather to describe His real nature. By using the various emblems of Himself (i.e. "I

am the bread of life,” “I am the way, the truth and the life,” “I am the light of the world,” et al), He expresses His absolute essentiality to those who seek life with the Father. It is a claim that no other human being has dared make. It is one thing to boldly claim the truth of one’s *message*, but when that same person declares himself to be the exclusive path to the Father, and to eternal life, it borders on lunacy; unless, of course, that person be Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

A German emperor was discussing this text with an unbelieving professor. He asked him if he, or any professor of his acquaintance, had ever affirmed to their students, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” He answered, “No.” The professor was asked if he expected any further professor to make the claim. He, again, responded, “No.” The emperor replied, “Since never has a master spoken nor can he speak as Christ has spoken, I believe not only that Christ was a real man, but also God”

*“the true vine”* – Let’s concentrate on the word: *“true.”* The Greek word is *‘alethinós.’* It describes something that is true, real, genuine; as opposed to that which is false, or counterfeit. I find it interesting that the symbol of Israel as a vine and/or vineyard is never used in the Old Testament apart from the idea of degeneration. Look at the references I provided above and see if that is not the case. What was Jesus saying when He declared, “I am the true vine”? It is as if He were telling His disciples, “The nation of Israel is not the true vine; and if someone thinks they are part of God’s vineyard just because they are a part of physical Israel, they are mistaken. The nation is degenerate; but I am the true vine.

As the vine, Jesus is the source of nourishment, and the only means for bearing fruit to the glory of the Father. Various allegories had been used by the Lord to impress upon His disciples the truth as to Who and What He was/is. And while He said He was the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the true Light, etc., it is the fact that He is the true vine that expresses the close and life-giving relationship that exists between Himself and His disciples. The Good Shepherd cares for the sheep, but the vine imparts its life to the branches.



*“and my Father is the husbandman”* – The *‘husbandman’* is the vine dresser; but the word could also refer to a tiller of the ground. Here the word is used to describe the Father as the One Who has the care of the vineyard. God appointed the Son to be the source of blessing to man, and the relationship of the “vine” to the “husbandman” suggests the submission of the Son to the Father. The Father is the husbandman, not simply a hired laborer or steward. As husbandman, the Father can, and will, reject and destroy the degenerate vine – Israel – while at the same time nourish, prune, and care for the vine and the branches attached to the true vine – *i.e.*, the Christians. I see a hint of God’s divine providence in all of this.

~~ 15:2 ~~

*“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away:  
and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may  
bear more fruit”*

The imagery continues. The words are rich in meaning; the implications quite significant.

*“Every branch in me”* – “Every” emphasizes totality as well as individuality. There are no “branches” outside of Christ. The word “in” translates a Greek word that denotes a fixed position; and that fixed position is in Christ. The “branch” cannot refer to the multitudinous denominations. It is, rather, the individual “man” (15:6), and includes all of the boughs, shoots, sprouts, and even full grown branches that shoot out from the parent stalk. The implications of these four words in our English are significant. Barnes summed it up quite well:

It is a union formed by believing on him; resulting from our feeling our dependence on him and our need of him; from embracing him as our Saviour, Redeemer, and Friend. We become united to him in all our interests, and have common feelings, common desires, and a common destiny with him. We seek the same objects, are willing to encounter the same trials, contempt, persecution, and want, and are desirous that his God shall be ours, and his eternal abode ours. It is a union of friendship, of love, and of dependence; a union of weakness with strength; of

imperfection with perfection; of a dying nature with a living Saviour; of a lost sinner with an unchanging Friend and Redeemer. It is the most tender and interesting of all relations (Barnes, ESword Module).

Repeat those four words, “every branch in me,” in your own mind and see if you don’t agree with Barnes.

*“beareth not fruit”* – The evidence of a healthy plant is whether or not it bears fruit (assuming of course that it is a fruit bearing plant of some kind). In this scenario, what should have been borne was fruit, but the final result is negated, thus “beareth not fruit.” Jesus first described a branch that did *not* bear fruit, and the ultimate end of that branch.

*“he taketh it away”* – The idea of the word is “to bear away what has been raised, carry off; to move from its place; to take off or away what is attached to anything.” Here the idea is that of removing it from the vine, or cutting it off in order to cast it away. Exactly how this is accomplished is not said. Church discipline would certainly play a vital role in this process. While church discipline certainly is included, the idea seems to be that the dead branches are taken away from fellowship with God and Christ. This verse presents a theological problem to those who teach the impossibility of apostasy. It should be noted that at some point these branches were “in the vine,” and were attached to it. The words of Jesus stand in stark contrast to those who say apostate “Christians” were never really saved. Demas is one example of a disciple that was once faithful, but became unfaithful, having loved this present world (2 Tim. 4:10). Consider also Galatians 5:4, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace.”

*“and every branch that beareth fruit”* – Turning our attention away from the fruitless branch, Jesus focuses on the branch that *does* bear fruit.

*“he cleanseth it”* – Our English word “prune” would be a better word; “to prune trees and vines from useless shoots” (Thayer). The Father (husbandman) prunes and dresses the branches in order that they become more healthy and fruitful. He purifies

and cleanses all who become branches in the true Vine in order that they might become fruitful. So, not only does the Father *cut off* the dead branches, He also *gives careful attention* to the branches that show signs of life and fruit bearing. William Barclay had this relative observation:

The vine was grown all over Palestine as it still is. It is a plant which needs a great deal of attention if the best fruit is to be got out of it. It is grown commonly on terraces. The ground has to be perfectly clean. It is sometimes trained on trellises; it is sometimes allowed to creep over the ground upheld by low forked sticks; it sometimes even grows round the doors of the cottages; but wherever it grows careful preparation of the soil is essential. It grows luxuriantly and drastic pruning is necessary. So luxuriant is it that the slips are set in the ground at least twelve feet apart, for it will creep over the ground at speed. A young vine is not allowed to fruit for the first three years and each year is cut drastically back to develop and conserve its life and energy. When mature, it is pruned in December and January. It bears two kinds of branches, one that bears fruit and one that does not; and the branches that do not bear fruit are drastically pruned back, so that they will drain away none of the plant's strength. The vine can not produce the crop of which it is capable without drastic pruning--and Jesus knew that (Barclay, ESword Module).

While the branches that did *not* bear fruit were “cut away,” those branches that *did* bear fruit were carefully pruned so as to cut away the dead shoots and allow the branch to bear more fruit. The fruit the Christian bears consists of the good works that go with faithful service to the Father, including the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), the Christian ‘virtues’ (2 Pet. 1:5-8), and the wide range of works that make faith alive and active (Jas. 2:14-26).

*“that it may bear more fruit”* – The word “more” is quantitative, and means more in quantity.

~~ 15:3 ~~

*“Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you”*

*“Already ye are clean”* – The word “ye” is plural; all of them, collectively. At that point they were clean. Judas had been exposed and expelled, leaving the group of the apostles cleansed and ready to go forth. Jesus was telling them that He had already pruned the branches (the faithful disciples who had been, and were being tried and tested), and had cut off the dead branch (Judas).

*“because of the word I have spoken unto you”* - The idea is that this “cleansing” had come about as a consequence of something said; some word of communication. The message that Jesus had given the disciples during His time with them served to solidify their allegiance to Him. It had also driven away those who “walked no more with him” (John 6:66). The word of God is the instrument appointed by God for the cleansing of the soul. The Word tells the alien sinner what to do to be cleansed and it tells the sanctified child of God what to do to stay saved (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

*“which I have spoken unto you”* - This is an utterance of a voice; a word spoken.

~~ 15:4 ~~

*“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me”*

*“Abide in me”* – This is more than a simple, friendly acquaintance with the Lord. The word means “to remain, to tarry, not to depart, to continue to be present” (Thayer, ESword Module). The “location” where they were to abide was “in” Christ. It is, of course, a spiritual abiding, and has the idea of remaining faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

*“and I in you”* - In order for Christ to abide “in” them it was essential that they allow the word of Christ to influence their behavior. Brother Woods made a significant observation:

Tempted though we may be to understand the words, ‘Abide in me, and I in you,’ as saying, in effect, ‘Abide in me and, in consequence, I will abide in you,’ such is not its meaning; the statement is not a command and a promise but a two-fold command: ‘Abide in me; see to it also that I abide in you,’ a relation attainable only through imbibing his spirit and living wholly by his word. Without this, despite any profession of discipleship one is only a fruitless and dead branch (Woods, 323).

*“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself”* – A disciple of Christ cannot bear fruit separated from Christ any more than a branch can separate itself from the vine and still expect to be fruitful.

*“except it abide in the vine”* – The word “except” means, “if not; unless.” The idea is “if and only if, it abide in the vine.” The application immediately follows.

*“so neither can ye, except ye abide in me”* - Like a branch that cannot bear fruit separate from the vine, so neither could the disciples bear fruit separate and apart from Christ. By itself, without the strength from Christ, they could not bear the fruit necessary to fulfill their mission. Although these words were spoken to the apostles, there is no doubt that they have a universal application, regardless of time or circumstances. Coffman picked up on the bearing this verse has upon our salvation in Christ.

Standing at both ends of this verse is, in short, the plan of human redemption. All depends upon one’s being “in Christ,” and abiding “in him” until probation has ended. Jesus did not here elaborate the means by which one is brought into such a sacred relationship with himself; but the New Testament leaves no doubt of how this comes about. Men are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27), nor is any other means of entry into Christ disclosed in the sacred Scriptures (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 15:5 ~~

*“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing”*

Repetition is an effective tool of learning. Jesus was the Master Teacher, and His oft repeated words, even in the same setting, are never wasted, never futile, and never without merit. The Lord did not want the disciples (or us for that matter) to miss the point.

*“I am the vine, ye are the branches”* – It is not the other way around. Jesus is not dependent on us; we are dependent on Him.

*“He that abideth in me, and I in him”* – Literally, “he that keeps on abiding in me, and I keep abiding in him.” As previously noted, the obligation rests upon us to (1) abide in Him, and (2) do the things necessary to keep Him abiding in our heart.

*“the same beareth much fruit”* – The saint that maintains a close relationship with the Lord – that abides in Christ – will not just bear fruit; he will bear *much* fruit. Sometimes that fruit bearing seems slow, and we get discouraged by the speed with which we see results. We are promised, however, that faithful abiding in Christ will produce abundant fruit in our life. The Psalmist made the same observation regarding the “blessed man”: “And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa. 1:3).

*“for apart from me ye can do nothing”* - What is the extent of the “nothing”? Was Jesus saying that they must abide in Him to exercise self-control? To show love? To have patience and longsuffering? Do not atheists demonstrate self-control from time to time? Who would argue that non-Christians are incapable of demonstrating love in their life? What kind of ‘fruit’ is it that a person cannot bear when separated from Christ? Jump ahead to verse eight and notice an identifying mark of the fruit under consideration. It is fruit that will “*glorify God*.” The only way to bear fruit that will *glorify God* is to remain attached to the Vine.

The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5-8) are the natural result of one who abides in Christ. It is not a miraculous, direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but the fruit that is produced by the word dwelling in us. Regarding this fruit bearing, brethren are sometimes anxious that they are not bearing enough fruit; that they are not “doing enough” to please God. The point to be emphasized in this regard is to take another look at the illustration Jesus is using here. A vine naturally produces fruit; that is what it does. Perhaps we should just get on with living the Christian life and not worry about the fruit. If we remain faithful to Christ, *i.e.* stay attached to the vine, we will bear fruit. As Hastings observed:

Marcus Aurelius describes the truly good man as one who “does not even know what he has done, but is like a vine which has produced grapes, and seeks for nothing more after it has once produced its proper fruit.” Like the bee when it has made the honey, so when he has done a good act he does not call for others to come and see, but goes on to another act, as a vine goes on to produce again the grapes in season (Hastings, 95).

~~ 15:6 ~~

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

The application continues; the difference being that Jesus flips the coin over to the other side and looks at the branch that does *not* remain attached to the Vine.

*“If a man abide not in me”* – The branches are not the various religious Protestant denominations. Jesus plainly says, “If a man abide not in men.” When Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and other pioneers of the restoration movement had launched their plea for a return to New Testament Christianity, they faced fierce opposition from the denominations. This particular passage was used by the denominations to justify their very existence. They would compare the church to a great tree with its many branches, and argue that the tree is the universal church, and the branches are the different denominations. Upon careful

examination of this passage it becomes clear that their analogy creates a religious monstrosity that is nothing like what we read about in the New Testament.

It is evident that Jesus was not making reference to the church for a number of reasons. First, Jesus plainly says, “If a man abide not in me.” Jesus is speaking of individuals; not denominational bodies. Second, His words are addressed to these eleven men. There is not the slightest indication that Jesus said anything about the church, much less the various denominations created by the fertile imagination of men. Third, the church was not even in existence at the time these words were being spoken, and would not come into existence for several more weeks. Fourth, if the branches are the various denominations, then it follows that the church was a branchless, fruitless, lifeless organization until such a time as the denominations came into existence more than fourteen centuries after the establishment of the church in Acts chapter two. Fifth, such a position produces a monstrosity of a plant that runs contrary to the simple law that says kind produces after its kind, and only after its kind. If the branches represent the various denominations, then each branch is producing different fruit, for each is different in its constitution, its character, and its nomenclature. It is equivalent to a single tree bearing apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries, berries, nuts, melons, and pumpkins. Men laugh at such a notion, yet embrace precisely the same thing when it comes to the denominational concept of Christianity.

What, then, does the text mean? Christianity has always been described in terms of a personal and individual relationship with God. I fully recognize the corporate unity of every Christian in the body, the church. But the connection of every disciple to the Lord is personal and individual. Obedience to the gospel is an individual responsibility; the judgement will be personal (Rom. 2:5-6); and discipleship is an individual responsibility. This parable sets forth that same individualistic concept, with God as the husbandman, Christ as the vine, and each individual one of the branches.

*“he is cast forth as a branch”* - As Jesus and the disciples made their way toward the garden, I can almost envision Jesus waving



His hand in the general direction of the branches that had been cut off the vine and cast by the wayside. The “man” who does not abide in Christ will be “*cast forth*” as one of these branches. There is a sense of finality in these words. Our English translates ‘*ballo*,’ and means “to throw or let go of a thing without care where it falls; to scatter; to give over to one’s care, uncertain about the result” (Thayer, Esword). What is to become of these branches that have been “cast forth”?

*“and is withered”* – The word in English (as well as the Greek) means to “dry up; make dry.” Their usefulness is gone! They do not, yea they cannot, produce fruit to the glory of their Creator. The end result of such lost and barren souls is undesirable and unpleasant. All that remains is that someone *“gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*

In these verses, Jesus makes it clear that the faithful disciple is the one who remains attached to the Vine, *i.e.* Christ. Every effort must be put forth to maintain a close relationship with the Lord. Failure to do so leads to destruction. And while the same fate awaits those who were never attached to the life giving vine, it is the tragedy of a once-faithful disciple that is the focus of the Lord’s teaching. A clearer image of the possibility of apostasy cannot be imagined. It is refreshing, therefore, to find denominational commentators who recognize the truth with regard to the possibility of apostasy. Adam Clarke was just such a commentator, and his remarks are noteworthy:

Our Lord in the plainest manner intimates that a person may as truly be united to him as the branch is to the tree that produces it, and yet be afterwards cut off and cast into the fire; because he has not brought forth fruit to the glory of his God. No man can cut off a branch from a tree to which that branch was never united: it is absurd, and contrary to the letter and spirit of the metaphor, to talk of being seemingly in Christ - because this means nothing. If there was only a seeming union, there could be only a seeming excision: so the matter is just where it began; nothing is done on either side, and nothing said to any purpose (Clarke, ESword).

*Blessings in Christ*

15:7-11;

These verses fall under the larger context of the *relationship of Jesus to the disciples*. These verses continue the application, but from the standpoint of the blessings received by faithful adherence to God's word. The blessings are fourfold: (1) The blessing of prayer, verse 7; (2) bearing fruit to glorify the Father, verse 8; (3) abiding love from the Father and the Son, verses 9-10; and (4) joy made full, verse 11. Let's consider each of these.

*The Blessing of Prayer, 15:7*

~~ 15:7 ~~

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

"If" – God's blessings have always been conditional. "If" is one of the biggest two letter words in the English language. Any attempt to make a promise of God unconditional that God Himself has made conditional is a fatal blunder.

*"If ye abide in me"* – To abide in Christ is to live in close communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son. John would elaborate on this very principle in his first general epistle. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7).

*"and my words abide in you"* – Our English 'words' (plural) translates the Greek word '*rhemata*,' while 'word' (singular) contained in verse 3 is '*logos*.' The '*logos*' refers to the Lord's teaching in its entirety, while the '*rhemata*' are the individual utterances that make up the whole of the teachings of Christ. Thayer tells us that the word '*rhemata*' is "that which is or has been uttered by the living voice" (Thayer, ESword). Whether or not Jesus intended to make a distinction between the '*logos*' and the '*rhemata*' is not certain. What is clear, however, is that Jesus is telling His disciples (and us) that if we hope to enjoy the blessings offered by God, we had better listen to His voice. The

late V.E. Howard was fond of asking his radio audience, “Are you listening?” Jesus was asking His disciples, “Are you listening?”

*“ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you”* – Jesus was not giving His disciples a ‘blank check.’ Our prayers are always to be tempered with the same attitude that Jesus manifested in His prayer to the Father: “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Observe also the tremendous trust that Jesus had in these men. So confident was our Lord that these men would stay the course that He would make this amazing promise to them.

### *Bearing Fruit To The Glory of the Father, 15:8*

Here is a second blessing promised to those who “abide” in Christ.

~~ 15:8 ~~

*“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples”*

*“Herein”* – Some translations read, “In this” (Living Oracles), or “by this” (ESV, NKJV). Exactly what the “in this” or “by this” refers to is a matter of opinion. Some suggest that Jesus points *back* to what He has just said: “If ye abide in me.” That is, by abiding in Christ, and allowing His word to abide in us, we will produce “much fruit,” which in turn will result in what is set forth here. A second opinion is that the words “herein,” or “by this” looks forward to the second half of this verse, “that ye bear much fruit.” The meaning would be, “When you bear much fruit, you glorify the Father.” Robertson (*Word Pictures*) thinks it looks forward *and* backward.

*“bear much fruit”* - Fruit bearing is an indication of faithful discipleship.

Fruit-bearing includes every activity of the Christian; it includes, but is not limited to acts of love and Christian charity; it embraces every act which Jesus endorses and which he would, if present do, but not being present, must depend on his followers to do for him (Woods, 325).

We have already been told that if we abide in Christ we will bear “much fruit.” I have also pointed out that this is the natural consequence of the branch remaining attached to the vine. The purpose of this verse is to qualify the *kind* of fruit we will bear, namely fruit that glorifies God and not ourselves. Only when we bear fruit that glorifies the Father can it be said that we are a disciple of the Lord.

*Abiding Love of the Father and the Son, 15:9-10*

Here is the third blessing of abiding in Christ.

~~ 15:9 ~~

*“Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love”*

*“Even as the Father hath loved me”* – This expresses a comparison between the first clause and the second. The first clause refers to the love that God has for Christ. That love was expressed audibly at the beginning of the Lord’s ministry: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). It was repeated at the Mount of Transfiguration: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). God’s love for Jesus was demonstrated throughout our Lord’s earthly sojourn by the signs and wonders that Jesus performed. If you can appreciate the love that the Father has for the Son, then the next few words of our Lord in this verse will have rich meaning to you, as no doubt it did to the disciples.

*“I also have loved you”* - The degree of love that the Father and Son have for a child of God is astonishing. While it is true that God loves the world (John 3:16), there is a special love bestowed upon every faithful child of God. God’s providential care for His children demonstrates His great love for us, “for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). Jesus tells this little rag tag band of disciples that He had *loved* them. Who would doubt that He would continue to love them? His past love for these men was demonstrated in a variety of ways, not the least of which was His

patience and care for them during the three-and-a-half years already spent with them.

*“abide ye in my love”* - So far we have seen, *“abide in me,” “abide in my word,”* and *“abide ye in my love.”* These are not three distinct things, but a summation of what it means to walk in close fellowship with the Father and His Son.

~~ 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”*

*“If ye keep my commandments”* - Having expressed the importance of abiding in the love of Christ, here Jesus tells them how: *“keep my commandments.”*

*“even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love”* - Jesus set the example by showing us what it means to keep the Father’s commandments.

The love of Christ by his disciples and his reciprocal love for them do not indicate a subjective emotional condition but a course of obedient action. This verse is almost the converse of John 14:15; and, taken together, they strongly teach that the love of Christ on the part of men means keeping Christ’s commandments. This is reinforced by the truth, also stated in this verse, that even the love of the Father by the Son meant keeping God’s commandments. Once more in John, it is revealed that the relationship between Christians and Christ is the same as that between Christ and the Father (Coffman).

*Joy Made Full, 15:11*

Here is the final blessing bequeathed to the disciples: Joy made full!

~~ 15:11 ~~

*“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”*

*“These things have I spoken unto you”* - Notice the emphasis upon the words; the communication of ideas and thoughts. Woods:

The ‘things spoken’ included all that he had said to them on this occasion and were designed to impress them with the importance of keeping the commandments in order that their joy might become full as his was. It is thus far from true, as some people today allege, that Christianity creates in its devotees a sour and gloomy disposition and requires of them a life devoid of pleasure; quite the contrary (Woods, 326).

*“that my joy may be in you”* - This “joy” is much more than temporary happiness. It is rather extreme gladness and inner rejoicing. It is a deep seated contentment that comes from a calmness of soul that exists when a person rests upon the promises of God. The Greek word ‘*chara*’ means “calm delight.”

Like the love mentioned in John 15:10, the joy here is not so much a subjective state of ecstasy as it is a state of spiritual serenity, much higher and more satisfying than a mere emotional state of euphoria. All such things as fun, pleasure, delight, happiness, gladness, etc., are on a lower level than the joy promised by the Lord (Coffman, ESword Module).

*“that your joy may be full”* - Abiding in Christ produces the fullest measure of joy possible. Among the many joys that a Christian enjoys are (1) communion and fellowship with the best people in this life; (2) fellowship with the Father in heaven; (3) a joy and satisfaction of doing good for others; (4) the assurance of life everlasting when this life is over.

Thus Jesus adds “my love” and “my joy” to “my peace,” which He had already promised to the disciples (14:27). It is no mere coincidence that all of these are a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The coming Comforter would be the topic of chapter

sixteen, thus tying chapters fifteen and sixteen together to provide comfort to the disciples and banish any misgivings that might have filled their hearts at that particular moment.

### Lessons

Morgan wrote regarding these verses: “These words are among the most simple, the most sublime, and the most solemn which ever fell from the lips of our Savior” (Morgan, *ESword Module, Westminster Pulpit*). The words of the officers who went to investigate Jesus in behalf of the Pharisees are certainly applicable here: “Never man so spake” (John 7:46). Who is there among men capable of making such claims as those made by our Savior? Every word invites close examination; not to find fault, but to drink deeply from the truths that are contained therein. A mark of inspiration is the inexhaustible storehouse of truth contained in a single passage. I suggest to you the following great principles that flow out of a study of this passage. These are not new in the sense of being a new revelation; but new in our appreciation and/or discovery of those truths.

First, the close association of the Vine and the branches gives me a greater appreciation for the beautiful unity of God’s order of things. The branches are not denominations; they cannot be! The numerous branches attached to a vine produce the same kind of fruit. Denominations produce *different* kinds of fruit.

Second, there is a vital connection between the Vine and the branches. That connection can only exist where the disciple is determined to “abide in” Christ. This “abiding” is not a casual acquaintance with Jesus; it is a “hang on for your life” effort! Dear friend, if the extent of your Christianity is a “once-in-a-while” visit with the saints, or a brief reading of a passage from time to time, I kindly suggest that you are not “abiding” in Christ.

Third, there is a mutual dependency between the vine and the branches. The branch cannot survive apart from the vine; it will wither and die, ultimately to be burned. The branch is dependent on the vine for life itself. Consider these select verses:

❖ Jesus is the “water of life” (John 4:10-14);

- ❖ “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35);
- ❖ He gives abundant life (John 10:10);
- ❖ “Because I live, ye shall also live” (John 14:19);
- ❖ He is the “prince of life” (Acts 3:15);
- ❖ He is our very life, in whom we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28);
- ❖ God has given us life, and that life is in His Son (1 John 5:11);

The vine also depends on the branches to bear fruit. Apart from the disciples, there could be no fruit. Jesus was depending upon these men (and us) to save the lost; He has no other plan!

Fourth, branches are to bear fruit. There is nothing so disappointing to our Lord as a disciple that does not bear fruit. Failure to bear fruit is a failure to glorify God.

Fifth, we should rejoice when God cuts us back. The branches that bear fruit are occasionally *pruned* - *cut back* - so as to make them more productive. That pruning comes by the word – cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17. It also comes by providence of God – 1 Peter 1:6-7; James 1:4-5. As we mature we are gradually, sometimes painstakingly so, pruned of our fleshly desires, improper motives, and selfishness. The more those things are cut away, the more we bear fruit. Thus, *when you are confronted with your sins, don't scream, holler, kick – submit, knowing that God is attempting to prune you.* “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty” (Job 5:17).

Sixth, there is the full realization that the non-bearing branch will be cut off and cast into the fire. We may fail in a lot of things in life, but a failure to bear fruit will have everlasting consequences.

Finally, we cannot help but be impressed with the willingness of God and Christ to be associated with us. The fact that they invite us to be a part of that great life giving Vine speaks volumes about the love the Father and Son have for our wellbeing. I am reminded of the words of the Psalmist: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which



thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?...O Jehovah, our  
Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Psa. 8:3-4, 9).  
No wonder so many have called Him, "The Magnificent One"!



## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### “THE GREATER LOVE”

*The Relationship of Believers to Each Other, 15:12-17*

This paragraph is an extension of the “new commandment” of John 13:34. It begins and ends with the injunction, “love one another” (15:12, 17). Surely Solomon captured the essence of the message contained here when he wrote: “Set me as a seal upon thy heart, As a seal upon thine arm: For love is strong as death; Jealousy is cruel as Sheol; The flashes thereof are flashes of fire, A very flame of Jehovah. Many waters cannot quench love, Neither can floods drown it: If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, He would utterly be contemned” (Song of Solomon 8:6-7). Yet as wise as Solomon was, a “greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42), and the love He commands of His disciples is to be no less than the love He demonstrated toward them and the Father. Take note of the words, “Even as I loved you” (15:12).

Paul expanded on this love in that great chapter we commonly call, “The Love Chapter.” After having touched on love’s *essentiality* (1 Cor. 13:1-3), he provides us with love’s *essence* (1 Cor. 13:4-7), and closes with love’s *eternality* (1 Cor. 13:8-13), “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” This is the “most excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). An unknown poet, using Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians as an obvious backdrop, wrote the following:

Ay, and when Prophecy her tale hath finished,  
Knowledge hath withered from the trembling tongue,  
Love shall survive, and Love be undiminished,  
Love be imperishable, Love be young.

These half dozen verses tell us of “*greater love*.” The superlative stirs the imagination of men, awakens their longing for something better, and strengthens their hope for the possibilities implied. Who would deny that there is a lack of this “*greater love*” even in this twenty first century? Hastings admitted, “There is lack of love – this great love, that can get right down beneath the hard and unresponsive strata of human character, and find a

living response in that which all but love has found unresponsive” (Hastings, 100). Unfortunately what men *think* is love is a cheap imitation of the real thing. That kind of love leaves the soul still searching and unsatisfied. Jesus demonstrated this greater love, identified it, and commanded it of all who would profess allegiance to Him. I see three important traits of this greater love: (1) It is a Reciprocal love, 15:12, 17; (2) It is a Resigning Love, 15:13; and (3) It is a Relational Love, 15:14-16. Let’s consider each of these.

*It is a Reciprocal Love*

15:12, 17

~~ 15:12 ~~

*“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you”*

*“This is my commandment”* – The “*greater love*” is to become a part of the very fabric of the life of every disciple of Christ. It is not an option. Nor is it the *only* commandment that Jesus gives His followers, but it is the one emphasized here.

*“that ye love one another, even as I have loved you”* - It is the *degree* of love being pressed upon the apostles; Jesus loved even unto death, so they, too, should be willing to love unto death.

*“that ye love one another”* – There are two important points to consider. The first has to do with the word “*love*.” The Greek word (‘agapao’) expresses the strongest degree of love possible. It is more than kindly affection. It is, rather, that essential trait that compels one to act in behalf of another and for that persons good. The second point to be emphasized is the *reciprocal nature* of that love. Consider what John would later write in his first general epistle: “But whoso hath the world’s goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:17-18). The full extent of that love will be noted in the following verse.

*It Is A Resigning Love*

15:13

~~ 15:13 ~~

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

The ultimate manifestation of this “*greater love*” is the sacrificing of one’s life for another. The Good Shepherd was willing to give His life for us (John 10:11).

*“for his friends”* – This means “in behalf of his friends.” As great as this love is, the Lord demonstrated an even greater love by giving His life for His enemies (cf. Rom. 5:8-10); something mortal man would not do. This important trait of our Lord magnifies Him far above any mortal man.

But what does it mean, “*that a man lay down his life*”? It could mean giving one’s life in death. Men have done that on numerous occasions, paying what has been termed, “the ultimate sacrifice.” I think Hastings is correct, however, when he noted the following:

The principle of sacrifice folded in our Saviour’s words does not find its full illustration in some act of tragic self-devotion, nor in the long tragedy of resignation. It is something nearer to common experience and necessity than these things. One has said, ‘Tis as hard at duty’s call to lay one’s life down day by day, as to lay it down once for all.’ Laying life down day by day. Always doing it. To live, not for our own pleasures, but to make gladness more possible for such as walk in the shadows of many sorrows, in order to make goodness more possible for such as stand in the tense darkness of great temptations, to set others ever first, to pass into the life of the world each day to minister and not to be ministered unto – this is the greater love. The music of its message has got into their hearts. Now they know that the wealth of life is its outpouring; and that the one priceless treasure for humanity’s finding and wearing is the heart’s unselfishness” (Hastings, 101).

Indeed, an essential element of love is that of self sacrifice.

*It is a Relational Love*

15:14-16

There is something special about being a friend to another. A British publication once offered a prize for the best definition of a friend. Among the thousands of answers received were the following: “One who multiplies joys, divides grief, and whose honesty is inviolable.” “One who understands our silence.” “A volume of sympathy bound in cloth.” “A watch that beats true for all time and never runs down.” The winning definition read: “A friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out.” The Bible says, “A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Pro. 17:17), and “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Pro. 18:24). Keep all of this in mind when you read the words contained in these three verses.

~~ 15:14 ~~

*“Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you”*

*“Ye are my friends”* – All of us have certain qualities we look for in a friend. Jesus did not base His friendship with the disciples on anything that had to do with physical traits. Friendship with Jesus is based on one’s attitude toward God, Christ, and Their will for our life.

*“if ye do”* – The words are present tense, and are more literally, “keep on doing the things which I command you.”

~~ 15:15 ~~

*“No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known unto you”*

*“No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends”* - This is an amazingly tender statement. The contrast between a “servant” and a “friend” would have been a stark one in that society. The “servant” (from ‘*doulos*’) was a “slave, bondman; a man of servile condition” ((Thayer, ESword). A slave in the

Roman Empire was considered on the level of a common brute beast. Service rendered to one's master seldom, if ever, was motivated by love. The disciples were to serve God, but their service was to be motivated by love.

*“but I have called you friends”* – Our English word “friends” translates *‘philos,’* and means “a neighbor; he who associates familiarly with one; a companion” (Thayer).

Robertson notes that the language is perfect active indicative and suggests a “permanent state of friendship” (Robertson, ESword Module). They will prove worthy of it, however, by continued obedience to Christ as Lord. By being a good servant of Christ, the disciple becomes a friend of Jesus.

*“all things that I heard from my Father”* – Pay close attention to the *source* of Jesus' teaching. He was sent from God, went through the natural process of birth, “advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52), and ultimately launched His earthly ministry, throughout which He received instruction from the Father. He, in turn, instructed the apostles, and upon His departure, sent the Holy Spirit, Who guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). This entire process by which God speaks to man through Jesus Christ His Son has some sobering implications. Seeing that Jesus' revelation to the apostles was complete, and that the apostles were enabled to remember completely the teachings of Jesus as they were inspired of the Holy Spirit, the inescapable conclusion is that subsequent revelations simply would not occur. As brother Coffman noted, “If Jesus did not teach it, his followers should not be duped into believing it, no matter what it is. In the light of this, where do such works as Science and Health, The Book of Mormon, and the encyclicals of popes appear?” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*“I have made known”* – This is a thorough knowledge. While the apostles were not able to grasp the full implications of the truths Jesus had so far taught them, the limitation was not with Jesus' willingness to impart that knowledge, but with their capacity to comprehend. It is precisely at this point that the distinction between a servant and a friend comes into focus. While “a

servant knoweth not what his lord doeth,” a friend is provided special insight into the work of the Master. As Bruce noted, “It is not for the slave to know why his master says, ‘Do this’; it is for the slave to do it - his not to reason why. But with a friend one shares one’s hopes and plans” (Bruce, 311-312).

~~ 15:16 ~~

*“Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”*

*“Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you”* – Brother Woods pointed out that “generally, Jewish students of that day selected their rabbis or teachers; but, in this instance, the order was reversed; the teacher selected the students” (Woods, 329). The realization that Christ had chosen them would provide them with additional comfort. Seeing that He was to leave them, and that they would be sent out into a hostile world, they needed to know that they were not haphazardly picked out, but were chosen *by* Christ *for* a particular purpose. Some have attempted to make the application of Jesus’ words to include *all* Christians. It seems to me that the words were exclusively spoken to these men, whom Jesus had selected personally, and for a special responsibility. This is not to say there is no application whatsoever for us. As Johnson noted:

The Lord selected every apostle, and called them to become his representatives in the church when he had ascended his heavenly throne. Peter, Andrew, James and John were taken from their boats and nets at the Sea of Galilee; Matthew from his place at the receipt of custom, the rest of the eleven from their various callings, and, last of all, Saul of Tarsus was arrested by the Lord himself on the way to Damascus and told that he was to become ‘a minister and witness’ to the Gentiles. As God chose Noah to build the ark, Abraham to found the Jewish nation, Moses to be its law-giver, David to leave his flocks and be its king, the Baptist to prepare the way for Christ, so the Lord chose out the apostles and ordained them to their special work. So too, I cannot doubt that He chooses servants in all ages to become the leaders in great works



which are called for by the interests of his kingdom  
(Johnson, Esword Module).

*“that your fruit should abide”* - These men were chosen, not to be served, but to serve and bear fruit for the Master. It was a call to duty. In the same manner, all Christians are called to a purpose; that purpose is to glorify God by bearing much fruit (15:8).

~~ 15:17 ~~

*“These things I command you, that ye may love one another”*

With the repetition of the command to love one another, this paragraph comes to an end.

*“These things”* - This is plural and cannot, therefore, refer to love alone, as if love in and of itself were the single badge of discipleship. *“These things”* must embrace all matters spoken earlier, including abiding in His love, keeping His commandments, and bearing fruit, et al.

*“that ye may love one another”* – The motive behind the commands is that the disciples might love one another.

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### I’LL BE A FRIEND TO JESUS

By Tom Wacaster

Eleanor Roosevelt once wrote: “Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.” There is something special in the word “friend.” It conjures up a warm feeling in the heart that transcends the bounds of explanation. Abraham was called, “the friend of God” (Jas. 2:23). That says a lot about that ancient patriarch and father of the faithful. My mother wrote the following two poems about friends:

## **Friends**

by Mary Wacaster

In my memories shadows grow  
to be the pleasant shades of life,  
And friendships are the canopies  
that filter out the strife.  
From the slender twigs that bend  
when storms began to blow,  
To the peaceful shade of love  
in the evening sun's warm glow.  
For it is there stands the mighty oaks  
where memories have been sown,  
Together forming the deepest roots  
whereby we never stand alone.

~~~~~

## **My Best Friend**

by Mary Wacaster

You are a friend to me.  
You taught me how to sing,  
And then supplied the harmony,  
With hope that flies on wing.

You are a harbor in my storms  
When waves are lashing high;  
You stay them with your arms  
Until peace again is nigh.

God's love you shared with me,  
And taught me how to win  
It's glory, and its beauty see,  
And how it dwells within.

So all that I can say,  
All that I can be, you knew;  
And with every passing day  
You touched my life - and I grew.

~~~~~

It has been said that a friend is someone who shares your joys and wipes away your tears. He knows your faults, but focuses on your virtues. He is someone to whom you can turn when there seems to be nobody else who cares. He is a poor man's psychiatrist, a needy man's financier, and an encourager when you falter. A friend will forgive you when you cannot forgive yourself, share with you his deepest secrets, and not charge you a single penny when you take up his time. A friend thinks you are wonderful when the world regards you as a failure. He can penetrate the veil of loneliness, hold your hand and laugh with you when you laugh, and weep with you when you weep. A friend makes the most poverty stricken man on earth feel as if he were the richest man alive! I hope you begin to get the picture when Jesus said He was a friend to those twelve men; and by implication what it means for us to be a friend to Jesus.

In 1922 Johnson Oatman published what has become a very popular Christian hymn – *"I'll Be A Friend To Jesus."* The lyrics speak volumes about friendship in general, but especially what it means to be a friend to Jesus. As I meditated on those beautiful lyrics, here are some of the things that came to mind.

### **Stanza #1**

*They tried my Lord and Master,  
With no one to defend;  
Within the halls of Pilate  
He stood without a friend.*

Friendship is something that all men desire. When Jesus stood before Pilate He had no friends at His side. Judas had betrayed Him, Peter had denied Him, and the remaining apostles, with perhaps the exception of John, had deserted Him. Oh how our Lord must have longed for a true friend during those darkest hours. If you were to ask me why all of us need a friend, I would suggest the following reasons:

(1) Friends can help you define your priorities. Of course the wrong kind of friends can influence you for the worse, but I am speaking of a friend who, like Jesus, cares for your soul. When you go about establishing bonds of friendship with someone I

strongly urge you to select those who will help you define your priorities for the better.

(2) Friends will support you through thick and thin. Who among us would deny the importance of such friends? While friends might get you into trouble, all of us need the kind of friends that will keep us *out* of trouble, and stand by our side when we might find ourself in hot water.

(3) We need friends to challenge us and motivate us. Herein is the value of the church. Our brothers and sisters in Christ ought to be our closest friends, for it is they who will encourage you in your darkest hours.

### **Stanza #2**

*The world may turn against Him,  
I'll love Him to the end,  
And while on earth I'm living,  
My Lord shall have a friend.*

The real test of friendship comes in those moments when a real need presses upon us. I once read of a man whose dearest friend had been attacked by the press, and quoted him as saying something that was patently false. This is the letter he dispatched to his friend: "I do not believe the report of your remarks is true. I do not see how you could have said that. But I want you to know that even if you did say it, my friendship and affection for you will always remain the same." That is friendship! Friendship with Jesus may take us down a rocky road of persecution and ridicule. We may be falsely accused, ridiculed, or persecuted. But through it all Jesus has promised to stand by our side.

### **Stanza #3**

*I'll do what He may bid me;  
I'll go where He may send;  
I'll try each flying moment  
To prove that I'm His friend.*

Friendship demands service. This is especially true if we are to be a friend to Jesus. “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (John 15:10). Can I be so bold as to suggest that the same requirement exists if we are to be a *friend* of Jesus? Who could possibly believe otherwise? There are at least three great truths expressed in the lyrics of this third stanza:

(1) First, our service to Jesus is *submissive*. “I’ll do what He may bid me.” As we become more submissive to the will of Jesus, our friendship grows deeper and stronger.

(2) Second, our service to Jesus is *sacrificial*. “I’ll go where He may send.” I am not suggesting that we must go to some foreign field to labor for our Lord. I am suggesting, however, that each one of us must be willing to go to those who are needy, lost, discouraged, living in sin, or who just need to be encouraged.

(3) Third, our service to Jesus is *urgent*. “I’ll try each flying moment.” When a friend needs our help we do all within our power to drop what we are doing, put things on the back burner, and go to the aid of our friend. The more urgent the need, the more we are willing to rearrange our schedule to lend a hand.

#### **Stanza #4**

*To all who need a Savior,  
My Friend I’ll recommend;  
Because He brought salvation,  
Is why I am His friend.*

Friendship is something to be shared with others. We should seek to extend our circle of friends in order that we might influence their lives for the better. When we were living in Africa a brother in Christ would put forth an effort to increase the circle of his friends. In so doing he felt that he could thereby introduce more people to the Lord.

#### **Refrain**

*I’ll be a friend to Jesus,*

*My life for Him I'll spend;  
I'll be a friend to Jesus,  
Until my years shall end.*

Being a true friend calls for *commitment*. Let's use Jesus as our example. "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6-8). That is commitment on the part of the Father and the Son. "Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto his Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). There is no doubt that Jesus is committed to being a friend – and Savior – to all who would come to Him in obedient faith. The question is whether or not we are committed to being *His* friend. I will close this portion of our study with an article I originally wrote almost twenty years ago:

COMMITMENT – OR THE LACK THEREOF  
by Tom Wacaster

Lafayette, a Frenchman, is remembered in the history books as a bold, courageous individual. During the French Revolution he was dismissed from the army. He tried to escape to America, but was captured and imprisoned in Germany. It is reported that he was offered freedom on the condition that he join the conspiracy against France. Even though he was threatened with long confinement in prison should he refuse to cooperate, Lafayette replied: "Never! I am still Lafayette." History is replete with examples of courage, heroism, and determination on the part of men and women who were willing to give their lives for a cause. The framers of our *Declaration of Independence* were men of such character and determination. They knew that if they won the battle for freedom that the best they could expect would be years of hardship in a struggling nation. If they lost, the best they could look forward to was the end of a hangman's rope. But because of commitment and sheer determination for a cause they considered worth more than life itself, they engaged the battle, and won for our nation its desired freedom. Such commitment is

in short supply in our society. Rare is the man or woman who can be depended upon to follow through with their promise, whose word is their bond. For example, a baseball player might make a “commitment” to honor a contract for some specified salary, only to “renegotiate” that contract after one year of service. Marriage ceremonies, in many instances, have removed such phrases as “for better or for worse,” or “till death do us part,” because of a lack of commitment on the part of either party. Financial indebtedness finds an easy out through chapter-eleven bankruptcy, and companies usher out the 20 or 30 year employee with an early retirement to avoid paying “retirement benefits” for the long term. The problem lies in a lack of commitment.

Heaven’s call for commitment on the part of the child of God is best stated by our Lord in Matthew 5:33-37. Yes, there were some who would swear with an oath that they would do thus and so. Some swore by heaven, but in their mind the oath was not binding. Others would swear by the throne of God, but that too was like playing games with one’s fellow man. It was sort of like the little game that we played when we were children where we would cross our fingers behind our back while making a promise - we were so immature that we thought that crossing the fingers relieved us of any obligation to keep the promise. These are the childish games that dishonest men and women play with God. But the Son of God tells us, “Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one” (Matt. 5:37). It seems to me that there are entirely too many Christians who play this silly game of making promises with little or no intention of following through on their commitment. “Yes God, I give my life to you! I surrender to You and Your cause!” Out front we make promises, and put on a great show with our oaths of dedication and determination. But all the while, we have our spiritual fingers crossed, knowing full well that if something should “come up” that interferes with my service to God, then the promise is not really that binding. The problem lies in a lack of commitment.

When our Lord returns to gather us into the eternal abode that is reserved for those who have followed through on their commitment, there will be a great host on that Day who will be

somewhat surprised that the reward will not be theirs to enjoy (Matt. 7:13-14, 20-23). The thorns will have choked out their faith, and the lack of determination to follow through with their once-made promise to serve the Master with all diligence will echo throughout eternity with the tragic words, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I never knew you." Like I said: The problem lies in a lack of commitment.

There are three attitudes that must exist if we would be committed to the Lord. First, our motives must be pure. Paul told us that love must be the motivating factor in everything we do (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Second, we must possess the attitude that God and Christ are all or nothing at all. David said, "With my whole heart have I sought thee" (Psa. 119:10). Jesus declared, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The soul seeking to serve God with a half-hearted commitment will find himself torn between two opposing forces. Third, we must remain single minded in our service to God. "No man 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" (Matt. 6:24). There are so many members who have just enough of Christ in them that they can't enjoy sin and just enough sin in them so that they can't enjoy Christ. That is double-mindedness. James warns us that the "double-minded man" is "unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:6-8). These three attitudes and/or character traits are essential elements to commitment. If we possess these we will be able to say "NO" to questionable activities. But it also means that the child of God will say "YES" to Jesus and anything that will further the cause of the Master.

The Lord's church does not need bigger and better buildings. Three decades ago we built some of the largest and most ornate edifices in the country, and today we can barely fill half the pews. We do not need improved sound systems or updated software for our computers. These are but tools that, when placed in the hands of committed individuals, will reap great benefits. Let us determine first and foremost that we will be committed to the Lord, and should the Father decide to provide us with the "tools" to accomplish great things, then so be it! On the other hand,



should the Father decide to remove these tools of technology, we can still accomplish great things if we are committed to doing His will in all things. Again, the problem lies in a lack of commitment.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

### “YE ARE NOT OF THE WORLD”

*Relationship of Believers to the World, 15:18-27*

As we study these verses, one does not have to read very far in this section until he becomes aware that Jesus is presenting to His disciples what awaited them following His departure. The world hated Christ; and the world would hate His ambassadors, as well as all those who choose to follow Christ. Our relationship to the world is to be one of *rejection* of their priorities, and *reproof* of their lifestyle. If we fulfill our obligation in this respect it is to be expected that we will be persecuted. “Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Because we are not of this world, the world will be antagonistic toward us.

These ten verses are cohesive in thought, though the last two verses lead quite naturally into the subject matter contained in chapter sixteen. There are four parts in this portion of our study. In verse 18 we have a statement regarding the hatred of the world toward Christ and His disciples. This is followed by three reasons why the world would hate the disciples: (1) because of the difference in nature between Christians and the world, vs. 19; (2) because of the close association of the disciples with Christ, vss. 20-21; and (3) because of the conviction of sin that the message of Jesus brings to those who are living in sin, vss. 22-24. John then cites an Old Testament passage that prophesied of this animosity, 15:25. The chapter closes with the antidote provided for the protection of the disciples in the midst of hatred and persecution, 15:26-27.

The title for this part of our study is lifted from John 15:19. There are several meanings attached to the word “world.” The term is used to refer to the material world and its inhabitants, as is the case in Psalms 98:7: “Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein.” Sometimes the word is used to refer to the inhabitants with respect to their moral behavior being in opposition to the will of the Father. A good example is seen in Galatians 1:4, where Paul, in speaking of

Christ, wrote: “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father.” John would write in his first general epistle that the “whole world lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Consider another passage in that first epistle of John: “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). Here the word is used in reference to the allurements of the world: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life” (1 John 2:16). When Jesus told His disciples, “ye are not of the world,” He was not suggesting that they had been, or would be, isolated from this physical world. Nor were the words of our Lord in this passage intended *only* for those few men who were now with Him. Those words are as applicable to those of us living in this twenty-first century as they were to those eleven men on that particular occasion.

*The Hatred Of the World For His Followers*

15:18-25

I have selected this heading for the simple reason that it provides me with a concise statement of what these verses deal with. The apostle John has already made it clear that the “world” hated Christ. Several attempts had been made to entrap Jesus in His talk, none of which had been successful. Unable to *entrap* the Lord, there were attempts to *execute* Him. John would later receive his vision on Patmos, and in that twelfth chapter provide his readers with a panoramic view of the hatred of Christ as it is carried out on His followers. Once the dragon was unable to destroy the “man child,” he “went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17). Let us not forget that Jesus had commanded His disciples to love one another. They would need that love for one another to survive what awaited them once Jesus had returned to the Father.

**The Record**

15:18

~~ 15:18 ~~

*“If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you”*

The servant “knoweth not what his lord doeth” (15:15a). Jesus would hold nothing back. These men needed to know, for the *record*, what awaited them.

*“if the world hateth you”* – The certainty of the world’s hatred for the apostles (and all Christians for that matter) is evidenced by history itself. The hatred that the Jews vented toward Christ was immediately turned upon the apostles shortly after the beginning of the church as revealed in Acts 2 thru 4. Luke’s inspired account of the history of the church reveals that, given the opportunity, and in the absence of any protection to the contrary, hatred and persecution will break out. The “world” here is that part of humanity that is in sin, loves the world, and is antagonistic toward God and all that is good and holy. It is precisely this “world” over which the devil is so influential (1 John 5:19).

*“ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you”* – Even the most preliminary and superficial reading of the four gospels reveals this hatred the world has for Christ. We will take a closer look at that hatred when we get to the trial of our Lord, but that trial, the treatment of our Lord by the Pharisees, and the abuse from the Roman soldiers, were not the only demonstrations of the hatred the world had for our Lord during His earthly sojourn. That same hatred awaited the apostles, and anyone else who would promote the cause of Christ and His Kingdom. No doubt, “the Lord, in this scene, was acutely conscious that the evil hatreds and maledictions which had marked the attitude of man toward himself would inevitably be directed in full fury against the holy apostles” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

### **The Reasons**

15:19-25

In these verses Jesus sets forth the reasons for the treatment these men would receive at the hands of the world. There are two: *intolerance* and *ignorance*. Consider each of these.  
*Intolerance*, vss. 19-20

An amazing thing about intolerance on the part of the enemies of the cross is that they plead for tolerance until it comes to Christianity; at that point their tolerance becomes intolerance. In the words of Solomon, “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecc. 1:9). These three verses provide us with some insight into the intolerance of the world that hated Christ, and presently hates Christianity. The first has to do with the *difference* we exhibit by our life. Jesus was certainly different from the religious leaders of His day. He spoke the truth without fear or favor of men. He refused to compromise with that “evil and adulterous generation.” He exposed the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the inconsistencies of the Sadducees, and the errors of the scribes. He taught as One Who had authority. No wonder the world hated Him.

~~ 15:19 ~~

*“If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you”*

*“If ye were of the world, the world would love its own”* – If the apostles were of the world there would be no persecution for the obvious reason that they would love the same things and hold to the same values.

*“Because you are not of the world”* – The apostles were not influenced by those things important to the world. Their values were *not* the same as those of the world, and consequently Jesus tells them, *“the world hatheth you.”*

It is characteristic of people to love those who are the most like themselves in disposition, character, and practice. Christians love other Christians because they are of like precious faith, with the same interests, the same goals and the same responsibilities. Similarly, people of the world bestow their affection upon those who find satisfaction in the things they do; and conversely, they ‘hate’ those opposed to that which they enjoy (Woods, 331).

*“I chose you out of the world”* - They were selected by the Lord; but this does not mean they had no choice in the matter. It was because they chose to renounce the world and serve the Lord that they maintained that relationship with the Lord. Judas, on the other hand, refused to renounce the world, and when tempted succumbed to sin, thus severing himself from the Lord. The words, “out of the world” are most significant. The call to these apostles was to “follow” Jesus. It was a call to live a different kind of life, preach a different kind of message, and seek a different goal in life.

~~ 15:20 ~~

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

Not only were the apostles *different*, they were *devoted*. That unswerving devotion and loyalty to the Lord contributed to the hatred the world had for these men.

*“Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord”* – Likely this is a reference to John 13:16, though Jesus had emphasized the same thing on other occasions (cf. Matt. 10:24).

*“if they kept my word, they will keep yours also”* - Those who appreciated the teaching of Jesus would respect the word of the apostles as well. But those who reject the word of Christ will likewise reject the word of the apostles as they went forth preaching the message of the gospel.

*“they will also persecute you”* - Before the pen of inspiration was laid down Satan was already venting his hatred against the “seed of the woman” (Rev. 12:17). For three centuries, from Nero to Diocletian, the church would suffer horribly at the hands of those who hated Christians. As one author noted: “The history of the church down through the centuries has been one of hostility from the world because God’s people are different. They separate themselves from the world” (Phillips, 294).

*Ignorance, 15:21-25*

The extent of the world's ignorance is astonishing. Jesus touches on at least three areas of the world's lack of proper knowledge: (1) ignorance of the Father; (2) ignorance of their sin; and (3) ignorance of Bible prophecy.

~~ 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 focuses upon the world's ignorance of the Father, specifically as the One Who sent the Christ.

*“But all these things will they do unto you”* – The hatred of the world, and the consequent persecution against Christians, has never really changed over the centuries. For almost two millennia the world's bitterness and hatred for Christ has been directed toward His apostles and disciples. Although there have been pockets of peace for God's church, the history of Christianity is a history of the world's hatred for those who refuse to exchange their faith in God for the “pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25).

That Satan is actually the author of all such opposition is implicit in the fact that long after that generation had descended into the grave, the same bitterness and hatred continued against the truth, only with a new set of human opponents in each succeeding generation. Only Satan could continue unabated the organization, marshaling, and deployment of his devices in one unending campaign throughout all history, with a hundred generations in turn playing out the same role of hating the Saviour of the world, telling the same lies, sneering the same sneers, sinning the same sins, repeating the same mockeries, and shutting their eyes to the same truths -- just like always! In nearly two millennia NOT ONE NEW THING has been alleged by the devil and his servants against the Christ of glory. The war has already been won, but so many do not know it (Coffman, Theophilus Software).



*“for my name’s sake”* - The apostles suffered at the hands of the enemies of Christ, but they rejoiced in that they were allowed to suffer *“for the Name”* (Acts 5:41). The name of Christ is sweet to His followers, but is an object of hatred to our Lord’s enemies. As Johnson noted, *“There is nothing that excites the animosity of the haters of Christ more intensely than his name”* (Johnson, ESword Module).

*“because they know not him that sent me”* – Here is the foundation for most of the religious persecution – ignorance of God’s nature, ignorance of God’s hatred for sin, and ignorance of God’s wrath regarding those who would harm His children. We could add to this their ignorance of God’s love, mercy, longsuffering, patience and grace.

~~ 15:22 ~~

*“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin:  
but now they have no excuse for their sin”*

Having addressed the world’s *ignorance of the Father*, the next two verses address the world’s *ignorance of the very nature of sin itself*.

*“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin”* – Jesus was not saying they would not have *any sin*. Jesus was referring to the specific sin of having rejected Him; if He had not come, they would not have hated Him because they would never have known Him. Here there may be a subtle hint of man’s unwillingness to be made aware of their sins. *“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God”* (John 3:20-21).

This explains the implacable hatred of evil men for the truth. The wicked soul desires nothing so much as to be left alone; there is something terribly upsetting about an aroused conscience; and unregenerates will avoid disturbing a conscience with the intensity of a burglar tiptoeing past the guard dog. *“Let us alone”* (Mark 1:24

KJV) has been the cry of the depraved and corrupted of all ages. (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

There is another lesson we can draw from this passage. Men will be judged in proportion to the opportunities provided them. The greater the opportunity - when ignored or rejected - the greater the guilt and punishment. Those who do not obey the gospel will be lost (2 Thess. 1:7-8); but those who have heard the gospel and *deliberately* rejected it have sinned against the truth as well as their awareness of the sin in their life. A ray of sunlight in the chamber reveals, but does not create, the moths. They were there before. So, too, the motions of sin in the soul are imperfectly recognized until the light comes, but in that light they are seen to be sin, and the conscience is alive to sin. So the knowledge of Christ, flooding the soul with light, brings sin into full view and takes away all excuse for continuance therein.

~~ 15:23 ~~

*“He that hateth me hateth my Father also”*

The close association of Jesus with the Father was a common refrain throughout the book of John: “He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father” (John 5:23). “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). “He that believeth on me, believeth on him that sent me” (John 12:44). “He that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me” (John 12:45). “If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also” (John 14:7). “He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (John 13:20). This verse is but another variation of that dominant theme, and the message here is that hating Jesus is one and the same thing as hating God. The unbelieving Jews may have *thought* they loved the Father while hating Jesus, but in view of the fact that Jesus is *Immanuel* (Matt. 1:23), God come in the flesh, to hate one is to hate the other.

~~ 15:24 ~~

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

*“the works which none other did”* – The inexcusable nature of their rejection of, and hatred for, Christ is magnified in light of the fact that the *“works which none other did”* were performed openly in their presence. The miracles of Jesus surpassed those of Moses and the prophets in a number of ways, not the least of which was the very nature of the miracles themselves. The diseases He cured, the casting out of demons, and the resurrection of Lazarus after he had been dead four days, all demonstrate the magnificence of Jesus. While Moses and the prophets invoked the power of God, Jesus did all this by His own power. Johnson’s logical approach to these words of Jesus was impressive:

Sometimes cavilers call for a scientific argument that Jesus is divine. The Savior here gives it. The syllogism is as follows: 1. No man that ever lived was sinless, was a teacher who never erred, or unlocked the portals of the dead, or made those whose souls were dead, live again as new creatures in a new and beautiful life. 2. Jesus of Nazareth did and does all these things. 3. Therefore, he is more than man and is divine (Johnson, 237).

~~ 15:25 ~~

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

Here Jesus adds one more category to their ignorance. They were ignorant of the Father, ignorant of the magnitude and nature of their sin, and *they were ignorant of Bible prophecy* that foretold their hatred of Christ.

*“written in their law”* The religious leaders of Jesus’ day prided themselves in their acquaintance with the Law of Moses. In fact, they were perfectionists in matters pertaining to the Law. Their zealousness toward that Law, coupled with tradition, fueled their hatred for Christ. They may have professed a love for the Law, but by their sinful conduct they actually denied it.

*“hated me without a cause”* - John never forgot this teaching and made it the basis of his comment on Cain: Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because

his works were evil, and his brother's righteous (1 John 3:12). The hatred that the world has for Christ remains a mystery to those who love Him. Who ever had a reason to hate Jesus? What injury or harm has He ever done to any single member of the human race? What has He said, or implied, that would give someone cause to hate Him? No one can give a reason that has any degree of plausibility to it. Yet in spite of this undeniable truth, as Barnes pointed out, "no being on earth has ever been more hated, despised, or neglected, and in every instance it has been 'without a cause'" (Barnes, ESword Module).

*The Help They Would Receive*

15:26-27

If I were sitting in the midst of those eleven men, and hearing the words of Jesus – words that may very well have contributed to their anxiety – I would need something to assure me that things were not going to be as bad as they might at first appear. Therein is the purpose, in my estimation, of the last two verses of this chapter. These two verses provide what Tenney calls the antidote for the world's hatred.

~~ 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 bear witness of me"*

This verse begins a section that presents more about the Holy Spirit than any other single passage. In fact, I think it would be safe to say that much of what we know about the Holy Spirit comes from this section (15:26 thru 16:15). This is the third *'Paraclete saying.'* Here it is promised that Jesus would send the Comforter. There is no contradiction between the Lord's promise that He would send the Comforter, and the promise that the Father would send the Comforter as stated in John 14:26. Any criticism fails to realize that Christ and the Father are one, and what the Father does, the Son does, and visa-versa.

*"he shall bear witness of me"* - Precisely how the Holy Spirit bore witness of Christ can be seen throughout Luke's inspired record of the establishment and growth of the early church. One passage

will serve to prove our point here: “And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (Acts 5:32). The presence of the Holy Spirit no doubt provided strength to those men who had left everything the world had to offer, and launched out into a world filled with sin and hatred, for the cause of Christ.

~~ 15:27 ~~

*“and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning”*

With the Holy Spirit at their side, those men would “bear witness,” something that was, without doubt, by divine inspiration given through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

*“because ye have been with me from the beginning”* – One of the requirements of being an apostle was that they had been present with Jesus during His earthly ministry (Acts 1:21-22). This verse is a reminder that the promise of the Holy Spirit here has reference to the apostles and not to all Christians.

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### They Hated Me Without A Cause By Tom Wacaster

As we bring this portion of our study to a close, along with the whole of chapter fifteen, there is one character trait of our Lord that deserves close attention. It is a character trait that is not specifically mentioned in this chapter; but when we study the overall life of Christ with this chapter as a background, something emerges that increases my appreciation for Him, and magnifies Him yet once again. Look at the chapter again. There were three parts in our study of the chapter. In the first we examined the Lord’s allegory of the True Vine. The ultimate purpose behind remaining attached to the Vine is that we might bear much fruit *to the glory of God* (15:8). The focus is the Father. In the second part of this chapter the focus is once again turned to the Father. Jesus kept the Father’s commands (15:10). He makes known to His “friends” those things He heard from the Father (15:15). It is the Father to Whom we should pray, and it is the Father Who grants our petitions (15:16). It is the hatred for

the Father that lay at the root of the world's hatred for Christ (15:23), and it is the Father Who would send the Comforter (15:26). This repeated reference to the Father helps me understand even more acutely the great love that Jesus had for His Father; and it is that wonderful love for the Father that drove Him unwaveringly toward the cross. Don't forget that the words of Jesus are designed to comfort the disciples. Ever aware of *their* needs, Jesus denied Himself, submitting to the will of the Father, and providing them with words to encourage and strengthen them in this their greatest hour of need. Even in the face of the world's hatred, our Lord maintained a calm disposition, ever moving toward that moment when He would give Himself as a ransom for all men; even those who hated Him *without a cause*. It was at this precise moment in our Lord's ministry that we are provided a glimpse at His inner character that lay behind His refusal to call "twelve legions of angels" (Matt. 26:53) and rescue Him from His enemies as He hung on the cross.

George Bernard Shaw is credited with having said, "Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated." There is not one shred of evidence that Jesus allowed the devil to drive Him to hate His enemies in return for their unwarranted hatred of Him. Though they hated Him without a cause, He loved them with an eternal cause: the salvation of their souls. If this were the only trait of our Lord that the Holy Spirit had wanted to make known to mortal man, it would cause us to stand in wonder, and ask, "What manner of man is this?" Dear reader, if you can look into the heart of Jesus, see His compassion and love for men, and the degree of His self-control that enabled Him to refrain from destroying those who hated Him, and then not magnify Him in your own mind and heart, then I do not know what else could possibly be done to achieve that end. Jesus is truly magnified in the sight of those who can "apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. 3:18-19), in spite of the fact that His enemies hated Him without a cause.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

# “WHEN HE, THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH IS COME”

*The coming and work of the Comforter, 16:1-15*

The chapter division at 16:1 is a poor division. Take a moment and read 15:26 thru 16:3 as a single unit and see if you don't get that impression. It also seems to me that 15:26 thru 16:6 contain somewhat of a general reference to the coming of the Comforter, whereas 16:7-15 is more specific.

There are four discernable parts in this portion of our study. They are distinguished by specific reference to what the Holy Spirit would *do*: “he shall bear witness of me” (15:26b), “he will convict” (16:8), “he shall guide” (16:13), and “he will glorify” (16:14). The first three are qualified with the added phrase, “when he is come” (15:26a; 16:8; 16:13). That fact is implied in verse 14 with the words, “and shall declare it unto you.”

“*He shall bear witness*” addresses the work of the Holy Spirit in relationship to the role He would play in comforting the apostles and in bringing to their remembrance the things Christ had told them (15:27; 16:4). The three “*he will convict*” statements (16:8-11) addresses the Holy Spirit's relationship to the world, while “*he shall guide*” addresses the Holy Spirit's work regarding revelation. The last, “*he shall glorify*” (16:14) indicates the relationship of Christ to the Spirit's work.

You might ask, “What does this have to do with the magnificence of Jesus?” The magnificence of Jesus is seen in the fact that He could provide such detail with regard to the coming and work of the Holy Spirit. Who among men could, with such detail, describe what his successor might do, or what policies he might enforce. Jesus would not only tell of the *coming* of the Holy Spirit, but would lay out a panoramic view of what the Comforter would accomplish when He *did* come.

The Holy Spirit is designated in our English translations as “the Comforter” (16:7). This ‘*paraklete*’ would bring comfort to the

troubled hearts of the apostles by providing (1) remembrance of the things previously spoken by the Lord, 16:1-7; (2) adequate conviction with respect to sin, 16:8-11; (3) guidance into all truth, 16:12-13; and (4) the glorification of the Christ, 16:14-15. Using these divisions, let me suggest the following headings for our study. The work of the Holy Spirit is:

A Work of Remembrance, 16:1-7;

A Work of Reproof, 16:8-11;

A Work of Revelation, 16:12-13

A Work of Reverence, 16:14-15;

Let's take a closer look.

*A Work Of Remembrance*

16:1-7;

~~ 16:1 ~~

*"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be caused to stumble"*

As mentioned, this verse is vitally connected to the last two verses of chapter fifteen. There the promise of the Comforter had been given. It is possible that the promise of the coming of the Comforter might have left the impression that things would change when that occurred. Jesus guards against such a misconception and warns that such a false hope must not be expected.

*"These things have I spoken unto you"* – One opinion is that "these things" refers to all that the Lord had spoken in chapters fourteen and fifteen. It seems to me, however, that it refers to what He had stated in the last chapter about the hatred of the world, a subject that He now continues by pointing out how this hatred will manifest itself. Keep in mind that there is no break in the Lord's discourse between the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters because the same subject is still under consideration.

*"that ye should not be caused to stumble"* – Some translations have the word "offended" rather than "stumble." Jesus may have been warning against the real danger that the disciples would fall



away in times of persecution. Johnson summed up the point Jesus was trying to make:

The Lord reveals to his disciples that there is an irrepressible conflict between the sinful world and himself, points out the issues and shows how it will involve his followers, in order that they may expect it, be prepared for it, and when it comes only see in it the fulfillment of his prediction (Johnson, ESword Module).

Jesus could have been referring to Peter's denial, Judas' betrayal, or the scattering of the disciples following His arrest. Those were certainly examples of the disciples stumbling in the face of real and/or pending persecution.

~~ 16:2 ~~

*"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God"*

Here Jesus addresses the first of two consequences that would come to the disciples as a result of the hatred of the world. First, *"they shall put you out of the synagogues."* Literally, they shall "excommunicate" you from the synagogues and from the fellowship with their countrymen. The first wave of persecution would come from their own countrymen. Their fellow Jews would pour out their vindictive attitude in a way the apostles may have not imagined possible. It is possible that they anticipated such action, for they had witnessed what was done to the blind man in John 9:34; but, at this stage of their development, they could not have been aware of the "frenzied hatred that would fall upon them when they began their worldwide proclamation of the gospel" (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*"that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God"* - Here is the second consequence that would come as a result of the hatred of the world. So intense would be the hatred of the world that they would be driven to actually kill them, and think that they were doing service to God. Saul is a good example of that intense hatred that would be poured out

upon the church; and that was from someone who thought he was doing God's service.

An old Rabbinical proverb illustrates the degree of hatred that drove the early enemies of the cross to do what they did: "Whoever sheds the blood of the impious does the same as if he offered a sacrifice." The Jews held that those who accepted Christianity were traitors to God. That same spirit has often been manifested in religious persecutions throughout the history of the church. From the crusades of the French kings against the Albigenses, to the present day fanatical persecution by Islamic zealots in the Middle East, the barbarous massacre of those who hold to the Christian faith is a demonstration of the same spirit of hatred Jesus warned about here.

What the Zealots did is notorious in history. They butchered any person, in cold blood, who, they pretended to believe, was an enemy to God, to the law, or to Moses; and thought they were fulfilling the will of God by these human sacrifices (Clarke, ESword Module).

~~ 16:3 ~~

*"And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me."*

The treatment that awaited the disciples was not to be regarded as abnormal. "It would be the logical result of unbelief, which was in turn a consequence of ignorance" (Tenney, 233). Any hope that the disciples entertained that they might somehow be exempt from the harsh and cruel treatment heaped upon the Lord was a vain hope at best.

~~ 16:4 ~~

*"But these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you. And these things I said not unto you from the beginning, because I was with you"*

*"when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you"* - The sentence is somewhat awkward in our English. By taking the last sentence and moving it toward the first part of the

verse, the progression of thought seems a little clearer: “I did not tell you these things in the beginning while I was with you, but now that the hour has come for me to go away, it is essential that I reveal them to you so that when hardships and persecution arise, you will remember that I told them to you.” But why bring to their remembrance the words spoken on this particular occasion?

Had all of these hardships and calamities come upon them without their having been told in advance, they might have been tempted to suppose that Jesus was not aware of them, thereby impugning His ability to do so. This, in turn, would lead to the inevitable conclusion that He was not the Messiah.

*“But these things have I spoken”* - While it may have been their impression that the hardships would cease with the coming of the Comforter, Jesus reminds them that all such expectations are wrong.

*“that when their hour is come”* - *“Their hour”* refers to the hour, or occasion when the world would vent its hatred against the church. Johnson’s summary was concise:

In the beginning of his ministry he did not teach of these things. In the second year of his ministry he began to present the lesson, but only in the hour of departure does he fully reveal the trials before his disciples. The greatest of all their trials, unless the promised Comforter came, would be the departure of the Lord. While he was upon the earth the bolts of hatred would strike him instead of his followers; but when he was gone and they represented him on the earth these bolts would strike them” (Johnson, ESword Module)

*“ye may remember them”* – Their recall of these words was part of what the Comforter would do once Jesus had departed.

~~ 16:5 ~~

*“But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?”*

The disciples had evidently resigned themselves to the fact that the Lord was going away. But their focus was not on Christ, nor upon the role that the Lord's death would play in fulfilling the purpose of God. Having accepted the fact, they would not ask Jesus, "Whither goest thou?" Instead, they turned inward, and instead of inquiring why He was about to leave them, or exactly where He was going, they thought only of their own loneliness. "Understandable as their attitude was, the Saviour was sensitive to this preoccupation on their part with the implications for themselves alone" (Coffman).

~~ 16:6 ~~

*"But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart"*

These words are not spoken out of censure as some suppose. Jesus was fully aware of their sorrow and sought to alleviate that as much as possible.

~~ 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 go, I will send him unto you"*

*"Nevertheless I tell you the truth"* - Though sorrow filled their hearts (vs. 6), it was important that Jesus tell them of these things. The Lord's effort to comfort them and prepare them for what was coming would never be achieved by withholding information from them. As much as He may have desired to withhold bad news from them, *"nevertheless"* expresses the course the Lord must now follow in telling them these things.

*"it is expedient for you"* - It is *"far better,"* or to the *"advantage"* that Jesus go away. Living this side of the cross, we can understand the necessity of the Lord's death far better than the disciples did at that time.

*"it is expedient for you that I go away"* - Unless the Lord descended back to the Father, the Comforter would not come. What seemed then a crushing sorrow was a real blessing. His

mission could never be accomplished unless He went away. These same apostles, who were now so overwhelmed with sorrow, would experience great joy following His resurrection. Following the Lord's ascension to the Father, these same disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy in their hearts (Luke 24:52). Coffman observed:

The high lines of politics, said Caiaphas, is that we get rid of him. The high line of God's policy, said Jesus, is that I go. Thus all the folly and wickedness of man is at last resolved into harmony with the divine government. "It is expedient," said the politician; "It is expedient," said the King and Redeemer" (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*"for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you"* - The departure of Jesus was essential to the fulfillment of God's purpose, and without the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, the next important step in carrying out the scheme of redemption could never occur.

*"I will send him unto you"* - Coffman made this astute observation:

Note on the expedience of Jesus' departure out of this world: The establishment of a worldwide religion with benefits of salvation from sin and eternal life for all humanity would have been impossible if the head of it had remained on earth, limited by earthly conditions, physically present at only one place at a time, inaccessible unless approached through other men (as did the Greeks, John 12:21,22), dependent upon human systems of communication, and his every contact with humanity subjected to monitoring and interpretation by human aides with their inevitable taint of fallibility and bias. An earthly head of such a thing as the true church of Jesus Christ is an impossibility revealed by this verse. If the holy Head of our blessed faith had himself remained on earth, there would have been no Holy Spirit to guide and comfort. Jesus Christ is the one true head of the true church in heaven "and upon earth" (Matt. 28:18-20). Whatever any man, therefore, may be "head of," it is not the holy church of Christ (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

Barnes was thinking along this same line, and his comments stand in stark contrast to the premillennial mindset that dominates our world today:

While he was with them, notwithstanding the plainest teaching, their minds were filled with prejudice and error. They still adhered to the expectation of a temporal kingdom, and were unwilling to believe that he was to die. When he should have actually left them they could no longer doubt on this subject, and would be prepared to understand why he came. And this was done (Barnes, ESword Module).

*A Work Of Reproof*

16:8-11

~~ 16:8 ~~

*“And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”*

*“And he, when he is come”* – It should be noted that this *Comforter* is not something akin to “the force” promised to Luke Skywalker, Jedi knight in the movie, *Star Wars*. Jesus uses a pronoun to refer to He Who would come once the Lord had left them. The Holy Spirit is as much a personage as is Christ and the Father.

*“will convict”* – Our English translates a Greek word that means to “refute an adversary completely; to prove guilt” (Thayer, ESword Module). As Tenney suggested, “It implies a successful action against an opponent that results in establishing his guilt” (Tenney, 235). With regard to this word *“convict,”* Coffman quotes Wescott:

It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestionable proof, of decisive judgment, and of punitive power. He who “convicts” another places the truth in a clear light before him, so that it must be seen and acknowledged as truth. He who then rejects, rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril. Whether or not the world will accept the word of the Spirit remains up to the

individual. The Holy Spirit would do His part in providing the word sufficient to point out the wrong and reveal the way of salvation (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

Precisely *‘how’* the Holy Spirit would accomplish this can be seen in a careful study of Acts 2:1-47. No sooner had the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit when, in keeping with the promise of our Lord, they preached the gospel, and through the preaching of the word, convicted the multitude of their sin in rejecting and crucifying the Son of God. Luke tells us that following the preaching of the apostles, the multitude was “pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). They were convicted of their crime before God! It is important to note that those first converts on the Day of Pentecost were convicted by *‘words’* spoken through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is also notable that Cornelius, the first gentile convert, was convicted and converted by *‘words’* spoken by the apostle Peter (Acts 11:14). There is not a single person who will ever be convicted of sin except it be through the preaching of the words of the gospel.

*“the world”* – Here the word has reference to those who hate the Lord, and who would hate the apostles as they served as ambassadors for Christ.

*“in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* – The work of reproof on the part of the Holy Spirit would apply to three areas: sin, righteousness and judgment. Let’s consider each of these.

*“sin”* – Our English word translates the Greek word, *‘hamartia,’* and means “to miss the mark; to wander from the path of righteousness; to wander from the law of God” (Thayer, ESwor Module). Of the threefold work of the Spirit having to do with conviction of the world, this one is perhaps the most difficult task of all. To convince the world of the guilt of sin and the need for salvation has always been a challenge. J.W. McGarvey was convinced that if he could get men to repent then getting them to obey would be easy. In the Far East the Chinese sage Confucius despaired of the world of his time when he said, “I have not yet

seen one who could perceive his fault and inwardly accuse himself.” Those of us living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have not changed much. “Sin” is one of those words that we don’t like to think about, much less openly acknowledge. Thirty years ago Karl Menninger addressed this very point:

In all of the laments and reproaches made by our seers and prophets, one misses any mention of “sin,” a word which used to be a veritable watchword of prophets. It was a word once in everyone’s mind, but now rarely if ever heard. Does this mean that no sin is involved in all our troubles – sin with an “I” in the middle? Is no one any longer guilty of anything? Guilty perhaps of a sin that could be repented and repaired or atoned for? Is it only that someone may be stupid or sick or criminal – or asleep? Wrong things are being done, we know; tares are being sown in the wheat field at night. But is no one responsible, no one answerable for these acts? Anxiety and depression we all acknowledge, and even vague guilt feelings; but has no one committed any sins? Where, indeed, did sin go? What became of it? (Menninger, 13).

Men may minimize sin, ignore it, or even attempt to justify it, but Jesus said the Holy Spirit would “convict” men of sin.

*‘of righteousness’* – The Holy Spirit will also convict the world of “righteousness.” Just as the world has a misconception regarding sin, so also do they regarding righteousness. The world does not understand what sin does to one’s relationship to God, feels no need for righteousness, and does not comprehend fully what will be involved in the coming judgment.

The world has no adequate sense of sin, neither has it an adequate sense of righteousness. There are certain standards of righteousness common among men, but they are very variable, and the best of them is most imperfect. The standard in one age differs widely from that in another, but in every case the standard is fixed just about the level of the average man’s doings. This is a most comfortable arrangement, which leaves most men free to follow the path of their own inclinations without any disturbing thought of better things. Keeping with ease to



the average level and counting themselves as good as their neighbors, they have a comforting assurance that nothing more can reasonably be expected of them. Ideals, doubtless, there are, and glimpses come of higher things, but they are looked upon as visionary (Hastings, 114).

It is these things that the Holy Spirit would address when He would come. Sin would be exposed, and the proper standard of righteousness found only in Jesus Christ would be presented to a lost and dying world. Jesus was the perfect example of righteousness, and the Lord's return to heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit likewise placed the stamp of approval upon Him as our authority and example.

The comprehensiveness of these terms is boundless. Here are the two fundamentals of man's spiritual condition and the two options, or alternatives, open to him. The Spirit convicts of sin, revealing man's fallen estate and bondage to Satan, and showing his total helplessness to achieve through his own efforts any healing of his condition. The Spirit also convicts of righteousness by revealing the mystery of how a man may acquire a righteousness not his own, that being the righteousness of Christ, available to all who receive and obey the gospel, thus being inducted "into Christ," and identified with Christ as Christ (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*"of judgment"* - When sin and righteousness meet, judgment is the ultimate outcome. Here the word means an "ethical decision." It implies a standard for judgment. Seeing that men vacillate in their multitudinous standards of authority, it is the Holy Spirit, and only the Holy Spirit, that could (and would) reveal heaven's standard of right and wrong in matters pertaining to sin, worship, and salvation; and it is by that standard that men shall be judged (John 12:48).

Taking into consideration the three-fold aspect of the Comforter's work of conviction, the fulfillment of this can be seen on that momentous occasion when the apostles, endowed and empowered with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, proceeded to fulfill these words of our Lord. If the student wants to know exactly *how*, and *when* the Holy Spirit accomplished this aspect

of His work, he need not go any further than Acts 2. In Acts 2:4 Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit gave the apostles the “utterance” of the very words that would convict those present with regard to “sin,” “righteousness,” and “judgment.” The words they spoke were the words of the Holy Spirit. As Johnson noted:

In the record of what it said by the mouth of Peter we find that it convicted (1) of sin, in that those who heard had rejected the Lord of life and glory; (2) of righteousness, in that it was demonstrated by the manifestations of that hour that God had exalted the Lord whom they had condemned to his own right hand, of which they had the proof in that “he had shed forth” what they saw and heard; (3) of judgment, in that they were assured of the “wrath to come” and warned to “save themselves from this untoward generation” (Johnson, ESword Module).

The Holy Spirit continues to convict the world of “sin,” “righteousness,” and “judgment” through the words written by the apostles and other inspired writers of the New Testament. The work of the Holy Spirit has not changed in this regard; only the method has changed from inspired men to the inspired word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

~~ 16:9 ~~

*“of sin, because they believe not on me;”*

The obstinate disbelief of a dying world is sometimes astonishing. It stands convicted of the sin of unbelief by the overwhelming evidence that is made available by God. The first sin is that of unbelief. It was unbelief that condemned the Israelites to wander in the wilderness; it was unbelief that caused Cain to kill his brother Abel. It is unbelief that continues to plunge men into the abyss of moral darkness. On the other hand, the blessings of faith are enumerated in Hebrews 11. Barnes was thinking along the same line:

The first thing specified of which the world would be convinced is sin. Sin, in general, is any violation of a law of God, but the particular sin of which men are here said to be convinced is that of rejecting the Lord Jesus. This is placed first, and is deemed the sin of chief magnitude, as it

is the principal one of which men are guilty (Barnes, ESword Module).

Tenney raises an interesting question: “Why should men be convicted of sin because of unbelief rather than because of some concrete offense, such as murder, theft, or adultery?” (Tenney, 235). What does the coming of the Comforter have to do with convicting men of sin? Or to put it another way, what has the return of Christ to the Father have to do with personal righteousness? Tenney then answered this question in a most forceful manner:

If Jesus is the Son of God, as this Gospel declares Him to be, then rejection of Him is the greatest and most fatal sin of all. Such sin is the product of an ingrained distaste for righteousness. It is the deliberate refusal of God’s will. It cannot be attributed to ignorance only, or to misfortune, or to fate, or to any one of a thousand reasons by which men excuse their behavior; for Christ is self-authenticating, and those who reject Him do so because they do not want Him (Tenney, 236).

When Jesus returned to the Father, that empty tomb, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and dozens of other manifest tokens of the authenticity of the claims of Jesus, all forever settled the question of whether or not God is justified in convicting men of sin! God placed the divine stamp of approval upon the ministry of Jesus by raising Him from the dead.

~~ 16:10 ~~

*“of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more;”*

Righteousness has to do with the commandments of God. It is the sinless life of our Lord that reveals to men the true meaning of righteousness, and it was the Holy Spirit that made the record clear and concise with regard to this matter. Human tribunals convicted Jesus of blasphemy because He had declared that He was the Son of God. They may have succeeded in putting our Lord to death, but as David said in the second Psalm, “He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh: The Lord will have them in

derision” (Psa. 2:4). When God exalted Jesus to the throne, He thereby demonstrated that those earthly tribunals were wrong, and that Jesus was truly righteous.

~~ 16:11 ~~

*“of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged”*

As with the previous “because” statements, there is some connection between the Holy Spirit’s work of convicting the world with regard to “judgement,” and the “prince of this world” having been judged. I want to focus first on the second half of the verse: “the prince of this world hath been judged.” You may recall that Jesus said “the prince of this world cometh” (John 14:30). Satan had his “hour” when he convinced the Jewish rulers to crucify the Savior. It was the spirit of the world, and Satan as the “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4) who slew Jesus. But when Jesus was raised from the dead, and all power and authority placed under His dominion as King of kings, that judgement was passed in the court of heaven against the “prince of this world.” If a critic wants to squabble over the fact that Jesus made this statement *prior* to His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, let him be reminded that oft times prophecy speaks of something as if it had already occurred, though still future. This is what we might call *prophetic certainty*. This means that a prophecy is so certain to occur that it is said to have already taken place. Coffman summed it up well:

Calvary was intended by Christ’s enemies as their judgment of him; but God made it the judgment of his enemies, particularly of Satan, the prince of this world. The cross indeed bruised the heel of the seed of woman, but it bruised the head of Satan. Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection condemned the value-judgments of men. Wicked men, living lives of conformity to the will of their prince (Satan) behold in Christ the rejection by Almighty God of their principles of judgment. The way of Christ was declared by his resurrection to be the right way. The Spirit of God would never cease from Pentecost and ever afterward to convict the world of what righteousness really is. The world’s traditional values were set aside by God’s judgment of the cross; and the prince of this world has

been summarily judged and condemned, and all who follow him shall partake of his judgment and destiny (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*A Work of Revelation*

16:12-13

This particular aspect of the Comforter's work is clearly seen in the finished product, *i.e.*, the completed, all sufficient, inerrant, verbally inspired word of God. As to *why* the apostles were not given the full revelation while Jesus was with them is the subject of verse 12; as to *when* they would be given that revelation is the subject of verse 13.

~~ 16:12 ~~

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

The astonishing truth that emerges from these words of Jesus is the fact that the disciples, even after having spent three and a half years with Jesus, were still not capable of receiving the full revelation of the mystery. Jesus revealed "here a little, there a little" during the course of His earthly ministry, only as they were able to *bear* them, and it would not be until after the ascension of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit that the full revelation of the mystery could, and would be given. The slowness of their minds to grasp and believe a lot of these truths continued even until the conversion of Cornelius, a full ten years following the apostles' baptism with the Holy Spirit. Barnes may have hit on at least one reason for their slowness of learning:

They were still full of Jewish prejudices, and were not prepared for a full development of his plans. He probably refers here to the great changes which were to take place in the Jewish system - the abolition of sacrifices and the priesthood, the change of the Sabbath, the rejection of the Jewish nation, etc. For these doctrines they were not prepared, but they would in due time be taught them by the Holy Spirit (Barnes).

~~ 16:13 ~~

*“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come”*

Any attempt to make the words of Jesus as some kind of sweeping promise to all disciples of every generation is riddled with error, and has, without doubt, poisoned the minds of men for centuries. Jesus was making a promise only to the apostles. If the student will go back and read again John 14:26 the issue becomes clear: “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and *bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you*” (emphasis mine, TW). Christians living two thousand years this side of the cross never heard Jesus say anything! How, then, can they be influenced by the Holy Spirit to remember something they never heard?

*“he shall guide”* – The Greek word translated “guide” (*hōdegeo*) means to “show the way” (Strong); “to be a guide or a teacher” (Thayer, ESword Module).

*“you”* – The promise was made to the eleven, but it applied to Matthias, who would be appointed to replace Judas, and to Paul, who was like a “child untimely born” (1 Cor. 15:8) and given a special ministry to preach to the gentiles. Any attempt to make the pronoun apply to someone other than those divinely appointed men is ripping the passage out of the context and can only result in a wresting of the Scriptures to one’s own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16).

*“into all truth”* – When men clamor for continued revelation to every Tom, Dick and Harry that comes along claiming God spoke to him, I know such a person has not given serious thought to what our Lord said in this verse. “All” means 100%, and all the reasoning to the contrary cannot change that truth. The Lord’s words do not leave room for 1%, or even 1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1%. Either the Holy Spirit guided those men into all truth, or He did not. It is a clear issue, and one that was settled long ago by the words of the Holy Spirit Himself: “Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through

the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). The word “all” in this passage is as forceful as the “all” in John 16:13. In this connection it is notable that the apostles were not shown anything new; only a bringing to remembrance of the things Jesus had taught them (John 14:26). It seems strange to me, therefore, that so many false teachers over the centuries have claimed that God told them something new, something heretofore unrevealed, or something not previously revealed in the Bible. Jesus did not even promise that to the apostles!

*“he shall declare unto you the things that are to come”* - Vincent had this note: “The article, omitted by A.V., is important. The meaning is not, ‘He will show you *some* things to come,’ but *the* things that are to come, or *the things that are coming*. These things are *whatsoever He shall hear*. The phrase occurs only here in the New Testament” (Vincent, ESword Module). It was through the apostle John that we received information about at least some of those things that are to come. Of course the revelation of “things to come” were not limited to the apostle John. Paul also provided us with considerable information regarding the resurrection and the second coming of Christ in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8, and 1 Corinthians chapter 15:20-28.

### *A Work of Reverence*

16:14-15

~~ 16:14 ~~

*“He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you”*

One significant truth in this verse is that the role of the Holy Spirit would be to glorify Christ, not Himself. The modern day fetish with the Holy Spirit is a complete misrepresentation of the very purpose for which the Comforter was sent. Let men accuse us of not believing in the Holy Spirit, or ridicule us for lack of faith if we do not accept their errors regarding the Holy Spirit. It does not change the fact that Scripture makes the truth clear on the matter. As Coffman noted:

This is a verse of nearly incredible importance in the proper understanding of Christianity. Here is the cornerstone of faith. The errors grounded here are colossal, and the general misunderstanding of it has perverted millions of disciples (Coffman).

Any religious movement that exalts the Spirit above Christ contradicts the plain teaching of Jesus. When men tell us, that the Holy Spirit moved them, revealed new truth to them, overpowered them, or touched their hearts, they are doing so without divine authority. All such theological nonsense is to be rejected outright.

~~ 16:15 ~~

*“All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you”*

Whereas Christ came as the representative of the Father, the Holy Spirit would come declaring things concerning the Son. He would do this through the revelation of divine truth to the apostles. This entire chapter, along with its remote and immediate context, is a clear and plain exhibition of the triune nature of the Godhead. There is no logical explanation as to the wording here if in fact the three divine Personages do not exist, as the Oneness Holiness Pentecostal Church believes.

The fact that the Holy Spirit would “glorify” the Christ is heaven’s declaration of the magnificence of Jesus. God would not magnify anyone, or anything, that fell short of absolute, eternal and glorious magnificence. God declared His approval of the Christ from the very moment that Jesus entered into His ministry; the Holy Spirit declares the magnificence of Jesus in each and every one of the four gospel accounts, and the inspired apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, upheld the magnificence of Jesus by their lives and their writings. Let it never be said that Jesus was a disappointment to the Father, or that He failed to accomplish His mission upon this earth, and is fulfilling His work at the right hand of the Father.

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“The Holy Spirit: His Personality and Nature”

by Tom Wacaster

Any endeavor to study the Holy Spirit is wrought with some difficulty due in a large part to the unwillingness on the part of so many to seriously study the subject. The influence of Calvinism on this subject compounds the problem. Most of Protestant theology has bought into Calvin's doctrine of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Consequently the minds of men have been poisoned long before they enter into a study of the Scriptures. Still others think that a knowledge of the Holy Spirit is elusive; that it is too “deep” for our understanding, and so no attempt is made to study the subject. This is rather surprising in view of the material that the Holy Spirit Himself has provided for our study and examination. In the Old Testament there are at least 90 references to the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament I counted more than 200 references to the Holy Spirit, not counting those passages which might be considered vague or uncertain as to what ‘spirit’ was under consideration; whether human spirit or the Holy Spirit. There are more than forty titles or descriptive phrases of the Holy Spirit. Some of these express His relationship to the Father (Spirit of God, Spirit of the living God, Spirit of Him that raised Jesus from the dead, etc.). Others express the Holy Spirit's relation to the Son (Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Jesus, Spirit of His Son, etc.). Still other titles express His essential deity (Spirit, Holy Spirit, One Spirit, eternal Spirit, etc.). Finally, some of these titles express His relationship to God's people (Spirit of truth, Spirit of life, Spirit of adoption, etc.). So it is not a lack of material, but the desire to know the truth on this subject that has limited the understanding of some. I hope that you will keep your Bible in hand and take the time to study the references that I provide for you. When appropriate I will quote the text. At other times, due to lack of space, I will simply provide a scripture reference. I hope and pray that this material, though somewhat limited in its scope, will assist you in a better understanding of the Holy Spirit.

It is the purpose of this article to affirm the personage of the Holy Spirit. We will study this under three headings: (1) The Disposition of the Holy Spirit; (2) The Deity of the Holy Spirit; and (3) The Duty of the Holy Spirit.

### The Disposition of the Holy Spirit

The best place to begin a study of the Holy Spirit is an examination of His personality and nature. This may seem superfluous to some, but you might be surprised to know that there are those who think of the Holy Spirit as some sort of “force” or “influence” that emanates from God. Some perceive of the Holy Spirit as some kind of “liquid” that can be poured into the vessel of the human heart in some mysterious fashion unknown and unfathomable to man. The Mormons have concluded that “he is a divine fluid, composed of material atoms or particles, or in other words an impersonal energy or cosmic force through which God acts.” That, in turn, leads not only to a misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit and His work, but contributes to the extreme emotionalism and irrational behavior on the part of the devotees to the various false doctrines associated with that misunderstanding.

Nor is the Holy Spirit some kind of “it” (though occasionally neuter pronouns are used to refer to Him). Rather, He is a personage, substantiated by consideration of at least four things.

First, the language employed to call attention to the Holy Spirit declares Him to be a personage. “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you” (John 14:26). “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 bear witness of me” (John 15:26). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you” (John 16:13-14). Notice that in these two verses the personal, masculine pronoun is used nine times.

Second, the characteristics given to the Holy Spirit affirm Him to be a person. (1) He is said to have a mind, Romans 8:27; (2) He has knowledge, 1 Corinthians 2:11; (3) He has the power of

volition and the power to forbid, Acts 16:6-7, 1 Corinthians 12:11, and Acts 21:11-14; (4) He possesses goodness, Nehemiah 9:20, Psalms 143:10; (5) He has the power to love, Romans 5:5, 15:30, Philippians 2:1-4; (6) We can have fellowship with him, 2 Corinthians 13:14; (7) We can be comforted by him, John 14:16-17, Acts 9:31, Romans 8:26.

Third, the very works that He performs clearly teach us that the Holy Spirit is a personage. (1) He speaks, John 16:13, Acts 2:4, 4:31, 8:29, 10:19-20, 28:25; 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 3:7; (2) He is said to testify, John 15:26, Acts 20:23; Romans 8:16; (3) He is said to teach, John 14:26; (4) To guide, John 16:13; (5) To lead, Acts 16:6-7; Romans 8:14; (6) To search, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; (7) To reveal, 1 Corinthians 2:10; and (8) To intercede, Romans 8:26.

Fourth, the emotions which He experiences and injuries suffered state emphatically that the Holy Spirit is a personage. (1) He can be grieved, Isaiah 63:10, Ephesians 4:30; (2) He can be resisted, Acts 7:51; (3) He can be despised, Hebrews 10:29; (4) He can be lied unto, Acts 5:3-9; (5) He can be blasphemed, Matthew 12:31-32.

### The Deity of the Holy Spirit

When we speak of the “deity of the Holy Spirit,” we simply mean those attributes which ascribe unto Him the divine nature. This inspired description leads us to the inevitable conclusion that He is, in fact, divine in nature. For one thing, the attributes and qualities of the Holy Spirit are attributes and qualities ascribed to the Godhead. “For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself” (John 5:26). Speaking of the Son, John said, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). But the Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of life” (Romans 8:2). “And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Likewise the Holy Spirit is light. It is the Holy Spirit Who provided enlightenment to the lost world. “We speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown...in a mystery...But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things

of God....Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:6, 7, 10, 13). Finally, John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Paul informed us, "And not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope: and hope putteth not to shame; because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us" (Romans 5:3-5). Hence, the very attributes ascribed to the Godhead are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Second, some of the terms used to describe the Holy Spirit are terms that can only describe deity. The Holy Spirit is eternal. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God" (Heb. 9:14). If He is eternal, then He is divine since the very essence of deity is self existence. The Holy Spirit is omniscient. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, And thy right hand shall hold me" (Psalms 139:7-10). The Holy Spirit is omniscient. "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:10-11). "Who hath directed the Spirit of Jehovah, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?: (Isaiah 40:13-14). Finally, the Holy Spirit is omnipotent. "But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8). We conclude: Only deity possesses the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, or omnipresence. The Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, or omnipresence. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is Divine.

### The Duty Of The Holy Spirit

Right here we are speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit so far as it distinguishes Him from the other members of the Godhead. When examined carefully, the various works of the Holy Spirit reveal that He is indeed a separate and distinct personage from either of the other two members of the Godhead. First, there is the work of inspiration. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Literally, all scripture is "God breathed." But when compared with 2 Peter 1:20-21, we learn that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Second, there is the work of intercession. "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;" (Romans 8:26).

Third, there is the work of sanctification. "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).

Fourth, there is the work of conviction. "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

Fifth, there is the work of the miraculous. This is seen in the lengthy discussion on the Spiritual gifts as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Sixth, there is the work of the resurrection. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11).

Seventh, there is the work of creation. It is stated in Genesis 1:1-2 that "God created the heavens and the earth....And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Each member of the

Godhead played a part in that creation. From John 1:1-3 we learn that Christ was the agent by Whom and through Whom all things were made. John plainly states that “without him was not anything made that hath been made” (John 1:3b). But there was also the work of the Spirit. From Job 26:13 we learn, “By his Spirit the heavens are garnished.” The word ‘garnished’ means to adorn, beautify, embellish.” If we compare the work of the Godhead in the spiritual creation with that specifically mentioned in the physical creation, we conclude that God served as the architect, Christ as the builder, and the Holy Spirit as the organizer. This arrangement identifies each member of the Godhead as being distinct in personage, and holy in nature. Finally, there is the creation of man. It is said in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Note the use of the plural here. It is stated again in Genesis 2:7, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” In Job 33:4 Elihu declares, “The Spirit of God hath made me, And the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Hence, the Spirit of God was actively involved in the creation of man.

All of this leads us to the inevitable conclusion that the Holy Spirit is a distinct, separate personage. A proper understanding of this will lend itself to a deeper appreciation for the Holy Spirit, and a greater respect for His work in God’s overall purpose and plan for man.

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## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

### “IN THAT DAY”

#### *Final Instructions, 16:16-33*

This portion of our study contains a two-fold prophecy. In the first, the Lord announces His departure, but focuses upon what lay ahead that would turn their sadness to *joy*. Verse 16 sets the tone for what follows in verse 17-28, captured in the words, “ye behold me no more,” and “ye shall see me.” The words are, without doubt, a prophecy of the Lord’s death and His resurrection to follow. The prophecy does not end there. In verse 28 the Lord looks beyond the resurrection to the time when He would ascend to the Father, thus fulfilling His mission, and providing salvation to all men. The disciples, unable to comprehend the full extent of the prophecy, become confused and asked, “What is this that he saith?” (16:18). The remainder of this first movement is a deeper explanation of what Jesus meant in verse 16, the design of which was to look forward to the time when their sorrow would be turned to joy.

The second prophecy is more immediate and has to do with what would occur that very night. This part of our study (verses 25-33) begins with the words, “*These things have I spoken unto you.*” The last verse contains the same words, giving us an indication that we are looking at a single unit of thought. As Jesus now prepares to enter the garden, His disciples assure Him that they now understand; that they truly believe that Jesus “camest forth from God” (16:30). Their confident affirmation of faith would be short lived, however, for no sooner would Jesus exit from the garden when the disciples would be “scattered, every man to his own” (16:32).

Keep in mind that earlier in the previous chapter Jesus has promised the coming of the Comforter (15:26). Without the Lord’s departure, the Holy Spirit would not come (16:7). The prospect of the Lord’s departure was now becoming increasingly clear in the minds of the disciples. It was necessary now that Jesus offer some final instructions regarding His upcoming departure; instructions that would *inform* and *encourage*;

instructions that would turn their sorrow to joy, and show them that their tribulation would give way to peace. It is easier for those of us living this side of these events to see exactly what the Lord had in mind. The apostles, however, did not enjoy the benefit of knowing precisely how the events of the next few days would play out. Thus, in verses 16-24 we have *sorrow* giving way to *joy*. In verses 25-33 we have *tribulation* giving way to *peace*. Let's consider each of these. Let's take a closer look.

*Sorrow Giving Way To Joy*

16:16-24

Men measure life by time; God measures it by eternity. The limited ability of the disciples to see what lay ahead is a part of why they were so discouraged. If they, like Asaph, would enter into the sanctuary of God and view the "latter end" (Psa. 73:16-17), their despair would soon vanish away. Like these disciples, Asaph sought to know the answer to a puzzling question of his time; and like the disciples, it "was too painful" for him to deal with (Psa. 73:16). Once he entered into the "sanctuary" and saw the "latter end," his questions were answered and his faith renewed. His *sorrow* gave way to *joy*. The disciples of Jesus were focusing on the Lord's departure. They were not looking beyond that point. If Jesus could get them to look beyond the moment and see His resurrection and subsequent ascension to the Father, their hope would be renewed. "That day" (16:23, 26) may have seemed a long time off to the disciples; but it *would come*; and when it did their *sorrow* would give way to *joy* (16:24).

~~ 16:16 ~~

*"A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me"*

"A little while" - This phrase is repeated seven times in this passage. When a phrase occurs that many times in so few verses, it suggests to me that it is essential to a proper understanding of the passage. "A little while" – we are dealing with time, are we not? When measured in view of eternity, all time is but a "little while." Jesus would die in the morning at the ninth hour, and that afternoon He would be buried, and for "a little while" – three days – they would not see Him. Following His resurrection,



Jesus would appear to the disciples, and for forty days – “again a little while” – they would see Him again before He “went to the Father.” Adam Clarke thought that the words, “again a little while” might refer to the Lord’s coming to destroy the nation of Israel in 70 A.D. I see nothing in the context that would suggest that. In fact, the sequence of events in the context of this section ends with Jesus “going to the Father” (16:28), not rendering judgment upon Israel.

~~ 16:17-18 ~~

*“Some of his disciples therefore said one to another, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? We know not what he saith”*

Every attempt to open the eyes of the disciples seems to only have produced more confusion. *“What is this that he saith?”* They still could not comprehend the deeper message. While the disciples were confused as to the meaning of the Lord’s words, it must be remembered that they did not have the information we have relative to the Lord’s death, resurrection and ascension. I don’t think they were confused about His departure. That was something of which they seemed to be certain. The problem was, they did not know what was meant by their seeing him again in a “little while.”

~~ 16:19 ~~

*“Jesus perceived that they were desirous to ask him, and he said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, A little while, and ye behold me not, and again a little while, and ye shall see me?”*

*“Jesus perceived they were desirous to ask him”* – Was it a look on their faces that communicated their desire? Some seem to think so. The Greek word here is ‘ginosko’ and means “to come to know; get a knowledge of; perceive” (Thayer, Esword). The same word is used in John 2:24: “But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men.” While it is possible that the Lord’s perception was a natural observance, I am prone to think that John is referring to the Lord’s divine omniscience here. I

draw that conclusion because Jesus was fully aware of the exact question they wanted to ask, as indicated in the last portion of the verse.

~~ 16:20 ~~

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

*“ye shall weep and lament”* - Both words are used of the loud lamentations so common in the east. Vincent points out that the word *“weep”* refers to the *“audible weeping, the crying of children, as distinguished from [the word that means] to shed tears, to weep silently, which occurs but once in the New Testament, of Jesus’ weeping”* (ESword Module).

*“the world shall rejoice”* – While it is true that the world would rejoice because of the Lord’s death and resurrection, I do not think that is what Jesus was referring to. The “world” throughout this discourse has been a reference to those who hated Jesus. Here it refers to those Jews who sought His death and who would rejoice once their evil plans to put Jesus to death had been completed.

The world will rejoice, because to some extent it will be the world’s doing, and it will fancy for a little while that it has got its way and succeeded excellently well. The world will roll a stone to his sepulcher, and make it as sure as they can, sealing the stone and setting a watch. Pharisaism will exult that this demand for a higher righteousness than its own is forever hushed; Sadduceeism will rejoice that this troublesome witness to unseen and eternal things is silenced; the hierarchy will boast that now no danger prevails of the Romans taking away their place and nation; the world will praise the deed of blood; but all this rejoicing will last “a little while.” Christ reaffirms their grief, and even for “a little while” justifies it, so long as they can hear the jubilate of the world over their personal burden of unutterable sorrow (Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module).

*“your sorrow shall be turned into joy”* – In the course of less than 96 hours the disciples would experience a wide range of emotional highs and lows. Deep sorrow would come upon them, followed by great joy. When Jesus died on the cross they experienced unspeakable sorrow. But when the disciples peered into the empty tomb on the third day, their sorrow quickly changed to joy, and their *“we hoped”* (Luke 24:21) was replaced with *“the Lord is risen”* (Luke 24:34). Yes indeed, their sorrow was turned into joy! Their greatest calamity actually became their source of highest comfort.

~~ 16:21 ~~

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

Jesus was fond of teaching in parables and using illustrations. A *“woman...in travail”* refers to a “woman giving birth” (Thayer, Esword), along with the accompanying sorrow of pain that goes with it. Once the child is *“delivered,”* the travail immediately turns to joy, and she no longer remembers the anguish. The old prophets often compared the grief of Israel or her peril to the pangs of a travailing woman preludeing deliverance (Isa. 21:3; 26:17; 66:6-7; Hosea 13:13, etc.). The disciples were entering into their *travail*, and it would not end until “that day” when the Comforter came upon them on the Day of Pentecost.

~~ 16:22 ~~

*“And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you”*

*“And ye therefore now have sorrow”* – Vincent noted that this “form of expression occurs frequently in the New Testament, to denote the possession or experience of virtues, sensations, desires, emotions, intellectual or spiritual faculties, faults, or defect,” but that it is “stronger than the verb which expresses any one of these” (Vincent, Volume II, 259). He goes on to point out:

For instance, *to have faith* is stronger than *to believe*: *to have life*, than *the act of living*. It expresses a *distinct, personal realization* of the virtue or fault or sentiment in question. Hence, *to have sorrow* is more than *to be sorrowful* (Vincent, 259).

*“but I will see you again”* – There is no way to take these words other than as a reference to the resurrection.

*“and your joy no one taketh away from you”* - Following the Lord’s ascension there is no indication that any of the disciples ever doubted for a moment that Jesus had risen from the dead. All the persecutions they faced, and every fiery trial they had to endure, never shook their faith, and through all of their afflictions they manifested a deep sense of joy in their lives.

~~ 16:23 ~~

*“And in that day ye shall ask me no question. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name”*

*“And in that day”* – I don’t see any way of getting around the conclusion that this “day” of which the Lord speaks here is the day of Pentecost. It was on “that day” that the promises in this section were fulfilled. There remained some things yet to be learned during the forty day interval between the Lord’s resurrection and ascension. Just prior to the Lord’s return to the Father the disciples were still unclear about certain aspects of the kingdom as indicated by their question in Acts 1:6.

*“Ye shall ask me no question”* – I don’t think this is some kind of prohibition against praying to Jesus. It just does not fit the context. There are enough reasons to conclude that praying to Jesus is not authorized in the New Testament. There is no command, example, or necessary inference that the practice existed in the first century church. That being said, what was Jesus communicating to the disciples? I am prone to agree with Johnson:

[It] means they shall ask him no questions because of their ignorance and misunderstanding. While attending his

earthly instruction they were dull of comprehension and often ask questions because they did not understand him, but when the Comforter was come he would teach the apostles all things (14:26). Enigmas would be solved, mysteries would be clear (Johnson, ESword Module).

*“if ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name”* – Here the sense is that of making a request. Here prayer *does* enter into the picture; and note that this particular “asking” is directed to the Father, not the Son. In fact, there are two different Greek words in this verse, both translated “ask.” When Jesus told His disciples, “ye shall ask me no question,” He used the word ‘*erotao*.’ But when He said, “ye shall ask anything of the Father,” He used the word ‘*aiteo*.’ Whereas the primary meaning of the first word is “to question” (Robertson, ESword), the second word means “to ask; to beg” (Thayer, ESword).

~~ 16:24 ~~

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

*“Hitherto”* – This would be during the Lord’s ministry. As if to say, “up to this point, or up until now.”

*“have ye asked nothing in my name”* – It is not that the disciples had never asked Jesus questions, or even made requests of Him. It is, rather, that they had never asked the Father *‘in the name of Christ.’* This great truth, that all things were to be done in the name of Christ, was reserved for that “day” after which Jesus had ascended to the Father, and taken His seat at the right hand of God. It was then that “all authority” was given to Him “in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18).

It is remarkable that Jesus, even in the shadow of the cross, was able to keep His eyes on heaven. The cross was merely the road He must trod to return to that heavenly abode. Once all things had been “finished,” the mystery answered, and the eternal plan of God enacted, then – and only then – would the disciples pray to the Father, *through* Jesus Christ the Son, in full expectation that God would answer. The result? *“Your joy may be made full.”*

You and I have the same promise of answered prayer. The realization of that promise, and the repeated demonstration that God will answer prayer, will produce joy in the heart of every child of God.

*Tribulation Giving Way to Peace*

16:25-33

The promise of peace would be fulfilled through the path of tribulation. There was no way to avoid it. Every saint must travel the same road, and “that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

~~ 16:25 ~~

*“These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings: the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father”*

*“These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings”* – Concentrate on the last two words: “dark sayings.” The Greek word is *‘paroimia,’* and means “a saying out of the usual course or deviating from the usual manner of speaking; a current or trite saying, a proverb; any dark saying which shadows forth some didactic truth, especially a symbolic or figurative saying” (Thayer, ESword). Prior to this precise moment Jesus had used these “dark sayings” to communicate a message that would later be put forth in plain, unmistakable language. As to why Jesus would, until this moment, shroud the truth in “dark sayings,” there are several possible explanations. For one thing, any premature declaration of the truth of His deity and Messianism might have interfered with God’s time table. Second, it is possible that the inability of the disciples themselves to grasp those truths prior to this moment caused the Lord to use this method of slowly unfolding the truth of the gospel. Whatever the reason for these “dark sayings,” we know that God in His infinite wisdom knew what was best.

*“the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings”* – Jesus was saying something to this effect: “When that time comes, I will no longer be the one to speak to you. I won’t have to tell you things in a figurative way. Instead, when the Holy

Spirit comes, He will tell you plainly of the Father, when He guides you into all truth.”

~~ 16:26 ~~

*“In that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you,  
that I will pray the Father for you;”*

*“In that day”* and *“the hour”* refer to the same time frame. Once Jesus had ascended to the Father, the disciples would pray to the Father *in the name of Jesus Christ*.

*“I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you”* – The precise meaning of these words is difficult to ascertain. I think the meaning falls somewhere in the realm of two possibilities. First, it could be that Jesus was telling His disciples that there was no need for Him to mention these things to them again. He had told them in dark sayings; now they must wait until the full revelation of truth is given by the Holy Spirit. God now stood ready to confer on them all the blessings promised to these men by the Lord.

A second possibility is that Jesus was telling them that when the “hour” was come – when Jesus died, had been resurrected, and then ascended to the right hand of God – that then, men could approach God directly. In that “hour” Jesus would serve as our mediator, through Whom we can now “draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

~~ 16:27 ~~

*“for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me,  
and have believed that I came forth from the Father”*

*“loveth you”* - This translates the Greek *‘phileo,’* rather than *‘aape,’* the more common word for “love.” Notice the close association between the Father’s love for these men, and their love for Christ, and their faith in Jesus as He Who “came forth from the Father.” The same conditions regarding faith and obedience exists for all men who have, or ever will live.

~~ 16:28 ~~

*“I came out from the Father, and am come into the world:  
again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father”*

This verse contains an amazing summation of the Lord’s incarnation, His life, and His destiny and mission. Look at each part of the verse and see if you don’t agree:

*“I came out from the Father”* - This would suggest His previous glory prior to the incarnation.

*“am come into the world”* - This would be His incarnation; “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14).

*“I leave the world, and go unto the Father”* – This is His ascension to the right hand of God the Father.

Christ had said all this before, but in “dark sayings.” For some reason the disciples had never seen the full implications of the message. Oh yes, there were those occasions when what they had come to believe brought them ever so close to the full realization of heaven’s message. Peter’s confession at the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16) was an early indication that they were moving ever so slowly to the implications of what Jesus had been teaching them in those “dark sayings.” After three-and-a-half years of His earthly ministry Jesus could now clearly, plainly, and forcefully tell His disciples the story in this encapsulated statement.

This verse serves as the crescendo of the symphony of Jesus’ life. This verse, and all that it implies, could now be declared in its fullness. The miracles have borne witness to the magnificence of Jesus. The sayings of Jesus declare His wisdom, thereby magnifying Him in the eyes of the multitude. In this verse the magnificence of Jesus is finally seen in all of its splendor.

Some beam of the heavenly light has begun to irradiate the whole of this sublime but partially realized revelation of God in Christ. The doubts vanish in this sunshine (Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module).



~~ 16:29 ~~

*“His disciples say, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no dark saying”*

*“Lo, now speakest thou plainly”* – They finally got it! Now they understood the mission of Jesus. Now it all made sense. Now it was apparent to them what, “by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10), those dark sayings meant. With hearts full of faith, and joy unspeakable at what they finally understood, they were ready to courageously declare what follows.

~~ 16:30 ~~

*“Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God”*

The words of Jesus in verse 28 now seemed simple and plain to the disciples. How often have we struggled with a passage, trying to understand the full meaning, until at last it is as if someone turns on a light, and all of a sudden we “get it!” That is something of what has happened here. Once we “get it” we are ready and anxious to tell others of our new found discovery. The disciples now thought they had the key to the dark sayings; and like many of us, they were anxious to act upon that truth they had just discovered. Unfortunately, they did not understand the full implications and cost involved in that faith. And so the Lord warns them of one more moment when their weak faith would prove disastrous.

Their stumbling while the Lord was in the hands of his enemies, and their fear, and their despair while he lay in the tomb, shows that they did not understand. Augustine says: “They so little understood that they did not even understand that they did not understand. For they were babes” (Johnson, ESword).

I have no doubt that the disciples, at this point, were determined, if need be, to die with Jesus. What a shock they must have had when Jesus said what follows.

~~ 16:31 ~~

*“Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?”*

As if Jesus were telling them: “And will ye continue to believe? Ye are now fully convinced; and will you, in the hour of trial, retain your conviction, and prove to be faithful and steady?” One is reminded of heaven’s warning, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Jesus read their hearts better than they knew. Not only could he answer the unspoken questions: he could assess the strength of their belief in him. It was sincere and genuine, bound up with their love for him, but it was about to be exposed to a test such as they had not imagined. For all their faith and love, they would abandon him the hour of his greatest need (Bruce, 325).

When we feel strong in the faith we should examine ourselves. It may be that we are deceived; and it may be that God may even then be preparing trials for us that will shake our faith to its foundation (Barnes, ESword Module).

~~ 16:32 ~~

*“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is 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”*

*“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come”* – Within a very short period of time the disciples would be tested; and tested severely. Jesus tells them they would fail the test. The words must have been devastating, and were it not for the rest of what Jesus says here, they might have given up in complete despair.

*“and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me”* – These words were designed to actually encourage them. Put yourself in their position. If they were to be scattered, *“every man to his own,”* who then would be there to encourage the Lord? Was all now at stake? Would their failure mean the failure of heaven’s plan? Here, then, is a promise that even in view of their weak and

faltering faith, all would not be lost. Heaven's plan would succeed.

~~ 16:33 ~~

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

*"These things have I spoken unto you"* – The truth is not always pleasant; but it is profitable. How many times have we attempted to hide ourselves from something that we perceive might inflict pain? Why do we avoid going to the dentist, if not to avoid the pain that might come with the truth that we have to have a cavity filled. Jesus did not tell them these things to produce sorrow. He spoke those words in order that the disciples might have peace. Even in the face of tribulation, they could have peace; and what greater tribulation ever confronted this small band of disciples than the thought that their whole world might now collapse around them?

*"in me...in the world"* – Note the two spheres of existence: *"in me"* and *"in the world."* Those that are *in Christ* will inevitably suffer tribulation *in the world* (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12).

As surely as he overcame,  
And triumphed once for you,  
So surely you that love his name  
Shall triumph in him too.

The tribulation was at hand; they were about to be plunged into it.

*"But be of good cheer"* – The idea is not that of an emotional giddiness. Robertson tells us this is a word for courage in the face of danger (Robertson, ESword).

*"I have overcome the world"* – Here is the basis for our victory. That victory is, as the popular hymn expresses it, "in Jesus." Since Jesus has overcome the world, all those who put their trust in Him and obey His will share in that victory.

FOUR FLAT TIRES  
by Tom Wacaster  
(originally written in 2010)

On a recent trip out of town I passed through Memphis, Tennessee. Occasionally I have to go to, or pass through, a large town to remind myself why I enjoy living in a small town. On this particular day the traffic was not all that heavy, and my route took me to the north side of the city, heading east on I-40. For the most part the state of Tennessee does a good job of keeping their roads clear of debris. On this particular day, however, as I rounded a curb, dead ahead was what appeared to be something like one of those old wire mesh bed springs lying right in my path. I was never really sure exactly what it was because I was too busy dodging the object to preserve my automobile and my sanity. I did manage to miss the item; I cannot say that for the driver behind me - he hit the object with all four tires. I was glancing in my rearview mirror to see how he fared and all I saw was what appeared to be puffs of air shooting out of both front tires and both rear tires. He did not lose control of his car, but he did suffer the unimaginable: all four tires going flat at one time. As he pulled off the road, two or three other drivers dodged the obstacle, and eventually the traffic had slowed to the point where others were stopping to render aid (and hopefully remove the obstacle from the road). As I continued east the images of dodging autos, slowing traffic, and frustrated drivers pulling off the road faded in my rearview mirror. I pitied that poor gentleman who appeared to have suffered four flat tires at one time!

There was an Old Testament character who suffered four flat tires at one time, and so far as the Bible tells us, he was not even riding in a chariot, much less an automobile. His name was Job. And the “flat tires” of which we speak are those trials that come into our lives and take the wind out of our sails and often drive us to our knees in prayer to the Father.

The “obstacle” that Job simply could not dodge was the devil. Asked by Jehovah if Satan had “considered my servant Job,” the devil answered, “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all

that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 1:9-11). There followed precisely four tragedies in the life of Job.

“And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:13-15).

“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:16).

“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:17).

“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:18-19).

Job suffered immensely; and the worst was yet to come. The devil robbed Job of his business (“flat one”), his property (“flat two”), his associates (“flat three”), and finally his children (“flat four”) - all in rapid succession so that Job had little or no time to respond. With the air taken out of his sails, hope taken from his heart, and joy snatched from his life, “Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD

hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:20-21). Instead, we are told, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22).

How would we react if, while travelling down the highway on the way to an important meeting, or on vacation, or simply out for a short trip to the local mall, and we were to encounter a flat on all four tires at one time? No doubt life is filled with uncertainties. Flat tires, whether it IS one, or four at one time, are nothing more than inconveniences. Perhaps how we react on just such an occasion might tell us a lot with regard to how we would react if we were to suffer as did Job. Don't forget this one thing: When the “flats” of life come along, God is there to help you change your tires. I'll close with the following poem that I hope will comfort some poor soul who might be suffering at this very moment:

*HE IS THERE*

by Bill Carr

When I need a word of comfort  
He is there!  
When I struggle 'neath a burden,  
He is there!  
When the blue skies turn to grey,  
And I cannot find my way  
At the closing of the day,  
He is there!

When I cannot face tomorrow  
He is there!  
When my life is filled with sorrow  
He is there!  
When I dread the coming dawn,  
And it seems I can't go on,  
When my hope is almost gone,  
He is there!



## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

### “AND LIFTING UP HIS EYES TO HEAVEN”

*Jesus' Prayer In The Garden of Gethsemane, 17:1-26*

There are some passages in the Bible that make the student feel as if he is standing on holy ground. This is such a chapter. I recognize that every word, in every chapter, in every book of the Bible has its purpose, and that no single passage is more important than any other. Still, in this chapter I see Jesus in all of His magnificence as He enters the garden and bows in prayer to the Father. The tributes paid to this chapter are almost as numerous as the commentary notes that have been written on it. Without exception, those sources which I consulted in my study of the chapter were cognizant of beauty and majesty of this chapter. Here are just a few of the tributes among many that I came across:

This prayer, so solemn and so tender, would never have been recorded had it not been intended for our study and profit, but I approach it with a feeling that it is almost too sacred for the usual verbal and textual criticism. It is the overflow of the full soul of the Lord in devotion to the Father, a fitting close to the wonderful discourses beginning in chapter 13. In order to drink in its spirit, the student must realize that the Lord stands at the foot of the cross, is about to suffer, and before the separation from his disciples and the agony and shame of the cross, he goes to the Father in their behalf and in his own. – *B.W. Johnson.*

Here is holy ground; here is the gate of heaven. No such prayer was ever heard before or since. It could only be uttered by the Lord and Savior of men, the mighty Intercessor and Mediator, standing between heaven and earth before his wondering disciples. Even he could pray it only once, in the most momentous crisis of history, in full view of the approaching sacrifice for the sins of the world, which occurred only once, though its effect vibrates through the ages. It is not so much the petition of an inferior suppliant, as the dialogue of an equal, and a solemn declaration of his will and mission. He intercedes with the eternal Jehovah as the partner of his counsel, as

the executor of his will of saving mercy. He looks back on his pre-mundane glory with God, and forward to the resumption of that glory, and comprehends all his present and future disciples in unbroken succession as a holy and blessed brotherhood in vital union with himself and his Father - *Phillip Schaff*

Where did Jesus offer this prayer to His Father? In view of the marked difference between the contents of the prayer as recorded by John when compared with the other gospel accounts, some have suggested it was offered at the Temple area prior to the short journey to the garden. Others place the time and location in the garden. I prefer the second option for the simple reason that there does not seem to be any break between chapters sixteen and seventeen.

When I compare the four gospels, it becomes apparent that John's record of the Lord's prayer is unique. Whereas the other accounts (Matt. 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46) focus on the sorrow overflowing from the heart of the Lord, John focuses on the victorious aspect of the Lord's prayer. Johnson quotes William Milligan on this:

The chapter on which we now enter contains what is generally known as our Lord's High-priestly Prayer. Such a name is appropriately given it; partly, because it is the longest and most solemn utterance recorded of the intercessions with which Jesus approached the throne of his heavenly Father on his people's behalf; partly, because he was at this moment standing on the threshold of his especial work as their great High Priest. No attempt to describe the prayer can give a just idea of its sublimity, its pathos, its touching yet exalted character, its tone at once of tenderness and triumphant expectation. We are apt to read it as if it were full of sorrow; but that is only our own feeling reflected back upon what we suppose to have been the feelings of the Man of Sorrows. In the prayer itself sorrow has no place; and to think that it was uttered in a tone of sadness is to entirely mistake what must have been the spirit of Jesus at the time. It speaks throughout of work accomplished, of victory gained, of the immediate expectation of glorious reward. It tells, not of sorrow, but



of ‘joy,’ joy now possessing his own soul, and about to be ‘fulfilled’ in his disciples (verse 13). It anticipates with perfect confidence the realization of the grand object of his coming,—the salvation of all that have been given him (verse 12), their union to himself and the Father (verse 21), their security amid the evils of this world while they execute in it a mission similar to his (verses 11, 15, 18,) and, finally, their glorification with his own glory (verse 24) (Johnson, ESword Module).

There are four distinct parts in this prayer. First, our Lord prays that He might be glorified with “the glory” which He had with the Father “before the world was” (17:1-5). Next, our Lord prays that the disciples might be guarded; not that they would be taken out of the world, but that the Father would keep them “from the evil one” (17:6-19). Third, our Lord prays for all Christians with particular emphasis upon their unity and the impact it would have upon the success of the preaching of the gospel (17:20-23). Finally, the Lord prays that the time would come when those with whom He had worked might behold His glory and be with Him, and with the Father (17:24-26). There is a notable progression in the prayer. First Jesus prays for Himself and His relationship with the Father. Expanding outward, Jesus next prays for those men whom the Father had given unto Him. The circle is widened again in verse 20 where Jesus prays for all Christians. Moving outward still, Jesus prays for the world, that they may come to know that the Father had sent Him.

We’ll study the chapter under the following headings:

A Prayer for Glory, 17:1-5

A Prayer for Protection, 17:6-19

A Prayer for Unity, 17:20-23

A Prayer for Reunion, 17:24-26

### *A Prayer For Glory*

17:1-5

~~ 17:1 ~~

*“These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the son may glorify thee”*

*“These things spake Jesus”* – Do these words refer to what proceeded, or what is to follow? Keeping in mind that the chapter and verse divisions are human tools to help in our study, the flow of the text suggests that it was John’s way of bringing to a close the discourse contained in chapters fourteen thru sixteen.

*“lifting up his eyes to heaven”* - Jesus now turns His attention from the apostles to the Father; from the earthly to the heavenly.

*“he said, Father, the hour is come”* - This is the “hour” toward which the entire ministry of our Lord had been moving. It is the hour of sacrifice, the hour of the cross; the very hour for which Christ came into the world. It is His greatest hour, the hour in which He so desperately needs the Father’s presence.

*“glorify thy Son”* - The Son was about to stoop to shame, to die on the cross as one accused and sentenced as a traitor, blasphemer, and insurrectionist. Had Jesus not been raised from the dead that shame would have remained. The Father answered this prayer when He raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand. It is as if Jesus were pleading that the Father would provide to the world the fullest demonstration that He is, indeed, the Son of God.

*“that the son may glorify thee”* - This would be accomplished by the spread of the gospel. It was the establishment of the church and the proclamation of the scheme of redemption that demonstrated the amazing wisdom of our God (cf. Eph. 3:10-12). “The conversion of a single sinner honors God; a revival of religion is an eminent means of promoting his honor” (Barnes, ESword Module).

~~ 17:2 ~~

*“even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life”*

If a mortal man asserted that he had “authority over all flesh,”

men would think he was mad. But this was not the claim of some kind of a lunatic, as evidenced by the miracles He performed and the words which He spoke. All of this was attested by reliable witnesses and recorded for the world to read. With the authority given to Him by the Father (Matt. 28:18), it would now be Jesus' prerogative to give "eternal life" to those who obeyed Him.

It needs to be observed here that in this prayer Jesus makes an important distinction between "all flesh" and those who were "given to him." He has power over all. He can control, direct, and restrain them. For more than 2,000 years the enemies of the cross have attempted to eradicate Christianity off the face of the earth. Every effort has been made to destroy the Bible, render its influence null and void, or discredit it in the eyes of men. While the devil has occasionally had his "little time," it remains an undeniable fact that Christianity remains alive and well to this very day. Let the mockers mock, the critics criticize, the atheists rant and rave, the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing (Psa. 2:1); the gates of hell have not, and will not prevail against the church (Matt. 16:18). The fact that the church and Christianity still exist today, despite every effort on the part of the devil to the contrary, glorifies the Father and the Son. Soviet Russia thought they could stop the advance of Christianity. They learned the hard way that when you fight with God you are on the losing side. The United States of America is undergoing a change in the very fabric of its culture. Forces are at work to eliminate every vestige of religion from the public eye. This generation will learn, too late, that it cannot overthrow the authority of our Lord.

~~ 17:3 ~~

*"And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ"*

*"And this is life eternal, that they should know"* – Eternal life is inseparably linked to a knowledge of *"the only true God, and him whom thou didst send."* It is not a superficial knowledge, but one that is rooted in deep faith. "And without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing *unto him*; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Eternal life is not a 'point-in-time'

blessing granted without any further obligations on the part of the recipient. The depth of that knowing is captured in the Greek word *‘ginosko.’* It is, as Thayer pointed out, “to know absolutely” (Thayer, ESword Module). Barnes correctly noted: “The word ‘know’ here, as in other places, expresses more than a mere speculative acquaintance with the character and perfections of God. It includes all the impressions on the mind and life which a just view of God and of the Saviour is fitted to produce.” (Barnes, ESword Module).

*“should know thee”* - Eternal life comes only through knowing God in a very personal and life changing way. The path to a proper knowledge is laid out in inspired scripture, but the full application of that knowledge to one’s life completes the process of truly “knowing” God and Christ. Robertson points out that the verb, “that they should know him,” is present active subjunctive, and means, “should keep on knowing.” Since that knowledge of God is mediated through the One Whom He chose, it is only through Him [the Lord] that men are admitted into fellowship with the Father.

*“and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ”* - Christ is, essentially, the Revealer; the One sent by the Father to make heaven’s will known to men.

*“even Jesus Christ”* - This is the only place where our Lord gives Himself this compound name, afterwards appearing in apostolic preaching and writing. Here the terms are used in their strict signification – “Jesus,” because He *saves* His people from their sins; “Christ,” as *anointed* by God to fulfill His priestly and kingly office.

~~ 17:4 ~~

*“I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do”*

*“I glorified thee on the earth”* - He glorified the Father by completing the work the Father had given Him to do. There remained one act by which the Father would be glorified; one act that would complete the obedience of the Son to the Father. Jesus was so committed to obeying the Father’s will that His

sacrifice on the cross is spoken of here as having already been accomplished. Jesus does not perceive of Himself as a disappointed failure, but as the obedient Son, and the successful Messenger and Apostle sent by the Father to mankind. In a matter of only a few hours our Lord would cry from the cross, "It is finished."

~~ 17:5 ~~

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

*"Father"* - In this prayer the word Father occurs six times. Jesus never says, "Our Father," as he teaches us to pray, nor "My Father," which would separate him from us, but "Father."

*"glorify thou me with thine own self"* - Literally, "glorify me by the side of thyself." Jesus was praying for the full restoration of Himself to the pre-incarnate glory and fellowship He had with the Father (cf. John 1:1-2), *"before the world was."* I get the distinct impression that Jesus was conscious of that glory He enjoyed with the Father prior to His incarnation.

Jesus ends the first division of His prayer, which is a petition for Himself, for the glory of the Father, and the good of the world. What will follow is a fourfold plea for the disciples.

#### *A Prayer for Protection*

17:6-19

It might be good before we look at the prayer itself to take a look at Jesus' assessment of these men for whom He was praying. It might help us understand a little better why Jesus was so close to these men, and give us some insight into the character traits He desires in all of us. First, they were possessed of a strong faith even before they were called by Jesus to be the ambassadors of the message of the Kingdom. The fact that "they have kept thy word" (17:6) is indicative of a humble and contrite heart that believed in God and manifested that faith in obedience. Second, they were men who could analyze and then act upon sufficient evidence. The miracles of Jesus, His teaching, yea His very character declared that He was (and is) more than just a man.

They were convinced by the evidence that Jesus came forth from the Father (17:8). Third, these were men who, like Moses, were willing to turn their backs on the riches offered by the world, “choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:25-26). These men were “not of the world” even as Jesus was “not of the world” (John 17:14). Fourth, these men were willing to accept a challenge and go forth as they were sent, preaching the gospel (17:18). Here were eleven men, each one like Nathaniel, an “Israelite, in whom is no guile” (John 1:47), deserving of their close friendship with Christ, and worthy of every blessing that Jesus requests that the Father bestow upon them.

Turning now to the prayer itself, it seems clear to me that the major emphasis is for the protection and safety of these men. Fully aware of what lay down the road, Jesus places them at the top of His prayer list, second only to His close relationship with the Father. Jesus prayed for their protection in view of:

- Who they belong to (17:6)
- Their love for the truth (17:7-8)
- The fact that they would glorify the Son (17:9-10)
- The fact that Jesus would soon leave them (17:11-13)
- The dangers they would face in the world (17:14-16)
- Their sanctification in the truth of God’s word (17:17-19)

We turn our attention now to our Lord’s prayer for these disciples.

*Protection In View Of  
Who They Belonged To  
17:6*

~~ 17:6 ~~

*“I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out  
of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and  
they have kept thy word”*

As the first reason why the Father should bless the disciples of the Son, it is pointed out that those men were a gift from the Father to the Son. More specifically (1) they were privileged to receive knowledge about the Father, 17:6a; (2) they had come “out of the world,” 17:6b; and (3) they had been faithful in keeping the word of God, 17:6c. Such men are candidates for great work in the Lord’s kingdom. So it was with them; so it is with us today.

*“I manifested thy name unto the men”* – In slightly more than a half dozen words Jesus summed up His work with these men. There are two essential thoughts here that beg closer consideration. First, in the Old Testament the “name” of God was inclusive of the whole character of God Himself. When Moses said to God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?” (Ex. 3:13), God answered, “*I AM THAT I AM.*” David wrote, “And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; For thou, Jehovah, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psa. 9:10). This does not mean that those who merely know what God is called will receive the blessing; rather those who know His character and nature are the ones who shall put their trust in Him. When the Psalmist wrote, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God” (Psa. 20:7), he meant that those who know what God is like will trust in Him. So when Jesus said He had “manifested thy name unto the men,” He was saying that He had declared – and *shown* – unto those men what God is like! When Jesus told Thomas, “If ye had known me, ye would have known the Father also” (John 14:7) He was telling the disciples that He, Jesus, is truly God come in the flesh. Beloved, imagine God in all His glory and magnificence; such splendor that no mortal man can look upon the face of God and live. Now look at Jesus! In doing so, the same magnificence you and I *cannot* see with the physical eye, these men saw in Jesus. Oh, the magnificence of Jesus Christ! No wonder they believed as they did!

Second, I have no doubt that the mention of the “name” of the Father conjured up the sacred four-letter symbol that was used so often by the Jews in Jesus’ day. I am referring to the

*tetragrammaton*, as it is called, YHWH. The name of God was considered so sacred that it was never pronounced, except when the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. Those four letters – YHWH – stood for the name Yahweh. One will notice there are no vowels in that four letter symbol. Barclay makes this incredible observation, followed by a conclusion that drives home the force of our Lord's words in this prayer:

We usually speak about Jehovah and the change in the vowels is due to the fact that the vowels of Jehovah are those of Adonai, which means "Lord." In the Hebrew alphabet there were no vowels at all. Later the vowel sounds were shown by little signs put above and below the consonants. The four letters Y-H-W-H were so sacred that the vowels of 'Adonai were put below them, so that when the reader came to YHWH he would read, not Yahweh, but 'Adonai. That is to say, in the time of Jesus the name of God was so sacred that ordinary people were not even supposed to know it, far less to speak it. God was the remote, invisible king, whose name was not for ordinary men to speak. So Jesus is saying: "I have told you God's name; that name which is so sacred can be spoken now because of what I have done. I have brought the remote, invisible God so close that even the simplest people can speak to him and take his name upon their lips" (Barclay, ESword).

Here were eleven men to whom had been revealed the mysteries of heaven. "For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not" (Matt. 13:17; Luke 10:24). Who among men were better qualified to communicate to the world those same mysteries? No wonder Jesus prayed for their well-being.

*"thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word"* – Not only had they received that knowledge; they kept it by faithful obedience thereto.



*Protection In View Of  
Their Love For The Truth  
17:7-8*

~~ 17:7 ~~

*“Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me  
are from thee”*

The Lord had taught these things to the disciples. He repeatedly told them that what He had received had come from the Father. Once those men received that truth, the implications would be far reaching. If God is the author of those things declared by the Lord, then the words of Jesus would stand firm and eternal, in spite of the cross that now lay before Him.

*“Now they know”* - Their knowledge was “by a strong experience, by tasting, handling, seeing, trusting, by vivid flashes of light, by keen, clear intuition of the reality” (Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module). John would later attest to this same firm knowledge:

That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).

Take special note of the increasing confidence the apostles were gaining. With an increase in knowledge comes an increase in maturity, and with greater maturity comes boldness and courage.

~~17:8~~

*“for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them;  
and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth  
from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me”*

*“the words which thou gavest me”* – The process of revelation has always consisted of words. The Father gave “words” to the

Son. The Son gave “words” to the apostles. The Holy Spirit taught in “words” (1 Cor. 2:13), and the apostles recorded that message in “words” (Eph. 3:3-5). All of this points to the verbal inspiration of Scripture. Jesus defended the immortality of the soul and rested His case on a single two letter word: “I AM” (Matt. 22:32). Paul also built an argument around a single word in Galatians 3:16. It is the “word” of Christ that shall judge us in the last day (John 12:48). How anyone could ever hope to defend some kind of “thought inspiration” rather than verbal inspiration is a mystery to me.

*“I have given unto them”* – The very “words” given by the Father were passed along to the apostles.

*“and they received them”* – Our English translates *‘lambano’* which has the meaning of laying hold on something. Thayer says the original means “to take with the hand; to lay hold of any person or thing in order to use it. To receive what is offered” (Thayer, ESword Module). There must have been a reason for their having embraced those words. Their confidence grew out of the full realization that the words given to them by Christ were the words given by the Father. There is also in this section a confidence on the part of our Lord that these men whom God had given could, and would accomplish the task for which they had been chosen. It is reflected in the words of the Lord’s prayer. As William Barclay put it:

He never doubted that they would carry on the work he had given them to do. Let us remember who and what they were. A great commentator said: “Eleven Galilean peasants after three years’ labor! But it is enough for Jesus, for in these eleven he beholds the pledge of the continuance of God’s work upon earth.” When Jesus left this world; he did not seem to have great grounds for hope. He seemed to have achieved so little and to have won so few, and it was the great and the orthodox and the religious of the day who had turned against him. But Jesus had that confidence which springs from God. He was not afraid of small beginnings. He was not pessimistic about the future. He seemed to say: “I have won only eleven very ordinary men; but give me these eleven ordinary men and I will change the world” (Barclay, ESword).

*Protection In View Of  
The Fact That They Would Glorify the Son  
17:9-10*

~~ 17:9 ~~

*“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom  
thou hast given me; for they are thine”*

The petitions of our Lord at this time, and in this place, are for these disciples. We are not to conclude from this that the Lord never prayed for the lost world, as we shall see later in this chapter. On one occasion Jesus even bid us pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

*“I pray for them”* – I have no doubt that Jesus was praying for this little group of men who would glorify Christ when once they had received that Great Commission to “go into all the world” (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). But there is an application that is readily seen as the multitudes in succeeding generations would hear, believe, and obey the gospel. They, too, would glorify the Christ with that gospel message that would go forth into the world in following generations, reaching across the mountain peaks of time, even to this 21<sup>st</sup> century. All those who were obedient to heaven’s call would become citizens of a “better country, that is, a heavenly” (Heb. 11:16). These men for whom Jesus now prayed, and all those who have embraced their message and followed in their footsteps, live in this world, but they are not *of* this world. As sojourners and pilgrims in this world, we “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11), while taking up the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:13-18), going forth conquering and to conquer. James Hastings, in a most eloquent manner, captured the full essence of “them” for whom Jesus now prayed:

The Church was a colony of heaven, located in the world but with all its loyalties centered in a realm beyond its borders. Empires, political systems, and social adjustments were no concern of the followers of Christ. They represented an alien rule to be submitted to for the good of the soul, and sometimes to be resisted, until the

redeemed should enter upon their promised inheritance. The Church consisted of refugees, who, however, were not pitifully seeking concealment, but were proudly, defiantly, daringly marching through a hostile territory to a better land (Hastings, 135).

No wonder Jesus was praying “for them.”

*“those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine”* – There are some relations that come to each of us; relations for which we have no choice. This would include our parents, siblings, and even our own children to some extent. Then there are those with whom we *choose* to associate. It makes no difference who befriends the other first; it is still a matter of choice as to whether or not we want to include them into our circle of companions. These men fall into this category, for it is Christ who chose them. That says a lot about these men, does it not? Because the Father had given them to Christ does not lessen the fact that Jesus selected these men, any more than God’s precious gift of a wonderful wife lessens the choice on the part of the man who selected her to be his wife. Now we find Jesus praying for them, and acknowledging the fact that they were truly a gift from the Father. The tenderness of Jesus’ intercession on their behalf gives me a deeper appreciation for the love Jesus had for these men, and they for Him. Why is it that oft times the precious gift of friendship in this life becomes an occasion for unkind words rather than intercessory prayer for those whom we love? A hasty word or unkind remark leaves its scar, and unless quickly corrected, will endanger and destroy what was once a beautiful friendship.

~~ 17:10 ~~

*“and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them”*

There are no divided interests between Father and the Son. Once again the absolute harmony and unity of each member in the Godhead are stressed. Jesus makes a most astonishing claim: “all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine.” The first part is relatively easy to understand in view of the close relationship that Jesus sustained to the Father. It is the second part of that

statement that is so amazing. He was saying that “all that You have is mine.” No human being ever dared make that claim. Jesus was claiming that He exercises the very power of God.

*Protection In View Of  
The Fact That Jesus Would Soon Leave Them  
17:11-13*

~~ 17:11 ~~

*“And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are”*

*“And I am no more in the world”* - Jesus was about to leave the world. The certainty of His resurrection and subsequent ascension back to the Father is so certain that Jesus speaks of it here as if it had already occurred. While He would eventually return to the Father, He was aware that these disciples would remain in the world and carry on the proclamation of the gospel. He pleads for the Father’s watchful care over the disciples since He would no longer be in the world to care for them.

*“I come to thee, Holy Father”* – Jesus is now looking beyond the cross to that inevitable moment when He would return to the Father. The words “Holy Father” are one of three ways in which Jesus addresses the Father in this prayer, the other two being “Father” (17:1 and 5) and “Righteous Father” (17:25).

*“keep them in thy name which thou hast given me”* – As noted previously, the name of God was synonymous with His great power and character. The prayer of our Lord that the Father might “keep them” was most essential at this point. There was a great danger that the disciples would lose all faith when the Lord is arrested and crucified.

The earthly ministry is over; for a while he must leave them in the pitiless storm, bereft of his care and counsel, exposed to infinite peril and temptation. Headless, scattered, tempted to believe that all he had said to them was one huge delusion (Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary*, ESword Module).

*“that they may be one”* – Our Lord also prays for their unity, a subject that would be expanded later in the prayer. Here the Lord prayed for the unity of the men whom the Father had given to Him; later that prayer for unity would extend to all those who came to believe on Christ through their word.

~~ 17:12 ~~

*“While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled”*

*“While I was with them, I kept them in thy name”* – During His earthly ministry our Lord not only taught and developed these men in matters pertaining to leadership and apostleship; He also provided divine watchful care over their safety. Read again Luke’s account of the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee in Luke 8:22-26 and note this very truth demonstrated.

*“thy name which thou hast given me”* – The full title given was referred to in 17:3: “Jesus Christ.” It is in the name of Christ, and His name alone, wherein men would be saved (Acts 4:10-12). That may not be “politically correct,” but it is true nonetheless.

*“I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition”* - The only one of the disciples that was lost was Judas Iscariot; and that was through his own desire for power and prestige. Judas was not lost *against* his will, but *by* his own consent and choice. Bruce is among the few denominational commentators who did not allow his theological bias to influence his conclusion on this verse: “He might have responded to Jesus’ last appeal to him in the gesture of fellowship at the last supper table, but he chose to respond instead to the great adversary. Judas, like the other disciples, had been given by the Father to the Son, but even among those so given apostasy is a solemn possibility” (Bruce, 332).

~~ 17:13 ~~

*“But now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves”*

*“But now I come to thee”* – Jesus was looking forward to His reunion with the Father. Here is another demonstration of the faith Jesus had in the Father regarding those things that were to unfold within the next few hours, and the few days that would follow.

*“that they may have my joy”* – Joy would come to Christ following His resurrection from the grave, and His reunion with the Father. It is that same joy that He requests for His disciples.

*Protection In View of  
The Dangers They Would Face In The World  
17:14-16*

~~ 17:14 ~~

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

He reflects upon an earlier point included in His discussion with the disciples. Because they were not of the world, the world would hate them. Now He prays that they might have strength to endure all that accompanied that hatred.

*“I have given them thy word”* – Coffman focused on the single nature of this “word” He had given them:

The frequent use of the singular noun where the divine word is concerned is significant. Though consisting of many words (John 17:8), the word of God is nevertheless one. It is one in that it is a single composite corpus of teaching. It is one in authority, trustworthiness, and saving efficacy, it is the one word delivered by God to Christ, by Christ to the apostles, and by the apostles to all mankind by means of their book, the New Testament. It is one word in the sense that no human teaching may be mixed with it or added to it. It is one word in the sense that “every word” of it is a necessary part of the whole, making it imperative that nothing be added to or taken from the teaching of God (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*“the world hated them”* – I have no doubt that much of that hatred had already been vented on the disciples for no other reason than the fact that they were so closely associated with the Lord. When Jesus is arrested He makes request that the soldier “let these go their way” (18:8). Having said that, it is tempting to see these words as prophetic in much the same way as the words, “I come to thee.” If that is so, then Jesus was looking to the time when these men would receive the full impact of the hatred the world had for Him during His earthly ministry.

*“because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”* – Jesus was “not of the world” in the sense that He did not originate from this world; but then, neither were His teachings, His values, or His priorities. It is this sense in which the disciples were “not of this world.” They had accepted Christ’s teachings, repudiated the world’s standards, and rejected the world’s passions and pleasures.

~~ 17:15 ~~

*“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out from, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one”*

It is important to note that Jesus did not pray that His disciples might be taken out of the world. To do that would have rendered their mission of taking the gospel to the world null and void. It has often been said that “we are in the world, but we are not of the world.” It is our Lord’s prayer that we remain in the world so as to accomplish the greatest good for the Master, and that we remain faithful in the process. There are times when we find the need to withdraw temporarily for prayer and meditation. That temporary withdrawal is not a release from the problems we face, but an occasion to solve life’s problems. As Barclay noted, Christianity “does not offer us an easy peace, but a triumphant warfare. It does not offer us a life in which troubles are escaped and evaded, but a life in which troubles are faced and conquered. However much it may be true that the Christian is not of the world, it remains true that it is within the world that his Christianity must be lived out. He must never desire to abandon the world, but always desire to win it” (Barclay, ESword).

*“keep them from the evil one”* – Seeing that the “whole world



lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19), our very existence in this world during the time allotted exposes each of us to the wiles and devices of the devil. By *not* asking the Father to take them “from the world,” Jesus was fully aware that He was, at the same time, asking the Father to allow them to be subject to all the temptations, trials, and tribulation that would come their way. The Greek word translated “keep” is *tereo*, and means “to attend carefully; take care of; to guard.” There is a tenderness in the request. Exactly how the Father would do this is not stated, but it no doubt has something to do with the fact that God would not allow them to be “tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

~~ 17:16 ~~

*“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”*

These disciples are “not of the world” in the sense that they seek higher values; things that are eternal rather than temporal. This is a repetition of what was said in verse 14. Repetition in prayer is not forbidden; it is *vain* repetition that we must avoid repetitions (Matt. 6:7).

*Protection In View Of  
Their Sanctification in the Truth of God’s Word  
17:17-19*

~~ 17:17 ~~

*“Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth”*

To “sanctify” is to render as holy; to consecrate something or someone to holy purposes. We are to “Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14), placing the responsibility to achieve that state squarely on the shoulders of the individual. Purity of life is an essential part of sanctification: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication” (1 Thess. 4:3). One who is “sanctified” is a “saint,” both words rooted in the same Greek word. The *means* of sanctification is the truth of God’s word, as declared here by the Lord.

*“thy word is truth”* - The only truth that can separate men from their sinful practices is the application of the word of God to his life. If men are to be sanctified it will be through their knowledge of the word. Life and godliness are offered to all men “through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). The modern day clamor for some kind of direct operation of the Holy Spirit in order to achieve sanctification has no basis in Scripture. The Holy Spirit will never operate directly on the heart of a person regardless of whether he is a Christian or a non-Christian. Coffman was right on target on this when he wrote the following:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16) is exactly the equivalent of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling; and many of the things said to be done by the Spirit are also said to be done by the word of God. It is not the purpose here to thresh all of the old arguments pro and con on this question; but we shall venture one dogmatic conclusion, namely, that the Holy Spirit never performs any kind of work in the human soul that is contrary to, or out of harmony with, the Scriptures. The notion, and it is merely that, of the Spirit’s entering the soul and making it independent of the word of God, is not found in the Scriptures. There are no instances, not even in the case of the apostles, of persons going on unto a more perfect state of sanctification without the constant necessity of their remaining under the tutelage of the revealed will of God; and that seems to be the very point of this verse (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 17:18 ~~

*“As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world”*

Jesus provided the disciples guidance as He prepared them to take the gospel to the lost following His ascension back to the Father. The Father had sent our Lord “into the world” to accomplish this task, and it would now be their duty to pick up the mantel and go forth *“even as”* the Lord had “sent them into the world.”

~~ 17:19 ~~

*“And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”*

*“I sanctify myself”* - The idea is that Jesus was about to offer Himself in sacrifice. As Bruce noted, “It was not what Jesus’ executioners did to him, but what he did himself in his self-offering, that makes his death a prevailing sacrifice for ‘the life of the world’” (Bruce, 334). Without Jesus’ self-sacrifice there would be no way the disciples could be sanctified.

*“And for their sakes”* – I deliberately reversed these first two parts of this verse because I wanted you to see *what* Jesus did, and then the *reason* for that act. Right here we are permitted to see the motive behind the words, and the ultimate sacrifice of His life on the cross. *‘For their sakes’* – what remarkable words; what love and concern Jesus had for these men. Keep in mind that, while the words have an immediate application to these men, those words can be, and are expanded to include all mankind. Jesus gave Himself in full sacrifice “for their sakes” – for the world’s sake. These men were to be His voice, His hands, His feet, to take the soul saving gospel to a lost humanity. I was especially touched by James Hastings’ words on these words of our Lord:

‘For their sakes’: that is a motto with its eyes looking outward, looking outward as far as the distant rim of the earth. It is the fitting motto of a life dedicated wholly to the service of the world. ‘I sanctify myself’: that is a motto with its eyes turned inward, the fitting resolve of one who is bent on individual holiness and perfection (Hastings, 142).

*“that they also might be sanctified through the truth”* – As Jesus was willing to give Himself, so here He expresses His desire that these men (and by application, all those who hear and obey the gospel) might also be so sanctified. Christianity is not a religion of passive self-indulgence, but one of complete surrender to the Father and the Son through the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit. Any attempt to reach a plateau of spirituality where full self-sacrifice is achieved through any means other than the word of God is an exercise in futility and will result in the loss of one’s

soul. This is precisely the point that Jesus made in the closing words of His sermon on the mount:

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 who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof (Matt. 7:21-27).

*A Prayer for Unity*

17:20-23

It is astonishing, and tragic, that men who are so enamored and engrossed in their denominational way of thinking cannot seem to see the point in this portion of the Lord's prayer. Unity to them is something unrealistic and unachievable. This portion of our Lord's prayer is not only practical, it is attainable, and something expected to be sought after with all diligence (Eph. 4:1-3).

~~ 17:20 ~~

*"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word"*

*"Neither for these only do I pray"* - At this point the Lord expands His prayer to include the saved of every generation. While it was important to pray that the apostles be united, it is just as essential that the followers of Christ be united.

*“them also that believe on me”* - There is no reason to construe this other than it being a prayer for Christians to be united. Paul stressed the same thing in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13. Any attempt to apply this to a union of denominations in some kind of ecumenical movement is beyond the scope of the Lord’s prayer. This plea for unity among God’s people extends all the way back to the Old Testament. The Psalmist wrote: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, That ran down upon the beard, Even Aaron’s beard; That came down upon the skirt of his garments; Like the dew of Hermon, That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion: For there Jehovah commanded the blessing, Even life for evermore” (Psa. 133:1-3).

*“through their word”* - Unity can only be achieved by close adherence to the word of God, which of course was delivered to the church through the apostles. Peter told us to “remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles” (2 Pet. 3:2). Paul also wrote: “how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:3-5). These passages are not inconsequential tidbits of information. They all declare in no uncertain terms that the *only way* men will come to the proper knowledge of God and His will for us is through the words of those men selected and delegated with the authority to proclaim that word. These words are, as Coffman put it, “equivalent to saying that there is no other way of bringing men to God except through the word of the apostles” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

It is amazing that some men can see nothing more in this prayer of our Lord than some kind of ‘*unity in diversity*.’ Barclay mistakenly thinks this “was a unity of personal relationship...the union between Jesus and God was one of love and obedience. It was a unity of love for which Jesus prayed, a unity in which men loved each other because they loved him, a unity based entirely on the relationship between heart and heart” (Barclay, ESword Module). Of course, I reject that completely. The Pulpit Commentary contains exactly the same kind of tomfoolery:

The oneness prayed for is not that of believers with one another, but that oneness which is the foundation of visible unity - the union of believers with Christ, and through him with God. It cannot refer to a visible unity, because it is a unity of successive generations of believers, who cannot be in the world at one and the same time (Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module).

Of course they attempt to explain the unity for which our Lord prayed as something quite contrary to what Jesus actually intended, due solely to the fact that the unity for which Christ prayed is non-existent in the denominational world. The next couple of verses will explain exactly the kind of unity under consideration.

~~ 17:21 ~~

*“that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me”*

*“that they may all be one; even as”* - The type of unity for which our Lord prayed was a unity characteristic of the union between the Father and the Son. Theirs was an absolute harmony in purpose, in message, and in doctrine.

I wrote the following short article for the local newspaper almost 20 years ago. It is as applicable today as it was then:

An article appeared on page 3A of the Dallas Morning News: “Church alliance proposed.” I’ll share with you the lead in statement: “The National Council of Churches is going to try to form a new organization that would for the first time include all major branches of U.S. Christianity, its board decided today.” This new organization is supposed to “give birth to a new ecumenical future.” I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet, but I can assure you that this effort is doomed to failure. Five hundred years have proven that all such “ecumenical” efforts that have their basis in human wisdom do not produce unity. Unity can only come by compliance to the word of God. This “birth to a new ecumenical future” is

based upon compromise, not humble submission to God and His will. The best that can be expected is a loose form of unity that agrees to disagree. It is just another step in an effort on the part of foolish men to erect a “tower of Babel” that will compete with God’s plan. When will men learn that there is a far cry difference between unity and union. Someone once said that you can tie two cats together by their tails and throw them over a clothes line. You may have “union,” but you will not have “unity.” Unfortunately some of our own brethren need to learn this lesson. Attempts to join hands with the denominations is futile, not to mention out of harmony with God’s word. Paul instructed us: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Why is that admonition so hard to understand? “No fellowship” means “no fellowship.” Actually, I don’t think it is a problem with understanding Paul’s instructions; it has to do with willingness to obey it.

*“that the world may believe”* – If asked how unity would have an impact on an unbelieving world, Robert Milligan gives a wise, and certainly Biblical answer: “This would be to all thoughtful persons a moral demonstration that the Christian religion is not of men, but of God” (Milligan, 268). Although Jesus was not speaking of some kind of unity in diversity such as is demonstrated by the denominations, it is true nonetheless that the divided state of “Christendom” in general has made a laughing stock of religion itself. When men look at the conflicting doctrines, multitudinous names, and hundreds, if not thousands of human creed books, is it any wonder that they turn away from such confusion? But the application is not limited to the denominational world. Even among those professing to be members of the one church we read about in the Bible, there are divisions that abound. Let he who is interested peruse any of the more detailed church directories published by churches of Christ and he will find various designations of precisely where a particular congregation might stand with regard to some of the issues that have divided the Lord’s church over the last half century. Heaven knows the value of unity; too bad many in the religious world have not yet come to embrace the implications of our Lord’s prayer.

~~ 17:22-23 ~~

*“And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me”*

I have chosen to deal with both of these verses together because of the unity of thought between the closing words of verse 22 and the opening words of verse 23. Read the two verses as one unit; but make sure you don't separate these two verses from the rest of the chapter.

*“And the glory which thou hast given me”* – In order to properly understand the ‘glory’ that Jesus desired be given to the apostles, it is essential to identify the ‘glory’ He received from the Father. I find it interesting that Jesus never looks upon His impending death as something dreadful. Instead, He spoke of being “glorified.” In life we often speak well of someone who has been given a difficult task; and the greater the task, once completed, calls for more honor to be bestowed upon the one who accepted and followed through with the challenge. This is precisely why Jesus could speak of the burden of the cross, given Him by the Father, as His glory. But it can also be said that Jesus was glorified because of His complete obedience to the will of the Father. This may be what Paul had in mind in Philippians 2:8-11:

“and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The same can be said about those who diligently strive to seek and serve the Savior. As Barclay put it:

We find our glory, not in doing as we like, but in doing as God wills. When we try to do as we like--as many of us



have done--we find nothing but sorrow and disaster both for ourselves and for others. We find the real glory of life in doing God's will; the greater the obedience, the greater the glory (Barclay, ESword Module).

*"I have given unto them"* – The "them" includes more than just the apostles, of whom He had been praying earlier. Verse 20 shows us that at this point Jesus was praying for "them also that believe on me through their word." He is speaking of us – you and me. We are called upon, therefore, to share in the cross of Christ – to suffer all that goes with living the life of the cross, and preaching the message of the cross. If we are faithful in the discharge of that duty, we shall share in the glory of heaven as well. "Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

*"that they may be one, even as we are one"* – Why was Jesus so interested in His followers sharing in His glory? It is so that "they may be one." When God's people are so dedicated to the proclamation of the one gospel, and living the life that surrounds the glory of the cross, they *will be one*. Division is carnal mindedness (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Read again the words of Paul in Philippians 2:1-7 and see if you don't get that impression:

"If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."

*"even as we are one"* – If one wants to know what kind of "unity" Christ was seeking among His followers, let him observe the

unity that exists between the Father and Christ. It is one of complete harmony, resolve of will, and dedication to the eternal purpose of God. The kind of unity for which Jesus prayed is a unity that “flows out of perfect submission to the total will of God in Christ, resulting in ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc’” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*A Prayer for Reunion*

17:24-26

~~ 17:24 ~~

*“Father, I desire 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”*

*“Father, I desire”* – There are two possible meanings of this word “desire.” The Greek word can mean “to take delight in, have pleasure.” But it can also mean “to be resolved or determined; to propose” (Thayer, ESword Module). I am prone to agree with Barnes here:

This expression, though it commonly denotes command, is here only expressive of desire. It is used in prayer, and it was not the custom of the Saviour to use language of command when addressing God (Barnes, ESword Module).

*“where I am”* - Likely means, “Where I will be,” seeing that Jesus was projecting His thoughts beyond the cross to His reunion with the Father. “Prophetically, Jesus was already at home with the Father when this prayer was uttered” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

The Lord’s heart is now turned toward home. I have had opportunity to travel to distant lands to preach the gospel. Without exception, I always find it hard to concentrate on the work the last two or three days because my heart and mind are turning toward home. It was the Lord’s desire that when the time came for these men to leave the realms below that they find themselves where Christ would be very shortly. I have no doubt

that Jesus continues to express these same sentiments before the Father for all those who believe on Him through the words of the apostles.

~~ 17:25-26 ~~

*“O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them”*

I have chosen to combine these two verses so as to pick up what I consider the message of the Lord. Here Jesus prays not only for His *present* disciples, but also those who would come to believe in Him, obey His will, and be added to the church.

*“the world knew thee not, but I knew thee”* – What an amazing contrast: Jesus, the perfectly informed, completely obedient Son; the world representing those who hate God, rebel against His will, reject His Son, spurn His love, and remain in ignorance of what God expects of them.

*“and these knew that thou didst send me”* – “These” would be the disciples who were with Jesus at the present time. They had witnessed the signs, weighed the evidence, and were now walking in the path laid out before them.

*“and I made known unto them thy name”* – The late Roy Deaver was fond of saying that the time these men spent with the Lord made up the very first preacher training school. After three and a half years of being exposed to the teachings of Jesus, with their education now complete, they were about to be sent into the world, with all of its hostility, to proclaim the only “name” by which men could be saved.

*“and will make it known”* – Here Jesus prays for the *future* disciples; those to whom the “name” would be made known. All depended on this little band of men. Yet so confident was Jesus in their ability to fulfill the commission that soon would be given, that He could confidently affirm that He (through them) would continue to make known to the world the very name of the Father. McGarvey summed up these two verses in his normal

succinct fashion:

The knowledge which he had of the Father had been imparted to the disciples, and they had received it, and had thereby been in some measure fitted for the revelation of the glory for which he had just prayed. The world, on the contrary, had rejected Christ's revelation, and had refused to know God, and had thus become unworthy of the privilege here asked for the disciples. Jesus had revealed the Father while on earth that men might attain to the revelation of God in the hereafter, thus participating in the love which the Father has for the Son because the Son is spiritually in them (McGarvey, ESword Module).

A MAGNIFICENT PRAYER FROM THE  
LIPS OF A MAGNIFICENT SAVIOR  
By Tom Wacaster

John Peter Lang observed regarding this beautiful prayer:

Neither in the Scripture nor in the literature of any nation can there be found a composition which in simplicity and depth, in grandeur and fervor may be compared to this prayer. It could not be invented, but could proceed only from such a consciousness as the one which speaks here. But it could be preserved and reproduced by a personality so wholly devoted and conformed to the personality of Jesus as the Evangelist (Lang, ESword Module).

As this chapter closes, so does the public and private ministry of our Lord. In life, and soon to be in death, the magnificence of Jesus runs like a fine thread throughout this gospel account. Who can look at the miracles of Jesus through the eye of faith, and with implicit trust in the accuracy of John's gospel, somehow fail to see the magnificence of the divine power of this One Who walked among men? Meditate on the discourses of Jesus. Those discourses delivered in public were open to be scrutinized, examined, dissected and either accepted or rejected. Yet in spite of the efforts of the enemies of Jesus, no fault was ever found, nor was there an occasion to lay blame at His feet. Feast upon those discourses Jesus delivered

to His disciples. Those were words designed to encourage, strengthen, and motivate. They were His friends; and He was *their* friend. Look at the discourses Jesus delivered to His enemies and see if you don't agree that they were spoken with love, compassion, and a depth of longsuffering that can only be found in the divine nature of God Himself. From those discourses a portrait of Jesus emerges that helps us appreciate our Lord's humanity and His relationship with men – the lost, the saved, and the rebellious.

Now turn your attention to the words of Jesus in this prayer to His Father. Meditate on them; and after drinking deeply from John's account, see if you don't agree that this prayer displays the magnificence of Jesus in a unique way. Here is a prayer in which Jesus asks little for Himself (17:1-5), but is filled with intercession for His disciples (17:6-26). This prayer flows with fervent love for His disciples, and all those who would come to believe on Him through their word. This prayer is, without doubt, the "noblest and purest pearl of devotion in the New Testament" (Meyer, as quoted by Lang). There is power in every sentence, yet the sheer beauty of the prayer is never diminished. Here is the Lord's High Priestly Prayer, the outpouring of His soul to the Father, the ultimate expression of His love for the disciples, and a clear manifestation of the magnificence of Jesus our Lord. Worldly critics may see in these twenty-six verses nothing of any importance; but saints find solace and hope in this prayer of Jesus, enabling them to sanctify themselves in the glory of the cross and march with faith toward that heavenly reward to which this prayer points.





## CHAPTER FORTY

### “I AM HE”

#### *The Arrest and Religious Trial of Jesus, 18:1-27*

John 18:1 thru 19:42 contains one single unit in which we have the following:

- The arrest of Jesus in the Garden, 18:1-11
- Christ is brought before Annas the High Priest, 18:12-14
- Peter follows at a distance, 18:15-18
- Christ before Annas: the religious trial, 18:19-24
- Peter denies the Lord, 18:25-27
- Christ before Pilate: the civil trial, 18:28-40
- The scourging and the mocking, 19:1-15
- Jesus' crucifixion and burial, 19:16-42.

You will notice that there are seven events that occur prior to the crucifixion, of which six are recorded in chapter eighteen. The arrest of Jesus (18:1-11) draws back the curtain and allows us to watch the ugliness of sin unfold over a period of only a few short hours. The fact that these soldiers “seized Jesus and bound him” (18:12) stands in contrast to our Lord’s amazing compassion and divine restraint. I say restraint because Matthew tells us that our Lord could have called more than twelve legions of angels to His side (Matt. 26:53). Rather than resist, our Lord calmly asked the soldiers, “Whom seek ye?” (John 18:4,7).

Jesus is then brought before Annas the high priest (18:12-14). Bound like a common criminal, the Lord is delivered to Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, before whom the initial interrogation was to be conducted. Outside Peter was warming himself by the fires of the ungodly while inside the religious trial was unfolding (if it could be called a trial). It would not be long before Peter’s timidity and cowardice takes its toll. Asked if he were one of the Lord’s disciples – not once, but three times – Peter denies. Once would have been bad enough; but three times demonstrates that Peter had embarked upon a path that could only spell disaster.

We will focus our attention on two supremely important movements in this chapter. The first (18:1-18) contains the words

of our Lord in response to those who came to arrest Him: “I am he” (18:6, 8). When this first movement comes to a close we find Peter, warming himself by the fire. The second movement (18:19-27) begins with interrogation by Annas, the high priest, and ends with Peter’s denial. This section contains the words of Peter when he was asked whether or not he was one of the disciples, to which he replied, “I am not.” Pay close attention to those words: “I am” and “I am not.”

*“I Am”*

18:1-11

One of the things John will focus on here is the voluntary surrender of Jesus. Of course our Lord hinted at this in John 10:17-18. The surrender of Jesus was a voluntary, conscious act on His part. The arrest did not catch Jesus off guard, for in verse four of this chapter John tells us, “Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were come upon him.” His meeting in the upper room, the various predictions of His death, His journey to the Garden, His prayer in the Garden; all of these things indicate His awareness of what awaited Him. As Tenney pointed out:

Between the dismissal of Judas from the upper room and the actual arrest in the garden, at least two hours must have elapsed. In that time Jesus could have left Jerusalem and have been well on His way across the river to Perea, or to some hiding place where the Jewish leaders could not have found Him. At one stroke Jesus could have saved Himself and could have disposed of the traitor. Why should He have gone deliberately to the place where Judas would surely look for Him, and wait until the traitor came to capture Him? (Tenney, 255).

When the mob came, Jesus went forth to meet them rather than wait for them to find Him. “His capture was not affected by their superior astuteness or power, but by His ready consent” (Tenney, 255). It is also notable that the Lord’s surrender was *vicarious* in nature, Jesus offering Himself and requesting that His disciples be allowed to go free. Finally, His surrender showed His love, even toward His enemies that came to arrest Him. When Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of



Malchus, the Lord lovingly and miraculously healed the servant. That certainly must have made a lasting impression upon Malchus, perhaps later leading to the man's conversion; or so we would like to imagine. R.C. Foster made this observation:

Never at any time in His ministry does the Master show more impressively the peace which is above the understanding of the world. His suffering is now past; there is no fear or anger. Jesus shows incredible gentleness even toward the traitor. His rebuke of the chief priests is full of dignity and measured reason so much more effective than hot wrath. The majesty of heaven shines out in every word and deed in this hour of humiliation. The crowd seems to have surged forward rapidly as they approached the Garden for Mark says: "And straightway while he yet spake, cometh Judas" (Foster, ESword).

I was also impressed with Tenney's contrast between Peter and Judas:

Judas arrived with armed men to capture Jesus; Peter drew arms to defend Him. Judas apprehended Him by stealth; Peter defended Him openly. Judas betrayed Him in cold blood; Peter attacked Jesus' enemies. In this account Jesus treated Judas with silence; He rebuked Peter sternly. Judas' crime was deliberate throughout; Peter's blunder in drawing the sword was prompted by a loyal though mistaken impulsiveness. The chilly indifference of unbelief and the erratic action of a belief which had not yet reached stability were alike destructive (Tenney, 256).

Let's take a closer look.

~~ 18:1 ~~

*"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which he entered, himself and his disciples"*

*"When Jesus had spoken these words"* - There is no contradiction between John's account and that of Matthew,

Mark and Luke. Our Lord's entrance into the Garden followed this priestly prayer of chapter 17, and in either case, the arrest came "*after*" these words.

*"he went forth"* - His departure from the city to Kidron was more than a mere physical change of location. He went forth to fulfill His mission, to meet His enemy, the devil, and fulfill the purpose for which He came. As Lange noted, "Simultaneously with Christ's passage of the Kidron, a passage infinitely more momentous than that of Caesar over the Rubicon, doubtless the last judgment was principally decided, together with the redemption" (Lange, ESword Module).

*"brook Kidron"* - '*Kidron*' reproduces the Hebrew spelling, so it is a *transliteration* here. It is derived from a root word meaning 'dark.' In the time of the temple worship, and especially during the height of the annual Passover, the blood of the sacrifices flowed into it and darkened it, thus giving it the name. The Kidron valley followed a long winding path that lead south-east toward the Dead Sea.

*"where was a garden, into which he entered"* - Although John does not record the events surrounding our Lord's prayer in the Garden, there is no doubt that those reading John's account some years later would immediately think of that momentous occasion as recorded in the other gospels. It is ironic that Adam (and Eve) were tempted in a garden, and failed the test. As Jesus enters this Garden He faces perhaps His greatest temptation, but passes the test.

~~ 18:2 ~~

*"Now Judas also, who betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft times resorted thither with his disciples"*

In the forefront of those who came to arrest Jesus was Judas. The Synoptics tell us that Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss. Foster had this interesting note regarding Judas' kiss of betrayal:

The Greek verb is compounded and means "kiss effusively or in a most demonstrative manner." It is thus that great

love and the joy of meeting again after having endured a prolonged agony of parting, would be expressed. Judas came forward boldly and was presumably in the place of greatest danger, if Jesus chose to use His power to defend Himself. Judas was convinced that Jesus would not resist arrest (Foster, ESword Reference Library).

John skips over our Lord's passion in the garden and His prayer to the Father during that time. It may be that John wanted to focus on the majestic and calm disposition of Christ that came as the result of His time spent in prayer with the Father on that occasion.

*"for Jesus oft times resorted thither with his disciples"* - It was evidently a habit of Jesus to frequent the Garden. Judas was confident the Lord would be there. In fact, the base character of Judas is manifested here in that he *knew* the Lord's fidelity to prayer, and he *knew* that at this precise moment, when Christ needed the Father's strength the most, that is where they would find the Christ!

Before we leave this verse, consider if you will the utter failure of Judas and how poorly he knew his Master. He knew the *place* of prayer, but not the *power* of prayer in the life of the Lord. He knew the Lord's *innocence* but not His *holiness*. He knew of the Lord's *human dignity*, but was ignorant of the Lord's *divine majesty*.

~~ 18:3 ~~

*"Judas then, having received the band of soldiers, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons"*

The American Standard Version rendering - *"the band of soldiers"* - does not clearly communicate the distinction between the temple police and the Roman soldiers who accompanied them to the arrest of Jesus. The Greek *'speira'* refers to a military cohort, clearly indicating that Roman soldiers were secured to accompany the Jewish authorities. Bruce tells us that "an auxiliary cohort, such as garrisoned the Antonia fortress north-west of the temple area, comprised a strength of 1,000 men."

Whether or not the entire cohort accompanied the priests is not certain, but certainly John's use of the word was designed to communicate that this was no small number of soldiers. Evidently the Jewish authorities anticipated some kind of resistance to be offered by the disciples, and thus their expected need for this show of force.

~~ 18:4 ~~

*“Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye?”*

*“Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth”* – These words are very significant for they help us to see that “the pathway of Jesus to the Cross was not the pathway of a Victim” (Morgan, ESword Module). Knowing what awaited, He “went forth.” He went forth in majesty, not in defeat. He went forth in determination to follow through with the Father's will; not in cowering fear of what awaited Him on the cross. This verse tells us that Jesus immediately took command of the situation. Rather than wait for them to enter the garden, the Lord goes forth to meet them, asking them, “Whom seek ye?” It is interesting that when men attempted to make Jesus an earthly king, He fled; but now, as they seek His death, He goes forth to meet them.

*“Whom seek ye?”* – Jesus was fully aware of whom they sought. By asking the question, and getting a verbal response, Jesus could use the opportunity to make sure the focus of the soldiers was on Himself and not the disciples. In doing this He could protect the disciples from undue persecution from the soldiers.

~~ 18:5 ~~

*“They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, was standing with them”*

*“I am he”* - The words of Jesus can be understood on two levels, and as Bruce points out, “this is probably the Evangelist's intention.” First, the words were meant to convey the fact that Jesus was the One for Whom they sought. It was a simple affirmation that He was the one. But secondly, it is a word of

power; the equivalent of God's affirmation of "I Am." That this is the force here seems clear from the fact that those present immediately fell backward to the ground.

But there is an additional reason why Jesus so willingly and openly identified Himself. When He asked them who it is they sought, and then openly affirmed that He was the One they were looking for, the Lord removed any attempt on the part of the soldiers or Jewish authorities to put Jesus away anonymously. We would say, "Everything was above board in the matter." Or as Paul put it, "This hath not been done in a corner" (Acts 26:26). God was not going to allow the hypocritical Jewish leaders to have their way in the matter.

~~ 18:6 ~~

*"When therefore he said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground"*

McGarvey pointed out that "the older commentators regard the falling to the ground as a miracle, but modern scholars look upon it as a result of sudden fear. Jesus merely manifested his dignity and majesty, and the prostration followed as a natural result" (McGarvey, ESword Module). B.W. Johnson was thinking along the same line:

Then follows a scene designed to show all the world that the Lord laid down his own life. His foemen were powerless in his hands. As he answers, either his majesty and their own terror so impressed them, that, awed, they fell backward to the earth, or his divine power was exerted to prostrate them (Johnson, ESword Module).

Clarke was more dogmatic, and viewed the entire episode as absolute proof of the Lord's power:

None of the other evangelists mentions this very important circumstance. Our Lord chose to give them this proof of his infinite power, that they might know that their power could not prevail against him if he chose to exert his might, seeing that the very breath of his mouth confounded, drove back, and struck them down to the earth. Thus by the blast of God they might have perished,

and by the breath of his nostrils they might have been consumed (Clarke, ESword Module).

In my estimation the episode is best explained as a miracle designed to demonstrate the power of the Lord. This is the only way to explain why the arresting soldiers allowed the disciples to go their way without being arrested. As Coffman noted:

It was perfectly clear to that entire company that Jesus could do anything, and therefore they allowed his arrest upon his own terms, not theirs. Can there be any other possible explanation of why the whole group was not arrested? It will be further noted that Jesus referred to his prevention of their arrest as a fulfillment of his prophetic words in the great prayer (John 17:12); and from this the deduction stands that if the apostles had been arrested they might have been killed also (Coffman, Theophilus).

~~ 18:7 ~~

*“Again therefore he asked them, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth”*

After gathering their composure Jesus asks them again who it was they sought. I find it ironic that these soldiers, agents of the government which God Himself had ordained (Rom. 13:1-7), were also the instruments in a devilish plot. Oh yes, it is the amazing providence of our God, where He takes the counsel of the devil and wicked men and turns it upon their own heads.

~~ 18:8 ~~

*“Jesus answered, I told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way”*

*“let these go their way”* – It is possible that the soldiers may have already laid hands on the disciples. This would make the request of the Lord most urgent. It is significant that at this particular moment the Lord’s thoughts were not on Himself, but the safety of the disciples.

~~ 18:9 ~~

*“that the word might be fulfilled which he spake, Of those whom thou hast given me I lost not one”*

The saying to which John refers is found in John 17:12. It should be noted, however, that the Lord did not mean here that this was the *complete* fulfillment of His words in that intercessory prayer, but only an instance of such.

*“that the word might be fulfilled”* – Matthew frequently used this same formula to refer to Old Testament Scripture being fulfilled (cf. Matt. 1:22; 2:15; 8:17; 13:35). John’s use here of the same kind of language in reference to Jesus’ words indicates that the apostle (*i.e.* the Holy Spirit) intended for the words of Jesus to be on equal par with those Old Testament inspired passages.

~~ 18:10 ~~

*“Simon Peter therefore having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. Now the servant’s name was Malchus”*

We learn from Luke 22:38, that there were only two swords in the whole company of the disciples. It is natural to assume that Peter would have possessed one of these seeing that he appeared to be numbered with those who were foremost among the disciples. From Luke 22:49 I get the impression that all of the disciples would have joined in the attack had they possessed the wherewithal to do so.

*“struck the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear”* – Throughout his gospel, John provides us with a great amount of detail, indicating that he was an eye witness of the things he wrote about. Not only does the apostle provide us with the name of the servant (something no other writer does), he tells us it was the “right ear” that was cut off. It has been suggested that Malchus may have attempted to dodge Peter’s sword and in so doing managed to save his head in exchange for his ear. While the theory may be intriguing, it is nothing more than conjecture. Regarding Peter’s action, Foster had this note:

Peter’s rash attack upon the first villain he saw rushing toward Jesus to lay violent hands upon Him, was exactly

what he had planned to do. He had declared he was ready to die with Christ. Anyone who talks of the cowardice of Peter has to shut his eyes to the fact that Peter rushed to attack a company of Roman soldiers and a mob of temple guards and underlings. Here were eleven men against a multitude, and only two swords in the possession of the eleven!" (Foster, ESword).

~~ 18:11 ~~

*"Jesus therefore said unto Peter, Put up the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"*

*"Jesus therefore said unto Peter"* - John uses only the name "Peter," rather than "Simon Peter." Exactly why He does this is not certain, but it might have something to do with the Lord's close friendship with the man.

*"Put up the sword into the sheath"* – This instruction to Peter reminds us that the expansion of the kingdom of Christ on this earth is not to be accomplished by the might of the sword. When we compare John's account with that of Matthew, the full significance of the Lord's statement takes on a deeper meaning.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword" (Matt. 26:52)

Peter evidently misunderstood the earlier command of Jesus to procure a sword (Luke 22:36). The Lord's command was a figurative way of telling the disciples that they must do what they can to avoid persecution and/or personal harm. From the passage in Luke we conclude that Jesus was telling His disciples that His cause is not to be advanced by violence, and whoever resorts to violence can expect to suffer the same. By telling Peter to put away the sword, the Lord not only rebukes any kind of physical force, but stresses the voluntary surrender which He, the Lord, was now willing to make.

*"the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* - In the Garden the Lord had requested that, if possible, this cup



might pass. Sometime between that prayer and His exit from the garden our Lord resigned Himself to the Father's will, and was now fully aware that He must indeed drink that cup.

The disciples would have been familiar with the Lord's figurative use of the word "cup." It was frequently used in the Old Testament to denote some experience in life in relation to God. For example, the Psalmist acknowledged that God's goodness to him was like a "cup" that "runneth over" (Psa. 23:5). Christ takes a well understood figure and applies it to Himself. His whole life is a "cup" delivered into His hands by the Father. There is a progression in the Lord's use of the metaphor that coincides with a progression in His purpose. After entering into the garden to pray we find the Lord asking the Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me" (Matt. 26:39). Upon His second entrance into the garden He prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42). But now Jesus seems to use the word as a word of victory: "Shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). Hastings captured this victorious note in the Lord's words:

The draining of the cup is not to Him a defeat in the unequal contest with the world, but a glorious triumph of love and loyalty. He has already drunk much, but not one drop to be spilled. Thus in devotion to the Father He 'tasted death for every man.' And His cup of death has in an inexplicable way opened for us the fountain of life (Hastings, 153).

There is a wonderful application of the words of Jesus to every disciple who has struggled with the burdens he must bear. Sometimes it seems as if there is no end to our struggles; that victory somehow continues to elude us. It is then that we need to recall these words of Jesus and realize that God may very well be giving us a "cup" to drink. "He is not deaf to our cry, or careless of our desires, and His answer to them all is the cup which He has given" (Hastings, 153).

And let us not forget that Jesus drank the "cup" for the sake of others. We must never forget that whatever we are called upon to bear in this life is for the greater cause of Christ and the good of

others. I once read that when Queen Victoria visited her Highland home at Balmoral following the death of her son, that she would go into the homes of those who lived round about Balmoral Castle and had suffered loss, or who were experiencing deep sorrow. The peasants would find comfort in her visits because they perceived of her as entering into their trouble with them. Jesus is not a Savior Who cannot be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath in all points been tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Let us prostrate ourselves before the Father and give thanks that our Savior was so willing to drink of the “cup” given to Him in this His darkest hour upon the face of this earth.

*“I Am Not”*

18:12-27

We come now to the second movement. There are four parts, two having to do with the proceedings at Annas’ house, and two detailing Peter’s faltering faith. The first has to do with what was developing *inside* the temple grounds where Jesus was being arraigned before Annas (18:12-14; 19-24). The second has to do with what was developing *outside* where Peter was warming himself by the fire (18:15-18; 25-27). Consider now the four parts that make up this part of our study. The first (18:12-14) takes us into the court of the high priest. I would be tempted to say that these three verses are merely informational; but I would be wrong to view the verses with that limited approach. The second part (18:15-18) focuses our attention on Peter and exactly what was developing outside the courtroom of Annas. In the third part (18:19-24) John takes us back to the religious trial and the first round of proceedings before Annas. The final part (18:25-27) will take one last look at Peter and his denial of the Lord. We will study the four parts under the following headings:

Christ delivered, 18:12-14

Christ distanced, 18:15-18

Christ detained, 18:19-24

Christ denied, 18:25-27

Let’s take a closer look:

*Christ delivered, 18:12-14;*

~~ 18:12-13 ~~

*“So the band and the chief captain, and the officers of the Jews, seized Jesus and bound him, and led him to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, who was high priest that year”*

Matthew tells us that it was at this point that the disciples fled (Matt. 26:56). It may have been because of their fear of the Roman soldiers and the Jewish temple police.

*“So the band and the chief captain”* - This would have reference to the Roman cohort, indicating that the civil authorities took the lead in arresting the Lord.

*“seized Jesus and bound him”* - They probably bound the hands of Jesus behind Him. Robertson points out there was no evidence they had obtained a warrant, nor was any charge brought against Him at this time. The power of Jesus had been demonstrated, as recorded in John 18:6. Knowing the power that Jesus had, they thought it best to “bind” Him. Oh the foolishness of men to think they can “bind” and restrict the Creator of the universe. It was not the soldiers that bound Jesus, but His love and the love of the Father that allowed Him to be bound and arrested.

*“Annas”* - Annas was the ex-high priest and father-in-law of Caiaphas, the actual high priest. Annas was appointed to the office by Quirinius, governor of Syria, about the time when Judaea was reduced to the status of a minor Roman province. He was deposed about nine years later by Valerius Gratus, prefect of Judaea, but still retained much of his power and influence among the Jewish authorities. Annas was a man of great wealth and influence and evidently served as an assistant to, or substitute for, Caiaphas. This would explain Luke’s reference to “the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. Caiaphas was appointed high priest in 18 A.D. and served eighteen years.

*“high priest that year”* - And what an infamous year it was. One can almost imagine the emphasis that John would have put on the word “that,” had he been speaking the words.

~~ 18:14 ~~

*“Now Caiaphas was he that gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people”*

Why would John provide this information? It was to show that the proceedings against Jesus would have, at best, been tainted by the evil intentions of Caiaphas. Or, to put it another way, John was telling us that Jesus was about to be tried by men who had *already determined* to put Jesus to death. Regarding Caiaphas, Johnson provided some important information relative to his priesthood and the role he played in the prophecy of Jesus’ death:

Caiaphas had already committed himself to the policy of condemnation (John 11:50). Both Annas and Caiaphas were creatures of the Roman court; both belonged to the Saddusaic party; both, that is, were openly infidel concerning some of the fundamental truths of the Hebrew faith. Originally the high priest was appointed for life but the Romans set him aside and appointed a successor whenever they wished. Annas had been thus deposed, but was probably still regarded as the real high priest by many of the Jews (Johnson, ESword Module).

*Christ distanced, 18:15-18*

~~ 18:15 ~~

*“And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest”*

*“And Simon Peter followed Jesus”* – At the time of the arrest of Jesus the apostles fled out of sheer panic. It appears that Peter overcame his initial fear and proceeded to follow Jesus, if only at a distance. He may have wanted to avoid being detected and ultimately arrested. I get the impression that Peter may have even been ahead of John, but when he came to the gate he stopped, and John then *“entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest.”*

*“and so did another disciple”* - It is generally conceded that this is John.

*“Now that disciple was known unto the high priest”* – The extent of John’s acquaintance with Annas is not known, but evidently it was enough to allow him entrance into the court area. Bruce addresses the extent of John’s acquaintance with the high priest:

The word ‘known’ suggests something more intimate than the knowledge an archbishop or prime minister might have of his fishmonger; it means an acquaintance, sometimes even a relative - like ‘friend’ in the Scots sense; in Luke 2:44 it is used in close conjunction with kinsfolk” (Bruce, 345).

Perhaps something needs to be said about the identity of this “high priest” that John mentions. Was he speaking of Annas, or Caiaphas? If the term “high priest” refers to Caiaphas, then what unfolds here is that of Jesus before Caiaphas, and no details of the trial before Annas is given by John. The problem with this position is that verse 24 specifically says that Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas. The problem so many commentators seem to have with regard to exactly which “high priest” is under consideration is due, at least in part, to the sequence of Peter’s denials as recorded by the other writer, and by John later in this chapter. I will address that when I get there.

~~ 18:16 ~~

*“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”*

*“But Peter stood at the door without”* – Why Peter did not go with John is not mentioned. I get the impression that he hesitated, and in that moment of hesitation came the temptation to distance himself from the Lord.

*“Then went out the other disciples...and spake unto her that kept the door”* – It was a Jewish custom to have women keep watch at the door. Not knowing Peter it would be natural for her not to allow him to enter. John went in, evidently expecting Peter to

follow, but when he did not, returned and spoke to the maid, who at once, suffered him to pass, John being an acquaintance.

~~ 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"*

*"Then saith the damsel...unto Peter, Art not thou one of this man's disciples?"* - It would appear that no sooner had Peter passed the doorway when the damsel asked the question. It was likely Peter's acquaintance with John that caused her to inquire. There does not appear to be any sense of compassion in Peter's encounter with the woman. I get the impression, however, that she asked the question *contemptuously*. Why the woman would only now challenge Peter is explained when we consider that prior to John's intervention, Peter had stood outside the gate where it was much darker. Upon his entrance through the gate the woman would now be able to see more clearly who he was, and thus the question. Bruce suggests a little different attitude that may have influenced the woman's question:

The servant girl presumably knew the 'other disciple' to be a follower of Jesus, and when she saw him bringing in Peter, she said, in effect: 'Oh no, not another!' Her question to Peter is cast in the form expecting the answer, 'No,' and Peter seizes the cue and gives that answer (Bruce, 345).

Some have seen a discrepancy between John's account and that of the other three gospels regarding the sequence of denials by Peter. Right here it would be good to note the following *agreements* between the four gospel accounts: First, each of the gospel writers record the three-fold denial of Peter. Second, each of the writers record three acts of denial. Third, all of the writers represent these denials to have occurred at the palace of the high priest. Fourth, they all record that the *first* denial was in answer to the question of the damsel at the gate. Finally, all of the gospel writers acknowledge that the denials of Peter occurred in the vicinity of the first denial where Peter had been warming himself. So far there is absolute harmony.

*“He saith, I am not”* - Here is the first of three denials. It is at this point that Peter begins to *distance* himself from the Lord. Permit me to stop and pause on Peter’s answer for just a moment. Whereas Jesus had *truthfully* answered the question presented to Him in the affirmative (18:5-6), Peter answered the question presented to him *falsely*. He *was* one of Jesus’ disciples; but in this moment of hesitation and faltering faith he denies any acquaintance with Jesus. Thus begins the journey of Peter into a moral and spiritual state that he would come to regret; and with bitter tears. Coffman makes this interesting application to Peter’s thrice repeated denials of the Lord:

The typical onset and progress of temptation are evident in this shocking sequence of events. One may readily believe that if Peter had been placed fairly on oath, if he had been called as a witness, or if there had been any formal recognition of his presence there, he would freely have acknowledged his discipleship. It was the very casualness of temptation’s initial onset that proved his undoing. It was only a “little deception” that Peter envisioned at first. He was only trying to shake off the obtrusive curiosity of a maid who had no business asking him in the first place. The beginning of this shameful episode can be pinpointed in that unwelcome, unexpected, unfair intrusion of that maid into the privacy of a man’s thoughts; but that was only the tiny hole in the dike that rapidly enlarged until the flood overwhelmed him. “Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 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”*

*“And the servants and officers stood there”* – There is no reason to believe that these “servants and officers” were anything other than the officers that went to arrest Jesus. They would have remained at hand in case of any problems that might have called for their assistance.

*“who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold”* - As was typical of John, he was very precise with the details, suggesting that he was an eye witness to these events.

*“Peter stood with them, and warmed himself”* - He may have been warming himself on the outside, but inside his heart was growing cold. As one author noted: “This fire in the court of the high-priest could not impart fresh warmth to Peter’s zeal and his fidelity to Jesus. If he had warmed himself by God in prayer, he would not have fallen” (Gossner, as quoted by Bruce).

### *Christ detained, 18:19-24*

John now takes us back inside to the court of Annas where Jesus was being detained for questioning. The arraignment and trial of our Lord was nothing more than a kangaroo court, designed to feign justice and provide a quick and easy method to get rid of the Lord. There was nothing just about the religious trial of Jesus; the numerous laws that were broken during this mock trial astound the imagination. I’ll touch on that later.

The information that John provides here is only a part of the complete Jewish proceedings that would unfold before Jesus is sent to Pilate. John will first take us from the arrest in the garden to the conclusion of the religious trial; interrupted only briefly as we return to see what was developing with Peter. Johnson, quoting Farrar, provides us some details to fill in what occurred during the religious aspect of Jesus’ trial.

Reading the Gospels side by side, we will, with care and study, see how all they tell us falls accurately into its proper position in the general narrative, and shows us a six-fold trial, a quadruple decision, a triple acquittal, a twice repeated condemnation of Christ our Lord. We soon perceive that of the three successive trials which our Lord underwent at the hands of the Jews, the first only--that before Annas--is related to us by John; the second--that before Caiaphas--by Matthew and Mark; the third--that before the Sanhedrin--by Luke alone. Nor is there anything strange in this, since the first was the practical, the second the potential, and the third the actual and



formal decision, that sentence of death should be passed upon him. Each of the three trials might, from a different point of view, have been regarded as the most fatal and important of the three. That of Annas was the authoritative pre-judgment, that of Caiaphas the real determination, that of the Sanhedrin, at daybreak, the final ratification (Johnson, ESword Module).

These verses are the first stage in the trial that would last through the night and take Jesus before the Jewish high priest, to Pilate, then to Herod, and finally back to Pilate. Throughout these proceedings there were a number of judicial laws that were broken. Adam Clarke, quoting from the Talmud, touched on this:

Criminal processes can neither commence nor terminate, but during the course of the day. If the person be acquitted, the sentence may be pronounced during that day; but, if he be condemned, the sentence cannot be pronounced till the next day. But no kind of judgment is to be executed, either on the eve of the Sabbath, or the eve of any festival (Adam Clarke, ESword Module).

It is clear, therefore, that as Christ was detained for questioning during the night, that these judicial proceedings were anything *but* just and fair. In fulfillment of prophecy, our Lord's "judgment was taken away" (Isa. 53:8).

~~ 18:19 ~~

*"The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his teaching"*

With this verse the interrogation by the high priest begins. Exactly why the high priest inquired about Jesus' disciples is not recorded. It may have been to entrap Jesus into some statement that could later be used against Him in the civil trial before Pilate. Annas may have been trying to determine if the disciples of Jesus were part of some secret organization, or anti-government movement, thereby providing him with some kind of charge to bring before Pilate when the time came. Bruce touched on this:

If Annas suspected Jesus of subversive speech and action, he wanted to know how many people were implicated in the subversion, and what its nature was. About his disciples Jesus said nothing - wishing perhaps, as shortly before, when he was arrested, to distract the authorities' attention from them (Bruce, 346).

Unable to establish any such covert organization, the next charge that would later be brought against the Lord would be that of blasphemy against the temple.

*“The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples”* – Why did Annas ask Jesus about His disciples? It is for no other reason than to seek a weak link that he might use when he took the case to Caiaphas, and later to Pilate. Unable to find any fault in Jesus, and unable to find any witnesses who might be able to provide something with which to charge Jesus, Annas turns his attention to the disciples of Jesus. This has often been the point at which Christianity has been attacked. Rather than examine Christ, the critics and enemies of Christianity take issue with the disciples of Jesus. If they can find fault with the disciples of Jesus, they think they have found fault with Christ. This is why it is so important for those of us who are His followers to maintain vigilance in the face of those who would seek to find fault. Men cannot see Jesus today, but they can certainly observe His followers; and be certain, they *are* watching.

~~ 18:20-21 ~~

*“Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world; I ever taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them that have heard me, what I spake unto them: behold, these know the things which I said”*

The apostle Paul acknowledged that these things were not done in a corner, or in secret. All that Jesus did was open for examination. Even the Jews who had been present on various occasions of His teaching and miracles could testify to what had been done. Jesus was doing what any lawyer would have done: “Call your witnesses; let them testify if I have done any wrong.”

*“to the world”* - The word “world” as used here is a reference to the nation of Israel. This is further substantiated by the Lord’s reference to the “synagogue” where He had taught.

*“where all the Jews come together”* - Any accusation that Jesus and His disciples had established some secret order, or that their intentions were clandestine, would have been immediately rebuked by the fact that Jesus spoke openly in their synagogues.

*“and in secret spake I nothing”* - There is no conflict with Matthew 10:27, for the very things that Jesus taught privately to His disciples were declared openly. Even His criticism of the Pharisees as contained in Matthew 23 was open to the public.

Jesus insisted on His rights, and He reproves the high priest for his unjust and illegal manner of extorting a confession from Him. “If he had done wrong, or taught erroneous and seditious doctrines, it was easy to prove it, and the course which he had a right to demand was that they should establish the charge by fair and incontrovertible evidence” (Barnes, ESword Module).

Although Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself, He was also determined that justice be done. He knew He was innocent, and nothing in His behavior could be used to cast any aspersions upon Himself. All of us are warned that we “shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12), but we may use the laws of the land and the courts to procure our freedoms where possible. When Paul was arrested he made use of the law and appealed to Caesar rather than mildly give in to the accusations of the Jews (Acts 25:11).

~~ 18:22 ~~

*“And when he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?”*

*“one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand”* - This appears to be the first physical injury done to the Lord by the soldiers. He would also receive mistreatment at the hands of Caiaphas. Later He would be blindfolded, mocked and beaten (cf. Luke 22:63-64).

*“Answerest thou the high priest so?”* - Exodus 22:28, “Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse a ruler of thy people.” Whether this was a Roman soldier or one of the temple officers is not certain. Nor can it be ascertained why this soldier thought Jesus was showing disrespect unto the high priest. It seems to me that this officer may have gotten caught up in the mob mentality of the moment and that his mind was biased with regard to guilt and/or innocence of Jesus.

~~ 18:23 ~~

*“Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?”*

The calm manner in which the Lord responds is evidence of His application of His own words in Matthew 5:39 to the situation. “But I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

If, in addressing the high priest, Jesus had spoken evil, as the officer had so accused Him, then the officer who struck Him should have brought charges against the Lord and had Him punished in a legal manner. If he could *not* do this then not only was he wrong in making the accusation, but he was wrong in striking the Lord. It should be noted that while Jesus forbade Peter from defending with the sword, it was right to defend with the *word*.

*“bear witness”* - Jesus was not simply saying, “Prove your accusations.” He was demanding that witnesses be provided before judgment or punishment could be carried out. On a side note, the reprimand applied to the high priest as well as the officer who struck Him. One thing that impresses me in this early stage of the religious trial is the effort Jesus puts forth to call the hand of these religious leaders who had, without any just cause, arrested Him.

~~ 18:24 ~~

*“Annas therefore sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest”*

The pre-examination now completed, Annas keeps Jesus bound and sends the Lord to Caiaphas. The fact that Annas kept Jesus bound would suggest to Caiaphas that Annas' conclusion in the pre-examination was that Jesus was guilty, and still considered dangerous. When Jesus arrived before Caiaphas bound as He was, it would immediately prejudice the mind of Caiaphas. After all, who was he to argue with his father-in-law?

John does not give us any of the details of the Lord's appearance before Caiaphas. The proximity of the place where Annas examined Jesus and where Caiaphas would conduct his portion of the hearing must have been close to each other; perhaps even the same hall. Luke tells us that the next part of the religious aspect of Jesus' trial was to be at Caiaphas' house (Luke 22:54). For more details on the proceedings at Caiaphas' house it would be good to study Matthew 26:59-68, Mark 14:53 and 55-65, and Luke 22:54 and 63-65; something that is beyond the scope of this commentary.

### *Christ denied, 18:25-27*

In order to assist in determining where the various words and phrases appear in the four gospels I have reproduced J.W. McGarvey's compilation of the four gospel accounts. You will notice that he uses the superscript letter "a" to designate Matthew's account, "b" for Mark's account, "c" for Luke's account, and "d" to designate John's account. I realize that any attempt to look up each of the references in this compilation would be very tedious. Therefore I present this harmony only to provide the reader with the opportunity to see the "flow" of the full account of Peter's denial. The parallel passages are found in Matthew 26:57-74, Mark 14:53-72, Luke 22:54-62.

<sup>a</sup>58 But {<sup>d</sup>15 And} Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; <sup>b</sup>54 And Peter had followed him afar off, <sup>a</sup>unto the court of the high priest, <sup>d</sup>16 but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, went out and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter, <sup>b</sup>even within, into the

court of the high priest; <sup>d</sup>17 The maid therefore that kept the door saith unto Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. <sup>a</sup>and [Peter] entered in. <sup>d</sup>18 Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves: and Peter also was with them, <sup>e</sup>55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the court, and had sat down together, Peter <sup>a</sup>sat with the officers, <sup>c</sup>in the midst of them. <sup>a</sup>to see the end; <sup>b</sup>and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light of the fire. <sup>c</sup>56 And <sup>a</sup>69 Now <sup>b</sup>as <sup>d</sup>Simon Peter <sup>a</sup>was sitting {<sup>d</sup>standing} <sup>a</sup>without <sup>b</sup>beneath in the court, there cometh {<sup>a</sup>came} unto him, <sup>c</sup>a certain <sup>b</sup>one of the maids of the high priest; <sup>e</sup>67 and seeing Peter <sup>c</sup>as he sat in the light of the fire, <sup>b</sup>warming himself, she looked {<sup>c</sup>and looking} stedfastly upon him, said, {<sup>b</sup>saith, <sup>a</sup>saying,} Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilaean. <sup>b</sup>the Nazarene, even Jesus. <sup>c</sup>This man also was with him. <sup>a</sup>70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. <sup>b</sup>I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest: <sup>c</sup>Woman, I know him not. <sup>d</sup>They said therefore unto him, Art thou also one of his disciples? He denied, and said, I am not. <sup>b</sup>and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. <sup>a</sup>71 And when he was gone out into the porch, <sup>c</sup>after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou also art one of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. <sup>b</sup>69 And <sup>a</sup>another <sup>b</sup>the maid saw him, and began again to say {<sup>a</sup>saith} unto them that were there, <sup>b</sup>that stood by, This is one of them. <sup>a</sup>This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>b</sup>70 But {<sup>a</sup>72 And} again he denied <sup>b</sup>it. <sup>a</sup>with an oath, I know not the man. <sup>e</sup>73 And after a little <sup>c</sup>after the space of about one hour another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this man also was with him; for he is a Galilaean. <sup>e</sup>60 But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. <sup>b</sup>Again they that stood by <sup>a</sup>came and said to Peter, Of a truth thou also art one of them; <sup>b</sup>for thou art a Galilaean. <sup>a</sup>for thy speech maketh thee known. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. <sup>d</sup>26 One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? <sup>b</sup>70 But <sup>d</sup>27 Peter therefore denied again: <sup>a</sup>74 Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the {<sup>b</sup>this} <sup>a</sup>man. <sup>b</sup>of whom ye speak. <sup>e</sup>72 And straightway <sup>c</sup>immediately, while he yet spake, <sup>b</sup>the second time the

cock crew. <sup>c</sup>61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered <sup>b</sup>And Peter called to mind the word, <sup>c</sup>of the Lord, <sup>a</sup>which Jesus had said, <sup>b</sup>how that he said unto him, <sup>a</sup>Before the cock crow, <sup>b</sup>twice, <sup>c</sup>this day thou shalt deny me thrice. 62 And he went out, <sup>b</sup>And when he thought thereon, he wept. <sup>c</sup>bitterly.

~~ 18:25 ~~

*“Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore unto him, Art thou also one of his disciples? He denied, and said, I am not”*

*“Peter was standing and warming himself”* - Once again Peter finds himself warming himself by the fire, likely late in the night or in the early morning hours. “Peter stayed to *warm himself*; but they that *warm themselves* with evil-doers, grow cold toward good people and good things; and they that are fond of the devil’s fire-side, are in danger of the devil’s fire” (source of quote not available).

*“They said therefore unto him”* - Exactly who the “they” includes becomes clear when we keep in mind the chronological order. Peter had entered into the court to hear the proceedings before Caiaphas. That now being completed, he ventures out onto the porch. So the “they” would, without doubt, be some of the Jewish officers and guards.

The conclusion is that it was a maid of the high priest who recognized Peter, and then spoke to these Jewish authorities who were, along with Peter, leaving the proceedings at the house of Caiaphas.

This is the second denial by Peter, and John does not provide the crowing of the cock the second time at the end of this series of challenges and denials (see Mark 14:66-68). It would appear that there were actually multiple denials here, one to the maid, another to those to whom she reported, a third to the crowd assembled outside the court on the porch, and still another to yet another maid, perhaps the first one he encountered. McGarvey thinks Peter denied to “four different parties, but in such quick

succession that the event is regarded as one” (McGarvey, ESword Module). I think he is correct in this.

Only Mark records the incident of the cursing and swearing; only John introduced the factor of Malchus’ kinsman being in the company of accusers; only Matthew recorded the fact of Peter’s language being the basis of the charge that he was from Galilee. Each sacred author made his contribution to our understanding of this tragic episode (Coffman).

~~ 18:26 ~~

*“One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?”*

John shows us the increase of danger associated with each of the charges. First, it is a maid who asks the question, but it appears to be only out of curiosity. Then, after the statement of the second maid (Mark 14:56-57), it is the officers around the coal-fire who more decidedly interrogate him. Finally a kinsman of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off, pretends to recognize him as one whom he has already seen in the garden with Jesus.

~~ 18:27 ~~

*“Peter therefore denied again: and straightway the cock crew”*

This, then, is the final and harshest of the denials. According to Mark this one occurred about an hour later, giving enough time for the trial before Caiaphas. The parallel accounts tell us that Peter not only denied on this occasion, but that he “began to curse and to swear, I know not the man” (Matt. 26:74). It was then that the cock crowed the third time.

How do we reconcile the various statements by the Lord in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John with regard to the number of times the cock would crow before Peter would deny the Lord, and/or how many times Peter would deny the Lord? Here are the passages:



Matt. 26:34 – “Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

Matt. 26:75 – “And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”

Mark 14:30 – “And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice.”

Mark 14:72 – “And straightway the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word, how that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.”

Luke 22:34 – “And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.”

Luke 22:61 – “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice.”

John 13:38 – “Jesus answereth, Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shalt not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.”

The variations are understood when we consider the fact that there is a difference between a cock crowing and what was commonly called the “cock crow.” Roosters generally do not, all at once and at the same time, begin their crow simultaneously. Rather, one may welcome the dawn, then another, until eventually all join in unison. There are several factors that enter into a proper understanding of our Lord’s reference to the various counts of the cock crowing. The ISBE had this note:

In our Lord’s time the Jews had adopted the Greek and Roman division of the night into four watches, each consisting of three hours, the first beginning at six o’clock

in the evening (Luke 12:38; Matt. 14:25; Mark 6:48). But the ancient division, known as the first and second cock-crowing, was still retained. The cock usually crows several times soon after midnight (this is the first crowing), and again at the dawn of day (and this is the second crowing). Mark mentions (Mark 14:30) the two cock-crowings. Matthew (Matt. 26:34) alludes to that only which was emphatically the cock-crowing, viz, the second (ISBE, ESword Module).

McClintock and Strong comments were also helpful:

The cock usually crows several times about midnight, and again about break of day. The latter time, because he then crows loudest. It has been considered a contradiction that Matthew 26:34 records our Lord to have said to Peter, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice," whereas Mark 14:30 says, "before the cock crow twice." But Matthew, giving only the general sense of the admonition (as also Luke 22:34; John 13:38), evidently alludes to that only which was customarily called the cock-crowing; but Mark, who wrote under Peter's inspection, more accurately recording the very words, mentions the two cock-crowings (McClintock and Strong, ESword, 'cock-crowing').

### A CLOSER LOOK AT PETER

At first we may be prone to focus on Peter's failure on this particular occasion. I will not try to whitewash what Peter did. It was inexcusable. The inspired writers never showed favorites when it came to recording the actions of Bible characters. The good, the bad, and the ugly are all presented alike. David is one example of the unbiased pen of inspiration. Though David was a man after God's own heart, inspiration still records his shortcomings and sins. I want us to consider some things about Peter that may help us to see this, his greatest failure, in proper context.

First, Peter must have had a deep love for the Lord. When all the other disciples (with the exception of John) fled, it was Peter who refused to flee to safety. He "followed" Jesus. Surely he knew that

by following so close to Jesus he was taking an enormous risk. It seems that Peter loved the Lord so much that he just could not bring himself to leave the Savior. “True, he failed; but he failed in circumstances which only a faithful lover of Jesus would ever have encountered” (Barclay, ESword).

Second, we must not overlook the courage of Peter. Look at what he had done in the Garden. When Jesus was arrested, it was Peter who drew his sword against the cohort of Roman soldiers; one sword against perhaps several dozen. While it is true that Peter failed on this one occasion, at least he failed trying. Perhaps you have come across the following observation from Teddy Roosevelt:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually try to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat” (original source not known).

Third, we must look past the failure of Peter on this occasion to the fact that he redeemed himself by faithful service for the Master. Peter had it within himself, because of his love for the Lord and his courage that called for bravery above and beyond the call of duty, to start over. One of our greatest Presidents was Ronald Reagan. He was once asked what he thought about the free market system in view of the hundreds and thousands of entrepreneurs that had failed. To this Reagan replied: “Well, many do, particularly the successful ones; often several times. And if you ask them the secret of their success, they’ll tell you it’s all that they learned in their struggles along the way; yes, it’s what they learned from failing. Like an athlete in competition or

a scholar in pursuit of the truth, experience is the greatest teacher.”

Many of us can see ourselves in Peter. He had his ups and downs, but in the final outcome, he demonstrated those character traits that all of us long for. Keep in mind that the real Peter declared his loyalty of the Lord in that upper room. It was the real Peter who drew his sword in defiance against those soldiers who came to arrest his Lord. It was the real Peter who simply could not, for whatever reason, abandon his Lord in that dark hour. I am thankful that the Holy Spirit saw fit to record this moment in Peter's life, for in so doing, heaven declares that in spite of my weaknesses and failures, I can still succeed and win the crown promised by my Lord. Winston Churchill is credited with having said, “Success is never final. Failure is never fatal. It is courage that counts.”



## CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

### “BEHOLD THE MAN”

*Christ Before Pilate: The Civil Trial, 18:28 thru 19:16;*

This is another one of those examples where our chapter divisions were not carefully thought through. I have selected to address the trial of Jesus before Pilate as a single unit rather than break it where our Bibles divide the chapters. John 18:28 begins the civil phase of the Lord's trial. John is the only one who gives a detailed account of the private examinations of Jesus by Pilate during this civil trial. John also devotes more space to this aspect of our Lord's trials than any of the other writers. Interestingly, John does *not* give any information about the initial accusation presented to Pilate by the Jews (Luke 23:1-2), the repeated accusations by the priests (Matt. 27:12; Mark 15:3), information regarding the trial before Herod (Luke 23:4-12), or the priests' agitation for the release of Barabbas (Matt. 27:20; Mark 15:11). It should not surprise us that John selected only a portion of all that occurred during the trial of Jesus, because this has been his pattern since the beginning of his gospel.

John's record of the civil trial of Jesus is very graphic. The scene is the Praetorium, which served as the residence of Pilate as well as his court. The scene alternates between the outside and the inside of the Praetorium. The focus in this section is the conflict between Pilate and Jesus. In a very real sense it was a trial of Pilate before Christ instead of Christ before Pilate. Morgan's summary picked up on this very point:

The whole story is that of Jesus and Pilate, with a background of priests and rulers and a rabble. Here we have the Gentile world as represented in the person of Pilate, confronting Jesus. Pilate was the embodiment of the Roman Empire; all its might and all its majesty were vested in him as an executive. All the way through the question about Jesus is a question of Kingship. Everything revolves around that. Three times over Pilate went inside the Praetorium, taking Jesus with him, leaving the crowd outside. These two are seen confronting each other. The priestly trials were over, the arraignment before Annas,

and the examination before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. Religion had decided to kill Jesus, and now the civil trial goes forward. We see Jesus no longer in the presence of religion, but of government (Morgan, ESword Module).

There are seven movements in this portion of our study. In the first we find Jesus *outside* the Praetorium (18:28-32). In this part Pilate puts the question to the accusers of Jesus, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" (18:29b). Their answer changed the entire course of the proceedings. "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (18:31). What they were seeking was not an investigation, but a sentencing. Pilate immediately knew that this was more serious than first suspected.

The second movement takes us *inside* the Praetorium (18:33-38a). It is here that the confrontation between Pilate and Jesus reaches its high point when Pilate asks, "What is truth?" (18:38).

The third movement takes us *outside* the Praetorium (18:38b-40). It is here that we are introduced to a *custom* and a *criminal*. "Will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" (18:39). In that moment the nation of Israel made their final choice; a choice of evil over righteousness.

The fourth movement takes us back *inside* the Praetorium (19:1-3). In some sadistic effort to placate the Jews, Pilate choses to scourge Jesus and send Him back out to the Jews. The scene demonstrates a depth of wickedness in Pilate that is seldom seen in even the most wicked of men. He had essentially rendered a verdict of not guilty, but in order to satisfy the Jews, he did what he thought best at the time; he had Jesus scourged.

The fifth movement takes us back *outside* the Praetorium (19:4-7). In a desperate attempt to end the trial and escape the dilemma that Pilate now found himself facing, he presented Jesus to the angry mob. He thought that by presenting a scourged, lacerated, and thorn crowned prisoner he would somehow appeal to their pity. In essence Pilate said, "Behold, I bring Him out to you, knowing that I have acquitted Him; but behold the man; this man you would call a king!" As the angry

mob looked at Jesus, the chief priests and the officers cried out, "Crucify, crucify."

The sixth movement takes us back *inside* the Praetorium (19:8-11). Motivated by fear, and desperate now to draw this trial to a close, Pilate asks Jesus, "Whence art thou?" (19:9); but Jesus "gave him no answer" (19:9b). With that, Pilate attempts to appeal to his own authority to do with Jesus what he pleased; but even that backfires on him when the Lord replies with these words: "Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above" (19:11).

The seventh and final movement is characterized by cowardice and compromise (19:12-16). Unable to muster the courage to release Jesus, the governor buckles under the demand to "crucify him." "Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified" (19:16).

It might be good right here to provide some information relative to cases concerning capital punishment and the bearing it had upon the trial, verdict, and punishment of the Lord. I cannot improve upon Johnson's summary:

The transference of the trial from the Sanhedrin to the "judgment seat" of Pontius Pilate was made necessary by the political condition of Judea. One badge of the servitude of the Jewish nation to the Roman yoke was, that while the Jewish courts were permitted to try and to punish minor offenses, the final judgment of all capital offenses was reserved for the Roman tribunals. A Roman judge must sign the warrant before the condemned person could be led to execution, and the punishment was then indicted by the Roman officials. These capital cases at Jerusalem were usually brought up at the great feasts, at which time the Roman Governor came up from his home at Cesarea to the Jewish capital. Pontius Pilate, at this Passover occasion, had come up, and as he would probably return as soon as the Passover was over, it was needful to make their appeal to him at once. Besides, after the Passover began it would be unlawful for them to conduct civil business, and unless they were prepared to hold Jesus for a week as a prisoner the death warrant would have to

be obtained this very morning, and the crucifixion follow immediately, in order that the bodies might be removed before the feast began. It is needful to consider these facts in order to understand the extreme hurry and urgency of the members of Sanhedrin (Johnson, ESword Module).

Now imagine yourself in a court as the trial of the century is about to unfold. The accused is Jesus of Nazareth. The prosecutor consists of the Jewish hierarchy and establishment in Jerusalem. The judge is Pilate. You are privileged to sit in the galley and watch as each scene unfolds dramatically before your very eyes.

Scene I: The Accusation

*“What accusation bring ye against this man?”*

18:28-32

~~ 18:28 ~~

*“They lead Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium: and it was early; and they themselves entered not into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover”*

*“They lead Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium”* - The ‘Praetorium’ was literally, the “hall of judgment.” It would be the governor’s court room where civil trials were conducted.

*“and it was early”* - If we take into account the events of the previous evening (i.e., the interrogation before Annas and Caiaphas), it seems that this could not have been any earlier than 6:00 a.m., the morning following Jesus’ arrest. Since it was only lawful for the Sanhedrin to pass sentence after dawn, we can surmise that the *informal* meeting of the Jewish court occurred prior to dawn, and after a short break reconvened to pass sentence. It was at this time that they passed the formal death sentence, but because of Roman law they could not perform the execution. That would take a civil trial.

*“and they themselves entered not into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover”* - For a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile would make him “unclean” till the



close of the day (sunset). Those who hold to a Thursday crucifixion find support in this passage. They take the words here as an indication that the Jews had *not yet eaten the Passover*. But the passage does not say they had not yet eaten the Passover; it says that they did not want to be defiled *while* eating the Passover. Robertson has this enlightening observation:

This phrase may mean to eat the passover meal as in Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12-14, and Luke 22:11-15. But it does not have to mean that. In 2 Chronicles 30:22 we read: "And they did eat the festival seven days" when the paschal festival is meant, not the paschal lamb or the paschal supper. There are eight other examples of '*pascha*' in John's Gospel and in all of them the feast is meant, not the supper. If we follow John's use of the word, it is the feast here, not the meal of John 13:2 which was the regular passover meal. This interpretation keeps John in harmony with the Synoptics (Robertson, ESword Module).

~~ 18:29 ~~

*"Pilate therefore went out unto them, and saith, What accusation bring ye against this man?"*

*"Pilate"* - Pilate was at this time governor of Judaea. He had received this appointment from the Emperor Tiberius in A.D. 26 (about four years prior to the events here). Archaeology has confirmed not only the historicity of Pilate, but the fact that he had the title of '*prefect of Judaea*.' A Latin inscription to that effect was discovered in 1961. Pilate was by all accounts available, a weak man who tried to cover up his weakness by a show of obstinacy and violence (Bruce, 349). He repeatedly offended the Jews; whether on purpose or because of his weak and vacillating nature is not certain.

*"went out unto them"* - Since the Jewish authorities would not enter into the residence of a Gentile, Pilate made it a point to go out to them in order to hear the accusations.

*"What accusation bring ye against this man?"* - It was the responsibility of the Jewish authorities to present a formal complaint for the governor to give consideration.

~~ 18:30 ~~

*“They answered and said unto him, If this man were not an evildoer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee”*

*“if this man were not an evil-doer”* - Here is evidence that these Jewish authorities expected Pilate to assent to their sentence of death without delay. They were not seeking another trial, but rather a speedy execution of the verdict of the religious trial. The Jews had the authority under Roman rule to (1) exercise discipline up to, but not including the point of capital punishment; and (2) to offer a *proposal* for capital punishment before the Roman authorities.

The answer carried a veiled contempt, as if they were telling the governor that their judgment was sufficient, and that his business was to carry out their behest. Pilate replied by a command which was virtually a taunt: “Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law” (Tenney, 259).

~~ 18:31 ~~

*“Pilate therefore said unto them, Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death”*

While reading the account of our Lord’s appearance before Pilate, I was immediately struck with the fact that Pilate recognized there was a complete lack of evidence for the charge. The Jewish authorities may have thought that Pilate would simply rubber stamp their verdict, but Pilate’s hesitancy to get involved seems evident throughout the interview. He would pronounce Jesus innocent (19:4), attempt to release Him (18:39), try to appease the priests with a lesser punishment of scourging (19:1), plead with the crowd (19:12), and employ sarcasm (19:15).

But if Pilate was aware that the Jews could not, under Roman rule, exercise capital punishment, then why did Pilate tell them, “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law”? One suggestion is that Pilate was being sarcastic. In essence, Pilate was telling them to finish what they had started, and if they were

unable to do so, then it was their problem, not his. It seems to me, however, that Pilate did not yet know the full extent of the charges that the Jews were brining against Jesus. There were some cases where Rome allowed the Jews to carry out the death penalty – such as the violation of the sanctity of the Temple – without a civil trial. This may explain why, according to Mark’s account, an attempt was made before the Sanhedrin to charge Jesus with uttering threats against the temple (cf. Mark 14:57-59). It would also explain why Stephen was stoned with no ratification by the Roman authorities in that case (see Acts 6:12-14f).

~~ 18:32 ~~

*“that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake,  
signifying by what manner of death he should die”*

This is probably a reference to the statements recorded in John 12:32-33 and Matthew 20:18-19 where Christ foretold His crucifixion. Jesus knew in advance that He would *not* die by stoning, which would have been the method of death had He been convicted of blasphemy. Attempts were made to stone Jesus on that very charge, but not only were the charges false, the attempts to stone Jesus were all unsuccessful (John 8:59; 10:31-39).

Scene II: The Interrogation  
*“Art thou the King of the Jews?”*  
18:33-38a

At this point John takes us back *inside* the Praetorium. It is here that the confrontation between Pilate and Jesus will reach its climax.

~~ 18:33 ~~

*“Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and called  
Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?”*

Each of the gospels gives this question as the first words addressed by Pilate to Jesus (See also Matt. 27:11, Mark 15:2, and Luke 23:3). Tenney thinks that in Pilate’s mind all of this “was half a joke.” As if Pilate was saying, “So YOU are the King of the

Jews, are you?” (Tenney, 261). Tenney also noted that “the emphatic use of the second personal pronoun in Pilate’s question showed that he did not expect to receive the kind of person that stood before him” (Tenney, 261). Likewise McGarvey:

The question expresses surprise. There was nothing in the manner or attire of Jesus to suggest a royal claimant. The question was designed to draw Jesus out should he chance to be a fanatical or an unbalanced enthusiast” (McGarvey, ESword Module).

~~ 18:34 ~~

*“Jesus answered, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me?”*

The answer may have taken Pilate by surprise. There was no attempt on the part of Jesus to protest His innocence. Jesus was not defiant or rude, or in any way disrespectful to Pilate. He treated Pilate, not as a superior authority, but as an equal who needed to be questioned about what role he would play in this proceeding. Jesus was actually asking Pilate if he was acting on his own, from evidence that was open and available, or was he being used as a pawn in the evil scheme of the Jewish authorities.

~~ 18:35 ~~

*“Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?”*

*“Am I a Jew?”* - This outburst on the part of Pilate was no doubt the result of his contempt for the Jews and his impatience with Jesus.

*“What hast thou done?”* - The question would indicate that at least at this point Pilate was unsure of the charges. What had this man done that called for the Jews to demand the death penalty?

~~ 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 always sought opportunity to teach the truth regarding His kingdom. He does the same here. Staring death in the face, Jesus does not recoil from Pilate's remarks. Instead, Jesus uses the occasion to teach Pilate about His kingdom; unfortunately the Lord's words appear to have fallen on deaf ears.

*"My kingdom is not of this world"* - The kingdom of the Lord is not defined by strength of an army, or boundaries on a map. His kingdom is not ruled by tyrants who oppress the subjects of that kingdom. If His kingdom *were* of this world, then His servants would "fight" with worldly weapons and earthly means so as to protect their King. Certainly Pilate had not missed the fact that Jesus' disciples were conspicuously absent.

*"but now is my kingdom not from hence"* - Not only is it not of this world, it is not from this world; it does not derive its existence from battles fought and won, or dictates declared in the councils of governments.

~~ 18:37 ~~

*"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"*

*"Art thou a king then?"* - Pilate could not relate to the Lord's statement. Here was a man who demonstrated a calm assurance in the face of death itself. The courage was that of a King, but the statement that His kingdom was not "of this world" and that His servants would not "fight" to protect Him must have been confusing; it simply did not fit Pilate's expectation of what constitutes a King and/or a kingdom.

*"Thou sayest that I am a king"* - There is no way to take this other than an *affirmation* on the part of the Lord as to His Kingship. Bruce had an interesting analysis of Pilate's question, and the Lord's answer:

The response to Pilate's question, "You are a king, then?" – "It is you who say that I am a king" (verse 37) – might in certain circumstances have been construed as an admission of the charge brought against the accused. If it was tantamount to "Yes" it was sufficient in Roman law for conviction, for Roman law, unlike Jewish law, could convict on a plea of guilty without confirmation from witnesses. But it was evident to Pilate that Jesus' response to his question was not tantamount to "Yes" – that whatever the nature of his claims might be, he had committed no offence against the law which it was Pilate's duty to administer (Bruce, 354).

*"To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world"* – Jesus never lost sight of the divine *appointment* given unto Him by the Father. This is a concise statement summing up the Lord's mission, and His fulfillment of that mission.

*"that I should bear witness unto the truth"* – The Lord's *appointment* was to come "into the world," and His *assignment* was to bear witness of the truth; this He did with faithfulness and courage unequalled in the annals of history.

*"Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice"* – Pilate was the one on trial. Jesus was asking this man, in no uncertain terms, "Pilate, will you listen to what I am saying? If not, you are not of the truth." Pilate was now at the crossroads in his life. Sadly, he made the wrong choice in the matter.

The reply of our Lord was precise and to the point. Tenney summarized this part of the Lord's exchange with Pilate:

Jesus, realizing Pilate's growing interest, gave him a little bait to draw him on. This was a subtle appeal, for a judge was supposed to adhere to the truth. Logically, then, if Pilate were devoted to truth, he would hear it in Jesus' voice; if not, he would brand himself as not belonging to the truth (Tenney, 262).

~~ 18:38a ~~

*"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"*

*“Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?” -*

We may never know the reason for Pilate’s question. Some have suggested that he was being cynical, as if to ask whether or not there was any such thing as truth. Others have thought that the question was asked in a scoffing way, still others viewing Pilate as being nothing less than honest in his motives. I really don’t think Pilate was jesting because the occasion was too serious, as the tenor of the proceedings suggest. After asking the question, Pilate immediately went out again to the Jews and declared, “I find no crime in him.” That does not sound to me like the response of a potentate that would have been jesting.

He was convinced of Jesus’ innocence of the charge against Him, and he sought to release Him. His attitude had swung from scornful surprise to that of respectful though puzzled regard. With a few words, Jesus had confronted him with the real issue at stake: his attitude toward truth. Had he realized it, the answer to his question, whether prompted by cynicism, scorn, or sincere desire, was within arm’s reach of him, for Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Pilate was facing the opportunity of a lifetime (Tenney, 262).

There is irony in this moment in Pilate’s life. Standing before the governor was Truth personified, and he seems either too blind to recognize it, or too stubborn to admit it.

Scene III: The First Acquittal

*“I find no crime in him”*

18:38b-40

~~ 18:b ~~

*“And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews,  
and saith unto them, I find no crime in him”*

Pilate was torn between two alternatives, neither of which was that appealing. He could either turn over an innocent man to be executed and appease the people, or he could refuse to grant the Jews’ request and face a possible riot leading to the loss of his position as governor. He would, of course, choose the former,

and thus begin his journey toward a complete compromise to the will of the people. He would attempt to solve his dilemma by compromising any shred of integrity he may have still possessed at this point.

*“I find no crime in him”* - McGarvey noted that the pronoun “I” is emphatic: “As if Pilate said, ‘You prejudiced fanatics, demand his death, but I, the calm judge, pronounce him innocent’ (McGarvey, ESword Module).

It is at this point that Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, of which none of the details are recorded by John. You can read about that in Luke 23:6-12.

~~ 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 desperately sought some kind of neutral ground. His attempt to turn Him over to Herod failed; his attempt to appease the crowd by scourging Jesus would fail as well; and his personal interrogation of Jesus only confirmed the Lord’s innocence. Pilate was in a very precarious position. The chants of the mob were growing louder; the patience of the priests growing thin. Still, Pilate seemed averse to executing an innocent man. Perhaps a well-known Jewish custom would provide a way of escape from his dilemma.

*“But ye have a custom”* – Exactly when, or on what occasion, this custom came into existence is not known. According to Bruce, “the practice of releasing a prisoner at Passover is unattested outside the New Testament” (Bruce, 355). No reference can be found, even in Josephus. McGarvey thinks that in those early morning hours there was a multitude who had come to Pilate asking for their annual “gift of a prisoner,” and “Pilate welcomed the demand as a possible escape from his difficulties” (McGarvey, ESword Module). According to the custom, the Roman governor would, at this particular time of the Jewish Passover, dismiss charges against some prisoner who had offended the Roman authority. There were only two such notable



prisoners in Pilate's hands at the time, four if we count the two thieves eventually crucified with Jesus. The choice, however, was narrowed down to Barabbas, a man who had been engaged in sedition in Jerusalem as the leader of a band of robbers; the other was Jesus. While the former was guilty before the law, of Jesus it was declared, "I find no fault in him at all."

~~ 18:40 ~~

*"They cried out therefore again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber"*

The hypocrisy of the Jews can be seen in the fact that Barabbas was admittedly guilty of the charges against him; crimes of robbery and, "who for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison" (Luke 23:19). To put it bluntly, Barabbas was guilty of the very crime with which the priests and rulers had falsely charged Jesus – insurrection and sedition against Rome.

#### AN ASTONISHING CHOICE

by Tom Wacaster

(originally written in 2010)

"Now at the feast the governor was wont to release unto the multitude one prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:15-17). I don't know where the "custom" originated that allowed the Jews to select some prisoner for release, but likely it had to do with Rome's attempt to appease the Jews by granting liberty to some political prisoner. After all, Israel was almost at constant odds with Rome politically.

Little did Pilate imagine that this Jewish mob would, when given the choice, prefer a cold-blooded killer over a man Who went about doing good, and against Whom no charge of wrong could be levied. Oh yes, Barabbas was a "notable" prisoner; no doubt a seditionist, a zealot who hated Rome and Rome's occupation of the Promised Land. Somewhere in the recesses of the not-too-distant past this man had taken someone's life. Arrested, tried,

and convicted, he was confined to a prison in Jerusalem to await his execution by crucifixion. Here was a murderer, a seditionist, deserving of the death that awaited him along with the two thieves who would eventually be crucified with Christ. Little did Barabbas imagine that in the early hours of the very day of his scheduled execution he would be granted not only a stay of execution, but a full release from prison. In an attempt to appease the angry mob, Pilate offered the Jews a choice. Knowing the Jews had delivered up Jesus out of jealousy, he asked, "Who shall I release to you? Jesus, or Barabbas." It is rather ironic that the name "Barabbas" means "son of father" ("*Bar*" meaning "son of," and "*abba*" meaning "father"). That dark night in Jerusalem, Israel was given the choice between two men as to whom they would accept, and whom they would reject. Jesus was the Son of the Father of all men; Barabbas the son of some unnamed man. Was Barabbas' earthly father still alive? Did he live in Jerusalem? Was he aware of the fate of his son, and the turn of events that would set this man free? No information is provided. But this we know about the "father" of each of these men. The father of one, if alive, or even aware of his son's life, must have hung his head in shame. The Father of the Other was "well pleased" with the love and obedience demonstrated by His Son's short thirty-three year earthly tenure.

To appease the crowd, Pilate gave the mob a choice: Jesus or Barabbas! The governor must have been shocked to hear that the people preferred this vile, wicked murderer to Jesus. But that is the choice they made; and their choice echoes through the halls of history revealing the extreme to which men will go when they are determined to rid their lives of Jesus. The atheist selects Barabbas over Jesus when he rejects the abundant evidence of the existence of God and deity of Jesus. He plays the fool (Psa. 14:1) and willfully closes his eyes to the abundant evidence that declares the glory of God and shows His wonderful handiwork (Psa. 19:1). In exchange he offers nothing to the world but a bleak outlook on life and an eternity filled with hopeless non-existence.

The profligate likewise select Barabbas over Jesus when he follows in the footsteps of that notorious criminal who had little respect for life and no respect for authority. Desiring to live a life of debauchery, the profligate rejects every attempt to reign in a

life that is out of control, and chooses instead to continue his journey into the dark night of indulgence and self-pleasure.

The unethical abortionist, unloving mother, and uncaring society select Barabbas over Jesus every time a baby is torn from its mother's womb and the masses of a society remain silent without so much as a whimper or wailing cry! Right and wrong meant nothing, and the value of human life even less, to those who chose Barabbas over Jesus so that they might escape the responsibility that comes with bringing a child into this world.

The list goes on! The homosexual selects Barabbas over Jesus for an unholy, perverted life style. The religious leaders and foolish followers who perpetrate, perpetuate, or participate in religious error have selected Barabbas over Jesus. The child of God that turns back to the filth of the world has made a bad choice. Every lukewarm, indifferent, undedicated, uncommitted child of God who allows pleasure to come between them and their God, have selected Barabbas over Jesus. Cowardly elders who choose to appease rebellious members rather than have the whole counsel of God preached, have likewise selected Barabbas over Jesus.

Yes, the choice those Jews made on that fateful day has been repeated by untold billions. When men choose a person, philosophy or policy over Christ, have they not called for the release of Barabbas over the Christ? "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Whether in person, principle, or way of life, when men choose to "crucify" Christ afresh, they are asking for Barabbas over Christ. Every time someone rejects the authority of Christ for tradition, family religion, or a moral life style contrary to the teaching of the New Testament, they have asked for Barabbas over Jesus. When we turn away from Christ and give in to anger, selfishness, envy, jealousy, hatred, evil speaking, we have chosen Barabbas instead of Jesus.

Each of us will eventually find ourselves in the shoes of Pilate. Will we listen to Jesus? Or will we listen to the rebellious mob who rejected and crucified our Lord. Like Pilate, each one of us will, at least one time, face the decision of whether to choose Jesus or Barabbas. Dear friend, what choice will you make? Barabbas or Jesus?

Scene IV: Intimidation and Torture  
*“Hail, King of the Jews!”*  
(19:1-3)

The mob was persistent in their cries for Barabbas, as well as the call for the Lord’s crucifixion. Pilate turns back into the Praetorium as he pursues one last resort – he would have Jesus scourged.

~~ 19:1 ~~  
*“Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him”*

Pilate did not have the courage to deliver Jesus. His attempt to placate the Jewish leaders by scourging the Lord not only demonstrated his complete lack of judicial prowess, but his misunderstanding of the depth of hatred that the Jews had for our Lord.

There is some question at this point as to whether or not Pilate was considering crucifying Jesus. Usually scourging preceded crucifixion, but in this case I think Pilate underestimated the situation and thought that by scourging Jesus he could avoid having to make the ultimate decision of having Jesus put to death. He thought to escape the situation he was in but, in the final analysis he ended up pleasing nobody. Such is the nature of compromise.

Any attempt to describe the horrible nature of scourging turns the stomach.

Men were known to die under the lash; and one shudders to think of such punishment being inflicted on any human being, especially upon a man the governor had just declared to be innocent. The horrible injustice of it was sickening. In post-apostolic times, there was a tendency to romanticize the role of Pilate in the crucifixion, viewing him as a helpless victim of circumstances imposed upon him by the Jews; but the glaring facts do not support any romantic view of this spineless procurator who ordered the scourging of a man he knew to be innocent, and followed that by condemning him to death. The kind of

man that Pilate was, based solely upon what is in this chapter, is enough to declare him worthy of the odium that fell upon his name. Philo mentioned his corruption, outrage, robbery, insult, contumely, his indiscriminate and continuous murders, and his unceasing and vexatious cruelty (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

Pilate, upon having Jesus scourged, unknowingly fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 53:5: "By his stripes we are healed."

~~ 19:2-3 ~~

*"And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple garment; and they came unto him, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they struck him with their hands"*

The mockery on the part of these Roman soldiers demonstrates how far sin will deprive men of any sense of moral conscience. Johnson had this note on these Roman soldiers:

A more brutal soldiery never existed in the world than the Roman. Even the Indian savage is not more unfeeling than was the soldier of the Roman legion. The national brutality which could choose for its sports the combats of gladiators in the arena, or of prisoners with ferocious beasts in the amphitheater, reached its climax in the men whose trade was war. The laws, made in self-preservation, aimed to protect Roman citizens, but the prisoner of a subject race might as well have appealed for pity to the tiger of an Indian jungle. The delivery of Christ to his soldiers for the preliminary scourging, the cruel Roman method of preparing a prisoner for execution, would therefore be a signal to the ferocious men of war in his palace to expend their natural love of brutality on the Lord. Hence, we learn, not only that he was subjected to the scourge, but to the additional shame of mockery. When he was covered with blood and torn with stripes, a most pitiable object to human eyes, in mockery of his kingly claims they array him in the robes of royalty, crown him with thorns, and while pretending adulation, heap indignity on indignity. Oh, the wonders of his love and long-suffering! (Johnson, ESword Module).

*“a crown of thorns”* - This was probably something akin to a cactus plant or briar bush, twisted into the shape of a crown and thrust upon the head of our Lord. When pressed into the scalp it would become another instrument of torture.

*“purple garment”* - Coffman made a most interesting observation regarding this garment:

This was a three-color fabric of sufficient extravagance of design to suggest royalty, being, in all probability, red and blue on opposite edges, blended into purple in the middle, thus accounting for the variable descriptions of it as “crimson,” “scarlet,” or “purple.” These were the colors of the veil of the temple; and, in view of the extensive symbolism of that veil, standing in one figure for Christ himself (Heb. 10:20), it was most appropriate that he should have borne the colors of it in his sufferings (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*“Hail, King of the Jews!”* – I get the impression that the conduct of the soldiers was designed to heap contempt upon the Lord. One can scarcely imagine the full extent of the mockery that took place. These soldiers would approach the Lord, extend their hands as if to salute or honor Him, and then strike Him instead. I cannot help but be impressed with our Lord’s amazing longsuffering. To think that He could have called twelve legions of angels to rescue Him, and chose instead to endure this mockery and ridicule, is beyond comprehension.

Scene V: The Second Acquittal

*“I find no crime in him”*

19:4-7

~~ 19:4 ~~

*“And Pilate went out again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him out to you, that ye may know that I find no crime in him”*

John’s focus on Christ and Pilate provides us with a glimpse at the battle that was presently being waged between God and the devil.

John kept the principal actors of this dark drama perpetually on stage. The very fact of Pilate's again confronting the Jewish leaders exhibits his determination to release Jesus, his view apparently having been that his brutal punishment of Jesus, if it could satisfy the leaders, was far better than crucifying him; but he reckoned without consideration of the satanic hatred of Israel's leaders (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*"And Pilate went out again"* – Following the scourging of Jesus, Pilate once again takes up his conflict with the crowd.

*"Behold, I bring him out to you"* – Pilate could not see that he was quickly losing control of the situation; or perhaps that he was never really in control. "I" bring him out? He would shortly hear the truth that it was not he who was in control, but the Father, and that he, Pilate, "wouldest have no power...except it were given from above" (19:11). Pilate may have brought Jesus out, crowned with thorns, bleeding, bruised, and humiliated, but it was only because Jesus (and the Father) allowed it to be so.

*"that ye may know that I find no crime in him"* – Here is the second acquittal of Jesus. "No crime" is a declaration of the complete innocence of the Lord. But in a symbolic gesture, Pilate spoke words that describe our Lord's pure and holy life. No crime before men; and no crime before the Father in heaven! Jesus is the only man ever to walk on the face of this earth of Whom it could be said, "No crime! Period!" "One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

~~ 19:5 ~~

*"Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold, the man!"*  
*"Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garments"* – Of all the crowns that men have worn, this one is perhaps the most familiar. The crown that Jesus wore represents the highest kingly position for it was a crown of suffering and self-sacrifice. "That scene in the common hall was vastly more than a bit of horseplay on the part of a few Roman soldiers. It was the coronation of the King of Sorrows" (Hastings,

164). At this moment, during this our Lord's 'hour,' Jesus is wearing the crown He came to wear.

*"And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!"* - We may never fully understand the deeper meaning of Pilate's words. Barnes ascribed the following meaning to Pilate's words: "In all this suffering, he is meek and patient. Behold, this man that you accuse! He is brought forth that you may see that he is not guilty" (Barnes, E Sword). Hendriksen interpreted Pilate's meaning thus: "Look! The Man! Has he not suffered enough already? Is it really necessary to inflict any more punishment upon him?" All eyes are now turned toward Jesus. If Pilate was expecting cries of pity for Jesus, he would be sorely disappointed.

~~ 19:6 ~~

*"When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him"*

*"When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw him"* – The howling mob consisted of more than just the religious leaders. The "officers" consisted of the Roman soldiers who had only a few moments ago scourged and mocked the Lord. "Mob mentality" had seized the crowd, and the call for the blood of Jesus is about to reach its crescendo.

*"they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him!"* - The intense hatred of the mob must have shocked even Pilate. The sight of Jesus dressed as a king – even a pantomime king – enraged them more for it was they who were now being mocked by Pilate.

*"Take him yourselves, and crucify him"* – Since the Jews did not have the authority to crucify Jesus, this was Pilate's way of taunting the Jews; perhaps even a threat. These were not the words of a judge pronouncing sentence, for Pilate himself had pronounced Jesus innocent. I see Pilate weary of the proceedings, and determined not to sanction their conduct.

It was equivalent to this: "I am satisfied of his innocence, and shall not pronounce the sentence of death. If you are



bent on his ruin - if you are determined to put to death an innocent man - if my judgment does not satisfy you - take him and put him to death on your own responsibility, and take the consequences. It cannot be done with my consent, nor in the due form of law; and if done, it must be by you, without authority, and in the face of justice" (Barnes, ESword Module).

*"for I find no crime in him"* – This is the third acquittal, the first pronounced in 18:38, the second in 19:4, and the third here. I get the distinct impression that Pilate was attempting to bring the court to a close with a verdict of "not guilty." If the Jews were determined to kill Jesus, then they would bear the responsibility. But something happens next that changes the trial and introduces something Pilate could in no way foresee.

~~ 19:7 ~~

*"The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God"*

*"The Jews answered him, We have a law"* – The law to which they referred had to do with blasphemy. Blasphemy was punishable by death (Lev. 24:16; Deut. 13:1-5). Keep in mind that the Jews had arraigned Jesus on the charge of blasphemy during the religious trial (Matt. 26:63-65). But this was *not* the charge on which they had arraigned Jesus before Pilate. According to Luke (23:2), they had accused Jesus of sedition. It appeared to the Jews by now that they would not be able to get the death penalty on that charge, for Pilate had found no crime in Him. Still determined to destroy Jesus, the Jews now reverted back to their original charge presented at the religious trial, and sought to make this charge in the civil trial. Since they could not obtain the death penalty as a rebel, they would seek to obtain it by a charge of blasphemy.

All of Satan's efforts to get Jesus crucified for sedition, or as a trouble-maker, failed. The solemn fact that Jesus had sworn under oath that he was the divine Messiah came squarely into focus in those events, and it would remain forever visible in the heavenly light shining upon the cross. Christ had, in this, at last accomplished the enlightenment of all men for all ages, who would thenceforth have his

testimony under oath, and sealed with his blood, to the effect that he was the only begotten Son of God, the divine Messiah, the Saviour of the world, and the world's only Redeemer. No wonder his enemies so stubbornly resisted letting the word out. They instinctively knew that the myriads of the human race would believe Jesus' testimony (Coffman, Theophilus).

*“because he made himself the Son of God”* – Now the truth comes out! Pilate must have realized that he had become a pawn in the hands of the Jews who were bent on destroying Jesus. The Jews did not hate Jesus because He claimed to be a king for this is precisely what they expected in their Messiah. They hated Jesus because He “made himself the Son of God.” Every discourse, every miracle, every movement of Jesus among the Jews declared His divine magnificence. This is what enraged the Jews; this is why they wanted to destroy Him.

Scene VI: The Judge Grows Impatient  
*“Knowest thou not that I have power?”*  
19:8-11

~~ 19:8 ~~

*“When Pilate therefore heard this saying, he was the more afraid”*

*“he was the more afraid”* – It was a common belief among the Romans that their gods often manifested themselves in human form. Now the trial took on a whole new dimension. It was never the wrath of the Jews that he feared; that is clear enough in his three-fold acquittal. It is probable that now Pilate feared the “gods,” and what *they* might do to him if indeed Jesus were the Son of God, and if he, the governor, allowed the Lord to be crucified.

It is clear that Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent; and in this state of agitation between the convictions of his own conscience, and the clamors of the Jews, and the fear of vengeance, and the certainty that he would do wrong if he gave him up, he was thrown into this state of alarm, and resolved again to question Jesus, that

he might obtain satisfaction on the subjects that agitated his mind (Barnes, ESword Module).

The fact that Jesus may very well have been the Son of God was no doubt reinforced by the interviews that Pilate had already had with Jesus. There was something different about this man; something wonderful and mysterious. Could it be that Jesus really was the Son of God? No wonder Pilate was “the more afraid.”

~~ 19:9 ~~

*“and he entered into the Praetorium again, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer”*

*“and he entered into the Praetorium again”* –Once again he isolates himself from the noisy, angry mob in an attempt to investigate this new charge on the part of the Jews.

*“Whence art thou?”* – There is nothing to suggest that during the Lord’s interview with Pilate that Jesus acted any differently than He did throughout His earthly ministry. The Lord’s words, yea, His very demeanor in the presence of Pilate, were no different than what others had witnessed. The calm and deliberate interaction between the two men must have impressed the governor deeply, giving him cause to consider the possibility that Jesus may very well be Who He claimed to be, and to ask this soul searching question: *“Whence art thou?”*. As Pilate interacted with Jesus, he must have observed something very unusual.

Here is a man who uses the vocabulary of God and uses it with perfect naturalness. He says things that no man ought to say and which no other man has ever said. We hear Him say: “I am meek and lowly in heart,” and yet we hear Him say: “I and the Father are one,” “He that hath seen me hath seen the father.” It is a language that nobody else ever used, or even dreamed of using. To appreciate the force of Jesus’ words we have to imagine them coming from the lips of some other. Had any other person spoken as He did his own words would have been his undoing, and yet He says these things with perfect naturalness and with exquisite balance of character (Hastings, 166).

This is precisely what troubled Pilate. And now, with this fresh accusation from the Jews, Pilate was compelled to investigate further.

*“But Jesus gave him no answer”* – The silence of Jesus amazed Pilate; in fact it appears to have infuriated the governor. There were other occasions when Jesus remained silent in the face of obstinacy. When the Jewish authorities brought the “woman taken in adultery” (John 8:3), Jesus said nothing to them; He merely “stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground” (John 8:6b). Sometimes it is best to remain silent; at other times it is best speak up. Wisdom from above will dictate which course of action is the best on any given circumstance. Concerning the silence of Jesus, Coffman concluded:

The procurator was already frightened, and the silence of Jesus was probably for the purpose of permitting him to act in character, rather than as a judge frightened out of his wits. It was here that Satan played out his last tactic in the strategy of inducing Jesus to abandon the purpose of redemption by refusing to die on the cross. Pilate, in this scene, actually seemed to plead with Jesus to do something that would enable him to deny the religious leaders the sentence they wanted (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 19:10 ~~

*“Pilate therefore saith unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?”*

*“Speakest thou not unto me?”* – It is as if Pilate were asking, “How dare you behave this way in my presence?” We get a glimpse of the frustration of Pilate, frustration that resorted to an arrogant declaration of his power. *“I have the power”* demonstrates Pilate’s failure to realize that there is a power greater than that which Rome had granted him. Pilate’s statement deserved a reply from the Lord; but it was not what Pilate wanted to hear. Bruce makes an interesting observation here:

Pilate is the one man who can be of any use to him in his present situation. ‘No one who has the power to condemn is without power to acquit,’ says a maxim of Roman law; and it may be that by mentioning acquittal before condemnation Pilate implies that acquittal, if it be possible, is still his intention (Bruce, 362).

~~ 19:11 ~~

*“Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin”*

*“Jesus answered”* – Previously silent, now Jesus deems it important to speak out in response to Pilate’s false concept of his power.

*“Thou wouldest have no power against me”* – These words must certainly have further infuriated Pilate. Here is a weak, scourged, beaten, and humiliated man telling such a one as Pilate that he had over exaggerated his own power!

*“except it were given thee from above”* – Pilate’s power was directly granted by God, and it was exercised only by God’s permission. Had Pilate been with his soldiers when they came to arrest Jesus he may have had a greater appreciation for the words of Jesus here. The fact that the soldiers were caused to go “backward, and fell to the ground” (John 18:6) was a demonstration of the power of Jesus. At that moment (or any point after) Jesus could have called for legions of angels and brought the entire garrison of Pilate’s soldiers to their knees. As Coffman noted, “The tiniest display of Jesus’ supernatural power could have turned Pilate into putty in Jesus’ hands” (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*“therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin”* – My conclusion is that Jesus was speaking of Annas and Caiphas. Theirs was the greater sin because, while Pilate was guilty of wrongfully using the civil power given to him by God, the high priests – including Annas and Caiphas – were guilty of not only transgressing God’s law regarding judicial procedures, but by falsifying the evidence, and then appealing to a heathen power to

execute an unjust sentence on Christ. As Coffman noted, “He [Caiaphas, TW] had sinned against God by unfaithfulness, and by unrighteousness” (Coffman, Theophilus Software). Bruce put it another way:

Pilate was acting in accordance with the terms of his divinely appointed authority in investigating a charge which was brought before him, whereas Caiaphas, who for reasons of political expedience handed Jesus over to him on a charge of sedition, for which he hoped a capital conviction would be forthcoming, was abusing the authority which attended his sacral office as high priest. For this reason Caiaphas’s sin was greater - meaning perhaps not ‘greater than Pilate’s’ but ‘greater than it would have been if he had not received from God the privileges and responsibilities of the high-priesthood (Bruce, 362).

Scene VII: The Verdict and Sentence  
*“He delivered him unto them to be crucified*  
19:12-16

~~ 19:12 ~~

*“Upon this Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar”*

*“Upon this Pilate sought to release him”* – This could very easily be considered Pilate’s fourth (and final) acquittal. Pilate was perhaps more convinced than ever of Jesus’ innocence and the responsibility to release Him. Exactly what Pilate did at this point in an effort to “release him” is not recorded. From what follows we know that the hatred of the Jews, and whatever mob they had managed to gather together, motivated them to have Jesus delivered up. It would only take one more outcry, one more accusation, before Pilate would cave in to their demands.

*“but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend”* – Coffman’s summation of the strategy in these comments in enlightening:

This was vicious political blackmail. If Pilate would not do their will, they would prefer charges against him before Caesar, charges which both Pilate and themselves knew to be false; but also known to both was the fact that such charges, whether true or false, could blast the procurator out of office. Such was the political climate of the times; and, alas, it must be hailed as the usual political climate of all times. This did it. Pilate moved at once to crucify the Lord, caving in completely before the unscrupulous scoundrels before him (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

The Caesar on the throne at that time was Tiberius, a man cruel in character and rash in his temperament. Such a charge from the representatives of the Jewish nation at Rome would have proven fatal to Pilate. The risk was too great, and Pilate surrendered to their demands. In his mind sentence had to be passed, and it had to be passed on the original charge of sedition.

~~ 19:13 ~~

*“When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment-seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha”*

John provides both the Roman and the Hebrew name of this seat of judgment. The details throughout John’s gospel are evidence of the apostle’s having been an eye-witness to these events. John’s reference to *“Pavement”* suggests that it was made of stones, formed together so as to make a throne like platform and symbolize the dignity of the proceedings of a Roman court. It is ironic that we now watch as “Pilate, the all-powerful deputy of Caesar, seated himself and ordered the innocent Christ before him for sentencing (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

John marks the spot where this, the most momentous of earthly decisions, was rendered (Johnson, ESword Module).

~~ 19:14 ~~

*“Now it was the Preparation of the passover: it was about the sixth hour. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold, your King!”*

*“Now it was the Preparation of the passover”* – Various attempts have been made to reconcile this with the fact that the Passover was already in progress. According to the Synoptics Jesus had already eaten the Passover, which would not officially end until 6:00 p.m. the very day on which Jesus stood before Pilate. How, then, do we explain John’s statement that “it was the Preparation of the passover”? In view of the abundant evidence, both in the Synoptics, as well as a careful analysis of passages in John dealing with the chronological sequence of events, it seems highly improbable that the day of the Passover was still nine hours away. So once again we are faced with how to harmonize John’s record and that of the Synoptics. The simplest explanation, and the one I accept as a representation of all the facts at hand, is that the words *“Preparation of the passover”* be taken to mean “Preparation of the passover-sabbath.” This conclusion is in harmony with Luke’s statement: “And it was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath drew on” (Luke 23:54). Any other explanation throws us into a hopeless dilemma as to which of the inspired writers made a mistake.

~~ 19:15 ~~

*“They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him,  
crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King?  
The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar”*

The extent to which men will go when blinded by hatred is clearly manifested in this verse. When Pilate made reference to Jesus as “your King,” these hate-filled Jews went into a rage, their chief priests actually denying God as their King: *“We have no king but Caesar.”* In that statement they renounced God and sealed their national doom. Within one generation Caesar would destroy the city, and the nation, at the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. More than a million would perish, 30,000 of them crucified and countless others suffering atrocities too horrible to imagine. I find it rather ironic that they appealed to Caesar, and yet within three and a half decades Caesar would “trample them in the wine press of wrath” (Johnson, ESword).

As the curtain falls on this moment in history, we see the hate filled crowd and a defeated governor who, for all practical purposes, has failed the one great test in his life; the test of what



he would do with Jesus. Now let us look at Jesus. Watch Him as He engages in this momentous polemic battle with Pilate, yea with the devil himself. Keep your eyes on His tender pleas, His stout resolution to the Father, and His uncompromising devotion to the will of He Who sent Him. It is not Jesus Who was on trial, but Pilate. Pilate may have treated many things in life with contempt; but by all evidence available, He treated Jesus with honor, no doubt amazed by our Lord's very behavior in the face of death. It was Jesus Who was in control of these preceding, not Pilate. The magnificence of Jesus never shone brighter than when He stood before the governor. It is He – not Pilate; not the Jewish authorities; not the rabble calling for Jesus' crucifixion – Who came forth victorious. The trial was but the final event in a long chain of events that took Jesus to the cross. Beyond this point lay Jesus' death, burial, and glorious resurrection – all of which declare the magnificence of the One Who died for us and sealed our eternal salvation with His blood. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

~~ 19:16 ~~

*"Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified"*

Every attempt by Pilate to release Jesus met with stern resistance. It was nearing mid-morning and the governor had had enough. Never once is it recorded that Pilate pronounced Jesus guilty of anything worthy of death. Courage gave way to capitulation, and the governor sentenced Jesus to be crucified.



## CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

### “IT IS FINISHED”

*The Crucifixion and Burial, 19:17-42*

Far removed from the halls of Pilate stood a place called Golgotha, “the place of a skull.” Three crosses were prepared and positioned to receive their victims. There “they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (19:18). Three victims, three crosses. One died *in sin*, refusing to repent, while openly mocking the Lord and pleading for help and deliverance. The second died *to sin*, beseeching the Lord, “Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). The third died *for the sins* of mankind. What little earthly possessions our Lord happened to own were gambled away at the foot of the cross while His mother, standing by the cross, watched as the Lord surrendered His life in accordance with God’s plan. “It is finished” were the final words our Lord spoke; and “he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit” (19:30). At the request of Joseph of Arimathaea, the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross, prepared for burial, and laid “in the garden in a new tomb wherein never man yet laid” (19:41). Satan had bruised the heel of the promised “seed,” but it would not be long before the Lord would crush the head of the devil (Gen. 3:15).

There are two parts in this portion of our study. The first focuses our attention on the crucifixion (19:17-30), followed by the Lord’s burial (19:31-42). Here, as throughout his gospel, John is selective in what he records. There are some things to which he makes absolutely no reference; instead he (*i.e.* the Holy Spirit) chooses those things necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose: *to magnify Jesus and produce faith in the hearts of those who read*. Before we get to the study of the remaining verses in chapter nineteen, there are two things that beg consideration. First, each of the gospel writers records the death, burial, *and* resurrection of Jesus. This is as it should be, for Paul summed up the essence of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word

which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.

Second, these three essential elements of the gospel make up the final “sign” that Jesus would give to prove His deity:

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:39-40).

And when the multitudes were gathering together unto him, he began to say, This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet (Luke 11:29).

The closing chapters of John provide the fulfillment of that sign. Let’s take a closer look.

### *The Journey To Golgotha*

19:17

~~ 19:17 ~~

*“They took Jesus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha”*

For a fuller account of the journey to Golgotha it is recommended that you study the parallel accounts in Matthew 27:31-34, Mark 15:20-23, and Luke 23:26-33. John left out many of the details recorded by the other gospels. In one verse John relates that journey of Jesus from the hall of Pilate to Calvary.

“and he went out” – “They took Jesus,” but “he went out.” Pilate may have delivered Him, the soldiers may have taken Him, but Jesus does not go forth as a victim; instead He goes forth the Victor! He may have been beaten, and men may have thought

Him broken and defeated, but it was not so. We are seeing Jesus in all of His magnificence.

*“Golgotha”* – The word means “place of the skull,” and according to those who have visited the site, it strikingly resembles just that.

*“bearing the cross”* – Although He is taken to the place of the crucifixion, He does not go as a reluctant victim, compelled to go where He did not want to go. Instead, He goes with His executioners on His own volition, carrying His cross with Him. Bruce notes, “It was normally the cross-piece (*patibulum*), and not the complete gibbet, that the condemned man carried into place of execution; the upright stakes were probably standing there already” (Bruce, 366).

### *The Crucifixion*

19:18

Any attempt to describe death by crucifixion, in my estimation, falls far short of providing the reader with any sense of the magnitude of horror involved in that particular form of execution. It has been said that crucifixion was developed by the Greeks and perfected by the Romans. B.W. Johnson provided the following description. The only reason why I include this information is to help us see the magnificence of our Lord as He endured the most horrific of deaths. Jesus did not die naturally; there would have been no punishment in that. It was God’s intention that our Lord, though without sin, be punished *for* our sin; the innocent for the guilty, the Sinless One for our sins. Paul put it this way: “and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, *yea, the death of the cross*” (Phil. 2:8, emphasis mine, TW). Johnson describes death by crucifixion:

It is spoken of by Cicero as “the most cruel and disgraceful of punishments,” and was never inflicted upon a Roman citizen, though often upon slaves. It was preceded by scourging and the condemned was required to carry his own cross, or a part of it at least, to the place of execution. The place selected was outside of the gates, and on arrival,

the sufferer was stripped naked, his clothing becoming a perquisite of his executioners. The cross was so erected that his feet would only be one or two feet from the earth. Sometimes he was nailed to the cross after it was erected and sometimes before, being thrown upon his back upon the ground, and nails driven through each extended hand and through the feet. A medicated cup was usually given before the nailing out of humanity, in order to stupefy the sufferer and render him less sensible to the exquisite pain. This our Lord refused to take in order that he might meet his fate with his senses all clear. These details are gathered from Smith's Bible Dictionary, which adds: "It only remains to speak of the manner of death, and the kind of physical suffering endured, which we shall briefly abridge from the physician Richter. These are, 1. The unnatural position and violent tension of the body, which causes a painful sensation on the least motion. 2. The nails being driven through parts of the hands and feet which are full of nerves and tendons (and yet at a distance from the heart), create the most exquisite anguish. 3. The exposure of so many wounds and lacerations brings on inflammation, which tends to become gangrene, and every moment increases the poignancy of suffering. 4. In the distended parts of the body more blood flows through the arteries than can be carried back into the veins; hence, too much blood finds its way from the aorta into the head and stomach, and the blood vessels of the head become swollen and pressed. The general obstruction of the circulation which ensues, causes an internal excitement, exertion and anxiety, more intolerable than death itself. 5. The inexpressible misery of gradually increasing and lingering anguish. To all of which we may add, 6. Burning and raging thirst." When left to the effect of the cross, victims usually lingered about three days and have been known to suffer nine, before death ended their agonies. Sometimes methods of hastening death were resorted to, in mercy, one of which was the breaking of the legs; others were to build fires beneath and stifle with smoke, or to turn wild beasts upon the victim. The first Christian emperor, Constantine, abolished crucifixion as a method of punishment (Johnson, ESword Module).

We turn our attention to the One Who was thus put to death.

~~ 19:18 ~~

*“where they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst”*

*“where they crucified him”* – John uses four words to describe the punishment inflicted on Jesus. Four words; simple in structure, concise in its message, but powerful in its implications. The parallel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus are found in Matthew 27:35-44, Mark 15:24-32, and Luke 23:33-43. Including John’s single verse, we have a total of thirty verses. Each of the writers states the case in the least amount of words possible, evidence once again of divine restraint in inspiration.

*“with him two others”* - Those crucified with the Lord were of the same criminal element as Barabbas. No doubt they were robbers, and perhaps even murderers.

These two may have been crucified at this time for convenience’ sake, but the fact that Jesus was placed between them suggests that they were crucified with him to heighten his shame and indignity. For, though Pilate had no personal ill will toward Jesus, he wished to show contempt for Judah’s King (McGarvey, ESword Module).

John is the only one of the gospel writers who mentions the “nails” (John 20:25). This is another example of the minute details John provided in his gospel account.

*“and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst”* - The amazing symbolism we find here is quite astonishing, whether it be by accident or according to plan, we have no way of knowing. Jesus was crucified between two thieves, one of whom repented, the other who appears to have had no remorse whatsoever for the crimes he had committed. Thus, Jesus, being in the center, symbolizes the great divide in all humanity. On the one side of the cross are those who in humble submission to the will of God are blessed to enter into Paradise. On the other side we see the thief who ridiculed the Christ, and refused to follow the lead of his companion in crime. There was

no indication that this second thief ever repented, or in any way paid homage to the only One Who could save him from sin.

*The Title Placed On The Cross*

19:19-22

~~ 19:19 ~~

*“And Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. And there was written, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS”*

It was a custom of the Romans to place some kind of designation above the heads of the victims that indicated the reason for their crucifixion. The exact motive for including the words recorded by John (and the other sacred writers) may very well have been as McGarvey suggested:

Pilate writes the accusation so as to clear his own skirts before Caesar and so as to show his contempt for the Jewish people. They had forced him to crucify an innocent man, and he retaliates by giving to that man the title which his enemies accused him of professing (McGarvey, ESword Module).

*“THE KING OF THE JEWS”* – Rejected by His own people, Jesus Christ remains “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). Pilate may have written it in jest, and those five words may well have angered the Jewish authorities, but it was true nonetheless. To their consternation, the Lord turned that “obscene instrument of torture into a throne of glory” (Bruce, 369).

~~ 19:20 ~~

*“This title therefore read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek”*

*“This title therefore read many of the Jews”* – Every attempt on the part of the Jews to isolate those events that were unfolding from the eyes of the public were met with divine intervention. The trial may have taken place in the Praetorium behind closed



doors, but God made sure that the details of that trial were recorded by an eye witness to the events. Though Jesus was crucified “without the gate” (Heb. 13:12) it was still “*nigh to the city*” where the multitudes of people could read; and read they did.

*“it was written in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek”* - These three languages were respectively those of religion, law and philosophy; but Pilate made use of them because all three were spoken by people then in Jerusalem: Hebrew, the vernacular of the Jews, Latin, the common language of the Roman army, and Greek, the common language of the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Thus, unknowingly, Pilate provided a declaration of exactly Who this Jesus was in the various languages so that all men could see what was happening. There is a touch of irony in the fact that the inscription was written in all three languages. In their attempt to sweep all of this “under the rug” the enemies of Jesus were actually instrumental in making all of the facts surrounding the trial, the death, and finally the burial and resurrection, a matter of public record for all the world to read, consider, and meditate upon. While Pilate may have intended the three-fold inscription as some kind of cruel joke on the Jewish authorities, it was the truth nonetheless.

The diabolical murder of Jesus backfired upon the perpetrators of it. Events were not turning out at all as they had planned. Pilate’s inscription was being painted in blood upon every conscience; and the shocking truth of the inscription was a double-barreled blast against everything the priests wanted. The inscription shouted two overwhelming facts to the crowds entering the city: (1) Jesus of Nazareth was the King of the Jews, and (2) the Romans had crucified him. No matter how one read it, it was bad news for Israel, and one can easily understand the chagrin and anxiety of the priests who sought to get it changed (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 19:21 ~~

*“The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews”*

As the inscription was written, someone passing by may very well have concluded that the charges of sedition and treason were true; after all, is that not what the words implied? Further, someone reading the words, and grasping the full impact of the crime, would have concluded that the movement started by Jesus must have been considered a credible threat against the government. If not, why would the authorities want to execute Him? No wonder the Jewish authorities wanted the wording changed. The Jewish hierarchy saw in all of this a threat to every attempt they had made (and would continue to make) to stop the influence of Jesus upon the nation, and we might add, upon the world. "From that hour, history hardened around the deeds of the day, and there could be no alteration of them. Forever etched into the conscience of the human race was the crucifixion of the Lord and Saviour of men (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 19:22 ~~

*"Pilate answered, What I have written I have written"*

What Pilate had written was nothing short of divine truth. We see fulfilled in the description an example of the fulfillment of the words of Jesus: "Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above" (19:11).

### *The Soldiers At The Foot Of The Cross*

19:23-25a

Our attention is now turned toward those things unfolding at the foot of the cross. The Jews had plotted, Pilate had permitted, but heaven had planned these things from times eternal (Eph. 3:10-11). Little did these soldiers realize that what they were doing in the course of a normal day's work was foretold by God centuries earlier.

~~ 19:23 ~~

*"The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout"*

*“when they had crucified Jesus”* – I cannot imagine what life was like as an executioner for the Roman government. I have heard that those who serve in our prison system whose job it is to pull the switch or throw the lever that takes the life of another (even the life of a hardened criminal) often wrestle with their conscious in the early years of their service in that capacity. Slowly they become accustomed to it, and in time, executing those on death row becomes just another day’s work. It was just another criminal, just another cross, just another day in the life of these soldiers.

*“The soldiers...took his garments and made four parts”* - As Jesus hung on the cross, they “part his garments among them, casting lots upon them, what each should take” (Mark 15:24). While the Son of God was suffering, those soldiers, for whom Jesus died, were busy with material things; more concerned about what spoil they might take home than they were with the suffering Savior on that cross. The remarkable fulfillment of the prophecy of this particular moment is nothing short of astonishing. Psalms 22:18 foretold this very moment: “They part my garments among them, And upon my vesture do they cast lots.” Once again we see “the fact that the trivialities of men are resolved in the knowledge and purpose of heaven” (Morgan, ESword Module). Unknown to them they were doing precisely what David had predicted centuries earlier. These soldiers had no idea that they were fulfilling the prophecy.

*“and also the coat”* – Look again at the prophecy from Psalms 22:18. David mentions not only the “garments,” but the “vesture” – a single piece, described by John as being “without seam, woven from the top throughout.”

This is one of the most astounding things in the Bible. The clothes of Jesus! Can anyone tell what Napoleon was wearing when he died, or what Franklin D. Roosevelt had on when he was stricken, and how the garments were made and what became of them? (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

I have often wondered why the soldiers did not divide that coat. There must have been something in its beauty, or perhaps they recognized that there was something unusual taking place and they wanted a “piece of history.”

*Last Words From The Cross*

19:25b-30

~~ 19:25 ~~

*“These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene”*

*“But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother”* – While the soldiers gambled, those who loved the Lord stood by the cross. Do we not see the same contrast today in the lives of men, played out on the stage of life? Multitudes gamble with their soul, with little or no interest in the Savior. They bow at the foot of the cross once or twice a year, but their interests lay elsewhere. Meanwhile, those near to the Christ draw ever nearer to Jesus as they “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18).

*“his mother”* - I find it interesting that John never names Mary, the mother of Jesus, in his gospel.

*“and his mother’s sister”* - Mark’s account lists three women: “And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome,” leaving out Mary the mother of Jesus. Thus, “his mother’s sister” is Salome. Salome was the wife of Zebedee, making James and John cousins of our Lord. This would explain why Jesus committed the care of His mother to John in the verses which follow.

*“Mary the wife of Clopas”* - In Matthew 27:56 and also Mark 15:40 she is said to be the mother of James the less and of Joses. But that same James is said to be the son of Alphaeus in Matthew 10:3, leading me to conclude that Clopas and Alphaeus were the

same person. Adam Clarke refers to a quotation from Eusebius saying that “Cleopas was the brother of Joseph, the husband of the virgin.”

“*Mary Magdalene*” – She was a devoted follower of Jesus who entered the circle of the disciples during the Galilean ministry and became prominent during the last days.

~~ 19:26-27 ~~

*When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home*

John does not mention all of the words spoken from the cross, so it might be good here to give at least some attention to the various phrases that Jesus spoke while on the cross so you can appreciate the sequence in which they occurred. I'll divide this into two parts: Words spoken during the three hours of light, and words spoken during the three hours of darkness.

### Words Spoken During the Three Hours of Light

The first seems to be recorded by Luke (23:34) where Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Here we get a glimpse of Jesus in His role as High Priest as He intercedes for those who were putting Him to death. The prayer was not just for the soldiers, but for the nation, its leaders, and all those who played a part in the death of our Lord. It must be pointed out, however, that the forgiveness was not granted here, and would not be granted except it be upon the conditions of pardon, which were proclaimed by Peter in Acts 2. This first phrase might be said to be the first words of intercession on behalf of a lost and dying world.

The second phrase was also recorded by Luke (23:43), where Jesus promised the penitent thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” These words reveal Jesus as the King of glory promising a penitent thief a place in His kingdom. One has noted:

The prayer, 'Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,' was a triumph of faith, to which Jesus responded as He always did. The thief prayed that somehow, somewhere, in the unknown future when all is righted, Jesus would not forget a fellow-sufferer, and the reply was that this very day his desire should be satisfied" (Crawford, 62).

This incident teaches us, as William Jennings Bryan so eloquently put it, that "Christ's salvation is for *all*, from *every* sin, throughout *every* moment of man's sojourn on earth" (source lost).

The third phrase is the one recorded by John in the two verses now before us (19:26-27). It actually consists of two separate admonitions; one to His mother, the other to "the disciple" John.

*"Woman, behold, thy son!"* - Here we see our Lord honoring His obligations to His human mother. I cannot pretend to know what must have been going through the mind of Mary. No tongue can express the agony she must have felt as she gazed upon her Savior and her Son. Now she fully understood the prophecy of Simeon in Luke 2:34-35: "and Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Oh, how her heart must have ached!

There is one observation that deserves consideration before we proceed. Jesus did not speak the name of His mother, nor in any way reveal His relationship to her, lest the hostile crowd turn on her. But with these simple words, He commended her to John's care, who *"from that hour...took her unto his own home"* (19:27).

*"Then saith he to the disciple"* – The disciple is without doubt, John the apostle.

*"Behold, thy mother!"* – How much time elapsed between Jesus' words to Mary and these words to John is not possible to determine. I do not think it was very long; perhaps a matter of

seconds. The Greek word from which is translated our English word “behold,” is more than a mere glance. There is intensity in the action that lies behind the word; as if to scrutinize and examine closely. Hanging in agony our Lord continues to manifest His concern for others; in this case, His mother. He must have been certain that John would fulfill this dying request.

*“took her unto his own home”* - The word “home” is italicized, and when left out, the words convey a warmth of the relationship between John and his now adopted mother. In John 1:11 it was said of Jesus that He came “unto his own, and they that were his own received him not.” The same word appears here.

### Words Spoken During The Three Hours of Darkness

The fourth set of words occurs sometime after the shroud of darkness descended upon the earth. The crucifixion started at 9:00 in the morning. What an amazing fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos 8:9: “And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.” Out of that darkness came the cry of our Lord: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). Matthew and Mark preserve for us the very words in Aramaic: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.” At this point the Lord turns to face the agony of being alone. No doubt the enemies of Jesus saw in this nothing more than words of despair. They may have even thought that this was an admission of failure; that somehow God did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. I’ll not dwell on this particular phrase since it is not recorded in John, but I can assure you that these were not words of failure, but of victory. “Why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46) was answered three days later when Jesus was raised from the dead.

Life’s last word is not a cross. What are the stars, if at last they become radiant? What is a cross, if at the end it lifts me? What is pain, if my pain becomes a paean? What are separations, if I come back more completely and fully than before? What is man’s slander, if God affirms? What can winter do, if spring beats in my veins? What of Calvary, if just beyond it lies an Easter morning?” (Crawford, 65).

~~ 19:28 ~~

*“After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst”*

*“After this...knowing that all things are now finished”* - Jesus was fully aware of His mission, and at this point He was confident that He had accomplished all the Father gave Him to do.

*“that the scripture might be accomplished”* – Permit me to take the liberty with the punctuation in our English translations and render the verse thus (keeping in mind that there were no punctuation marks in the Greek language): “After this Jesus (knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished) saith, I thirst.” The phrase is more closely connected with “all things are now finished” than with “I thirst.” The Old Testament scriptures spoke of the mission of the Messiah, and His sacrifice in such passages as Isaiah 53:1-12.

*“I thirst”* – Here is the fifth phrase for our consideration. As a man, the Lord was subject to the frailties of the body. As they prepared Jesus for the crucifixion, they brought Him a drink of myrrh and wine. This drink was designed as a kind of anesthetic to relieve the pain. But when Jesus tasted of it, He refused to drink. Why? It would have deadened the pain and helped to relieve Him of some little part of His suffering. But Jesus chose to reject it for He had chosen to drink of another cup, namely the cup of suffering. He was resolved to die with unclouded senses and an undimmed mind. As a man, Jesus now longed for water to quench His thirst, not deaden His pain. So Jesus did not refuse the gesture of the soldiers.

~~ 19:29 ~~

*“There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth”*

Only an eye witness could have provided the details given here. As Coffman noted, “The words before us are clearly the result of a vivid mental picture in the mind of the narrator of what he had seen. The vessel full of vinegar, the sponge, the very kind of stick



used to lift it to the Lord's mouth. No forger would have dared to piece together such a narrative as this; and, besides that, there could not possibly have been any motive for doing such a thing" (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 19:30 ~~

*"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit"*

This verse contains the sixth phrase of the Lord, along with some pertinent information relative to the death of Jesus.

*"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar"* – He had refused the drugged vinegar earlier. Jesus accepted the kind gesture on the part of the soldier to offer Jesus some relief. God welcomes and willingly receives those gifts of kindness we render to others in His name.

*"It is finished"* - Here the Lord speaks as our Redeemer. Though the resurrection and ascension remained in the not-too-distant future, all things had been accomplished which the Father gave Jesus to do. The price for sin was now paid; the atonement for sin was completed. These three words carry profound implications. For one thing, the Old Law could now be taken out of the way. The Jewish leaders could no more harass or blaspheme the Lord. The terrible suffering is at last completed, the shame now past. The Lord had come to this world, suffered, and endured temptation. All that remained was the simple act of conquering death by His resurrection, to be followed by His ascension to the right hand of the Father. When He spoke these words He was fully aware that all things had either been completed or adequately put into motion so as to make this statement true. So far as His earthly sojourn and mission was concerned, it was indeed, "finished."

I'll leave these three words with a beautiful observation from Barclay:

When we compare the four gospels we find a most illuminating thing. The other three do not tell us that Jesus said, "It is finished." But they do tell us that he died

with a great shout upon his lips (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). On the other hand, John does not speak of the great cry, but does say that Jesus' last words were, "It is finished." The explanation is that the great shout and the words, "It is finished," are one and the same thing. "It is finished" is one word in Greek, and Jesus died with a shout of triumph on his lips. He did not say, "It is finished," in weary defeat; he said it as one who shouts for joy because the victory is won. He seemed to be broken on the Cross, but he knew that his victory was won (Barclay, ESword Module).

The seventh and final phrase is filled with confidence and hope: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). If the order of these seven phrases as presented here is correct, then the first words spoken from the cross were to the Father, as were also the last. Jesus had told His disciples that He would go to the Father. Now He confidently declares the fulfillment of His hope.

It is this 'vital spark,' this 'heavenly flame' which defies the tomb. From the Father it came and unto the Father it returns. His children bow in reverent submission to the Almighty's will as they enter that narrow, starlit strip that separates the days of our brief pilgrimage on earth, from our eternal abode in the mansions that Christ has gone to prepare (Crawford, 68).

*"and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit"* – John uses a word that means "to recline" or "incline." For Jesus, the battle is now over; it has been won, and that victory came on the cross. Jesus knew the joy of victory and now He could recline His head, and surrender His life.

*The Breaking Of The Legs, Removal Of The Body,  
And Burial Of Jesus*  
19:31-42.

~~ 19:31 ~~

*"The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the*

*day of that sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away”*

It was common for Roman soldiers to leave a body on the cross until beasts and birds of prey, or putrefaction, removed them. But Jewish Law forbid such because it would pollute the day following because of the curse attached to it. (Deut. 21:23).

*“because it was the Preparation”* – This would have been Friday, the “Preparation” before the Saturday Sabbath. See my comments under 9:14.

*“that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath”* – It was their desire that the body be taken down from the cross lest they violate their law regarding the matter. Seeing that putrefaction would set in almost immediately, one can understand the urgency in their desire.

*“the day of that sabbath was a high day”* - A “high day” or “great day” meant that it was a special, or “great day.” This verse has been used to bolster the position that Jesus was crucified on Thursday, and that the reference here to the Sabbath being a “high day” had to be speaking of the Friday Passover. It is argued that since John takes special pains to note “that sabbath was a high day,” that the apostle *must* have been referring to Friday, the Passover. Coffman took this position, and wrote:

This verse, beyond all others in the New Testament, casts doubt on the widely accepted view that Christ was crucified on Friday. True, he was crucified on the day of Preparation, the day before the sabbath; but John was careful to point out that the ordinary sabbath was not meant, but rather the high day (also a sabbath, whatever day of the week it was) which always initiated the Passover celebration (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

It should be noted, however, that John specifically says, “The day of that sabbath was a high day,” and not, “That day was a high sabbath.” There is a difference. Notice that our English word “day” is in italics, meaning that it was supplied by the translators. Literally John wrote, “That Sabbath was a high.” It was an

ordinary Sabbath made “high” by the fact that it fell during the Passover week.

~~ 19:32-33 ~~

*“The soldiers therefore came, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him: but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs”*

The fact that John uses the plural “soldiers” leaves the impression that since Jesus was in the middle, that likely soldiers started at either end breaking the legs of the victims, and when they met in the middle at the foot of the cross of our Lord, they saw that He was dead already. By breaking the legs of a victim the soldiers would not only increase the pain but deprive their body of the support to lift themselves so they could breathe. Not only would the pain be increased, but the victim would die of asphyxiation.

~~ 19:34 ~~

*“howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water”*

To assure that Jesus was actually dead, “one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side.” The fact that “there came out blood and water” is evidence that death had already occurred. Keep in mind that Jesus had earlier said, “No one taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself” (John 10:18). In view of the words of Jesus, I must conclude that the soldier did not kill Jesus; he merely provided the means by which John, as an eye witness, could provide his readers with undeniable proof that Jesus was, indeed, dead when He was taken down from the cross.

Some have seen a great deal of symbolism in the “blood and water.” McGarvey had this interesting observation:

Many able men have argued learnedly that this flow of blood and water was evidence that Jesus died of a ruptured, or literally broken, heart; but they confess themselves involved in difficulties, for it is hard to

reconcile the idea that Jesus died a voluntary death with the idea that he died of any natural cause whatever. Can anything be at once natural and supernatural? However, John's observation that he was an eye-witness of this shows that he attached importance to it. To him the body of Jesus gave evidence that it differed from other dead bodies. We enter with hesitancy the realm of symbolism, knowing how flagrantly it is abused, but we offer this as a suggestion. Jesus died for our sins, and his death was therefore to provide a means for the cleansing of sin. But, under the terms of his gospel, sins are visibly and physically washed away by water, and invisibly and spiritually by blood (Heb. 10:22). Now, since both these means were seen by a faithful witness to issue from the side of our crucified Lord, contrary to the ordinary law and course of nature, we have additional reason to believe that things out of the course of nature, namely, the cleansing of sin, etc., were accomplished by his crucifixion (McGarvey, ESword Module).

~~ 19:35 ~~

*“And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe”*

There is a sense of solemnity in these words of John. They describe in a most sober manner the reality of what has just happened.

*“And he that hath seen hath borne witness”* - John is referring to himself. Had John been referring to anyone else he would not have used the words, “hath borne witness.” According to Robertson, John uses the perfect tense, making it certain that John was referring to himself. If it be argued that John uses the third person, and therefore could not be referring to himself, it should be noted that John uses the third person earlier in this same chapter (19:26-27).

~~ 19:36-37 ~~

*“For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced”*

*“For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled”* – Even after His death, our Lord continues to fulfill the prophecies concerning Himself. As McGarvey noted, “He hangs upon the cross as one of a group of three, yet, in the twinkling of an eye, he is separated from the other two by the fulfillment of a brace of prophecies which point him out as the chosen of God (McGarvey, ESword Module). These soldiers had no idea they were fulfilling prophecy.

*“not a bone of him shall be broken”* - This comes from Psalms 34:20 where the Psalmist speaks of the deliverance of the righteous man from his enemies: “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.” Coupled with that Old Testament passage is the fulfillment of Jesus as the anti-type of the paschal lamb, where the Jews were forbidden to break a bone of it when they ate the Passover (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12).

*“And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced”* - The second prophecy comes from Zechariah 12:10. That Old Testament passage is almost universally accepted as a prophecy of the Messiah. John’s use of the passage here shows that John also believed the Old Testament passage was a reference to this specific event.

~~ 19:38 ~~

*“And after these things Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked of Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took away his body”*

John devotes only five verses to the burial of the Lord; another evidence of divine restraint in the inspired scriptures.

*“And after these things Joseph of Arimathaea”* – We know that Joseph was a rich man (Matt. 27:57), and that he was “a councillor of honorable estate” (Mark 15:43). Luke tells us that he was a “good and righteous man” (Luke 23:50), and that “he had not consented to their council and deed” (Luke 23:51).

*“being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews”* – Does this clause modify the description of his being a disciple, or

does it modify his request of Pilate for the body of Jesus? Seeing that Mark tell us he “boldly went in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus” (Mark 15:43), I have to conclude that his being a disciple of Jesus was held in secret. Although he may not have consented to the council and deed of the Jewish authorities, he does not appear to have spoken up at the trial. I find it rather ironic that those who were *not* afraid to be the Lord’s disciples appeared to be afraid to ask for the Lord’s body, while here is one who appeared afraid to be a disciple, yet was not afraid to ask for the body of Jesus.

*“and Pilate gave him leave”* - The governor gave permission for Joseph of Arimathaea to take the body of Jesus only after it had been proven conclusively that Jesus was dead. Mark’s account tells us that “Pilate marvelled if he were already dead” (Mark 15:44). Bruce makes an interesting observation:

Roman law normally handed over the bodies of executed criminals to their next of kin, but not if they had been executed for sedition. Why then did Pilate hand over the body of Jesus to Joseph, who was not related to him, when Jesus had in fact been executed for sedition? Perhaps because Pilate was convinced that Jesus was not really guilty of the crime alleged against him” (Bruce, 378).

~~ 19:39 ~~

*“And there came also Nicodemus, he who at the first came to him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds”*

*“And there came also Nicodemus”* – We see two members of the Sanhedrin unite to bury Jesus. Joseph provided the burial clothes, and Nicodemus the spices of myrrh and aloes.

*“a mixture of myrrh and aloes”* - Myrrh was a type of resin, and the aloe was pulverized wood. Both were aromatic and would help alleviate the stench of the body being in the grave until they could come back and properly wrap and give a more permanent burial. The various spices, and the sheer amount of spices, are indicative of a royal funeral. Don’t forget that Mary had also anointed the Lord with expensive nard (John 12:3-5). Barclay’s

assessment of these two men, and the effect that the Lord's life and death had on them, is worth repeating:

The death of Jesus had done for Joseph and Nicodemus what not even his life could do. No sooner had Jesus died on the Cross than Joseph forgot his fear and bearded the Roman governor with a request for the body. No sooner had Jesus died on the Cross than Nicodemus was there to bring a tribute that all men could see. The cowardice, the hesitation, the prudent concealment were gone. Those who had been afraid when Jesus was alive declared for him in a way that everyone could see as soon as he was dead. Jesus had not been dead an hour when his own prophecy came true: "I when I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). It may be that the silence of Nicodemus or his absence from the Sanhedrin brought sorrow to Jesus; but it is certain that he knew of the way in which they cast their fear aside after the Cross, and it is certain that already his heart was glad, for already the power of the Cross had begun to operate, and already it was drawing all men to him. The power of the Cross was even then turning the coward into the hero, and the waverer into the man who took an irrevocable decision for Christ (Barclay, ESword Module).

~~ 19:40 ~~

*"So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury"*

There is a touch of tenderness in this verse. In 2001, following the terrorists' attack on the World Trade towers in New York City, the recovery of those killed was a slow and pains taking process. Whenever a body, or even a portion of a body was discovered, all work would cease, and honor would be paid to the deceased as they were placed in bags, an American flag draped over the remains, and the bodies taken away for proper burial.

~~ 19:41 ~~

*"Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid"*



The “garden” likely belonged to Joseph. Joseph may have prepared the tomb for his own burial in much the same way that people make pre-funeral arrangements today.

As Jesus died about three o'clock in the afternoon, and as all work had to stop at sunset, which was the beginning of the Sabbath, Joseph was much hurried in his efforts to bury Jesus. The context, therefore, shows that our Lord was not completely embalmed by him. The body of Jesus might have been kept elsewhere until after the Sabbath; but because the tomb was near it appears to have been used temporarily, and the preparation of spices by the women shows that even that part of the burial was not, in their estimation, completed. This unfinished burial led the women back to the tomb early on the first day of the week, and thus brought to the disciples the glad news of the resurrection without any needless delay (McGarvey, ESword Module).

The proximity of the grave to the place of crucifixion was convenient since time was of the essence. The body must be removed, and then placed in the tomb before sunset when the Sabbath started.

~~ 19:42 ~~

*“There then because of the Jews’ Preparation (for the tomb was nigh at hand) they laid Jesus”*

*“There...they laid Jesus”* – “There”! Jesus was buried in a definite place; a place well known by friend and foe alike. Pilate would place a guard “there.” Jesus would rest “there”! The disciples would return “there”! Satan thought the battle had been won “there”! In three days, where they had laid Jesus, some of the unbelieving disciples would become believers, and the divine power that offers salvation would be demonstrated in the resurrection of our Lord “there”!

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF JESUS' DEATH  
by Tom Wacaster

Someone once said, "Death is more universal than life; everyone dies but not everyone lives." The truly great life is not one that is lived in selfish pursuits, but in service to others. The Christian realizes that at least one key to true happiness is bound up in the words of Paul: "Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself" (Phil. 2:3). The greatness of a man's life is not measured by his material possessions he might leave behind at the time of his death. It is, rather, how a man lives that makes his death a momentous event in the overall evaluation of his life upon this earth. So it is with our Savior. In His death He demonstrated the magnificence of His very character. "It is finished." With those three words our Lord closed the books on thirty-three years of a selfless and sinless life. When the incarnate Immanuel came into this world it was said He was "laid in a manger" (Luke 2:7); after slightly more than three decades it was recorded that he was "laid in a tomb" (Mark 15:46). Those two bookmarks define the life lived in service to the Father. "It is finished" declared the success of all that Jesus accomplished during that short span of time. His enemies sought to bring upon Him the ultimate shame and disgrace by having Him crucified. They nailed His hands and feet, holding Him forever (so they thought) in that attitude of shame and disgrace. They offered Him wine, mingled with myrrh, but He refused it. No narcotic, no anesthetic, would be allowed to cloud His mind. In His death He would satisfy justice, not evoke pity! He came to conquer Death, not compromise with death's agony. In His dying moments He breathed a prayer, not for Himself, but for His torturers, that they might be pardoned. "Father, forgive them" was the first of seven sayings He would utter from the cross. In His death, as in His life, He demonstrated the undeniable truth that He was, and is, the Word of God to man, teaching forgiveness to others, providing guidance to His mother, granting salvation to the dying thief, and acknowledging God's righteousness by His complete submission to the death on the cross. He Who was forsaken maintained unwavering trust in the Father Who never forsakes us. In the final moments upon that cross He cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani." We may never fully

understand the import of those words, but as one noted, those words were “the utterance of a Son, innocent Himself, yet disowned.” With His last breath our Lord would declare, “It is finished.” He Who did nothing by halves, paid the debt to the uttermost! Now He could render His spirit to God, which was His to give up; and while the thieves lived on, He hung there dead.

On the cross the magnificence of Jesus is displayed for the world to see. It is there that the sinless Savior died for sinful man. His innocent hands were pierced with nails intended only for the most horrible of offenders. His Holy Name was mocked and ridiculed. And yet, He willingly gave Himself as a sacrifice for the very ones who sought to do Him harm. Behind His sacrifice was God’s love for man, the Savior’s love for the Father, and heaven’s love for lost humanity. Our Lord’s death may seem a paradox to those who do not appreciate things spiritual, but for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, heaven’s gate is opened into Paradise. How can anyone look at our Lord on the cross and not be deeply touched by His magnificence?





## CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

### “I HAVE SEEN THE LORD”

*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, 20:1-18*

Chapter twenty records those events having to do with the resurrection of the Lord and His early appearances to the disciples. I cannot find the words that would adequately express the significance of this one event in history. I'll share with you a sampling of such attempts that have been made along this line.

The twentieth chapter of John is the climax of the book. The tragedy of unbelief which culminated in the cross would remain forever unresolved were there no resurrection, for evil would have triumphed over good and the heroic and vicarious death of Jesus would be at best a magnificent but futile gesture. In that event, faith in a good God would be irrational, the concept of a moral universe would be impossible, and stark pessimism would be the necessary philosophy of all humanity. The Johannine account of the resurrection is remarkable for several reasons. It is compact, and tells the essential story in a surprisingly short compass. It is historical, for it connects spiritual meaning with events in space and time, and presents evidence which asserts the reality of the supernatural without employing the extravagant tales of apocryphal legend. It is personal and interprets the resurrection as it affected the intimate lives of certain of Jesus' disciples. It is coherent with the rest of the Gospel, for it summarizes by illustration the various effects of belief and brings that belief to its highest expression (Tenney, 272-273).

The Christian church rests on the resurrection of its Founder. Without this fact the church could never have been born, or if born, it would soon have died a natural death. The miracle of the resurrection and the existence of Christianity are so closely connected that they must stand or fall together. If Christ was raised from the dead, then all his other miracles are sure, and our faith is impregnable; if he was not raised, he died in vain and our faith is vain. It was only his resurrection that made his death available for

our atonement, justification and salvation; without the resurrection, his death would be the grave of our hopes; we should be still unredeemed and under the power of our sins. A gospel of a dead Saviour would be a contradiction and wretched delusion (Phillip Schaff, Vol 1, Chapter 2, #19, ESword Module).

At the moment when Christ died, nothing could have seemed more abjectly weak, more pitifully hopeless, more absolutely doomed to scorn and extinction and despair, than the Church which he had founded. It numbered but a handful of weak followers. They were poor, they were ignorant, they were hopeless. They could not claim a single synagogue or a single sword. So feeble were they, and insignificant, that it would have looked like foolish partiality to prophesy for them the limited existence of a Galilean sect. How was it that these dull and ignorant men, with their cross of wood, triumphed over the deadly fascinations of sensual mythologies, conquered kings and their armies, and overcame the world? There is one, and one only, possible answer--the resurrection from the dead. All this vast revolution was due to the power of Christ's resurrection (Johnson, ESword Module).

Divine inspiration has provided us with the full consequences if Jesus was not raised from the dead:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable (1 Cor. 15:13-19).

The story of our Lord's resurrection and early appearances to His disciples (as recorded by John) covers a period of eight days. John selects only two of those days - the first and the eighth – on which to focus our attention. The account of the first day is

covered in verses 1-23; the account of the eighth day is covered in verses 24-29. This particular part of our study focuses on the *earlier* part of the first day. It is the story of the morning of the resurrection day of our Lord. I find it intriguing that none of the gospel writers actually records the resurrection itself. We have the account of a risen Lord, but nothing surrounding the moment our Lord was actually raised. Nor do any of the writers elaborate on the Lord's exit from the tomb.

There is a lot of material that John does not record; but what he does record reveals much. I want to simply follow the sequence of events provided by John. There are two movements for our consideration. The first has to do with *the empty tomb* (20:1-10); the second with *the living Lord* (20:11-18). Let's take a closer look.

### *The Empty Tomb*

20:1-10

~~ 20:1 ~~

*“Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb”*

*“Now on the first day of the week”* - The first thing recorded by John is the arrival of Mary Magdalene at the tomb. Upon her arrival she sees *“the stone taken away from the tomb.”* While the other gospels say the stone was “rolled away” (see Matt. 28:2), John uses a word that means “lifted up,” or “taken away.”

*“while it was yet dark”* - The first day of the week began at sunset. Exactly what time the Lord rose from the dead, or what time He appeared to Mary, is not provided. All we know for certain is that these women came *“while it was yet dark.”*

*“Mary Magdalene”* - Mary Magdalene was not by herself. According to Matthew and Luke we know that Mary, the mother of James and John, and Salome were with Mary. These three women were the first to see the Lord alive following His resurrection. John mentions only Mary because she was the one

who reported to Peter and John. John evidently makes no attempt to record any of the activities of the other women.

*“seeth the stone taken away from the tomb”* - Here is the first piece of evidence for the resurrection. The fact that this stone had been rolled away was evidence of some spectacular happening. The rock hewn tombs that were used for burial were usually closed by rolling a large circular stone in front of the opening. A groove would be cut out in front of the entrance into which the stone would drop, and by its own weight, would permanently seal the opening. It would take little strength to *close the opening*, but it would take several men to remove the stone. Since the stone was “rolled away,” and/or “lifted up,” it must have been moved by some incredibly powerful force.

As a side note, skeptics often claim that the disciples planned to steal the body; but had they hatched such a plan it is evident from the four accounts that these women knew nothing of any such scheme.

~~ 20:2 ~~

*“She runneth therefore, 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 tomb, and we know not where they have laid him”*

*“She runneth therefore”* – I don’t think Mary expected to find the tomb empty. There is no indication that she takes the time to investigate the scene once she arrives. Upon her arrival at the tomb she finds the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. McGarvey thinks that Mary Magdalene hurried away to tell Peter and John of the empty tomb while the other women remained at the tomb.

*“and cometh to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved”* – I get the impression that Peter had isolated himself at John’s house following his denial of Jesus. I like to think that John encouraged Peter during this dark moment in his life.



*“They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb”* – These words reveal that Mary did not expect a risen Lord; she was looking for a body, one that she suspected had been moved for one reason or another.

*“we do not know where they have laid him”* - Had Mary Magdalene been the only one at the tomb she would have said, “I do not know where they have laid him.” Thus, this account is in accord with the other writers with regard to the other women being with Mary Magdalene that morning.

One interesting feature here is the fact that the women were the first to find the tomb empty, and the first to whom the Lord appeared. What makes this even more astonishing is that women were not generally held in high esteem during that time. Bruce wrote: “Celsus, the anti-Christian polemicist of the later second century, dismisses the resurrection narrative as based on the hallucination of a ‘hysterical woman’” (Bruce, 384).

~~ 20:3-4 ~~

*“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb”*

*“Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple”* – The next thing that occurs is the response of Peter and “the other disciple” (i.e., John). Anxious to investigate, Peter and John “ran both together.” It is interesting that John notes that he outran Peter and that he (John) was the first of the disciples to see the empty tomb.

*“and they went toward the tomb”* – If some kind of plot had been laid by the disciples to steal away the body, why did these two men run to the tomb? They would not have wasted their time and energy if they had known in advance that the tomb was empty.

~~ 20:5 ~~

*“and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in”*

The fact that John had to stoop in order to look in, gives an indication of the size of the tomb. It was not a large room, but likely a very small chamber large enough to hold the body.

*“looking in...he seeth”* - Our English translates only one Greek word - *“blepo”* - which means “to see, discern” (Thayer).

*“yet he entered not in”* - The size of the tomb and the sufficient light did not necessitate John entering into the tomb.

*“he seeth the linen cloths”* - Here is a second piece of evidence for the resurrection. John, arriving first on the scene, stood outside and looked into the tomb. It may have still been dark, and at best, only a faint light from the flickering sunrise. So John would not be able to discern as clearly as he might have hoped. John tells us that he simply saw the cloths lying. I don't think John grasped the full implications of what he saw at this point. As he examined the evidence his faith would progress to the point where he believed that Jesus had risen, but right now I think he simply believed that the report of the women was mistaken and that the body was still there.

~~ 20:6-7 ~~

*“Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself”*

*“Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb”* - Peter runs past John and immediately enters the tomb to get a better look. No doubt John was blocking Peter from observing the tomb from the outside; Peter needed to get inside to get a closer look.

*“he beholdeth”* - The Greek word here is *“theorei,”* and it means more than a mere glance. It is a word that describes a careful notice; an intent look as if to investigate a matter more closely. With an inquisitive mind John examines the facts and discerns the meaning thereof.

*“the linen cloths lying”* - The cloths that had been wrapped around the body were not scattered about the tomb. They were more like “things put or set in any place...that quietly cover some spot” (Thayer).

*“and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself”* – This head “napkin” is said by John to have been “rolled up” (ASV), “wrapped together” (KJV), or “folded up” (NKJV). It appears to have been neatly laid off by itself. There must have been something that impressed John about this fact since he is the only one of the four gospel writers who mentions it.

It might help to give some consideration to the method of burial in those rock hewn tombs. The wrapping of the head was never a part of the wrapping of the body. The napkin about the head was always separate. When Peter and John saw the grave clothes they were exactly as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea had left them; the wrappings were there, the spices had not escaped, and the head napkin was neatly folded and set off to the side.

~~ 20:8 ~~

*“Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed”*

*“Then entered in therefore the other disciple, who came first to the tomb”* – John now follows the lead of Peter and enters the tomb to investigate more closely.

*“and he saw, and believed”* – There are varying opinions as to exactly what it is that John “believed.” Some think that John saw the evidence and believed Mary’s report (Gill, Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module). I think there is much more implied. Clarke’s observation is helpful:

The providence of God ordered these very little matters, so that they became the fullest proofs against the lie of the chief priests, that the body had been stolen away by the disciples. If the body had been stolen away, those who took it would not have stopped to strip the clothes from it,

and to wrap them up, and lay them by in separate places (Clarke, ESword Module).

There are others who conclude that at the precise moment John saw the cloths lying, he was convinced that the Lord had been raised from the dead.

Like a flash it came home to him what had happened: the Lord had risen from the dead and left the tomb. It is implied that Peter was only puzzled by what he saw, and could not fathom what it meant. In general, it is true that 'the early Christians did not believe in the resurrection of Christ because they could not find his dead body; they believed because they did find a living Christ. But there was one exception; the beloved disciple believed in his resurrection before he saw him alive again - not indeed because he saw the empty tomb but because the disposition of the grave-clothes suddenly made the truth clear to him (Bruce, 385-386).

I think John immediately assessed the evidence and concluded that it would have been impossible to extract the body and leave the cloths lying as they appeared. Any robber would have taken the body, cloths and all. A thief certainly would not have taken the time to unwind the clothes from the body, and then carefully lay the linen cloths back in some arranged and neat form. John must have immediately deduced two facts: (1) Mary's report was true, and (2) the body was not taken from the tomb by a human being. The position of the grave clothes convinced John, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Jesus had been raised from the dead; for if the body had not been taken from the grave by human hands, then all that remained as a reasonable explanation was that the body was taken by divine intervention, i.e. a raised Christ. Keep in mind that the angels had not rolled back the stone to let Jesus *out*, but to let the witnesses *in* so that they could see the evidence.

~~ 20:9 ~~

*"For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead"*

*“For as yet they knew not”* – John is not saying that he and Peter did not believe at *that* moment; he was saying that *up until they saw the evidence*, they did not expect Jesus to rise from the dead. From John’s standpoint, all of that changed the moment he saw the grave clothes. While the disciples are said to have disbelieved the various reports of those who had seen the risen Christ (cf. Mark 16:11-14), I don’t think John doubted for a moment that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Morgan put it this way: “Intelligent apprehension produced absolute conviction” (Morgan, ESword Module).

~~ 20:10 ~~

*“So the disciples went away again unto their own home”*

*“So the disciples went away”* – We are not told what impact all of this had upon Peter. While it is specifically said that John “saw and believed,” I get the impression that Peter may have been a little uncertain as to the meaning of what he had seen.

A careful examination of all of the accounts of the life of Christ leaves one with the impression that at this point the disciples simply were not expecting the resurrection of the Lord. With this verse John ends his narrative of the empty tomb. By itself, the empty tomb would not demand a resurrection; but when coupled with all the other evidence available, it serves to encourage those who believe, strengthen them in their faith, and give greater determination to remain faithful in service to their Lord.

Before I close this portion of this study, I want to share the following observation from Bruce:

That the tomb was found empty is recorded as a matter of some importance by all four evangelists, but it is given no prominence in the apostolic preaching. In Paul’s summary of that preaching in 1 Cor. 15:3-7 it is not mentioned, although it is implied by his mention of the Lord’s burial between his death and his resurrection. The emptiness of the tomb itself would suggest only the conclusion to which Mary came - that the body had been removed. But if the tomb had *not* been empty, or if the body of

Jesus could have been produced, the apostles' proclamation that the Lord had risen indeed would never have got off the ground; it would have been refuted in their hearers' minds by the brute facts of the case. For to them resurrection meant bodily resurrection; the empty tomb, therefore, while by no means sufficient to confirm the resurrection message, was essential to its acceptance (Bruce, 386-387).

I find it curious that the disciples of Jesus never conducted a search for the body of Jesus. They knew He was alive, and their life demonstrated their full belief in that fact. They went to their grave proclaiming, "He is risen!"

*The Living Lord*  
20:11-18

The focus of these eight verses is on the Lord's appearance to Mary. There are three distinct movements: (1) First, we see Mary alone in verse 11; (2) Second, we see Mary with the angels, verses 12-13; (3) Finally, we see Mary with the Lord, verses 14-17. The section closes with Mary's report to the disciples, verse 18.

**Mary alone**  
20:11

~~ 20:11 ~~

*"But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb"*

*"But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping"* – She was outside the tomb. I don't get the impression that Peter and John stopped to talk to her. What is she doing? She is "weeping." The Greek word means "to wail aloud" (Strong). Mary was in deep sorrow.

In her sorrow, she *"stooped and looked into the tomb."* What had Peter and John seen that made them leave without so much as a word to her? What had they seen? This Mary sought to determine.

**Mary and the angels**

20:12-13

~~ 20:12 ~~

*“and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain”*

*“she beholdeth two angels”* - The “two angels” here are the same as the “two men” in Luke 24:4. Angels often took the form of men as in the case of the three men who visited Abraham (Gen. 18:2), two of whom were angels, and one of whom was the Lord Himself. According to Matthew these angels tell Mary the Lord is risen (Matt. 28:6).

*“one at the head, and one at the feet”* – Any attempt to explain away the presence of these angels and identify them as mere human beings demonstrates the lengths to which men will go once they deny the reality of the spiritual realm. Where did these “men” come from? They were not there when Peter and John entered the tomb. The only reasonable explanation as to the identity of these two “men” is that they were exactly who John says they were: “angels!” This vision, along with numerous passages throughout the Bible attest to that realm of the unseen; unseen by human eyes, but none the less real. The reason why men do not believe in the supernatural is because they do not *want* to. As Gill noted, “To some the door thus opened into heaven is closed and sealed by the seven seals of materialism, agnosticism, dogmatism, scientism, worldliness, indifference, and unspirituality” (Pulpit Commentary, ESword Module).

~~ 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”*

Rather than inform Mary of the resurrected Christ, these two angels ask Mary why she is weeping. She gives the same answer that she gave to Peter and John upon reporting the empty tomb, with but slight variation. In verse 2 she told Peter and John, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him.” In Mary’s mind Jesus was dead,

but He was still “the Lord.” In this verse she uses the personal possessive pronoun: “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” I cannot know how Mary must have felt, but the words are very touching and tender, are they not?

Mary of Magdala was true till death, and beyond it. He was dead. He had cast the demons out, and had been by her side through the years, and held her by His love and teaching. During those years He had indeed been her Lord. But now He was dead. She had lost even His dead body. That is how she thought of Him. She did not think of a living Lord. She thought of a dead body. They have taken away a dead body; yes, but still she said, “my Lord” (Morgan, ESword Module).

The angels may have rolled the stone away from the door of the sepulcher, but the burden on Mary’s heart still remained; and it would not be lifted until her faith in the risen Lord is realized.

Mary Magdalene, like Peter and John earlier, despite all that Jesus had taught, was another who had never really believed in the resurrection. The inclusion of such facts by John shows how impossible and preposterous was the falsehood that the Lord’s disciples stole his body for purposes of pretending a resurrection had occurred. On the contrary, they hardly believed it after the fact, being singularly blind to it, until the absolute and overwhelming proof of it enlightened them, Matthew recording the launching of the lie that the apostles stole the body (Matt. 28:11-13); and it may be assumed that the falsehood was still being repeated in John’s time. The conduct of two of the Lord’s most intimate disciples, as well as that of Mary Magdalene, demonstrated the incapacity of the disciples either to contrive or advocate such a falsehood (Coffman, Software).

It is indeed strange that Mary did not seem the least bit enthralled with the presence of the angels. Did she not recognize them as angels? Was she so overtaken with grief that all she could do was answer their question without any further investigation as to who these two personages were?



**Mary and Jesus**

20:14-17

~~ 20:14 ~~

*“When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus”*

*“she turned herself back”* – I get the impression that she turned away from the angels; why I do not know. It may have been that they did not provide the answer to her question, so she turned to seek the answer elsewhere. If you will permit me a little conjecture here, I think it was at this point that the angels responded: ““Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matt. 28:5-6). They were inviting Mary to take a closer look; to investigate as had Peter and John.

*“and beholdeth Jesus standing”* – Imagine, if you will, Mary turning away from the empty tomb, and immediately she comes face to face with Jesus.

*“and knew not that it was Jesus”* – Did Jesus purposefully hide His identity from Mary? He would on other occasions, the most notable being the Lord’s encounter with the two men on the road to Emmaus later that day: “And it came to pass, while they communed and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him” (Luke 24:15-16). I do not think that was the case here. Mary may have been so blinded by her tears that she could not make out the form of the One standing before her. Whatever the reason for Mary not knowing that it was Jesus, the fact remains that multitudes, for a number of reasons, fail to recognize Jesus today. Some, like Mary, have hearts filled with grief, and through their tears they fail to realize that God and Christ are nearer than what they suspect. Others fail to see Jesus because they are blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4), or their vision is blurred because of prejudice and/or preconceived notions regarding the Lord.

~~ 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 hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away”*

*“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?”* – The angels had asked the same question. But Jesus immediately asks a second question: *“Whom seekest thou?”* When the angels asked, *“Why weepest thou?”* they did so to solicit a factual response. But when Jesus asks the question, *“Why weepest thou?”*, I think He did so with the intent of soliciting a response as to the *reason* for her weeping. Was she not aware of the various occasions when Jesus had prophesied of His death, burial *and* resurrection? It is as if the Lord was asking, *“Mary, you should know I would rise from the dead. So, why are you weeping?”*

*“She, supposing him to be the gardener”* – She may have presumed that she finally found someone who could tell her where they had laid the body of Jesus.

*“Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me”* – That was what Morgan calls, “the splendid language of loyal love” (Morgan, ESword Module). She was determined, perhaps with the assistance of the other women present with her, to retrieve the body of Jesus, and *“take him away”* for a proper burial. The fact that she planned to *“take him away”* lends credence to the conclusion that this tomb in which the Lord was hurriedly buried Friday afternoon was only intended to be a temporary burial place for the Lord’s body.

~~ 20:16 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher”*

*“Jesus saith unto her, Mary”* – The printed page cannot capture any tone of voice that might have accompanied that one word from the lips of our Savior. *“Mary!”* Did Jesus whisper her name? Did He use a certain inflection in His voice that would remind her of some incident involving the two of them?

If the sympathetic stranger's kindly enquiry was insufficient for recognition, his calling her by name was all that was necessary. Immediately her distress vanished; here was something far better than she had dreamed possible. Instead of the dead body she had hoped to recover, she found herself face to face with her living Lord (Bruce, 389).

Whatever there was in that tender beckon from the Lord, it appears to have had an immediate effect on her state of mind. She immediately passes from a state of overwhelming grief to overwhelming joy. Her disbelief gives way to belief; her despair is vanquished by hope.

*"Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher"* - This same word was used by Bartimaeus in Mark 10:51. It was an Aramaic form with more honor than the simple term 'Rabbi.' Other than that there seems to be no more difference in the two terms. I find it interesting that both Jesus and Mary expressed themselves in a single term. Indeed, "Seasons of greatest joy are marked by little speech" (McGarvey, ESword Module).

~~ 20:17 ~~

*"Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God"*

*"Jesus saith to her, Touch me not"* – The Lord's admonition to Mary may sound strange, if not what we might call "standoffish." The better rendering of the original language would be, "Do not cling to me."

*"for I am not yet ascended unto the Father"* – Jesus was not telling Mary to simply avoid a touch, but not to embrace Him or hold Him as if to now keep Him from ever leaving again. Bruce points out that "the use of the negative 'me' with the present imperative indicates that Mary is being told to stop what she is doing" (Bruce, 389). McGarvey's explanation of the passage is as good as any I came across:

We would explain it by the following paraphrase: “Do not lay hold on me and detain yourself and me; I have not yet ascended; this is no brief, passing vision; I am yet in the world, and will be for some time, and there will be other opportunities to see me; the duty of the moment is to go and tell my sorrowing disciples that I have risen, and shall ascend to my Father” (McGarvey, FF in ESword Module).

*“but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father”* – In spite of the fact that Peter had denied Him, and that the disciples had fled when Jesus was arrested in the Garden, Jesus still addresses them as “my brethren.” The message that Mary was to carry to the “brethren” was that of the ascension of Jesus to the Father.”

### **Mary’s message**

20:18

~~ 20:18 ~~

*“Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord; and that he had said these things unto her”*

When we compare this with Mark 16:12-14 it is evident that the disciples received the news with unbelief. Exactly what they did not believe is open for discussion. Some have suggested that the disciples did not believe her claim that Jesus was raised from the dead. It may be that they did not believe her claim that she had seen the Lord. The prevailing attitude toward women in that day and age may have contributed to their disbelief.

### **SOME PROOFS OF THE RESURRECTION**

Too often men read the inspired records, but they do not give serious consideration to all that surrounds the events on that first day of the week. I do not know any fact in history that is accompanied by the kind of evidence for our Lord’s resurrection. Consider the following.

First, consider is the reaction of the enemies of Jesus. They made every attempt possible to cover up the facts. Following the resurrection they drummed up the charge that the disciples stole

the body while the Roman soldiers slept. How would they know it was the disciples that stole the body if they were asleep? Even if the Roman soldiers were awake, an attempt on the part of the disciples to invade the tomb and rob the body boards on sheer lunacy. Imagine if you will that band of eleven disciples attempting to overthrow an entire regiment of Roman soldiers, then roll back that enormous stone which now covered the opening of the grave. Three days previous those eleven men fled the presence of the soldiers, and to believe that somehow their faith increased to the point that they would now attempt to take on battle hardened soldiers, just to steal a body, is beyond comprehension. It borders on sheer lunacy.

Second, there are the actions of the friends of Jesus. Take, for example, the apostles themselves. They were so convinced of the resurrection that they marched into the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and, after receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit, stood before the multitudes and proclaimed a resurrected Lord. They did all this in the very city where Jesus had been crucified. As one writer put it: "By their declaration of the fact they induced thousands of the enemies of Christ to believe in it, and that close to the time and near the spot on which it occurred. The early Church universally believed in it; and it is incredible that a myth, a false story, should have so grown up without substantial foundation" (B.W. Johnson, ESword Module). Another observed:

Only the fact of the resurrection can account for the marvelous change in the spirit and character of the apostles. The resurrection completely transformed them; inspired them with a new conception of Christ's kingdom as for all people, with a new courage to suffer for the sake of their risen Lord and his kingdom, and with a new purpose to preach Christ and him crucified everywhere as a spiritual redemption for sin. Neither fraud nor fiction is competent to account for the moral contrast (Johnson's quote of Abbott).

Third, there were witnesses. Had only one, or perhaps two, claimed to have seen the Lord, there might be some room for doubt. Any lawyer would be excited if he had at his disposal the

number of witnesses who are said to have seen the Lord following His resurrection. There was Cephas, who only three days earlier had denied the Lord. Fear had gripped his very being causing him to swear with an oath that he did not know Jesus. Yet, like every one of those witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, Peter was willing to put his life on the line and declare to the Jewish Sanhedrin, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). Then there were the women who were the first to see Jesus. Did they conspire together to hatch such a lie, if indeed they had *not* really seen Jesus? Such evil scheming does not fit the character of these women, nor would there be any motive to conjure up such a story as astounding as a resurrected Christ. After all, Mary Magdalene came to the grave fully expecting to find a dead body. What shall we say about the more than five hundred brethren who all saw Jesus alive, *and at the same time*? (1 Cor. 15:6). Most of that number were still alive at the time Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. Add to this incredible and impressive list the names of John, Phillip, Thomas, the 120 disciples, and others who, like John, were willing to declare: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

Perhaps one of the strongest arguments in favor of the resurrection of Jesus is the incredible impact it made upon the disciples. Consider the following in regard to this matter:

#### THE AMAZING SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY

by Tom Wacaster

I have been profitably engaged in a reading of Philip Schaff's, "*History Of The Christian Church*." This multi-volume set, though challenging to the average reader, is worth taking the time to peruse its pages. The establishment and growth of the church in the first three centuries is nothing short of amazing. No movement in the history of the world has been as rapid or made as significant an impact as has the growth of the church in the first two centuries of her existence. The exact count of the number of Christians by the end of that first century is not

available, but some have estimated that the Lord's church may very well have reached a half a million or more. Evidence suggests that the churches in Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth were strong enough to bear the strain of controversy and division into parties. With the exception of these few larger congregations, most of the local churches were small and perhaps consisted of only a small handful of poor people. Christian converts came mostly from the middle and lower classes of society, such as fishermen, peasants and slaves. This is why Paul wrote: "For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God" (1 Cor. 1:26-29). Yet who would deny that these poor and illiterate churches had received the greatest blessings imaginable and thus attain to the highest thoughts which could possibly challenge the attention of mortal mind?

By the time of Constantine, at the beginning of the fourth century, the number of Christians has been estimated to have reached between ten and twelve million, or about one tenth of the total population of the Roman Empire. Some have even estimated it higher. This rapid growth of Christianity in the face of overwhelming opposition is not only surprising, but is its own best evidence of the Supernatural power that lay behind this movement. It was accomplished in the face of an indifferent and hostile world, and by purely spiritual and moral means, without shedding a drop of blood except that of its own innocent martyrs. Gibbon attributes the rapid spread to five causes. First, there was the amazing zeal of the first century church. Here were men and women who were willing to die to get the message of the gospel to the lost world. Second, there was the belief in the immortality of the soul, something only dreamt of among ancient philosophers and pagan religions. Third, the morality of the first century church was exemplary, standing head and shoulders

above their peers. The love of the brethren, compassion for the lost, and holiness of life made a definite impact on those who had never witnessed such in the lives of men. Finally, the unity of the church contributed to a phalanx of incredible strength. All the strength of the Jewish authorities, coupled with Rome's determination to exterminate this new found religion simple could not banish the gospel of the cross. Unified in doctrine, and with love for one another, these Christians marched forth with the gospel, and within three centuries had conquered the known world.

It must have been grand to live in that first century and witness the rapid growth of the church in a world of skepticism and unbelief. But before we become cynical and disillusioned let us not forget that the same power that brought ancient Rome to her knees and ushered in the growth of the Lord's church at unprecedented rates is the same word that we have in our possession today. Cheer up brethren! Be busy planting the seed, and our God will give the harvest! Please consider the following quote from Schaff (Volume 2, Introduction) - a little lengthy, but it is worth taking the time to read:

No merely human religion could have stood such an ordeal of fire for three hundred years. The final victory of Christianity over Judaism and heathenism, and the mightiest empire of the ancient world, a victory gained without physical force, but by the moral power of patience and perseverance, of faith and love, is one of the sublimest spectacles in history, and one of the strongest evidences of the divinity and indestructible life of our religion. But equally sublime and significant are the intellectual and spiritual victories of the church in this period over the science and art of heathenism, and over the assaults of Gnostic and Ebionitic heresy, with the copious vindication and development of the Christian truth, which the great mental conflict with those open and secret enemies called forth.

The church of this period appears poor in earthly possessions and honors, but rich in heavenly grace, in world-conquering faith, love, and hope; unpopular, even outlawed, hated, and persecuted, yet far more vigorous



and expansive than the philosophies of Greece or the empire of Rome; composed chiefly of persons of the lower social ranks, yet attracting the noblest and deepest minds of the age, and bearing, in her bosom the hope of the world; “as unknown, yet well-known, as dying, and behold it lives;” conquering by apparent defeat, and growing on the blood of her martyrs; great in deeds, greater in sufferings, greatest in death for the honor of Christ and the benefit of generations to come.

The condition and manners of the Christians in this age are most beautifully described by the unknown author of the *‘Epistola ad Diognetum’* in the early part of the second century. ‘The Christians,’ he says, ‘are not distinguished from other men by country, by language, nor by civil institutions. For they neither dwell in cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They dwell in the Grecian or barbarian cities, as the case may be; they follow the usage of the country in dress, food, and the other affairs of life. Yet they present a wonderful and confessedly paradoxical conduct. They dwell in their own native lands, but as strangers. They take part in all things as citizens; and they suffer all things, as foreigners. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every native land is a foreign. They marry, like all others; they have children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have the table in common, but not wives. They are in the flesh, but do not live after the flesh. They live upon the earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown, and yet they are condemned. They are killed and are made alive. They are poor and make many rich. They lack all things, and in all things abound. They are reproached, and glory in their reproaches. They are calumniated, and are justified. They are cursed, and they bless. They receive scorn, and they give honor. They do good, and are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice, as being made alive. By the Jews they are attacked as aliens, and by the Greeks persecuted; and the cause of the enmity their enemies cannot tell. In short, what the soul is in the body, the Christians are in the world. The soul is diffused through all the members of the body, and the Christians are spread

through the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, but it is not of the body; so the Christians dwell in the world, but are not of the world. The soul, invisible, keeps watch in the visible body; so also the Christians are seen to live in the world, but their piety is invisible. The flesh hates and wars against the soul, suffering no wrong from it, but because it resists fleshly pleasures; and the world hates the Christians with no reason, but that they resist its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh and members, by which it is hated; so the Christians love their haters. The soul is enclosed in the body, but holds the body together; so the Christians are detained in the world as in a prison; but they contain the world. Immortal, the soul dwells in the mortal body; so the Christians dwell in the corruptible, but look for incorruption in heaven. The soul is the better for restriction in food and drink; and the Christians increase, though daily punished. This lot God has assigned to the Christians in the world; and it cannot be taken from them' (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*).

Lift up your heads brother and sister! If God could accomplish such great things in that first century, why should we doubt that His power and might in the gospel cannot do the same thing in our generation?



## CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

### “EXCEPT I SHALL SEE HIM”

*Appearance to the Disciples, 20:19-31*

The morning of the resurrection day was the focus of 20:1-18. John now passes immediately to the evening of that day, bypassing a number of incidents recorded in the other gospels. So there is an interval of 12 to 18 hours between John 20:18 and 19. There is also a lengthy interval between verses 25 and 26; in fact a full week lapses before we read of Jesus' appearance to the disciples with Thomas present.

With the exception of the last two verses of John, the remainder of the book records the post resurrection appearances of our Lord to the disciples. We have already seen Jesus' appearance to Mary. This is followed by the Lord's appearance to the disciples, Thomas being absent (20:19-23), the appearance to the eleven, Thomas included (20:24-31), and the appearance to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias (21:1-23).

There are three movements in the section now before us (20:19-31). The first has to do with what occurred in the evening of that first day of the Lord's resurrection (20:19-23). Technically it would have been the second day (according to Jewish measurement of time), since the new day began at sunset. There is more here than meets the eye (as we shall see momentarily). Next, John tells us what occurred seven days later, *i.e.* the second Sunday following the Lord's resurrection, or what has commonly been called the “eighth day” appearance of Jesus (20:24-29). This section concludes with a summation of the purpose for which John wrote this gospel account (20:30-31).

*Appearance: Thomas Absent*  
20:19-25

~~ 20:19 ~~

*“When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were,*

*for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you”*

“*When therefore it was evening, on that day*” – John bypasses several hours of the Lord’s activity on the resurrection day, and immediately takes us to the evening of that first day.

“*first day of the week*” - The change in the day of worship began immediately after the Lord’s resurrection and His appearance before the disciples. Some other passages that place the importance of the first day of the week would include Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, 16:9; Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; and Revelation 1:10. Keep in mind that the hour was late. Time had been allowed for the return of the disciples from Emmaus. Yet, despite the lateness of the hour, John, by divine inspiration, still calls it “that day, the first day of the week.” By the time John wrote this gospel account the “Sabbath” worship had already been discarded for the first day of the week worship.

“*the doors were shut*” – The reason for meeting behind closed doors was “for fear of the Jews.” There are two factors that may have instilled fear in the hearts of the disciples. First, there was the distinct possibility that the Jewish authorities were going about the city threatening anyone who claimed to have seen Jesus resurrected from the dead. It was evening; perhaps twelve hours since Jesus burst forth from the tomb. The tomb was empty, and by this time the news would have certainly reached the ears of the Jewish authorities. A second thing that may have instilled fear in their hearts was the statement that Jesus had made: “If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you” (John 15:18). The hatred that the Jews had for Christ could (and eventually *would*) be vented upon the disciples. No wonder they were afraid.

Yet in spite of their fear, this band of disciples gathered together. What is it that brought them together, if not the stories they were hearing about a resurrected Christ? The doors were shut, and inside they were no doubt discussing what some of them already realized to be true.

*“Jesus came and stood in the midst”* - The interesting thing here is the fact that Jesus seems to have simply appeared; suddenly, without warning. There was no need to unlock or open the door in order to give Jesus entrance. Jesus simply appeared and stood in the midst of the disciples. The reference to the doors being shut may have been added by John in order to highlight the miraculous nature of the Lord’s appearance. When we couple this with the reference by Luke regarding the Lord meeting with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, that Jesus simply “vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:31), it becomes obvious that Jesus was not subject to the physical limitations of mortal men.

*“Peace be unto you”* - The words our Lord spoke to them were much like the words spoken just prior to the departure from the upper room three days earlier: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you” (John 14:27).

~~ 20:20 ~~

*“And when he had said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord”*

*“he showed unto them his hands and his side”* - This verse is proof that these appearances of our Lord were more than hallucinations. The Lord wanted them to be convinced of His resurrection, and that what they were witnessing was more than some spiritual vision. The Lord’s invitation to examine His hands and feet would also serve to identify Him as the One Whom they knew.

*“The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord”* - This invitation to investigate His hands and His side would be extended to Thomas later. It was this bodily appearance that convinced Thomas, as we shall see later, and eventually compelled all of the disciples to go forth with the message of a risen Lord. As Coffman noted:

This was the sacred fountain that supplied the evangelistic zeal of the apostles. The certainties established in these scenes enabled them to stand before the whole world

shouting the message of redemption in Christ. The conviction made final and permanent by these events sustained them in the fires of persecution and death. The Galilean had triumphed! If the facts here related did not occur, then what did happen? Skepticism has no answer. For nearly two millenia the wisest and best have received this narrative as sacred Gospel. The record here is the truth, and it shall stand forever (Coffman, TheophilusSoftware).

~~ 20:21 ~~

*“Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you”*

While the great commission is not officially provided by John, this verse has the same effect. Bruce picked up on this:

The technical term ‘apostle’ is avoided by John, but by the use of the cognate verb ‘*apostello*’ he indicates that the disciples now become effectively apostles in the sense of the ‘sent ones.’ The Son’s mission in the world is entrusted to them, since he is returning to the Father; but as the Son had received the Spirit in unrestricted fullness for the discharge of his own mission (John 1:32-34; 3:34), so they now receive the Spirit for the discharge of theirs (Bruce, 391-392).

That particular moment had a profound impact upon those men. Not only did it give credence to the rumors they had heard, but it also brought them back to a realization of the responsibility they now shared to get the news to others.

There are two different Greek words, both translated with our English word “sent.” The first appears in the phrase, “as the Father hath sent me.” It is the word ‘*apostello*,’ and means “sent out.” It implies delegated authority. The second appears in the phrase, “even so I send you.” Here the word is ‘*pempeo*,’ and means “to send; to send a thing into another” (Thayer, ESword). While Jesus was given all authority, it was their responsibility to go forth with His authority and preach the gospel.

~~ 20:22-23 ~~

*“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained”*

*“And when he had said this, he breathed on them”* - This may have been a symbolic gesture to emphasize the source from whence the authority to forgive sins would originate.

*“Receive ye the Holy Spirit”* - In view of the fact that the apostles did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost, and in view of the fact that they did not offer remission of sins until that time, the only possible conclusion is that this statement by our Lord is *prospective* rather than *immediate*. How could they offer forgiveness of sins prior to conviction and repentance, something that most definitely occurred at Pentecost and following the sermon from Peter (Acts 2:37-38). The apostles had not yet received such apostolic authority to offer forgiveness because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon them. Jesus would later promise them, “Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you” (Acts 1:8a).

~~ 20:24 ~~

*“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came”*

Why Thomas was absent during that meeting is not known. Perhaps he, like the other apostles, had been disillusioned when Jesus did not provide the material kingdom they were expecting. Whatever the reason for his not being there, he missed out on the tremendous blessing of seeing Jesus on the very day He was raised from the dead.

He had once affirmed that he would die with the Lord (John 11:16); but, like the others, he had failed. However, he came back, and that is what counts. He came back, and Jesus came back to meet him. Jesus came back to the man who came back; and therein is a promise of hope for all

who will return to the Master (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*“Didymus”* means *‘Twin.’* It is the Greek for the Hebrew name, Thomas. Regarding Thomas, Johnson had this note:

He was one of the Twelve, of whom history has recorded but little. It is reported by tradition that he carried the gospel to India and died there. He seems to have been an honest, affectionate man, but of a rather skeptical turn of mind. This incident, as well as the unbelief of the others prior to the meeting of the Savior with the apostles, shows that they were very incredulous, and hard to convince, notwithstanding the Lord had said he would rise again. Only “infallible proofs” could convince them. The failure of Thomas to be present with the other disciples was probably due to his utter despair (Johnson, ESword Module).

~~ 20:25 ~~

*“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 hand into his side, I will not believe”*

*“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord”* – The precise timing is difficult to discern. We do not know how much time had elapsed before they told the wonderful news to Thomas. McGarvey had this note:

The apostles had undoubtedly seen and talked with someone, but the question was, Who? They said that it was Jesus, and Thomas, holding this to be impossible, thought that it must have been someone else whom they mistook for Jesus. But he would not be deceived; he would thoroughly examine the wounds, for these would identify Jesus beyond all doubt--if it were Jesus (McGarvey, ESword Module).

*Appearance: Thomas Present*

20:26-29



~~ 20:26 ~~

*“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you”*

*“after eight days”* - This would be the second Sunday after the resurrection, or, as Johnson noted, “the second Lord’s day in the history of the world” (Johnson, ESword Module).

This might be a good place to make some additional observations relative to the first day of the week and those who hold to a Sabbath Day of worship. Keep in mind that on the seventh day, the Lord was still in the tomb, the hopes of the disciples were buried with their Lord. As Johnson noted, “It was the last Sabbath of the old dispensation. The Sabbath institution went out in gloom. Its last memory is of the dead Savior and buried hopes” (Johnson, ESword Module). Why would God institute *that* day as the day to memorialize the death of our Lord? Why remember the day in which He lay entombed, rather than the day He was raised? Saturday was the devil’s day; a day of defeat, hopelessness and despair. The first day of the week, however, is appropriately called “the Lord’s day,” because it was the very day that Jesus burst forth from the tomb and “who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). It was on the first day of the week that Jesus met with the disciples; not the seventh. If God had intended to memorialize the Sabbath as the day of worship, what better opportunity to do so than at this moment? The fact that Jesus met with His disciples on the first day of the week – not once, but twice – indicates the superiority of *that* day over the Sabbath Day. Now, add to that the fact that the Day of Pentecost – the day the church began – was on the first day of the week, the fact that the disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7), and the fact that the first day of every week was set aside to make a contribution (1 Cor. 16:1-2), making the evidence overwhelmingly in favor of New Testament worship being on the first day of the week; not the Sabbath! Throughout the history of the church, the practice has always been to conduct worship services on the first day of the week.

*“again his disciples were within...the doors being shut”* - It is likely that they were *expecting* the Lord to appear. There is nothing here that indicates that the disciples were meeting on the first day of the week by any express statement given by the Lord. It would only be natural for them to meet again on this first week's anniversary of having seen the Lord. What is conspicuously missing is any reference to the disciples having met on Saturday; here, or anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears that for all practical purposes these men had seen the implications of the first day resurrection as it had to do with their previous practice of “remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy.”

*“Peace be unto you”* – Just as the disciples expected, the Lord DID appear again, and uttered the same words as in the previous appearance.

~~ 20:27 ~~

*“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing”*

*“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands”* - The Lord was fully aware of the doubts of Thomas and therefore invited him to see and touch the wounds which would identify Him as the Lord. Jesus was willing for Thomas to apply the tests that the disciple had declared would be necessary for him to believe. As Johnson observed, “His compassion for the unbelief of Thomas shows the patient tenderness of the Savior with the difficulties of an honest seeker. Christ never wasted words on the insincere” (Johnson, ESword Module).

An important point to note here is the open invitation of our Lord for Thomas to investigate the evidence. This is a mark of true Christianity. While some religions seek to hide their true colors, God invites investigation. Some years ago, while doing mission work in South Africa, I had the opportunity to engage in a discussion with two Mormon elders. I asked them to provide evidence as to why they believed the Book of Mormon (or why any of the other of their so-called “inspired” books) should be considered inspired and worthy of following. I was informed that the way they determined whether their doctrine was true or false

was through prayer, and the warm feeling of assurance that would descend upon the heart in answer to that prayer. God has never worked that way; He has invited men to investigate, knowing that the evidence speaks for itself. Before this chapter closes John would reiterate this truth by showing the connection between the evidence – the “signs” – and belief in Jesus as the Son of God.

Neither Christ nor his religion has anything to hide, nothing to conceal or cover up, no issues to avoid or problems to evade. To every unbeliever of all ages, the challenge of the risen Christ still thunders across centuries and millennia: INVESTIGATE! Test the evidence; make your own examination of the facts; and be not faithless but believing. Thus, infidelity was rooted out of the sacred group, and thus it has been rooted out of the heart of every unbeliever throughout history who took the trouble to investigate. This gives the lie to the satanic falsehood that knowledge leads to unbelief. It is the opposite. Ignorance leads to unbelief, as do prejudice, sin, and rebellion in the heart (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 20:28 ~~

*“Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God”*

Whether or not Thomas actually placed his hands into the side of Jesus, or touched the nailed scarred hands, we are not told. It is not improbable that Thomas immediately recognized the Lord when he saw Him. What an amazing climax to an amazing incident. Thomas’ conclusion is the same truth toward which the apostle John was leading all of his readers in this biography of Jesus Christ.

This pinnacle of the sustaining witness of that theme is inherent in the fact that even an apostle who at first would not believe came back to confess, ‘My Lord and my God.’ It should be said in Thomas’ favor that if his doubts were heaviest, his confession of faith was fullest (McGarvey, ESword Module).

*“My Lord and my God”* – If Jesus is not the divine Son of God, Thomas would be guilty of blasphemy. In addition, had Jesus

accepted that adoration and praise from Thomas, knowing that He was *not* divine, it would immediately brand Jesus as a hypocrite and a fraud. Thomas spoke the truth; a truth that honest souls have recognized for more than two millenia.

~~ 20:29 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”*

*“blessed are they that have not seen”* – Of whom was Jesus speaking? The other ten disciples? Hardly, for they *had* seen. Their belief was the result of having seen Jesus. Even John, who wrote this gospel, had seen Jesus. No, Jesus was not speaking of the ten; He was referring to those who would read the testimony of the apostles, look carefully at the evidence, and then acknowledge the same undeniable truth believed and embraced by those who had seen with the physical eye. “The eyes of the risen Christ were turned from Thomas and the group, and looking down the running ages, He saw the great hosts who should believe on Him, never having seen Him; and His last beatitude came down the ages for all the host that make up the Church of God” (Morgan, ESword Module). Thomas was given the privilege, as were the other apostles and hundreds of others who lived during that time, to see the Lord with their eyes. No doubt many of them touched him (1 John 1:1), and were among that number who had “seen” the risen Lord with their own eyes. With that in mind, the Lord turns our attention to those who had not seen, and generations yet unborn who would *never* see with the physical eyes, or in any way have personal contact with Jesus. Those who believe the testimony of those who *have* seen - these are the recipients of this wonderful blessing from the Lord.

*Purpose Statement From John*

20:30-31

~~ 20:30-31 ~~

*“Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name”*

I will readily admit that John's purpose was to produce belief on the part of those who openly and honestly read what he and the other inspired writers had recorded. This does not lessen the fact that John, throughout his gospel, exalts the Christ, magnifying Jesus in the eyes of all those who desired to know the truth in these matters.

*"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book"* – John himself declares that Jesus performed more signs than the apostle included in his inspired record. John drew only from what was sufficient for his purpose. John (*i.e.* the Holy Spirit) did not think it necessary to go over the material already addressed by the other writers. Instead, he would draw only from his own personal experience such signs and discourses that he himself witnessed, recording only those events that would accomplish his purpose of leading others to believe in Jesus. No doubt there were other details in the life of Jesus that could have been recorded, but as Gill points out, "it is not necessary to record every word and every action of a life in order that we may know what manner of life it was" (Gill, Pulpit Commentary, ESWord).

*"in the presence of the disciples"* - These signs were not performed in secret or behind closed doors; they were done in the presence of "the disciples."

Thus the writer did not set down "cunningly devised fables"; he recorded facts which he could personally vouch for, and words which no one but the eternal Logos could have spoken. Those facts thus attested, and those words of heavenly wisdom, bring their own evidence with them. John's book is therefore no fiction, but a record of divine truth, testifying to the divine Sonship of Christ (Gill, Pulpit Commentary, ESWord Module).

*"which are not written in this book"* – The closing words of this chapter (21:25) point to the fact that, indeed, Jesus did "*many other signs*" (20:30). Truly, only a fraction of the many things Jesus did were recorded by John. Some of these were recorded

by Matthew, Mark and Luke, but no doubt hundreds, if not thousands, were not recorded by any of the gospel writers.

*“but these are written”* – The significance of this fact cannot be overstated. God places a premium on the written word rather than the ongoing, spoken word. Consider just a few of the New Testament passages that place importance on the *written* word:

“Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other” (1 Cor. 4:6).

“How that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Eph. 3:3-5).

“Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Not only is there a strong emphasis on the written word, there exists not a single passage of scripture that teaches or implies that divine revelation would extend beyond the apostolic age of the church; quite the opposite, in fact. The completion of divine revelation within a designated period of time is clearly established by a careful study of such passages as 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Consider also the words of Peter: “Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust” (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

In light of all such passages no man can successfully defend the concept of “modern day revelation.”

*“that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”* – It is not enough to acknowledge that Jesus is a “good man”; or even that He is a “prophet sent from God.” While both of those accolades of Jesus are true, neither expresses the full extent of our Lord’s very being. In the words of Jesus, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24b). The gospel, when preached in its purity and simplicity, and received by good and honest hearts, produces exactly that kind of belief in Jesus.

*“and that believing ye may have life in his name”* – Within the first dozen or so words of this gospel, John had declared: “But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). Jesus Himself declared the very purpose for His coming: “I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly” (John 10:10). It is to this end that we preach the gospel and persuade men to believe and obey.

Before I leave these last two verses I thought it might be beneficial to consider the everlasting value of John’s purpose statement. The apostle appears to have had a definite purpose before him, and that purpose, as Hastings points out, “governed him both in the matters he included, and in those he omitted” (Hastings, 211). Obviously we cannot ignore the divine inspiration that played an all important role in selecting what was recorded, and what was omitted. Taking these two verses as a whole we can see that it refers to a *reality*, unfolds a *revelation*, and provides a *revelation*. I borrowed those three “R’s” from Hastings because I think the words provide us with an encapsulated description of John’s purpose statement. Dwell with me on each of these three points:

First, John is telling us the story of Jesus is true. The life of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is a historical *reality*: “these are written.” Critics who do not believe in the inspiration of the Bible or the historicity of Jesus claim that it makes little difference whether or not Jesus actually lived. For some strange reason they look upon Jesus as a mythical character, born of the fertile imagination of those first century Christians, and slowly evolved into what we have in the four gospel accounts. Such a notion falls

into that category of what I call “sophisticated foolishness” that demonstrates the extremes to which men will go when once they deny the reality of the spiritual realm and the reality of God. Whatever else we might take from John’s purpose statement, we know that the apostle believed that Jesus truly lived; that He walked upon this earth, performed the miracles attributed to Him, and spoke the words recorded by John and the other gospel writers. It might be easy to understand a skeptical mind that has a hard time accepting the miracles of Jesus, but who can possibly believe that the sayings of Jesus originated from men? “Never man so spake” (John 7:46) was the sentiment of the officers who were sent to arrest Jesus. Those words express the sentiment of untold millions who have, over the centuries, examined the discourses of Jesus as recorded by John. No, Jesus was not a mythological character! And John declared that reality of Jesus in his first epistle: “That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1).

Second, the life of Jesus is a life of *revelation*: “that ye may believe.” The things that Jesus *did* and *said* reveal the Father: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9b). If you want to know the love of God, look at Jesus. If you want to see the patience of God, look at Jesus. If you want to know the path that leads to God and those wonderful mansions prepared for the godly, listen to Jesus: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6a). Without the record of the life of Jesus Christ men would still be in darkness, unable to find their way to the Father. But through Jesus, there is revelation, and with that revelation, hope.

Finally, the life of Jesus is a life of *redemption*: “and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:31b) The lyrics from a wonderful song express the sheer joy of knowing we have redemption from our sins: “Redeemed - how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Redeemed thro' His infinite mercy, His child, and forever, I am.” Redemption! The very word causes our hearts to swell with great anticipation of that day when we will sit with the angels and all the redeemed saints of every age, and sing the sweet story of redemption



throughout the endless ages. Luke records that moment in Peter's life when he fell down before Jesus and cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). But Jesus refused to depart from Peter, or from any man for that matter. This is because Jesus came to redeem man, "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus came to bring life through faith in His name; but that cannot be, nor will it happen, separate and apart from our obedience to His will. "His redemption can only become ours through the doorway of a love and obedience that opens wide enough to receive all He has to give us on the one hand, and all we can surrender to Him on the other" (Hastings, 214). Well stated, don't you think?





## CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

### “AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS”

*Appearance of Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias, 21:1-14*

The record that John presents could very easily have ended with chapter twenty, and there would be no loss in continuity, or in the completion of the record. This has led some to conclude that chapter twenty-one is something like an appendix or supplement. Had John not included this last chapter, however, we would have been the worse for it, if for no other reason than the fact that it shows us the forgiveness that was granted to Peter for his denial of the Lord. While it could be presumed from the role that Peter played on the Day of Pentecost that he had been forgiven (not to mention his role in the preaching and promotion of the gospel throughout his life), this chapter gives an account of that restoration in a most beautiful and touching way. Whether it was intended as some kind of epilogue or appendix is not important. It is still part of the original document provided by divine inspiration. In fact, there is not a single ancient manuscript of the gospel of John that does not contain this last chapter.

This appearance at the sea of Tiberias also serves to demonstrate not only the reality of the resurrection, but gives us some insight into the nature of that resurrection. I will not claim to understand every aspect of our Lord's resurrected body, but it is clear from the various appearances of our Lord that His body was much more than a mere apparition. The resurrection was real. He came to His disciples in a bodily form, interacting with them in the same manner that any person living would interact. He talked to them. He ate with them. All of these appearances would serve to convince the disciples that they were not dreaming, and that they were not following some “cunningly devised fables” (2 Pet. 1:16).

It is also apparent that Jesus limited His appearances to the disciples, there being only ten instances recorded in the New Testament. During those forty days between His resurrection and ascension back to the Father He only appeared to the

disciples, never to His enemies (Acts 1:3). It would make sense, therefore, that there would have been many rumors spreading throughout Jerusalem when once the tomb was found empty. How would the authorities respond to news that the body was missing? How would they explain the undeniable fact that the body of Jesus could not be found? “He is raised!” “He is alive!” “The disciples took the body while we slept!” The explanations must have been endless. Included in these rumors was the fact that at least some were saying they had actually *seen* Jesus. Were these appearances nothing more than visions or hallucinations? We are almost two thousand years removed from those forty days when Jesus made His appearances to the disciples, and still there are those who deny that the disciples saw a bodily, resurrected savior. The disciples, however, insisted that Jesus was raised from the dead, that they saw Him, spoke with Him, touched Him, and associated with Him during those forty days.

The focus of this chapter is on Peter. No, I am not ignoring the interaction that Jesus had with all of the disciples; but if you look closely at the flow of the chapter you will see that Peter is, without doubt, the predominant character. I see three movements; each one revolves around a statement that Peter makes. The first of these is Peter’s affirmation, “I go a fishing” (21:3). It is Peter’s suggestion that ultimately lands them in the boat, from which they see Jesus appear on the shore. The second movement revolves around Peter’s affirmation, “Yea Lord; thou knowest I love thee” (21:16). The statement is a response to the Lord’s question, but still it is Peter’s affirmation that stretches out the conversation, and from which we derive some valuable lessons. The final moment has to do with Peter’s question, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” (21:21). This particular conversation between Jesus and Peter is brief, but serves to answer some of the rumors that may have been floating around regarding what God had in store for the one who had written this gospel. We will study the chapter using the statements and/or questions of Peter for our headings:

“I Go A Fishing,” 21:1-14

“Yea Lord: Thou Knowest That I Love Thee,” 21:15-19

“Lord, And What Shall This Man Do?” 21:20-23

Let's take a closer look.

*"I Go A Fishing"*

21:1-14

These verses can be subdivided as follows: (1) a statement of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples, 21:1; (2) a list of the disciples present on this occasion, 21:2; (3) Peter's statement that he is going fishing, 21:3; (4) the appearance of Jesus at daybreak, 21:4; (5) a question presented by Jesus to the disciples, and their answer, 21:5; (6) further instructions from Jesus to the disciples, and the catch of a great multitude of fish, 21:6; (7) the reaction of the disciples, 21:7-8; (8) the disciples join Jesus on the beach, bringing the fish they had caught, 21:9-10; (9) a reference to the precise number of fish the disciples had caught, 21:11; and (10) the Lord's conversation with the disciples, 21:12-14.

~~ 21:1 ~~

*"After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and he manifested himself on this wise"*

*"After these things"* – Exactly how much time had elapsed between the close of chapter twenty and the events that unfold in this chapter is not known.

*"Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples"* – The original word here translated "manifested," is used only five times in the gospel of John (2:11, 17:6, 21:1 [twice], and 21:14). The original word (*phaneroo*) means "to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown, whether by words, or deeds, or any other way" (Thayer, ESword Module).

In all of the appearances of Jesus to the disciples it was He Who took the initiative, selecting the time and place at His Own volition. Nothing is said about the apostles ever seeking out Jesus, but that in every case the Lord "appeared unto them" or was "seen of them" only when He so willed.

*“the sea of Tiberias”* – This is the same as the sea of Galilee. It is also called the “lake of Gennesaret” (Luke 5:1), “the lake” (Luke 5:2), and “the sea” (John 6:16). The disciples were in the area of Galilee because the Lord had instructed them to meet Him there (cf. Matt 28:7). Interestingly, this name for the lake does not appear in any of the other gospels, and only three times in John’s account. It is also notable that none of the synoptics mention this appearance of Jesus to the disciples.

*“on this wise”* – It is as if John was saying, “Here are the details of that meeting.”

~~ 21:2 ~~

*“There was together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples”*

There were seven present on this occasion. Three are mentioned by name: Peter, Thomas, and Nathanel (also known as Bartholomew). Two are clearly identified, though not named: “the sons of Zebedee,” i.e. James and John. Exactly who the “two other of his disciples” might be is anybody’s guess. Assuming that this small group of men were the eleven who had been with Jesus in the upper room, the only remaining possibilities as to the identity of the “two other” of the disciples would be Andrew (Peter’s brother), Philip, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Cananaean, or Thaddaeus. That these “two other of his disciples” were of the eleven seems evident, though any attempt to be more specific than that is futile.

~~ 21:3 ~~

*“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also come with thee. They went forth, and entered into the boat; and that night they took nothing”*

*“Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing”* - Some have mistakenly presumed that Peter had given up all hope of seeing the Lord again, thereby explaining why he was intent on going back to his former occupation. I am prone to think that Peter wanted to “go a fishing” in order to provide him an opportunity to think about what had transpired over the past few days as he awaited the

promised meeting with the Lord. Keep in mind that the disciples had been instructed to return to Galilee where the Lord would meet with them. How long that would be was not specified. It was prudential, therefore, that these men engage in some activity while waiting for further instruction from the Lord. Fishing would provide a means of income, as well as opportunity to be alone and meditate in their hearts on these matters.

~~ 21:4 ~~

*“But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus”*

*“when day was now breaking”* – It would have been in the early part of the day when the sunlight was just beginning to break the dawn. It would still have been sufficiently dark making it difficult, if not impossible, for someone in a boat to see very clearly those who were standing on the shore.

*“Jesus stood on the beach”* – How long He had been there is not certain, but I get the impression from verse nine that He had been there long enough to start breakfast prior to extending the invitation to them to come ashore and eat.

*“the disciples knew not that it was Jesus”* – It is hard to tell if this was one of those occasions where Jesus intentionally hid His identity from them. My first impression is that their inability to recognize Jesus was due to natural circumstances.

~~ 21:5 ~~

*“Jesus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye aught to eat? They answered him, No”*

Jesus had always demonstrated a tender affection for His disciples, and His use of this word “children” indicates that His love for these men had not diminished. The original word here is ‘*paidion*’ and it was used to refer to infants, small children, and those who were immature. There was still much that the disciples needed to learn before they could fulfill the task that lay before them. They were still “children” in many respects.

*“have ye aught to eat?”* – It is important to note the various

references to eating that appear over the course of the Lord's appearance and interaction with the disciples. If these appearances were nothing more than mere hallucinations, how does one explain the invitation that Jesus gives to the disciples to "Come and break your fast"? (21:12). A vision or hallucination does not build a fire, put fish thereon, and then invite those having the hallucination to come eat. The question may also have had a symbolical meaning that transcends the physical. Coffman took an interesting view of this:

Jesus was not asking them for food, but he was rather emphasizing the fact that their return to their old tasks (however momentarily) had resulted in failure. The Lord was not yet through with those men; and Jesus had no intention of permitting them to return to the fishing business, even if they had desired that. The whole sequence of events in this chapter shows conclusively that their long night of failing to catch anything was providential, in the same manner as their astounding catch a little later acting upon the Lord's instructions (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 21:6 ~~

*"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes"*

How anyone could miss the miraculous element in this is a mystery to me. The entire episode is reminiscent of the draught of fishes recorded in Luke chapter five. In both instances the disciples had fished through the night, without catching anything. In both instances Jesus fully knew what needed to be done to catch fish; and in both cases a multitude of fishes was gathered into the nets, so much so that both the disciples and the boat were overwhelmed with the large haul. Yet in spite of the similarities, there are still those who deny any miraculous element here. Even if it could be proven that Jesus simply noticed a large school of fishes just off the shore, it would not lessen the miraculous nature of this catch of fishes. For one thing, it was early in the morning, and the distance from the shore to the boat was somewhere in the neighborhood of 100



yards. There is no way, unaided by the supernatural, that Jesus could have seen those fish from that distance and in that dim light. Coffman had some significant comments on this:

The entire narrative here cannot be explained at all except in a frame of reference including the supernatural power of Jesus. Can it be doubted that Jesus already knew exactly where to find the apostles, that he knew of their fruitless night's work, or that he had built a fire and prepared food at exactly the place where Peter would swim shore, or that he already knew that they had nothing to eat? Rationalization of Jesus' miracles is essentially dishonest. One may have a certain carnal respect for an avowed infidel; but so-called Christian scholars who attempt to rationalize the miracles are not entitled to either credence or respect. Dishonest handling of the sacred text is incapable of producing an honest argument (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 21:7 ~~

*“That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea”*

*“That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved”* - John was the first to recognize that the figure on the beach was the Lord. His faith that had been developed in the empty tomb now finds expression in the full realization that the Lord had kept His promise to meet them in Galilee.

*“It is the Lord”* – The miraculous catch of the fishes is the only possible explanation for John's conclusion as to the identity of the figure on the shore. Once again John demonstrates his keen sense of reasoning. At the grave site he immediately assessed all the available information, and then “believed.” He does the same thing here. Who else but the Lord could have known about the fish, both their location, and the fact that they would be caught if only the nets were cast on the “right side” of the boat?

*“So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the*

sea” - Peter, upon hearing it was the Lord, took immediate action. He cast himself into the water and headed for the shore. Likely the water was about waist deep, and so he girded up his outer garment about him. John’s note that Peter was “naked” suggests two things. First, Peter was fishing stripped down to the bare necessities, likely his undergarments, so as not to impede his work in fishing. This was common among fishermen. The second point is the almost imperceptible truth that nakedness does not necessarily mean complete nudity. It is possible for a person to be clad in scanty clothing and be considered “naked.” I can only wonder how anyone could defend the modern day swimming apparel in view of this incidental statement by John.

~~ 21:8 ~~

*“But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits off), dragging the net full of fishes”*

*“But the other disciples came in the little boat”* – When Peter recommended that they go fishing, he evidently did not intend for all of them to use just one boat. As to where they got the boats it must be remembered that when James and John were called into the ministry that they left the “boats” and followed Jesus (Luke 5:10-11). No doubt the boats they were now using belonged to their father, with whom they had left them earlier.

*“they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits”* – A cubit measures approximately eighteen inches. One hundred cubits would have been approximately 150 feet, and two hundred cubits 300 feet, about the distance of a football field.

*“dragging the net full of fishes”* - Once the net full of fishes was dragged to the shore it would have been easier to pull it along. Jesus demonstrated frugality in His use of provisions from the Father, as in the case of the feeding of the 5,000 where there were 12 baskets left over. The fragments were saved and used at a later time, no doubt (John 6:12). The disciples learned the same lesson of proper stewardship and rather than waste what was obviously provided by the Lord, they made every effort to bring the catch to shore.

~~ 21:9 ~~

*“So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread”*

*“they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon”* –The purpose of John’s providing this detail is to point out that this appearance, like the others, was not some vision or hallucination.

~~ 21:10 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken”*

Jesus invited them to bring what they had and add it to what He had provided, and enjoy a meal together. God still invites men to bring what they have (their self, their soul, their abilities, etc.) and add it to what God has provided. Interestingly, Peter would later instruct Christians to add “on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5-7). In that passage the word “adding on your part” suggests bringing in alongside on our part what God has supplied on His part. The same imagery is apparent here.

~~ 21:11 ~~

*“Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, the net was not rent”*

*“Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three”* – A multitude of theories has arisen as to the meaning of the “hundred and fifty and three,” none of which impress me in the least. The conjecture that the number is symbolic of something else seems a little farfetched to me. I have never met a fisherman who is not willing and ready to tell any audience exactly how many fish he caught on a fishing trip, and the more unusual the catch, the more precise he will be in relaying the exact number to those who will listen. The number was simply John’s way of telling them there were a lot of fish, and in spite of that fact the net still did not break.

~~ 21:12 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast. And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord”*

*“Jesus saith unto them, Come and break your fast”* – The original word translated “break your fast” could refer to the simple act of dining. It is used by John to refer to a morning meal, by which the night’s “fast” is “broken,” and the body takes nourishment. We use the word “breakfast” to refer to the same meal.

*“And none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou?”* – The rather obvious reason for not asking, “Who art thou?” is that they were fully convinced that it was Jesus in Whose presence they now stood. John specifically tells us that the disciples knew “that it was the Lord” (21:7). Why then John’s comment of this point? I think John wanted to impress upon His readers the sense of awe that filled the minds of these men. Here they were, in the very presence of deity. All their doubts had been removed; their fears subdued. After all, if Jesus had come forth from the bonds of death, what was there to keep Him from now fulfilling all those promises He had made while working with these men during His earthly ministry?

~~ 21:13 ~~

*“Jesus cometh, and taketh the bread, and giveth them, and the fish likewise”*

The interaction of Jesus with His disciples could only have taken place if He had actually risen from the dead rather than being some kind of a vision or hallucination.

*“Jesus cometh, and taketh...and giveth”* – As in the upper room, our Lord once again fills the role of a servant. He is the waiter, so to speak, at this banquet celebrating His glorious resurrection. Once again Jesus demonstrates to His disciples the path to greatness comes through service and not being served.

~~ 21:14 ~~

*“This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead”*

*“This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples”* - This would have been His seventh appearance, but only the third time He appeared to the *disciples* as a group. The other two appearances to the disciples would have been the appearance to the apostles *without* the presence of Thomas, and the appearance *with* Thomas present, both recorded in chapter twenty.

Before leaving this part of our study, I think it important to take a closer look at this incident from the perspective of its effect upon the disciples. I do not think I could ever appreciate the position in which Peter found himself at this moment in his life. He and the other disciples had been given instructions to go to Galilee, where Jesus would come to them (Mark 16:7). Think about Peter for just a moment. I have no doubt that he was concerned about his past, and how he must have disappointed the Lord. If anyone was ever haunted by his past, surely Peter would have been that man. Now he finds himself waiting for the Lord. How many days passed from the time they arrived in Galilee until Jesus makes this appearance is not revealed. In view of Peter's statement, “I go a fishing,” it would appear that enough time had passed for the disciples to grow a little anxious. So Peter needed something to relieve his troubled mind, and occupy himself as he waited for Jesus to meet him and the other disciples. And so he says, “I go a fishing!” His words must have struck a chord with the other disciples, for it would appear that they, too, wanted something to do in order to occupy their minds during this time of waiting. Here were seven men, together in the same “boat” so to speak. Peter had suggested the obvious solution to their anxious awaiting. “Let's go fishing.” And so they did. Between Peter's, “I go a fishing,” and John's, “It is the Lord,” there was a remarkable transformation in the lives of these men. That transformation was so powerful that when they finally arrived on the shore, “none of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou? Knowing that it was the Lord” (21:12). This episode on the sea of Tiberias serves as a wonderful object lesson for us. When we are anxious or troubled, it is often best to engage ourselves in some worthwhile work. When the heart is crushed

beneath the burdens of life our prayers give access to the divine help that comes from the Father, and our activity in some worthwhile task lessens the time it takes to get past the burden. Elijah, after his encounter with the four-hundred-fifty prophets of Baal, became discouraged, due at least in part to the news that Jezebel sought to do him harm. Elijah goes into the wilderness, sits down under a juniper tree, and has his own little pity party. He was discouraged; anxiety filled his heart. God's cure for Elijah's anxiety was, "Arise and eat" (1 Kings 19:5), and get on with his journey (1 Kings 19:7). "I go a fishing" was Peter's way of saying, "I need time to think about all of this!"

A second thing to notice is that Jesus was actually waiting for the moment when He would meet the disciples after their long night of activity. The Lord will meet us in our work, and comfort us in our times of sorrow and despair. It is easy to see Jesus when we are on the mountain top with Him; but it is quite different to see Him on the shore when we toiled throughout the dark night without any results. Look again at these disciples who had gone fishing. Oh, the thoughts that must have flooded their souls while they were out on that lake! They toiled all night, but caught no fish. Repeatedly they must have cast the nets, and each time they came up empty. How many times do we cast our nets, only to have them come up empty? As the night wore on, the ship drifted ever closer to the shore until that moment when they heard the voice of the Savior calling to them from the distant land. "Children, have ye aught to eat?" When the answer came back, "No," they were instructed, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." What about us? After toiling all night, perhaps we need to hear the voice of the Lord telling us to put our efforts into that which can assure a catch beyond our wildest dreams. So they cast their nets and were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. What a difference the morning brought for these disciples.

W.C. Smith is credited with having written the following:

They stood together by the sea  
In trouble and perplexity;  
The waves were breaking on the sand,  
The winds were moaning o'er the land,

And life came back, like floating wrack,  
On those dim shores of Galilee.

On every hill, 'neath every tree  
Was some fond haunt of memory,  
Where they had known the mystic force  
Of healing might, or high discourse;  
And at His will those waves were still  
Upon the sea of Galilee.

But Peter nought can hear or see  
Save that dark cross on Calavry,  
The crowing cock, the certain maid;  
'I go a fishing,' then he said;  
He could not bear the thoughts that were  
Thick-crowding now in Galilee.

*"Yea Lord; Thou Knowest That I Love Thee"*

21:15-19

These words of Peter appear three times in five verses. Each time, they are in response to a question that, likewise, was asked three times by the Lord. But why three times? Why does Jesus ask Peter the same question, though with a slight variance in the words used the third time? Peter had denied the Lord three times, and this may have been the Lord's way of giving Peter an opportunity to reaffirm his faith and devotion to the Lord in response to each of those three denials.

~~ 21:15 ~~

*"So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, 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"*

After breakfast with all of the disciples, it would appear that Jesus and Peter may have walked off by themselves so that the Lord could present Peter with an opportunity to reaffirm his faith and love. It is said later that Peter "turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following" (21:20), suggesting that there was definitely motion occurring during this conversation Jesus was having with Peter. It is also significant that Jesus deals

with Peter's need for forgiveness in a private way. He does not seek to embarrass Peter or place him in a situation where he might be "swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow" (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7b). The amazing similarities on this occasion with that of only a few days previous, when Peter denied the Lord three times, are striking. Each occasion presented Peter with three opportunities to declare his loyalty to the Lord. Each occurred at the breaking of dawn. Each occasion had a fire burning.

*"Simon son of John"* - Jesus addressed Peter with the same title - Simon Bar-Jonah - used in Matthew 16:16-19. No doubt it must have conjured up sweet memories in the mind of Peter. It would also remind Peter that responsibility would come with discipleship. I think it interesting that during this entire conversation with Peter, Jesus nowhere uses the word "rock" as He had on that occasion in Cesarea (Matt. 16:18).

*"lovest thou me more than these?"* - There exists a difference of opinion as to what the word "these" might be. Johnson believed that it was a reference to "these others" as Peter had used the word in his rash promise that even if all "others" would forsake the Lord, he would not. Another opinion is that Jesus was asking him if he loved the Lord more than the fishes and loaves that the world has to offer. "Peter, do you love me more than the fishes and the fishing business?" Bruce offers yet another take on the question: "In the context of the whole passion and resurrection narrative it is more natural to take it as meaning, 'Do you love me more than these others do?'" (Bruce, 404). The problem with this position is apparent: how was Peter to know how much the other disciples loved Jesus? Coffman summed up the vain attempt on the part of commentators to ascertain the exact meaning of the Lord's words:

The words of Jesus are not specific here, and why should men feel the compulsion to be otherwise? Perhaps all of the above meanings, in one degree or another, are implicit in the Master's words here to his servant who denied him (Coffman, Software).

Of particular interest throughout this conversation is our English word "love" as it appears in the questions that Jesus asks, and



the answers given by Peter. Jesus asks Peter, “lovest thou me more than these?” The word He uses is the Greek word ‘*agape*’ which denotes the highest degree of love that is to characterize the Christian life. It is the word that John used in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world.” But Peter does not respond with that same word. When Peter affirms, “*thou knowest that I love thee,*” he uses the word ‘*philo*,’ which has the meaning of a kindly affection; a close friendship or warm affection. As to why Peter responds in such a manner may never be known. The moment itself may have motivated Peter to respond as he did. It must have been an exceeding emotional conversation he was having with the Lord, and the fact that they were alone would suggest that Peter must have felt a deep friendship between the two of them.

“*Feed my lambs*” – The Lord’s response suggests one of two things that Peter’s love for the Lord would require. The first is responsibility. Jesus was saying in essence, “If you love me, then you must give yourself to the task of feeding my lambs.” Peter must be willing to turn his back on the things of the world and get about the Lord’s business. But Peter’s affirmation of his love for the Lord would also bring him a cross, which I will address under vs. 18.

~~ 21:16 ~~

*“He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep”*

The question is the same, as is also the answer. The same words were used by Jesus and Peter. The notable difference is in the words, “Tend my sheep” as opposed to, “Feed my lambs” in the previous verse. If there was any intended importance as to variation of words the Lord uses in verses 15 and 16, I am unable to discern it.

~~ 21:17 ~~

*“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, 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”*

“*Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?*” - Here the Lord does not use the word ‘*agape*,’ but ‘*philo*.’ Our Lord condescended to Peter’s two declarations, “Lord, thou knowest that I love (*philo*) thee.” In the entire conversation that Peter has with the Lord we are granted an opportunity to see Peter as a renewed man, having been fully forgiven of his past denials of the Lord, and standing ready to take the position in the Lord’s church of caring for the sheep and proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Peter, pierced to the heart by these repeated questions, throws himself on the knowledge the Lord has of his heart. The third time the Lord charges him to act as a shepherd under him and to take care of the sheep. Three times Peter had denied the Master; three times the Master questions his love; three times he gives him charge concerning his work. The questioning was painful, Peter was grieved, but the grief was wholesome and Peter’s whole subsequent life bore proof of the discipline. His rashness was forever gone (Johnson, ESword Module).

“*Feed my sheep*” - Peter echoed these words to the elders of the Lord’s church in 1 Peter 5:1-4.

~~ 21:18 ~~

*“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not”*

I mentioned earlier that Peter’s affirmation of his love for Jesus would demand responsibility on his part to feed the sheep. What comes into focus here is the fact that his love for the Lord would also call forth a cross for him to bear.

“*When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldst*” - The language suggests that Peter, in his younger years, was pretty much able to do exactly as he pleased.

That freedom may have contributed to his impetuous character.

*“but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands”* - These words, *“stretch forth thy hands,”* were used by Greek writers to refer to crucifixion. This is the meaning here. Nailed to a cross, *“another shall gird thee and carry thee whether thou wouldest not.”* Coffman quoted Lanctantius regarding Peter’s death at the hand of Nero:

He it was who first persecuted the servants of God. He crucified Peter and slew Paul. St. Peter, as a Jew, could thus be dealt with; St. Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded. Nor did he (Nero) escape with impunity; for God looked on the affliction of his people; and therefore the tyrant, bereaved of his authority, and precipitated from the height of empire, suddenly disappeared, and even the burial place of that noxious wild beast was nowhere to be seen (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

~~ 21:19 ~~

*“Now this he spake, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me”*

*“signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God”* - There are two remarkable truths that beg closer consideration. The first is that Peter would glorify God by his death. The death of a faithful child of God glorifies the Father because it declares that the life lived in service to the Father was until death; a life given completely and fully in service to He Who called us to His glory and honor. Here was a prophecy that Peter would remain faithful to his Lord. Peter must have had some question as to whether he would remain faithful, or again deny his Lord at some point down the road. This is the Lord’s answer to that question.

Second, it is a remarkable prophecy of the type of death Peter would face. Only a divine mind could foretell the horrible persecution that would be leashed upon the church leading to the martyrdom of every one of the apostles, with the exception of John (but of course John also endured his own persecution in

the form of exile on Patmos). Interestingly, Peter's promise in John 13:37, "I will lay down my life for thee" became a reality, though much later and under different circumstances than Peter may have imagined.

Tenney concluded that John added this comment because Peter had already died when the gospel was penned, and that his "fate was already known to the readers of the Gospel" (Tenney, 293).

*"Follow me"* - These words would have the same import as those in Revelation 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." Johnson had this interesting observation:

He had once forsaken Christ through fear of death. Now, with a prospect of violent death before him, he is bidden to resume the Master's work and to follow him. He did this, from this time, faithfully and gloriously, whether threatened by the Jewish Sanhedrin, in prison, or dying as a martyr on the cross. He was to follow until he tasted the cup that his Master had drunk. It will be noted that at the beginning of the Lord's ministry the command "Follow me," had a different, though analogous meaning to that which was now attached to it. Then it meant primarily to follow the Lord in his ministry, abandoning previous occupations, and sharing with him danger and disgrace. At the time of the seizure of Christ, Peter had ceased to follow and even had denied him. Now, with the certain prospect of death in the end, he is bidden to follow in a life of obedience to his will which would manifest Christ to the world (Johnson, ESword Module).

*"Lord, And What Shall This Man Do?"*

21:20-23

~~ 21:20 ~~

*"Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?"*

*"Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following"* – As I noted earlier, this would suggest that Jesus and Peter must have been walking, perhaps along the beach, while

the conversation was taking place. John was evidently following close behind, and when the conversation between the Lord and Peter had concluded, Peter asked his question regarding John.

*“the disciple whom Jesus loved”* – This is not an affirmation that Jesus loved John any more than the other disciples. It is an oft used description by John, the author of this gospel, designed to express the wonderful appreciation of that love he felt Jesus had for him.

*“who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?”* – Without naming himself, John wants his readers to be fully aware of who it is Peter and Jesus were talking about.

~~ 21:21 ~~

*“Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?”*

By omitting the words in Italics as they appear in our English versions, the reader can catch the laconic form of the Greek: “Lord, this man, what?” Peter understands the prophecy with regard to himself, but what shall become of his friend? Peter’s question speaks volumes about his concern for John and the deep friendship the two of them must have had for one another. Understanding that the Lord had prophesied a violent death for himself, Peter wanted to know what would happen to his close friend.

~~ 21:22-23 ~~

*“Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. This saying therefore went forth among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”*

The word “tarry” is rendered “remain” in the English Standard Version. Jesus was telling Peter, “If I will that he remain alive until I come.” Caution must be exercised that we do not read into the Lord’s word some indication that Jesus was to return within the lifetime of John. We know that did not happen. The words

were construed by the disciples to mean that John should not die, an error corrected by John in verse 23.

*“that he should not die”* - The absurd positions taken by some commentators are not worthy of even commenting on, perhaps the silliest being that John is still alive today. B.W. Johnson presented this interesting and intriguing position on this statement of our Lord regarding John:

Discarding all these hypotheses as inadequate, I may be allowed to express my surprise that the commentators have not perceived that John did literally tarry until the Savior came, until he saw him, heard him speak, and recorded the last revelation of the Lord to the world. About sixty years from the time that Christ spoke these words, according to the testimony of the early Church, the aged John was an exile in, Patmos. There, upon the Lord's day, he “heard a great voice,” and turning, he says, “I saw one like the Son of Man” blazing with such glory that he fell, “fell at his feet as dead, and then he laid his right hand on me, saying to me, Fear not.” Then follow the Seven Letters to the Church dictated to John by our Lord, and the sublime prophecies of Revelation. It is, therefore, a historical fact that John did “tarry” on the earth long after the other apostles were wearing crowns of martyrdom, and until the Lord came to him visibly to make the last inspired revelation of his will to man. This view, which is the only one in which the Savior's words and the historical facts are in exact harmony, incidentally shows that Revelation was not written when John penned this chapter. Had that been the case he would not have been at loss to understand just what the Savior's words could mean, but would have referred at once to the wonderful “coming” he witnessed on Patmos (Johnson, ESword Module).

This incident at the sea of Tiberias is touching in a number of ways. While Peter seems to be the main focus of the chapter, John is in the background, not only recording these words, but living them as well. The entire account is very personal in nature. Consider Peter for a moment. Who can read this chapter without feeling a sense of warm admiration for Peter? He had no doubt

disappointed his Lord on the very night when Jesus needed him the most; but his love for the Lord eventually led him to be restored and take his place of service in the kingdom of the Lord. John's record helps us to get a glimpse of Peter's restoration, but it also gives us a greater appreciation for the revelation contained in all twenty-one chapters of this gospel account. John is writing from the viewpoint of a witness to these events; an inspired witness, but an eye witness nonetheless. John experienced these things; and to this day, the strongest argument for Christianity is the experience itself. Even to this day, it is the Christian who can say, "I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). As this gospel account comes to a close, John takes two of the greatest figures of the early church, Peter and himself, to show that each one of us has our function in the church and in our service to God. Peter was to shepherd the sheep of Christ, and die as a martyr in service to his Master. John would live longer, and give witness to the life of Christ to all men, Jew and Gentile alike. As Barclay pointed out, "That did not make them rivals in honour and prestige, nor make the one greater or less than the other; it made them both servants of Christ" (Barclay, ESword Module).







## CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

### “THE BOOKS”

Epilogue, 21:24-25

There are two views concerning these closing verses of the gospel of John. Some hold that both verses were added by someone else. The plural “we know” lends credence to this position. The words appear in all of the ancient manuscripts and, if they were appended after the original was written, it was done before the distribution of the gospel. The alternate view, and the one to which I subscribe, is that the words are those of John himself. Throughout the book, John has refused to call himself by name, and in that same style, the apostle closes his record with one final reference to himself as a full attestation that the disciple to whom the Lord and Peter referred to in the previous verses is the very one who is an eye witness to these events, and the very one who penned the words of this gospel.

~~ 21:24 ~~

*“This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true”*

*“This is the disciple that beareth witness”* – None of the other three gospel writers could lay claim to what the author here attests. John closes his account with the affirmation that he was an eye witness to the events recorded in this gospel. Every detail contained in these twenty-one chapters, from the number of water pots at the marriage in Cana, to the precise number of one hundred fifty three fishes hauled ashore, declare that the disciple who wrote this account was present to witness the signs, hear the discourses, and watch the interaction of the Lord with His friends and His enemies. Quoting Hendriksen, Coffman observed:

*“This is the disciple, etc. ...”* “This” cannot refer to Jesus, for he was no disciple. It must indicate either Peter or John. But Peter was no longer bearing witness, being dead when this was written. Neither is it possible to introduce another person here, for

“this” clearly means someone just mentioned. Only John is left. That person must therefore be John. Accordingly, the passage must mean: “This disciple, John, who is still bearing witness (the present participle is used) and he is the one who has written (aorist participle) these things.”

*“and we know that his witness is true”* - This is a plain statement that the beloved disciple is the author of this gospel. The author was in close touch with all the events recorded in this gospel account, and as Bruce noted, “St. John’s is the only one that claims to be the direct report of an eye-witness” (Bruce, 409).

Every Christian who has ever lived, who has honestly examined the evidence presented by John (along with the evidence presented by Matthew, Mark and Luke) cannot help but echo the refrain of John: “We know that his witness is true!”

~~ 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 would not contain the books that should be written”*

*“there are also many other things which Jesus did”* - Exactly why John (i.e., the Holy Spirit) selected the signs which are recorded in this gospel may never be known. Whatever the reason, we do know that the Holy Spirit selected seven of the greatest signs that attest to the deity of our Lord. Coffman touched on this as he concluded his commentary on this wonderful book:

He leveled his witness squarely against the incipient Gnostic heresies beginning, even then, to show themselves in Asia Minor. He designed it so as to refute the false rumors of Peter’s unworthiness, due to his denials, and the equally false rumor that the Lord had promised to return within his lifetime. The person of Jesus Christ as both God and perfect man was the theme throughout. There can be no

marvel that Satan is very displeased with the Gospel of John; but, despite all satanic opposition to its teachings, the saints of all ages have received it as it is indeed the truth of God, ever rejoicing in its divine revelation of Jesus Christ our Lord (Coffman, Theophilus Software).

*“even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written”* – I have often mentioned the element of divine restraint that is evident in all of Holy Scripture. This, in itself, is evidence of its inspiration. Since the pen of inspiration was laid down near the close of the first century, countless volumes have been written about Christ, the church, and Christianity. Had Solomon lived in our day and age he would most certainly have had a deeper appreciation for his own words: “Of making many books there is no end” (Ecc. 12:12b). The immense volume of material, both inspired and uninspired, have filled the shelves of faithful Christians in every generation. Yet it is the One Book, the Bible, that provides us with all that we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

I close this commentary on the same note with which I began. The Magnificence of Jesus is portrayed in this wonderful account of the Life of our Lord; it runs like a fine thread through the pages of John’s gospel. Though the gospel certainly produces faith in the mind of those who read this record with the intention of learning the truth, that faith comes as a result of seeing the magnificence of our Lord. Bruce captured the same thought as he closes his notes on this gospel, and with which I bring this journey through John to its conclusion:

The Evangelist’s desire is to help his readers to penetrate behind the surface appearance of the incidents recorded so as to recognize in the One to whom he bears witness the Eternal Word of God, made man for man’s salvation. ‘We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14) is his own testimony, with which he associates his fellow-disciples; and he tells his story in such a way that his readers may see that glory too. The passion and resurrection narratives form the climax of the story; it is here, above all, that to the believer the divine glory shines

forth. No study of this Gospel could promote the purpose for which it was composed if it did not enable the reader more clearly to see that divine glory in the crucified and risen Jesus, and to hail him, like Thomas, as ‘my Lord and my God’ (Bruce, 411).

Oh indeed! The magnificence of Jesus Christ our Lord, unto Whom be the honor and glory, world without end!

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